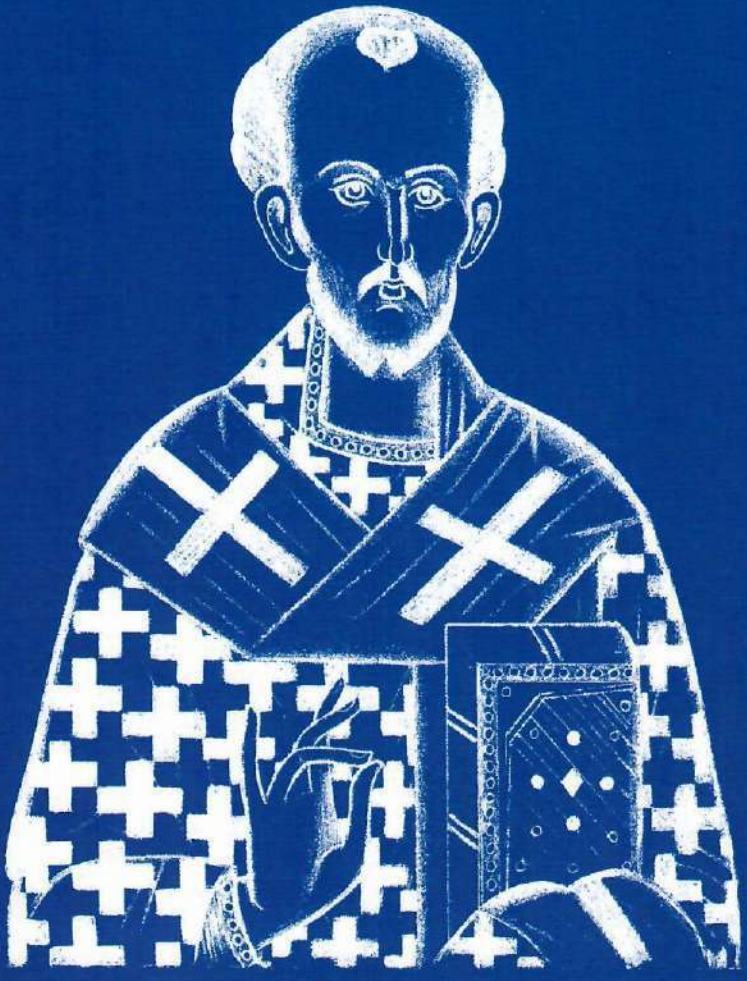
St. John Chrysostom

COMMENTARY ON THE PSALMS



Robert Charles Hill

ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM
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St. John Chrysostom
Commentary on the Psalms

Volume One

Translated with
an Introduction
by
Robert Charles Hill

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Abbreviations

AJP	*American Journal of Philology*
Bib	*Biblica*
CCG	*Corpus Christianorum Graecorum*
ClR	*The Clergy Review*
DB	*Supp. Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplément*
EstBib	*Estudios Bíblicos*
FOTC	Fathers of the Church series
ITQ	*Irish Theological Quarterly*
JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*
LXX	Septuagint (Greek Old Testament)
NJBC	*New Jerome Biblical Commentary*
OCA	Orientalia Christiana Analecta
PG	*Patrologia Graeca*
PL	*Patrologia Latina*
SC	*Sources Chrétiennes*
StudP	*Studia Patristica*
TRE	*Theologische Realenzyklopädie*
TS	*Theological Studies*
VC	*Vigiliae Christianae*
VTS	*Vetus Testamentum*, Supplement

To the Veech librarians, Sydney,
for their many kindnesses

Introduction

1
The Commentary in Relation to Chrysostom's Other Work on the Psalms

St John Chrysostom, preacher in Antioch and later bishop in the see of Constantinople in the late fourth century, left as testimony to his ministry a vast exegetical output, happily much of it extant. Of the hundreds of his pieces of commentary on books of the Bible, the bulk deal – predictably – with the New Testament, including the Gospels of Matthew and John and most of the Pauline corpus. "Predictably," if only because of the language of their composition: Chrysostom had no knowledge of Hebrew, and encouragement to undertake a commentary on the Old Testament books of Genesis and Psalms may have come from the example of his mentor in biblical studies, Diodore of Tarsus, fragments of whose commentaries on these books we have today.[1]

In the ninth century Photius, patriarch of Constantinople, wrote appreciatively of both these Old Testament works of Chrysostom, though with greater familiarity with the circumstances of delivery of the Genesis homilies: he suggested, on the grounds of lively audience participation, that the title λόγοι (*logoi*) for these in the manuscripts would be better replaced by ὁμιλίαι (*homiliai*).[2] He does not use this word of the Psalms commentary, to which he applies the term ἑρμηνεῖαι (*hermeneiai*)(as he does to Chrysostom's treatment of Paul's letters). Both Old Testament works deserve to be

[1] Cf Diodore's *Commentarii in Psalmos I-L* (*CCG* 6), ed. J. M. Olivier. Like most of the Fathers, Diodore himself had no Hebrew, either (cf C. Schäublin, "Diodor von Tarsus," *TRE* 8, 763-67).

[2] *Bibliotheca* 172-175 (*PG* 103, 502). See note 6 on Psalm 12 below.

known in English. The sixty-seven Genesis homilies I have previously translated,[3] supplying there some general estimate of Chrysostom's significance in the school of Antioch and patristic exegesis/commentary generally. I also ventured to disagree with Johannes Quasten's verdict on the Psalms work as "by far the best of his homilies on the books of the Old Testament;"[4] but there is no disputing its claim to be widely known to patristic scholars, students of hermeneutics and spirituality, and general readers. It certainly shows the preacher grappling with different challenges arising from the nature of the material, which a translator comes to appreciate.

The Fathers of East and West – predictably again – frequently drew the attention of their congregations and readers to the Psalter; commentaries on it are known from at least Hippolytus and Origen, though some later ones come to depend on the earlier masters' work to such an extent that it is a task of great discernment to establish originality. Such a task has been performed by scholars like Marie-Josèphe Rondeau[5] and Vittorio Peri.[6] Chryostom has not been found to be guilty of such dependence, though occasionally he admits his awareness of the work of other commentators. This is mostly just a brief deferential nod in their direction,[7] but he can also show his independence: on the phrase in v.2 of Psalm 45, "Comely to behold beyond all human beings," he remarks, "Some say this refers to the tongue, that it is a pen comely to behold, but he seems to me to be now referring to Christ himself;" and he resists the trend to take the various musical instruments mentioned in Psalm 150 in a spiritual sense.

[3] *St John Chrysostom. Homilies on Genesis* (FOTC 74,82,87), Washington, 1986-92. There is also a series of (eight or) nine sermons on *Genesis* from Chrysostom, in some places resembling verbatim the text of the homilies.
[4] *Patrology* 3, Utrecht/Antwerp/Westminster MD, 1960, 435.
[5] *Les commentaires patristiques du Psautier (IIIe-Ve siècles)*, I *Les travaux des pères grecs et latins sur le Psautier*, II *Exégèse prosopologique et théologie* (OCA 219, 1982; 220, 1985), Roma.
[6] *Omelie Origeniane sui Salmi. Contributi all' identificazione del testo latino* (Studi e Testi 289), Roma, 1980.
[7] For example, on Psalms 6.2; 7.2; 45.8.

Unfortunately, our manuscripts of Chrysostom's *Hermeneiai* on the Psalms do not include all 150, numbering only fifty-eight psalms in blocks from Psalms 4-13, 44-50, 109-118, 120-150.[8] The question whether there is evidence that particular psalms have been lost from this series we shall take up in its proper place. We do also have a commentary on the opening verses of Psalm 3 and 42 included in the De Montfaucon edition appearing in PG 55, described there as authentic though out of series; occasional commentary on verses of individual psalms occurs elsewhere in Chrysostom's works. He seems in this series to be working from a book of psalms;[9] he opens commentary on Psalm 150 by drawing attention to the way the psalmist "closes the book,"[10] and on the long psalm divided into two (9 and 10) in the Hebrew text he begins with an acknowledgement:

> This is a long psalm. The wisdom of the Spirit determines that. He did not make them all short, nor draw them all out to great length; instead, he varied the book suitably, arousing our interest with a lengthy one, and alleviating tedium with some brevity.

We would be grateful for an inkling of the contents of that book of psalms Chrysostom is using, whether the whole Psalter or a shorter collection resembling the contents of Codex Vaticanus or Codex Alexandrinus from the 4th and 5th centuries respectively, which omit about thirty psalms each.[11]

[8] Hence the last 42 psalms of the Psalter are included, apparently in sequence, with the exception of Psalm 119 – too long for commentary in one session. (See note 1 to Psalm 10 below for reasons for our following the numbering of the Hebrew text and modern versions in this translation in place of the Septuagint numbering.)

[9] Cf his comment on the opening of the psalm the LXX numbers 147 (Heb. 147.12): 'the whole book.'

[10] There he also speaks of the book opening with a hymn of praise as it so concluded, and yet of course the canonical Psalter begins rather with a Wisdom psalm – which Chrysostom acknowledges elsewhere (see note 73 to Psalm 141).

[11] It is rare for him to cite a psalm by number: commenting on Psalm 111 he refers to "the eighteenth psalm" (Psalm 19) without suggesting his congregation had heard him speak on it, as is true also of his mention of Psalm 105(106) in commentary on Psalm 115.

2
Circumstances of Composition/Delivery

With regard to the circumstances of composition/delivery of the Commentary, we probably should endorse the agnosticism of Photius in the ninth century, who admitted that "we are not yet in a position to know anything about the historical circumstances of the commentaries on the Psalms except to marvel at the force and excellence in other respects of the language, and thus to say he completed them while at leisure rather than when involved in public affairs."[12] That latter surmise has led scholars like Chrysostom's editor Bernard De Montfaucon to suggest the work comes from the period before priestly activities began in 386 with ordination,[13] and the place Antioch. Rondeau sides with the majority in dating them after Chrysostom's ordination and before his movement to Constantinople in 398.[14]

The evidence from the text of the commentaries is likewise inconclusive. Lack of local reference and personal experience is a feature of it; an exception could be his expectation that his congregation knows the story of St Babylas, bishop of Antioch, and Emperor Julian's infamous stay there (on Psalms 111;148). Nor should we place much weight on Chrysostom's chronology within a piece of anti-Jewish polemic arising out of comment on Psalm 8.2, "Four hundred years have now passed since the city (of Jerusalem) was destroyed down to its very foundations." We might like to associate his anxiety to explain intricate details of trinitarian and Christological doctrine to his congregation (as arising quite indirectly out of a verse like Psalm 45.2, more formally Psalm 110) with the recent deliberations of the Council of Constantinople in 381; but that also would be to draw the long bow. While not supporting Photius' surmise of a leisure period in his life, the commentary suggests rather an immaturity by comparison, say, with the Genesis series. There is that unsual display of erudition, seemingly for effect, in not only listing a range of alternative Greek versions of the Hebrew original but also frequently citing the Hebrew itself – often erroneously – whereas on Genesis he was content to accept

[12] *Bibliotheca* (*PG* 103,504).
[13] Preface reprinted in *PG* 55, 14-15.
[14] *Les commentaires patristiques* I, 130.

his received Greek text and admit ignorance of the Hebrew with some such phrase as "those who know that language say..."[15] His congregation is at times overwhelmed with such true and false erudition – the sign of an inexperienced teacher.[16]

3
Text of the Commentary; Chrysostom's Greek Text of the Psalter

Unlike some recent attempts to reconstruct the text of other of Chrysostom's supposed works on Old Testament books, we are in the fortunate position of having a text of the Psalms Commentary "en tradition directe," as Rondeau remarks with relief. The significance of this text tradition emerges from a comment like Robert Carter's to the effect that composition of the *Codices Chrysostomici Graeci* for Chrysostom's New Testament homilies involved consultation of 824 manuscripts, and these but a small fraction of the three to four thousand stemming from the Byzantine period.[17] Though the text tradition of the Psalms Commentary is thus relatively uncomplicated, the downside of our study of Chrysostom's text is that to date there has been no modern critical edition.[18] And so a mere translator is indebted to the 19th century reprint by J.-P. Migne[19] of Bernard De Montfaucon's 18th century edition, dependent itself on the 17th century editions of Savile and Fronton de Duc, Savile's foundational work resting primarily on a few mss. some six or seven centuries earlier. Translation and commentary on the whole series, however, are probably not at a great disadvantage for all that.

[15] Cf Homily 4 on *Gn* (*PG* 53,43).

[16] There is one interesting remark of his that could suggest he speaks as a bishop. On Psalm 50.5 he makes the point that moral correction is best achieved by dealing with the recalcitrant in a dignified manner; and proceeds, "This is the way we behave, too: when we see people offending, we want to touch them more profoundly, so we summon them using titles so as to lend our accusation a more serious note, saying, Call the deacon or the priest."

[17] "The future of Chrysostom studies: theology and *Nachleben*," *ΣΥΜΠΟΣΙΟΝ. Studies on St John Chrysostom* (ΑΝΑΛΕΚΤΑ ΒΛΑΤΑΔΩΝ 18), Thessaloniki, 1973, 133-35.

[18] Cf M. Geerard (ed.), *Clavis Patrum Graecorum* II, #4413.

[19] *PG* 55.

What is less uncomplicated is the question of the text or texts that Chrysostom had before him when he composed and/or preached on the Psalms at that period of leisure or immature ministry. He seems to have had at his disposal, in addition to his basic Greek text, a range of alternative Greek translations and the Hebrew text – a unique situation, to judge from his other exegetical works. Several questions arise as we see him handling this relative abundance of resources – one who can speak somewhat disparagingly of "the scholars." What is his basic Greek text? On Psalm 10.4 he cites these variant translations and "the Septuagint," apparently the text he is commenting on; whereas on Psalm 7.9-10 he gives his text before citing a variant and "the Septuagint," which this time differs from the text he has just cited as his. What is this "Septuagint" text of his, which can differ from another "Septuagint" text?

His quotation of Job 31.13-15 (in commenting on Psalm 4.1) in a form markedly different from both the Hebrew and a modern composite text of the Septuagint like Rahlfs'[20] reminds us of the diversity of forms of the LXX current at the time. Jerome, roughly contemporary with Chrysostom, speaks of three forms then current respectively in Alexandria, Constantinople-Antioch, and "the provinces in between;"[21] he further describes the second of these as "another version which Origen and Eusebius of Caesarea and all the Greek commentators call the popular text, and which by most is now called the Lucianic text,"[22] the work of the scholar-priest of Antioch, Lucian, a century earlier. The precise character of this Antiochene form of the LXX, which Chrysostom is thought to exemplify (as also Theodoret of Cyr, likewise commentator on the Psalms), is much debated: the claim for its provenance directly from the Hebrew, made for it by the ancients, is thought unlikely in view of general ignorance of that language;[23] the responsibility of Lucian is allowed by some moderns,[24] disallowed as a legend by others,

[20] A. Rahlfs (ed.), *Septuaginta*, 2 vols, 7th ed., Stuttgart, 1962. Cf note 49 on Psalm 50 below.
[21] *Praef. in Paral.*(*PL* 28,1324-25).
[22] *Ep* 106 *ad Sunniam* ii (*PL* 22, 838).
[23] So S. Jellicoe, *The Septuagint and Modern Study*, Oxford, 1968, 160-161.
[24] Cf D. S. Wallace-Hadrill, *Christian Antioch. A study of early Christian thought in the East*, Cambridge 1982, 30; B. Drewery, "Antiochien," *TRE* 3,106.

who would prefer to speak of a "texte antiochien" or even Palestinian.[25] If it is this revised form of the LXX Chrysostom is using as his text for the Commentary on the Psalms, he is not above amending it: the word order of both his text and the Hebrew of Psalm 45.5 leads to nonsense, and so after first relaying it he makes an adjustment, as do modern versions.

What particularly distinguishes Chrysostom's approach to his text of the Psalms, at least the "earlier" part, is his offering of versions alternative to his *textus receptus*. These can be as many as three – four in one case (for Psalm 11.4-5), where in an obvious slip he cites his own text again as a fourth variant. He never acknowledges the source of these variants, though they have been commonly identified as the work of the three translators/revisers of the second century, Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion. Editor De Montfaucon frequently identifies them as such from the six columns of Origen's *Hexapla* compiled in the third century;[26] recent work on them as a result of discoveries of Greek and Hebrew mss. would make such identification more tentative.[27] Chrysostom's purpose in offering such an array to a congregation whom he faults for lack of basic biblical knowledge escapes us, unless it be to impress them with his erudition. Reading to his listeners in one hit the four verses 7-10 of Psalm 10 plus all the variants leaves us with a picture of a preacher with a mass of material to hand;[28] and though in a hurry to get through Psalm 46 he still insists on offering them variants to vv.4-5. He rarely offers any evaluation of the variants quoted, deepening our puzzlement as to their pastoral efficacy: on Psalm 45.4, where his text reads "Your right hand will guide you," he finds a variant reading "Your fearful right hand," and gets some mileage from it by comparison with his own reading, which un-

[25] Cf D. Barthélemy, *Les Devanciers d'Aquila* (VTS X), Leiden, 1963, 126-7; E.-L. Guillaumin, "Problèmes posés aux éditeurs de Jean Chrysostome par le richesse de son inspiration biblique," *ΣΥΜΠΟΣΙΟΝ*, 62-63.
K. G. O'Connell would rather place the origins of this revision of the LXX in Palestine, matching Palestinian Hebrew mss. from Qumran ("Texts and versions," *NJBC* 1092), and dating back to the late 1st century.
[26] He has to admit in many cases, however, ignorance of the provenance of a particular variant.
[27] Cf O'Connell, art.cit., 79.
[28] This, of course, begs the question, which we shall examine in Section 5, of the circumstances of composition/delivery.

usually he names as "the Septuagint;" for Psalm 49.4 he prefers the alternative reading "obscure saying" to his text's "riddle" on the grounds that "the Hebrew means that" – for him a risky venture into an area where he often gets his fingers burnt through ignorance; he compares alternative versions to his text of Psalm 116.11. We would have to conclude that the Commentary – and such a congregation – would suffer little from omission of all the variant readings, as becomes clear from commentary on psalms 109 et seq., where the preacher has largely tired of citing them.

4
The Commentary: Its Nature, Structure, Extent of Coverage of the Psalter

It is a difficult, probably insoluble, problem determining whether the Commentary in its present form was delivered to a congregation (perhaps several) or not; the next section will grapple with the task more comprehensively.[29] The evidence of the text is contradictory; we can only remark on features of a biblical commentary that at least imply a live audience – an implication strengthened by lack of any formal Introduction to the series such as we find in the commentary of Theodoret of Cyr a half-century later.[30] Firstly, there is the impression that (unlike Theodoret at his desk) a preacher is addressing a congregation in a teaching setting on an occasion that is paraliturgical, not eucharistic. Chrysostom begins his commentary on Psalm 47 thus:

> All the nations, clap your hands (another version, 'hand'). 'Shout to God in a voice of happiness' (a different version says, 'Indicate in a voice of praise')... Some people may find the opening of the divine Spirit's exhortation unworthy – such a bidding, applause, din, loud cries. These things do not become people assembling in this place dedicated to teaching (διδασκαλεῖον, *didaskaleion*), but rather those indulging in the theatre and banquets, shaking rattles and applauding.

[29] Cf my "Chrysostom's Commentary on the Psalms: homilies or tracts?" *Prayer and Spirituality in the Early Church*, Melbourne, 1998.
[30] *PG* 80,857-1998.

They are assembled, not in a church, but in a teaching setting (as befits psalms composed "to give guidance in knowledge of God"),[31] where nevertheless noise (about which the preacher remarked in commenting on Psalms 8 and 44) is inappropriate.[32] The *didaskaleion* "is more important than a courtroom," he claims with some smugness on Psalm 50.16, because it is not condemning but correcting.[33] That they are not eucharistic occasions is confirmed by a remark on a phrase in Psalm 49.2, "rich and poor together," that both are welcome: "Let our assembly be in common, the sermon in common, the listening in common." Had it been eucharistic, surely a preacher would have adverted to the particular *koinonia* of the occasion.[34] Psalm 116.13, "I shall take a cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord," evokes reference to chalice, sacrifice, thanksgiving, anamnesis – but no reference is made to eucharist as would surely have occurred had the occasion been eucharistic (likewise on Psalm 145.15).

That opening to the commentary on Psalm 47 in the *didaskaleion* is typical also of the abrupt opening to most; there is none of the small talk, resumé, blandishments that mark the opening of, say, the Genesis homilies that so impressed Photius with their orality. This is also a matter of genre, recording, and transmission to be dealt with below in Section 5. We might note that the extant texts of other patristic preachers, like Augustine's commentary on Psalm

[31] Cf note 18 on Psalm 136.

[32] On Psalm 8 he also stresses the need of silence, as contrasted with the theatre, but speaks of the congregation as being "in church" (see note 5 there). It is possible there were different venues on different occasions.

[33] At the opening of commentary on Psalm 122, he seems (perhaps because of the psalm's content) to refer to the venue as "a house of prayer" (εὐκτήριος οἶκος, *eukterios oikos*), a term still not suggesting a church, and applied shortly after in that commentary to the Jews' Temple. Chrysostom had used the term elsewhere in his works for an oratory, such as a martyr's chapel.

[34] On Psalm 50.18 he upbraids clergy (some possibly in the congregation) for not being more outspoken on public sinners, and urges the latter not be admitted to the "holy table" – as though at another liturgical function. A century later in Constantinople the presbyter Leontius delivers some homilies within a eucharistic liturgy, others "during an evening liturgy which comprised readings from the Scriptures, singing of psalms and a homily" (P. Allen, C. Datema [edd.], *Leontius, Presbyter of Constantinople. Fourteen Homilies*, Brisbane, 1991, 17).

52, can reveal an equally blunt opening, though in this case the African preacher admits he has a reader in mind as much as a listener[35] – something not admitted in Chrysostom's case.

At least early in the "series," Chrysostom would begin his commentary on a psalm with the title as found in his text, to which he adds variant versions. There is no suggestion he thought the psalm titles a later addition, as did his mentor Diodore and the moderns; in this he sided with most other patristic commentators.[36] So he fails, as does his LXX text, to see them as in many cases giving directions to musicians, not recognising names like Korah and Asaph as items in the lists of such artists occurring in *The Chronicler*.[37] These failings led him and his LXX text to grapple with the Hebrew to find meaning in every phrase, a task for which they were ill-equipped; nor were they ready, as are modern scholars (themselves not always clear about the musical direction being given), to admit ignorance of such terms as *gittith* in the title to Psalm 8 or *muth labben* in Psalm 9, so by questionable etymology they came up with terms about "winepresses" (*gat*) and "dying" (*muth*). They were not able to recognise *maskil* as a psalm type, or "On the lilies" as a melody key, in Psalm 45. We are plunged into a lengthy disquisition on Psalm 5 about inheritances because the LXX had failed to read aright the similar Hebrew word in the title for "flutes," another musical direction. (Chrysostom is generally wise enough to be content with the LXX's διάψαλμα (*diapsalma*) for the direction *selah* in the body of Psalms 9 and 44, unclear also to modern scholars, for which a variant version offers "always.")[38]

[35] *PL* 36,600.

[36] Cf R. E. Heine, *Gregory of Nyssa's Treatise on the Inscriptions on the Psalms* (Oxford Early Christian Studies 10), Oxford, 1995, 3-5. It is noteworthy that towards the end of the collection Chrysostom omits the titles and in fact mention of David by name; possible reasons for this I have suggested in note 1 to Psalm 137.

[37] See note 1 to Psalm 50.

[38] The more deliberate Theodoret, who knows of the musicians listed by *The Chronicler* and is even prepared to allow authorship of some psalms to them, criticizes Aquila for using "always" and even inserting it into the text of the preceding verse. "I take the notation *diapsalma* to indicate an alteration of the melody," he says (*PG* 80,864). Chrysostom acccepts and gets mileage from Aquila's "always" in commenting on Psalm 140 (see its note 7) and Psalm 143 (note 47).

Once the preacher launched into his commentary, the congregation could expect the session to continue at length, sometimes at great length, as the time given to Psalms 4, 7, 45 indicates.[39] Their own role is not spelled out clearly in this series, beyond the need for silence. Commentary on Psalm 44.12 suggests they did some singing; Chrysostom says, "The verse seems to be extremely unclear, yet pay attention so that your singing (ψάλλειν, *psallein*) may be done with understanding" – an accent he repeats at the opening of commentary on Psalm 141, where he regrets that "those singing it daily and uttering the words by mouth do not enquire about the force of the ideas underlying the words."[40] From the text of that commentary on Psalm 42 beyond this collection, which speaks of the congregation singing a *responsorium* or ὑπακοή (*hypakoe*) ("As the stag longs...," in that familiar refrain) under the guidance of a leader, De Montfaucon generalises to see all psalms in this Commentary being treated likewise, on the analogy also of Athanasius' usage.[41] But Chrysostom, who finds the practice can have the effect of leaving the congregation ignorant of the psalm as a whole, begins commentary on Psalm 118 in a way that suggests singing of a *hypakoe*, or "the verse for *hypekesis*," was reserved for eucharistic occasions and perhaps only at Easter:

> *Confess to the Lord that he is good, because his mercy is forever* (v.1). The verse of the psalm which the congregation is accustomed to sing in response (*hypopsallein*) is like this: *This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it* (v.24). It rouses many people, and the congregation are accustomed to sing it in response to that spiritual assembly and on the heavenly festival... The Fathers prescribed the singing (ὑπηχεῖν, hypechein) of that verse by the congregation... We, on the contrary, must address ourselves to the whole psalm.[42]

[39] Later in the "series" great length is rare, especially where an historical basis to a psalm is acknowledged.

[40] A statement of the benefits of sung prayer arises out of comment on Psalm 135.3.

[41] *PG* 55,155-56.

[42] While thus finding fault with the practice, he is happy to have them sing a refrain of his own choosing; when he comes to v.6 of this psalm, he remarks, "Let us not only sing this as a refrain (*hypopsallein*) but also manifest it in our deeds." Yet there is no mention of that repeated antiphon in Psalm 136 being sung. On Psalm 145 he does speak of initiates (to sacramental reception) singing as an antiphon v.15 ("You give them their food in due season") but of his congregation *reading* the psalm.

The congregation, then, listened and sang, even if not following the liturgical pattern.

Our present text shows the commentary on the psalm verses beginning quite directly, after possible comment on the title, but that is no guarantee of ordered and concise treatment. We noted the false lead in the title to Psalm 5 onto a discussion of inheritances material and spiritual; at its completion the commentary proper proceeded with unholy haste. An historical reference in the title of Psalm 7 encouraged the commentator to deliver a long historical introduction on Hushai and Ahithophel from the Former Prophets before proceeding, resulting in a very lengthy "session" (hopefully the congregation was in fact seated during this hour or two). Other digressions involved polemic against the Jews in Psalm 8 and a joust with popular philosophy on Zeus and rainmaking in Psalm 4.7. Commentary on Psalm 44 meanders to great length; Psalm 46 is unusually brief. Conclusion to a commentary can accordingly be well developed, with carefully articulated doxology – or abrupt, lacking peroration, truncating or omitting the doxology completely (e.g., Psalms 4; 5; 109; 111; 147; 149), perhaps on occasions when two psalms were commented on together.

In short, one does not get the impression in this commentary of a scholar at his desk enjoying the leisure to control the development of the material; more like an impulsive preacher, often subject to pressure of time mismanaged.

Today's commentator on Chrysostom's text is at some difficulty in referring to "previous," "earlier" and "later" individual psalm commentaries for the reason already mentioned that we do not have from him treatment of the complete Psalter, nor can we be sure that the series once included it all and that he moved consistently from one psalm to the next.[43] De Montfaucon is convinced that the series was originally complete but later dispersed, that a

[43] Writing about the end of 404 to discourage Augustine from attempting a commentary on the Psalms, Jerome listed six Greek and three Latin commentators, among whom Chrysostom does not occur, though he admitted there were other "in paucos Psalmos opuscula" (*Ep* 112,20: *PL* 22,928-9). Rondeau (*Les commentaires patristiques*, 128) finds Baur's argument on this basis against a complete commentary by Chrysostom "précaire." Evidence from the catenae suggests sequences of psalms to be missing, as in the extant collection.

"collector" is to be congratulated for reassembling all and only the extant commentaries (those on opening verses of Psalms 3 and 42, insofar as also authentic, being legitimate addenda to the collection), that completeness is suggested by the fact that the extant commentaries survive in blocks rather than at random, and that a genuine note by Photius found in a catena mentions the lacuna from Psalms 14 to 43 and discovery of part of Psalm 59.[44] His trump card by way of internal evidence is the reference in the commentary on Psalm 141.4-7 to "what has already been said" on Psalm 63.2, a psalm no longer in the series; but against this one could raise Chrysostom's failure to remind his congregation of the verbatim similarity of verses in Psalm 144 to Psalm 18, which suggests the latter had not come in for commentary.[45]

The internal evidence, at least on the matter of the sequence of extant commentaries, is rather more abundant than De Montfaucon cites, if also not without contradiction. Occasionally there is a suggestion of movement from one psalm in numerical order to the next. In commenting on Psalm 11.4-5 Chrysostom is correct in telling his congregation, "What we said in the previous psalm to indicate that wickedness itself is sufficient to destroy them he suggested here too," having made this point about Psalms 9.15 and 10.16-18 (the one psalm in his LXX text). He refers the (same?) congregation unequivocally to "the previous psalm" in course of comment on Psalms 140; 146; 147; 148; 150 (erroneously in this final case). After cross-references to other psalms in the course of commentary on Psalm 49.12, he asserts that the same topic (of forms of vice) occurs "also in the present psalm" as though part of a wider series. Again, he opens commentary on Psalm 13 with the remark, "This too is no slight benefit, to get a sense of God's forgetting," a hint at his opening to the previous psalm, where he also began with mention of "fellowship and fraternal encouragement" as no slight benefit.

Such off-the-cuff connecting links in the chain of psalms can be more ambiguous. Chrysostom begins his commentary on Psalm 47 with the remark, "This psalm, too, has to do with the same subject," yet it is stylistically quite different from Psalm 46, fulsome

[44] *PG* 55,18-19,30.

[45] It is also possible that commentary on Psalm 63.2 fell outside the larger series; see note 7 to Psalm 141.

and rhetorical where the previous one was concise. Likewise, in dealing with the opening verse of Psalm 50 he claims, "It seems to me that this is related to the previous psalm," and he clearly presumes his listeners are in a position to make a comparison of the two based on exposure to the content of both. Yet the reader is struck by the great difference in style of commentary in moving from one to the other; further, Chrysostom omits the usual variant translations of verses in Psalm 50 as well as its title, "A psalm to Asaph" – as Psalms 73-83 with a similar title are also missing from the extant series.

5
Evidence of Composition, Delivery, Recording, Transmission

Such structural and stylistic inconsistencies in Chrysostom's extant psalm commentaries serve to lead us into that intriguing question about them: were they ever delivered from the pulpit, or composed and left on the theologian's desk? In either case, but particularly in the former, how were they recorded and transmitted? Comparison with Theodoret's commentary on that similar "Lucianic" psalms text suggests a relative degree of orality, yet not to the level of the Genesis homilies. De Montfaucon insists *a priori* (against historian Tillemont) that such an inveterate preacher could hardly have left a text of such pastoral richness to lie fallow on his desk,[46] and the argument has some force. Yet biographer Chrysostomus Baur would be convinced of actual delivery only by possession of both speaker's text and stenographer's copy, and by "an appearance of actuality" imparted by references to real life.[47]

The practices and resources in antiquity for recording and transmitting scholars' and preachers' words are surprisingly well documented. Beyond classical authors like Cicero, we know (from Eusebius), for example, of Origen's use of the resources generously supplied him by his friend Ambrose of Nicomedia – ταχύγραφοι (*tachygraphoi*), βιβλιόγραφοι (*bibliographoi*) and καλλίγραφαι

[46] *PG* 55,9.

[47] C. Baur, *John Chrysostom and His Times* (1929) I, Eng. trans., London-Glasgow, 1959, 222.

(*kalligraphai*) – for dictating his private commentaries and having his public homilies recorded, copied and touched up, and (from themselves) of Jerome's use of similar resources for his commentaries and of Augustine's use of *notarii* for preserving his oratorical works.[48]

As is clear from the remark of Photius five centuries afterwards, we do not have such precise evidence for recording and transmission of Chrysostom's Commentary on the Psalms. But there is the statement from Socrates Scholasticus, historian from Constantinople who died in 450, that the great preacher's discourses survived to that point, some in the form he released them and some in stenographic transcription of his spoken word.[49] Of course, stenographers could also have been employed in the former group, and the composer's proofing involved in the latter group. Into which group did this Commentary fall?

We have seen Dom Baur looking in the text for "an appearance of actuality," or for what we might term evidence of spontaneity, something conspicuously absent from Theodeoret's more measured, literary commentaries. We admitted above in section two that Chrysostom's Psalms commentary is lacking local reference by comparison with the Genesis homilies; but we have also to admit that stenographers could be responsible for excision of such irrelevant material. Correlatively, the evidence of spontaneity Baur finds in the Genesis sermons by contrast, particularly that notorious example of the rebuke to the congregation for being distracted by the lamplighter in Sermon 4,[50] could easily be "manufactured" by composer or *bibliographoi* at a late stage of production, as we know from classical authors.[51] Spontaneity is an unreliable index of orality of texts.

[48] For details, see my "Chrysostom's Commentary on the Psalms: homilies or tracts?"; R. J. Deferrari, "St Augustine's method of composing and delivering sermons," *AJP* 43 (1922) 97-123, 193-219; J. De Ghellinck, *Patristique et moyen âge. Etudes d'histoire littéraire et doctrinale*, II *Introductions et compléments à l'étude de la patristique*, Paris, 1947, 214-224.

[49] "...οἵ τε ἐκδοθέντες παρ' αὐτοῦ λόγοι καὶ οἱ λέγοντος αὐτοῦ ὑπὸ τῶν ὀξυγράφων ἐκληφθέντες" (*Historia Ecclesiastica* 6,4; *PG* 67,672).

[50] *PG* 54,597.

[51] One recalls the exiled Milo's ironic rejoinder to Cicero on the publication of the (revised) *Pro Milone*.

Baur could have adduced textual, structural, and stylistic features we have noted above to support his case for the Commentary as a desk theologian's bookish exercise. There is that display of erudition by the composer, offering of alternative versions and recourse to the Hebrew original; commentary on some psalms opens abruptly and in other cases closes just as abruptly; some are short, others long, some concise, others florid; and, as we shall see, scriptural testimonies are sometimes ladled out in indigestible lumps, at other times are completely missing. Yet it is not a clinching argument: would not a composer at his desk be in a better position to iron out such inconsistencies? And, as for the true and false erudition, would not such a composer be better able to avoid the solecisms linguistic and biblical which (the possibly immature) Chrysostom gets himself into in the Commentary?

It is therefore probably an open question whether or not the present Commentary came from desk or pulpit. Equally ambiguous are stylistic features suggesting orality, like the cry of exasperation at sinner's contribution to their own fate touched on by Psalm 13.4: "Βαβαὶ (*Babai*)! Bless me! what dreadful stupidity, what awful frenzy, to lend help to one's enemies against oneself!" There are other passages where the composer rises to poetic heights in his rhetoric and even versifying, as in the apocalyptic dimension he lends to Psalm 47.2 in a rhythm reminiscent of Qoheleth.[52]

A compromise solution to the conundrum might be to see the extant text as a preacher's material prepared (even with the help of *tachygraphoi*) for delivery, and susceptible of development on the occasion as circumstances required. Other of Chrysostom's extant exegetical works have been thought likewise "less finished,"[53] "incomplètement élaboré."[54] Alternatively, we may have

[52] See note 21 there; also Psalms 4, note 15; 6, note 31; 13, note 6; 49, note 50; 110, note 47.

[53] Cf Quasten on the Homilies on *Acts*: "Their literary form is less finished than we are accustomed to expect of him. It seems that the text was drawn up from notes taken by stenographers during the preaching and that Chrysostom never revised it" (*Patrology* 3, 440).

[54] Cf H. Sorlin (ed.), *Jean Chrysostome, Commentaire sur Job*, I (*SC* 346), Paris, 1988, 35, n.1: "Ne serions-nous pas en présence d'un texte incomplètement élaboré, de notes de lecture dans lesquelles Chrysostome se proposait de puiser ultérieurement, en vue d'éventuelles homélies sur le livre de Job?"

to allow for the employment of a range of different stenographers on the different occasions of delivery of the commentary on individual psalms; even Cicero's works were at the mercy of such a range, if we can believe the letters of Marcus Cornelius Fronto two centuries later.[55]

6

Chrysostom's Society and Congregation; Anti-semitism, Sexism

We have noted the absence in the Commentary, for whatever reason, of reference to the local situation and current events; Chrysostom does not devote a whole treatise to the evils of going to the races, for example, as he does in Homily 6 on Genesis.[56] We have to work a lot harder to divine the composition of his congregation and trends in the wider society, much less so to become attuned to the preacher's position on issues like the place of the Jews in God's plan of salvation and the role of women in Church and society.

The congregation(s) that gathered in the *didaskaleion* at evening time for a lengthy commentary by Chrysostom on a psalm seem(s) to have been exclusively male.[57] This would not have helped him adjust his sexist attitudes, abundantly demonstrated in the commentaries, as we shall see. He need speak only of men as examples of endurance and character,[58] of men being under the guidance of the Spirit.[59] His choice of scriptural references is at times inappropriate to women (e.g., Prv 5.17-19; 2 Tim 3.6). The evil people the listeners may need to avoid to be "hope-filled and secure" (Psalm 4.8) include "your wives, your friends, anyone at all" – no men-

[55] *Ep.* I,7, which speaks of certain of Cicero's books being *pretiosores* if transmitted by more gifted stenographers.

[56] Cf my "On giving up the horses for Lent," *CIR* 68 (March 1983) 105-106.

[57] Particularly when there is clear evidence of psalms being commented on in numerical sequence, the preacher presumes he is addressing the same congregation. Obviously, this cannot have been completely true of all fifty-eight psalms. Cf note 1 to Psalm 128, note 1 to Psalm 129.

[58] See note 21 on Psalm 4, note 2 on Psalm 125, note 1 on Psalm 150.

[59] See note 2 on Psalm 47. Amongst the problems for good people he cites on Psalm 128.1 is "a fiendish and crooked wife they live with."

tion of husbands. There were surely no women present to be told, on Psalm 148.10, that "desire managed with moderation makes you a father!" Women, being excluded from the assembly, could also be excluded from the pastoral perspective.

This male congregation comprised the "rich and poor together" of Psalm 49.2 if the commentary on that psalm is to be believed. Chrysostom congratulates himself on "making no distinction between members of the congregation on the grounds of status," like the Church generally; "I propose the same teaching to everybody." But the relish with which he depicts (to great effect, admittedly) the fate awaiting the rich fool, and the frequency of recommendations to almsgiving, suggest the audience was more rather than less affluent. Their level of biblical literacy, however, was not high – demonstrating further the anomaly of the preacher's citing to them alternative versions and Hebrew original. In introducing two psalms which he believes have historical origins, Psalm 7 on Hushai, Absalom and Ahithophel and Psalm 44 on the Maccabees, he regrets that their lack of familiarity makes it necessary for him to rehearse the relevant biblical narrative. "Listen to this, all you who are heedless of your children, who ignore their singing diabolical songs, while you pay no attention to the divine stories," he says to them on the latter. Not that he presumes they have Bibles at home: it is by listening to the spoken Word that they come to familiarity with the narratives – hence the emphasis on silence and decorum in the *didaskaleion* in the passages cited in section four above (and note 32 there).

We may lament the relative lack of wider social comment in this work, despite Chrysostom's obvious experience and observation of legal and commercial practices in particular.[60] We do, however, get a picture of a society in which naked power and stark social divisions were accepted without demur except from moralists like this preacher. Not simply was it a society marked by clear separation of rich and poor such as emerges in his commentary on Psalm 13, where at the close he urges his congregation to take advantage of the fact that God hears the cry of the poor by earning their support through benevolence to them. What evidently struck him as a particular aberration was the squandering of wealth by the rich on

[60] Cf note 5 to Psalm 9, notes 46 & 67 to Psalm 49.

vain display – clothing, buildings, tombs, monuments – rather than using it to alleviate poverty. Psalm 49.10, "The brainless and the foolish will perish alike, and leave their wealth behind to strangers," moves him to savage satire of the wealthy fop striving in vain for lasting memorial, as also the abuse of power by domestic tyrants in the line of biblical Potiphar's wife; the relations of slave and master figure frequently in his metaphors. Women, as we have noted, enjoyed a less privileged position in society than men; to make a point on Psalm 6.2 that punishment for sin varies according to position, Chrysostom seems at first egalitarian in suggesting priests in Old Testament times rightly incurred greater punishment, but his example is less impressive: "For that very reason the woman of no rank who fell by the wayside was removed from the community, whereas the daughter of the priest was burnt alive."

No one reading Chrysostom's works could be ignorant of his obsession with the Jews and their fate; his works on the Old Testament predictably elicit this obsessive attitude, and like the Genesis homilies[61] this Commentary is marked by digressions on the subject that interrupt the flow. His biographers attribute this attitude, in which he was not alone, partly to fear: "It was doubtless caused in part by their fear of a strong and flexible community which necessarily had many points of contact with the Church, not least in their common use of the Old Testament Scriptures."[62] It was probably not Chrysostom that Theodoret had in mind in saying some commentaries on the Psalms had been too Jewish;[63] but, even jealously, he can concede "the special privilege the Jews alone received in gift," as in the conclusion to Psalm 147, and the fact that Jews do spend time poring over this gift of the Jewish Scriptures (on Psalm 50.6). He is even prompted by the opening of Psalm 48 to see the Jerusalem (of Old Testament times) as "the earth's *didaskaleion*."

[61] See my "Chrysostom as Old Testament commentator," *EstBib* 46 (1988) 61-77.

[62] Wallace-Hadrill, *Christian Antioch*, 19. He adds: "A further cause of sensitivity towards Judaism may be found in the fact that the Antiochene Church itself was seen by the rest of the Christian Church as lying too close to Judaism for comfort" (20). Cf Baur, *John Chrysostom and his Times* I, 331-333.

[63] *PG* 80,860.

His quarrel is with the Jews under the New dispensation. He hardly needs his mentor Paul's encouragement (though he is probably citing implicitly 2 Cor 3.7-9) to class the Law, which was a gift in the Old, now as "a ministry of condemnation and death" (opening Psalm 49). Without the encouragement of the text he can launch into polemic in which his text is left far behind and commentary becomes unbalanced. His preference to lend the psalms a Christological bent promotes this tangential invective. Psalm 8 would not seem a likely locus for it, but a casual reference to "enemy and avenger" in v.2 has him giving deductive and inductive justification for the Jews' plight: they crucified Jesus, and so deserved to suffer; they are suffering wherever you find them, and so must have sinned ("if you ask me the reason," he says, "you will find none other than the crucifying of Christ"). In commencing a further piece of polemic on Psalm 50.6 he is honest enough to admit it is not the first time, and will not be the last – but pretends a motive of charity: better not to let the Jews go to their graves in any doubt.[64] Though in more than one place arriving at a fine statement of the unity of Old and New Testaments, he can articulate a quite adversarial position on the relation of the two communities: "You are one people, after all, whereas we are the whole world; Moses has not convinced you to the extent Christ has us; your time has come to an end, ours is still in force" (on Psalm 110.1, a psalm that nonetheless has him saying as well, "Do you see the harmony of Old and New Testaments?").

There is no similar satire of women in contemporary society in the Commentary: just a reflection of their position, the preacher's own blinkered viewpoint and societal attitudes. His unthinking use of ἀνήρ (*aner*) for ἄνθρωπος (*anthropos*) in places results in some unconscious compliments to womankind – for example, in his lamenting "a dearth of good men" at the opening of commentary on Psalm 12, and the platitude, "Nothing is more vile than a man under the yoke of evil" (Psalm 6.8-9). His statement of the relative

[64] It is interesting that Chrysostom does not cite the wealth of Jews as a basis for polemic, despite the evidence of wealthy Jewish families in contemporary Antioch (cf R. L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews. Rhetoric and Reality in the late 4th Century*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, 1983, 57).

maturity of children and adults comes out as a comparison of children and men (Psalm 49.5). He is inclined to omit names of women characters in the Bible, like Sarah and Lydia. Reflecting a deeper imbalance is his interpretation of sacred history (something emerging in the Genesis series[65] also): Adam and Eve both sinned, but her sin was worse (Psalm 6.2; 143.3); the exposure of Sarah to risk in the incidents in Gn 12 and 20 paled before possible unpleasantness for Abraham (on Psalm 4.3; 143); the incident in Numbers 25.6-15 of Phinehas's dispatch with one blow of the Israelite Zimri and the Midianite woman he had taken into his tent at Shittim is reworked to read, "Phinehas was so esteemed by God for doing away with a harlot" (Psalm 8.2); the "sinful woman" of Lk 7 becomes a prostitute. The nature of true human love is examined through an example of love between males (Psalm 13.1-2) – odd, even for an exclusively male congregation.

Are we safe to presume that in this exclusiveness Chrysostom was but reflecting the attitudes and prejudices of his time?[66]

7

His Style of Commentary, Hermeneutics, Wider Thinking on Scripture

For Chrysostom's love of the Scriptures we do not need the testimony of historians like Socrates and Sozomen;[67] the text of his works makes this abundantly clear. "Exegetical" is applied to his commentaries on the Bible, however, only *secundum quid*. Despite his reputation in antiquity for classical scholarship, exemplified by his mentor Libanius's vain hope to have him as his successor[68]

[65] Cf FOTC 74, 12-13. A deliberate compliment to women in the Psalms Commentary is rare: on Psalm 130.1-2 he cites women as examples of ardent prayer in his experience.

[66] Elizabeth A. Clark would agree: "The often repeated assertion that the coming of Christianity benefited women in general is not borne out in our evidence from the period" (*Women in the Early Church* [Message of the Fathers of the Church 13], Wilmington, 1983, 156). Clark also believes the Fathers' appeal to Scripture reinforced prejudices, citing Chrysostom, though not this Commentary.

[67] Cf *Historia Ecclesiastica* VIII, 2-8 (*PG* 67,1513-37).

[68] Cf Sozomen, *H.E.* VIII, 2 (*PG* 67,1513).

and by the odd reference in this commentary to Homer[69] and Plato,[70] his nod in the direction of "the scholars" seems at best deferential, probably disparaging, hardly sympathetic.[71] Libanius and Diodore could not leave him with a knowledge of Hebrew, an asset for this task, nor it seems did they succeed in communicating to him a spirit of critical scholarship. He retained a conservative view of the authorship of the psalms, even parting company with many of his peers in the case of Psalm 44, which they allowed to be a product of the age of the Maccabees, but which he attributed to the wide-ranging vision of David as inspired author, προφήτης (*prophetes*):

> While it is the inspired author who recites this psalm, he recites it not in his own person but in the person of the Maccabees, describing and foretelling what would happen at that time. The inspired authors are like that, you see: they span all times, the past, the present, the future.

He could not be as liberal as Diodore about the psalm titles, either.[72]

So it is commentary rather than exegesis we get from him – and a moral commentary at that. The Scriptures to him are primarily moral and hagiographical, and this accounts for the relative problems he has with the lyrical and figurative material in the Psalms. He has difficulty recognizing a dogmatic stance in a biblical author; when on Psalm 7 he fills his congregation in on the story from the Former Prophets of David's friend Hushai, he attributes pious motives to him of which the text knows nothing, failing to recognise the purpose of the Deuteronomist to show the word of Yahweh at work.[73] The theological purpose of the Yahwist is ig-

[69] *Iliad* (on Psalm 50.8).

[70] *Apology* and *Meno* (on Psalm 45.1).

[71] Cf Psalms 9.4-6; 46.8-9; 132.1-2.

[72] See Section 4 above. It is noteworthy that later in the "series," especially after the Pilgrim Songs, or "Songs of the Ascent" (Psalms 120-134), which he regards as connected to the return from Exile, Chrysostom is loath both to speak of David by name and to include and comment on psalm titles. Has his faith in Davidic authorship been undermined by the historical basis? See note 1 to Psalm 137.

[73] See note 4 to Psalm 7. In his vision of sacred history, the lions in Daniel's den can outrank Joshua and Solomon (see note 10 to Psalm 145).

nored by Chrysostom in adducing the Flood story in comment on Psalm 143.[74] Photius in the ninth century acknowledged the plus and minus of this level of treatment of the psalms: "I must always admire that blessed man for always and in all his works keeping this purpose in mind, the benefit of his listeners, and concentrating less or not at all on other purposes."[75]

In place of textual analysis of psalm texts we get much rationalizing; despite his limited resources he never admits defeat, even when by mistake he quotes a verse in two different forms. In commenting on Psalm 44 he explains v.19 to his satisfaction, "You have not diverted our paths from your way," then later inadvertently quotes it without the negative and has no difficulty rationalizing that version. He likes to find an historical reference in verses of a psalm; on Psalm 44.2 he brings to bear the story of Gideon's assault on Jericho in such a way that has his editors Savile and De Montfaucon debating how much violence he is doing to the text of that story, and even he is sheepish enough to admit to his congregation, "In case you think what I have said is a kind of guesswork." There are real obscurities in some psalm verses, of course, like Psalm 48.2, which he renders as "rooting it firmly in the joy of all the earth;" a modern editor of the Psalms will have recourse to linguistic data (Ugaritic, in Mitchell Dahood's case, for example)[76] to clarify the obscurity, but Chrysostom just rationalizes his way out of it after admitting it is "a cause of great bewilderment in the person who reads it casually, whereas the one approaching it with precision will see the sense and precise sequence of the ideas."

That is one of Chrysostom's key principles of biblical interpretation, precision, *akribeia*, a virtue he inherits from his school of Antioch, of course.[77] There could hardly be a better exponent of it

[74] See note 7 there.

[75] *Bibliotheca* (*PG* 103,505). A notorious *crux interpretum* like Psalm 110.3, classed "the most difficult and obscure verse in the entire psalter" (Dahood), the Hebrew text of which "teems with difficulties," Chrysostom blithely rationalizes his way through – nothing is a problem.

[76] Psalms I (Anchor Bible 16), New York, 1965, 289-90.

[77] Cf my "*Akribeia*: a principle of Chrysostom's exegesis," *Colloquium* 14 (October 1981) 32-36. Precision, of course, is not identical with accuracy (despite the translation sometimes offered, as in M. H. Flanagan, *St John Chrysostom's Doctrine of Condescension and Accuracy in the Scriptures*, Napier, 1948 – where "condescension" is also wide of the mark, as we shall see). Chrysostom is often inaccurate, rarely imprecise.

than he (except in an occasional case where he finds it inconvenient).[78] It is not a principle that he and his school light upon by chance: it is a consequence of their acceptance of the deeper theological principle of incarnation, in both the historical Jesus and the biblical Word. For Chrysostom, precision is both a characteristic of the biblical text and an obligation on the biblical commentator.[79] As he says in Homily 18 on Genesis, "Sacred Scripture says nothing idly (ἁπλῶς, *haplos*) or to no purpose; every single sound and syllable has a treasure contained in it – all spiritual realities are like that."[80] And in the second of the six homilies on ch. 6 of Isaiah, "The mouths of the inspired authors are the mouth of God; such a mouth would say nothing idle. Accordingly, let there be nothing idle in our attention."[81]

He follows his own advice to a large extent in this Commentary, too. He can pick up an apparently insignificant phrase and make capital of it (even if by rationalizing), as he does with the opening verse of Psalm 44:

> Now, why did he not simply (*haplos*) say, 'We have heard,' instead of 'We have heard with our ears?' With what other part of the body does one hear? Surely the words are superfluous? Far from it: it is a common practice with human beings...

For him such details in the text serve to illustrate that wonderful divine considerateness for human limitations, *synkatabasis*, manifested again both in sacred history (preeminently the Incarnation) and in the biblical text. The language of the text keeps demonstrating that to him, as he says on Psalm 47.4:

[78] Cf Anne-Marie Malingrey, "John Chrysostom," *Encyclopedia of the Early Church*, A. Di Berardino (ed.), Eng. trans., I, Edinburgh, 1992, 441: "We can at least recognize that he is the most illustrious representative of the school of Antioch, whose exegesis is based on minute explanation of the texts."
[79] Of the *Genesis* homilies F. Asensio remarks, "La ἀκρίβεια *(akribeia)* humana en el estudio es la respuesta obligada a la *akribeia* con que el binomio Espiritu Santo-Moisés ha querido enseñar mediante la Escritura" ("El Crisóstomo y su visión de la escritura en la exposición homilética del Génesis," *EstBib* 32 [1973] 242).
[80] *PG* 53,154.
[81] *In Oziam* 2,2 (*PG* 56,100). See my "St John Chrysostom's teaching on inspiration in 'Six homilies on Isaiah,'" *VC* 22 (1968) 19-37.

> He calls the nation 'his inheritance,' not as though disregarding the others, but to give evidence of the extent of his love, his affinity for them, and the added gift of his providence. For you to learn the inspired precision, see how he employs the expression of common people, which they adopt in matters of commerce...

That precision has its limits is clear when he can give meaning to a verse both with and without the negative in place, as we saw. There are also limits on the precision (or, in this case, accuracy) possible for a preacher endeavoring from memory to recall biblical texts invoked in support of his theme. In elaborating on the title to Psalm 5 he quotes the Song of Songs but attributes it to Ecclesiastes; he wrongly includes Peter and James in the Matthean account of the Canaanite woman (Psalm 4.1); in some cases he quotes a psalm verse differently in two or three different places; in one case a psalm text is recalled in a form not corresponding to anything canonical; Gospel texts can be recalled imperfectly, words of one character or group put into the mouth of another character or group – and so on in the manner of a preacher pulling texts out of the air (less excusable in a theologian at his desk – or is the stenographer to blame in either case?).

These lapses are few compared with the frequency of his reference to the Scriptures to support his teaching. In place of exegetical conviction his words are reinforced with scriptural testimonies and his own rationalizing and the underlying theology of the Word. This frequent reference is such a staple that its omission raises doubts about authenticity, as with Psalm 48, where the commentary has also some other unusual features – though it can point also to haste and/or lack of relish in the preacher, as in the case of commentary on the Songs of Ascent (Psalms 120-134). The other extreme is reached in many psalms with a long sequence of supporting texts on one verse (e.g., 4.4; 7.6; 12.28; 44.2; 49.12; 141.3; 143.6), which must have had a scattergun effect on the congregation, such that again one wonders about the maturity of the teacher, experience telling us not to indulge in overkill. In other cases his failure to keep his commentary in proportion results in an obvious sense of pressure of time, and the closing verses of the psalm (like 44, 45, 49) are atypically devoid of scriptural reference as the pace is on to bring things to a close. All in all, it is a rich scriptural diet his congregation is fed, if not qualifying as scientific exegesis.

It may be immaturity again that is reponsible for his so frequently regaling his listeners with snatches of Hebrew (and even Syriac)[82] after quotation of variant translations; he would like to be seen as the scientific exegete – though, like many a teacher, he seems to grow out of it as the Commentary proceeds. (Is it a sign of greater maturity that in the Genesis homilies Chrysostom is content to admit ignorance of that language?) The ploy often comes to grief and proverbs frequently spring to our mind, "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing," "Pride comes before a fall." In his defense we may say he is not completely at fault, drinking from a tainted source. The form of the Septuagint he is using as his text commits many solecisms in translating the Hebrew, especially in psalm titles. We noted above the confusion of a musical direction for "flutes" (Hebrew *nehiloth*) in the title to Psalm 5 with the verb *nahal*, "inherit," leading to a lengthy discussion of inheritances. A similar musical direction in the title to Psalm 45 "for the lilies" (apparently a cue to a melody), *shoshanim*, is rendered as "those to be changed" as though from *shanah*, "change." In the title to Psalm 46 the word for "maidens," *alamoth*, is read as "on the secrets" as though from *alam*, "conceal." He comments thus on Psalm 9.6: "'Their memory disappeared with a crash.' Another version, 'with them,' while the Hebrew is *em*." His LXX text erroneously presumes a Hebrew text form *ome*, otherwise unattested, to give the sense "with a crash," though our Hebrew text reads *emma*, "with them," as the alternative version correctly suggests. Along with the LXX he renders Psalm 7.6 as "Be exalted in the boundaries of your enemies," acknowledging a variant "in the rage" – from Symmachus, in fact, who thus rightly avoided the confusion of two similar Hebrew words. And so on.

In these cases we may say he is paying for the sins of others through his own ignorance and his anxiety to make a display of false erudition. He must share some of the blame, on the other hand, for giving a reading of Psalm 48.9 as "in the midst of your people" instead of "your temple," where the LXX has picked up, probably through a copyist's error, λαοῦ instead of ναοῦ; Chrysostom

[82] On Psalm 49.5 he cites the "Syriac" *rha* – the same form as the Hebrew – for the not uncommon word "evil," occurring a score of times in the Psalter. Another show of erudition?

all uncomprehending cannot resist offering the Hebrew once more – this time *hecal*, "temple" – hoist on his own petard! Mere carelessness is responsible for his incorrectly transliterating *yedidoth* in the title to Psalm 45 as *idothoth*. Rather worse is his misreading a transliteration of Hebrew *zo'em*, "(God) is angry," in Psalm 7.11 as ζωήν and translating it as "the whole of life." Would it have been likely his congregation picked him up on any of his unnecessary solecisms? Photius thought they got what they needed, if not deserved.

Chrysostom thus set himself an unnecessary challenge in trying to cope with the original language of the Psalter on an inadequate formation. He could not escape, however, and he was no better resourced for, a different challenge presented to him by this lyrical material in the Bible. It was not narrative, and thus could not be reduced to hagiography, as was his wont; only occasionally could a historical basis be traced for particular psalms, though moral examples from sacred history would be adduced to support ascetical principles arising from the psalmist's poesy, and the history of the Jewish people could not be prevented from looming large by reason of the preacher's obsession. Instead, it was the figurative character of the material that presented the moralist preacher from Antioch with a new and disconcerting challenge; and we seem to see him gradually coming to terms with it and developing a broader range of hermeneutical principles.[83]

His mentor Diodore, whom in the *Laus Diodori* he commends as "this wise father of ours,"[84] had written a work on the difference between *allegoria* and *theoria*, and in a work on the Octateuch had expressed the view "that we esteem the literal sense as far superior to the allegorical."[85] This was a fair summary of the reluctance of the school of Antioch to follow Origen's lead in Alexandria to

[83] The comment of G. Bardy is therefore unduly harsh: "S'il a commenté, au cours de son ministère pastoral, un bon nombre de livres de la Bible, il n'a jamais cherché à définir ses règles d'interprétation" ("Interprétation chez les pères," *DBSupp.* IV, 581). See my "Chrysostom, interpreter of the Psalms."

[84] *PG* 52,764.

[85] Frgm 93 (so Schäublin, "Diodor von Tarsus," 765, though Clavis of *CCG* acknowledges only 91 fragments, accepting 1-78 as genuine; text found in *PG* 33,1561-88).

move the accent from literal to spiritual senses in Scripture. In the terminology of modern hermeneutics, Antioch retained its preference for an adequate historical, spatio-temporal understanding of texts, more text- and author-centered than reader-centered.[86] Chrysostom might quote 1 Cor 10.11, "These things happened to them as a type," by way of support for recognizing a spiritual sense in Psalm 44.2; but Henri De Lubac is too categorical in suggesting that *omnia in figura* is an adequate summary for patristic hermeneutics in general and Chrysostom in particular.[87]

So Chrysostom came to his hermeneutical task on liturgical hymns in this Commentary with some inherited misgivings. Even on the narrative material in Genesis he had warned his congregation about the risk of taking anthropomorphic expressions in the text in a way that infringed divine transcendence, a constant preoccupation of this eastern theologian; on the poetry of the psalms he has to do this constantly, urging them (on Psalm 46.6, e.g.) not to take the παχύτης (*pachytes*) of the expressions as anything but an example of divine *synkatabasis* for human limitations, which they should respect by rising about the materialistic level to an intellectual one. With "earlier" psalms we seem to see him reluctantly conceding that meaning is possibly operating at another level than the literal: on Psalm 7.2, "Lest like a lion he should carry off my soul," he admits that "some, on the other hand, take this verse in a spiritual sense, saying lions and pursuers are devil and demons." He agrees about Psalm 8.5 that "this can be taken in both a literal and a spiritual sense."[88]

Literal he may be in interpretation, but not literalist;[89] he can speak perceptively of the force of imagery in biblical texts.[90] And

[86] Cf A. C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*, London, 1992, 171-72.
[87] *Exégèse médiévale* II-II, Paris, 1964, 62.
[88] It is not always clear to what extent he adopts the three- or four-fold distinction of senses of Scripture elaborated by Fathers and medievals like John Cassian and Gregory the Great, and whether the sense *kata anagogen* is for him merely spiritual or the specifically anagogical sense of those catalogues. (See my *Making Sense of Faith*, Sydney, 1995, 66-67.)
[89] Cf Thiselton on Chrysostom's usage: "The 'literal' may include the use of metaphor or other figures of speech, if this is the meaning which the purpose of the author and the linguistic context suggest" (*New Horizons in Hermeneutics*, 173).
[90] Cf note 96 on Psalm 7.

as the "series" moves on, he comes to urge his congregation to "rise above the literal sense" (on opening that Psalm 45 which so prompts the Fathers to explicate their thinking on biblical inspiration).[91] He will even highlight the absurdity of staying with the literal, historical, face-value sense, and lecture on the need for *theoria*, the process of looking for a fuller sense arising from it (but, unlike the allegorical, not apart from it),[92] as he does on Psalm 9.8:

> In some things, you see, it is possible to find a fuller sense (θεωρέω, *theoreo*), whereas others should be understood only at face value – for example, 'In the beginning God made heaven and earth.' Other statements, by contrast, are to be taken differently from the surface meaning – for example, 'Spend your time with the hart you love, with the filly that has won your favor,' and 'Let those things be yours alone, and let no stranger share them with you, your well is for you to drink from.'[93] I mean, if you take this saying as it occurs and do not depart from the surface meaning but stay at that level, it reflects little humanity, the counsel to share water with no one. The sense, however, is to do with one's wife. This is true of this verse, too, while in other places we must take the words as we find them, and the meaning arising from them, like this example, 'As Moses lifted up the serpent.' We must accept that this happened – it did happen, in fact – and what meaning comes from it, namely, a type of Christ.[94]

He is thus prepared to find a fuller sense in texts, especially poetic texts (like Prv here), and not take every one at face value. By the time he reaches the psalm which the LXX numbers 147, in fact, he even offers to the "more studious" in his congregation, after a literal (κατὰ ῥητόν, *kata rheton*) interpretation, a whole reinterpretation of the nine verses κατὰ ἀναγωγήν (*kata anagogen*) (where the

[91] See my "Psalm 45: a *locus classicus* for patristic thinking on biblical inspiration," *StudP* 25 (1993) 95-100.

[92] On Psalm 115.5 he comments: "It would have the opposite meaning to this if we were to take the words at face value superficially, and were not to have regard to the fuller sense (*theoria*) contained therein."
Cf A. Vaccari, "La θεωρία nella scuola esegetica di Antiochia," *Bib* 1 (1920) 12: "La essenziale differenza fra teoria e allegoria consiste in ciò, che l'allegoria esclude di sua natura il senso letterale."

[93] *Prv* 5.17-19. (The citation lends further support to our conclusion that Chrysostom's congregation is exclusively male.)

[94] Likewise on Psalm 115.16, "it would in fact conflict with the psalmist if we were to take his words at face value superficially, and were not to have regard to the fuller sense (*theoria*) contained in them."

phrase, rarely, means anagogical, and not a general spiritual sense, as usual) – though "without doing violence to the historical sense – perish the thought." To see typology operating (very rarely) in historical events in the text, whose historicity he accepts, he needs the support of Scripture, as in this case Jn 3.14. In fact, he is a great believer in his principle "Scripture interprets itself,"[95] which he formulates in connection with Psalm 45.4, where he says the meaning emerges "if you examine it *precisely*." In other words, be patient, stay with the text, apply ἀκρίβεια *(akribeia)* to it, and resist the temptation to take to flights of fancy. So he rarely and briefly accepts an allegorical interpretation, and again only on the example of Scripture, as on the Lord's use of sword, bows and arrows in Psalm 7.12-13, claiming support from John the Baptist's words (in Lk and Mt) about laying the axe to the root and clearing the threshing floor:

> What, then, is the axe? Retribution and punishment. And what are the trees? People. What is the straw? The unworthy. What is the grain? The virtuous. What is the winnowing fan? Judgement. Likewise in this verse sword and bow and arrows are punishment and retribution.

So it is fascinating to watch Chrysostom as an Antiochene coming to grips with this lyrical material, achieving some sense of comfort, and eventually devising – for the first time? – his own hermeneutical principles adequate for coping with such texts. He never abrogates the accents of his school and his mentors; but he seems to achieve a new synthesis, dismissed though he is by some modern commentators.[96] It is against the backdrop of his overall theology of the Word, of which we need to be aware in evaluating the Psalms Commentary, that this synthesis is developed. Charles

[95] This is not a novel statement, according to J.-M. Leroux, "Relativité et transcendance du texte biblique d'après Jean Chrysostome," *La Bible et les pères: Colloque de Strasbourg 1969*, Paris, 1971, 73: "Le principe n'est pas nouveau; il fait même partie des lois fondamentales de l'exégèse patristique, et on peut le rencontrer en des termes presque identiques dans les écrits d'Origène et d'Augustin."

[96] Cf B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 3rd ed., Oxford, 1983, 18: "He was by far the best-known representative of Antiochene principles in the West and, at the same time, the author who could teach his readers least about Antiochene exegesis."

Kannengiesser rightly challenged patrologists in 1991 to raise that question, which he found neglected even of his own Athanasius: what is this or that Father's way of thinking about Scripture?[97] Chrysostom, fortunately, has left his position on the scriptural Word patent: it is a Word spoken, an inspired Word, a Word incarnate with both human and divine aspects, and thus offered as a delicate gesture of considerateness, συγκατάβασις (*synkatabasis*), which it is his privilege to minister to his congregations. The Psalms commentary confirms this position.

Unlike today's disciples of the Word, Chrysostom saw his own and the psalmist's congregations as listeners to a Word spoken[98] – as did the Creed of 381 in holding that "he has *spoken* through the inspired authors," *prophetai*, the word Chrysostom applies to all the Old Testament composers.[99] The psalmist to which the Jerusalem and Antioch congregations listened was, like all these composers, inspired (ἔνθους, *enthous*) by the Spirit, he tells his listeners on Psalm 7 about Hushai and Absalom. So all were worthy of belief; but "if you do not believe the biblical authors, we can supply clear, unmistakable evidence that they were inspired, and that they told us nothing on their own account but with the inspiration coming from divine love." Commentary on Psalm 45 and especially its opening verse, "My heart belched good news; I tell my works to the king, my tongue the pen of a fluent scribe,"[100] enabled

[97] "The future of patristics," *TS* 52 (1991) 135-36. For Kannengiesser such "decisive questions concerning the Bible as received in the ancient traditions of Christianity" surpass in importance matters such as canonicity, authenticity, exegetical methods, hermeneutical principles. See, by way of response, my "The Fathers on the biblical Word," *Pacifica* 7 (1994) 255-72.

[98] Cf commentary on Psalm 45.4.

[99] See my "Chrysostom's terminology for the inspired Word," *EstBib* 41 (1983) 367-73. This is not an aspect of Chrysostom's thought on the Scriptures that interested his earlier commentators like S. Haidacher, *Die Lehre des heiligen Johannes Chrysostomus über die Schriftinspiration*, Salzburg, 1897. Cf, by contrast, Leroux: "La première constation qui frappe un lecteur attentif est le refus de considérer la Bible comme un écrit... Pour lui, Dieu 'parle' par l'Ecriture" ("Relativité et transcendance," 74).

[100] Chrysostom makes much of this rendering by the LXX of the opening verb, a *hapax legomenon* in the Hebrew, according to Dahood (Psalms I, 270).

Chrysostom – and a host of other Fathers,[101] including Antiochenes Theodore and Theodoret – to articulate his thinking on the inspiration of biblical authors, including the Spirit's role and the role of the human author. That balance between divine and human in inspired composition is one he tries to maintain in his theology generally and, in this series, with regard to the spiritual life, the Incarnation remaining his paradigm. Though he is in awe of the voice of the Spirit in the Scriptures, he can thus speak of biblical composition in down-to-earth terms: "'I tell my works to the king' – or, in another version, 'my deeds.' What works are referred to? Inspired composition (*propheteia*). As it is the work of a smith to make a tool, a builder to build a house, a shipwright to build a ship, so it is an inspired composer's job to produce inspired composition." He scorns the passive role of the pagan seers, quoting Plato from the *Apology* and *Meno;* "the Spirit allows the heart to know what is being said," he maintains by contrast; "if the psalmist did not know, after all, how could he have said 'good news?'"[102]

Chrysostom's understanding of Scripture, we can therefore assure Kannengiesser, is a thoroughly incarnational one, as is his Christology. The divine comes to us in the human, which must therefore be taken seriously and examined with "precision" – be it biblical text or humanity of Jesus. In the opening to Psalm 5, "Heed my cry," where he sees the Church (unusually) speaking, he adds,

> She did not say, Listen to my cry, but what? 'Heed,' that is, pay close attention. You see, even if she employs human expressions, nevertheless even in the human terms themselves she conveys what is being properly communicated.

[101] Rondeau includes in her survey eighteen commentators on the Greek text, plus sixteen Latin commentators (*Les commentaires patristiques du Psautier* I). See also my "Psalm 45: a *locus classicus* for patristic thinking on biblical inspiration."

[102] Chrysostom thus gives the lie to the generalized statement of Bruce Vawter on patrisic thinking on biblical inspiration as "the prevalence of a concept of divine authorship that could lead to a practical forgetting of the claims of human authorship" (*Biblical Inspiration*, London, 1972, 38). Hence, he does not dwell on the possibilities of Psalm 49.4, "I shall solve my riddle to the music of a harp," for a discussion of biblical inspiration, as that model was used in antiquity to illustrate precisely the passivity of seer under the influence of the demon akin to the inert plektrum in the hand of the musician.

Through a divine gesture of *synkatabasis* – considerateness (not "condescension,"[103] there being nothing patronizing about the gesture) for human limitations (ἀσθένεια, *astheneia*) – the Scriptures adopt human forms of expression, limited though these too are, yet worthy of the commentator's respect and investigation. The psalms, with their figurative language and anthropomorphisms, constantly required this pastor to invoke the principle to prevent misunderstanding and infringement of divine transcendence. Psalm 6, for example, opens, "Lord, in your anger do not censure me," and he is quick to interpose:

> When you hear of anger and rage in God's case, do not get the idea of anything typical of human beings; the words, you see, arise from considerateness. The divine nature, after all, is free of all these passions. On the contrary, he speaks this way to make an impression on the minds of more materialistic people. For in our case, too, when we converse with foreigners, we use their language; if we speak with children, we babble away with them, and even if we are extremely gifted, we show considerateness for their undeveloped state... God likewise, wanting to make an impression on materialistic people, made use of such words. For in so speaking, you see, his concern was not for his own glory but for the benefit of his listeners.[104]

We can recognize in this the model of commentary Photius spoke of Chrysostom adopting.

8

Other Theological Accents

This notion of divine considerateness reflects much of Chrysostom's theology. As F. H. Chase said over a century ago,

[103] This unfortunate rendering, which is simply a lazy calque for the Greek and Latin, is frequently to be found, as in Flanagan's monograph; J.-M. Leroux likewise renders it "Herablassung" in his article "Johannes Chrysostomus," *TRE* 17, 121. For a fuller study see F. Fabbi, "La 'condiscendenza' divina nell' ispirazione biblica secondo S. Giovanni Crisostomo," *Bib* 14 (1933) 330-47, and my "St John Chrysostom and the Incarnation of the Word," *Compass Theology Review* 14 (1980) 34-38; "On looking again at *synkatabasis*," *Prudentia* 13 (1981) 3-11.

[104] Cf comment on Psalm 113.5: "As I have said before and shall never cease repeating constantly, with the limitations of the listeners in view God adjusts the language."

"the great principle expressed by the word *synkatabasis* is of deep and wide application. As in the historical Incarnation the Eternal Word became flesh, so in the Bible the glory of God veils itelf in the fleshly garment of human thought and human language."[105] Not only does Chrysostom insist in some cases on giving the psalms a Christological interpretation ("This psalm, you see, was composed with Christ in mind," he says in opening commentary on Psalm 45).[106] He frequently makes the parallel between scriptural statement and the historical Incarnation, which he speaks of as the οἰκονομία *(oikonomia)*, rehearsing in obviously familiar detail the mysteries of the human life of Jesus.[107] This goes along with that profound eastern respect for divine transcendence, compelling him invariably to remind his congregation not to be misled by anthropomorphic statements in the Bible: "those expressions were metaphorical," he says of voice and armour applied to God in Psalm 46.6, "rather figurative and considerate of our limitations (God, after all, being in need of none of these things)." Gustave Bardy would seem to have a more jejune notion than Chrysostom of what constitutes theology in denying him the status of "a theologian in the strict sense of the word" on the grounds that he had no interest in current theological controversies.[108]

It is interesting, in light of his absorption in the Incarnation, to note one theological lacuna. Mary, the mother of Jesus, does not loom large even in those litanies of his life ("not choosing a queen for his mother" is a passing reference amongst the deprivations suffered by Jesus that are listed in commentary on Psalm 45). This reticence earns the rebuke of editor De Montfaucon,[109] when on

[105] *Chrysostom. A Study in the History of Biblical Interpretation*, Cambridge, 1887, 42.

[106] Rondeau finds Chrysostom's Christological ("prosopologique") interpretation superficial – "une utilisation incidente et superficielle de l'exégèse prosopologique" – and one would have to agree in connection with a psalm like 47 (see note 46 there).

[107] For examples see note 13 on Psalm 45, note 37 on Psalm 50, and my "St John Chrysostom and the Incarnation of the Word in Scripture."

[108] "Jean Chrysostome," *DTC* 8,672. Bardy, like so many other commentators on him, seems ignorant of the Psalms Commentary; he is flying in the face of his jousting with Arians, Anomians, Manichees, Marcion, Paul of Samosata (not to mention Jewish theology) in comment on psalms like 110;144;145;148.

[109] Cf *PG* 55,242.

Psalm 50.2, "God will come openly," Chrysostom remarks that "even the pregnant virgin did not know the ineffable truth of the divine plan." Also, unlike many churchmen, Chrysostom is sparing in his references to Church; apart from the odd mention, like the comment on Mount Sion in Psalm 9.11, "Now, in a spiritual sense Sion refers to the Church," he does not develop the topic, and one would look in vain in this Commentary for features or theology of the contemporary Church.[110]

Unlike his contemporary Augustine in the West, the Fall is not a preoccupation for him.[111] He admits its occurrence (*pace* his ancient detractors), but with true eastern optimism on the subject maintains (in comment on Psalm 116.7-9) that "God made use of it for our benefit." On Psalm 49.12 he waxes eloquent in listing the privileges of the human being, with not a hint at this chapter in sacred history, despite the frequency of "evil" and "wickedness" in his mouth as a moralising preacher (unfortunately, commentary on Psalm 51 is not extant). The theology of marriage, however, that occurs incidentally in this commentary is at best concessive; the phrase "virgins will be conducted to the king" in Psalm 45.14 results in an encomium of virginity and a depressing picture of the distractions of the married woman,[112] and a moralistic insert on Psalm 44.25 concludes, "The reason marriage was allowed, after all, was in case you should exceed proper limits" – though at both places he is quoting Paul's less elevated statements on the subject.[113] His carefully developed theology of the relationship between grace and human effort, consistent with his balance of human and divine in the Scriptures, we shall deal with below in connection with his moral thinking.

[110] Cf note 2 to Psalm 129, note 5 to Psalm 149. His ecclesiology, Bardy claims, "n'offre rien d'original" ("Jean Chrysostome," 679).

[111] See note 8 on Psalm 136, note 11 on Psalm 142. Cf J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th ed., San Francisco, 1976, 349: "The Greek Fathers, with their insistence that man's free will remains intact and is the root of actual sinning, have a much more optimistic outlook than the West" (quoting Chrysostom from the Gn homilies).

[112] Antoine Wenger finds such (merely conventional?) accents in Chrysostom's treatise on virginity by contrast with a more balanced view in his homilies on marriage ("Jean Chrysostome," *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 8, Paris, 1974, 346-47).

[113] Cf notes 9 & 19 to Psalm 128, note 7 to Psalm 133.

9
The Spirituality of the Commentary on the Psalms; Moral Accents

In general it could be said of his treatment of this great spiritual resource, the Psalms, that, faithful to the principles of Antiochene realism, Chrysostom has his feet on the ground not only in biblical commentary but also in his approach to spirituality. We do not look to him for ascent into mystical experience;[114] in fact, his spiritual guidance of his congregation can be of a pedestrian kind, mechanical even. When the question of response to prayer arises in connection with the words "God hearkened to my righteousness" in Psalm 4.1 (referred to in commenting on Psalm 7.3), he reels off a list of the necessary qualities of prayer, rather like a physician writing a prescription:

> Being heard happens in this fashion: first, of course, worthiness to receive something; then, praying in accordance with God's laws; third, persistence; fourth, asking nothing earthly; fifth, seeking things to our real benefit; sixth, contributing everything of our own.

In fact, a physician curing ailments is the model of spiritual direction Chrysostom chooses, and it occurs frequently in the commentaries. Immediately after the above prescription comes the comment, "Prayer, you see, is a medicine; but if we do not know how to apply the medicine, neither will we gain the benefit from it." So learn the rules, follow the prescription (dictated by God and/or the preacher).

Commentary on Psalm 4, the beginning of the extant collection, appropriately shows Chrysostom as teacher in "the art of prayer," as he styles it, again as a means of bringing God to hearken. He would like to suggest prayerfulness is something angelic and infused:

> The human being who has been taught to converse with God as befits the one conversing with God will from then on be an angel...

[114] Louis Bouyer speaks of Chrysostom's "asceticism without mysticism," and sees it within the context of a contemporary movement within monasticism (of Antioch in protest against Alexandria) "from mysticism towards a rather moralistic asceticism" (*The Spirituality of the New Testment and the Fathers*, Eng. trans., London, 1963, 444,436).

> There is no need to take ourselves to a library, nor outlay money, nor hire teachers or orators or debaters, nor devote a great deal of time to learning this oratorical skill. It is instead sufficient to want to do it, and the skills fall into place.

But at the same time he is equally insistent he can teach what is involved in this

> art of praying: being of sober mind and contrite spirit, approaching him in a flood of tears, seeking nothing of this life, longing for things to come, making petition for spiritual goods, not calling down curses on our enemies, bearing no grudges, banishing all disquiet from the soul, making our approach with heart broken, being humble, practising great meekness, directing our tongues to good report, abstaining from any wicked enterprise, having nothing in common with the common enemy of the world – I mean the devil, of course.[115]

The prescription for the art of prayer has here become a recipe for Christian ascesis in general, and contains many of the characteristics of Chrysostom's view of Christian life in the world. It is a world in which the devil and the demons are active and palpable; they figure constantly in the psalm commentaries. It is a world not completely good that one would do well to escape from; there is not the cosmic optimism that one associates with other eastern theologians. After seeing the art of prayer turning the Christian into an angel, Chrysostom proceeds: "In this way the soul is released from the shackles of the body; in this way the mind is raised on high; in this way our abode is transferred to heaven; in this way one scorns things of this life." And he must have puzzled his congregation on Psalm 9.10 by recommending them to achieve "freedom from all worldly concerns" and, at the close of commentary on Psalm 110, to be "unencumbered by any concern of the present life" and not to "wallow in the mire of earthly concerns" (Psalm 120). There is thus an element of dualism in his thinking on spirituality that makes us uneasy today, though pastors proverbially tend to weigh in more heavily on spiritual than on material values. At all events, we may quibble at the claim made for him as "the precursor, if not the initiator, of a spirituality for the laity."[116]

[115] He speaks on prayer again in commenting on Psalm 141 and the Penitential Psalm 130.

[116] So Bouyer, *Spirituality*, 446. Cr Malingrey, "John Chrysostom," 441: "The majority of Christians are called to live in the world. For them John traces

His catalogue of vices and virtues is probably traditional, though one looks for the marks of personal experience. The savage irony with which, in commenting on Psalm 49, he depicts at length the futile attempts of the rich fop to attain everlasting remembrance by outlaying great sums on funereal monuments is indicative of his abhorrence of greed and avarice in the rich, as is his graphic portrayal of the wealthy person's despondency at a funeral (on Psalm 111.1-2). The disparity between rich and poor in his society leads him to elevate poverty as a virtue: "You well know that wealth is an encouragement to vice in those who do not take heed, whereas poverty is the mother of wisdom; the truth of this emerges every day," he says in commenting on Psalm 4.7 (and similarly Psalm 143.4). A correlative virtue for the rich is the practice of almsgiving, which he advocates in the absence of means to address structural causes of poverty in society. Psalm 45.4 speaks of "the cause of truth, gentleness and righteousness," and this provokes a lengthy series of biblical texts and examples illustrating the meekness of Moses and David (as also Psalms 120.7; 132.1). One would wonder why this virtue attracts the attention of the preacher were it not for his obvious affinity with the situation of the righteous sufferer in Scripture; the plight of the young men in the fiery furnace from Daniel 3 is given prominence time and time again, likewise David maltreated by Saul and Absalom, Noah alone in a vicious generation, Job, the Maccabees, the Paul of 2 Cor. Is he speaking from personal experience of such a lot in life?

We saw Chrysostom above mentioning as the sixth requirement for being heard by the Lord "contributing everything of our own." This is a constant emphasis in his spiritual teaching: we must play our part, no sitting about waiting for grace to strike. Grace is not completely gratuitous, God can be won over, as we saw above in his prescription for being heard from Psalm 7 quoting Psalm 4.1, a verse he is happy to read as "God hearkened to my righteousness:" it is the petitioner's righteousness, not God's (which a more critical reading of the text would suggest), that is the critical factor. Likewise in commenting on the words from Psalm 6.2, "Have mercy

the way, giving advice marked at once by an extraordinarily concrete sense of situations and by a genuinely evangelical inspiration." Documentation from this Commentary would help moderate these glowing estimates.

on me, O Lord, for I am weak," he insists, "We all stand in need of mercy, therefore, but we are not all worthy to receive it. Even if it is mercy, you see, nevertheless he seeks out the worthy recipient." And he closes commentary on the last of the penitential psalms, Psalm 143, with a remark that leaves his editor gasping: "It is not possible simply to attain our requests; rather, we must in all cases make ourselves worthy to receive what we ask and contribute what we have to contribute, and thus present our request. By its nature, prayer on its own is not sufficient, you see." Luther also, to whom Chrysostom was "only a foolish babbler,"[117] might not have been happy with his statement (on Psalm 111), "Faith is not sufficient if a way of life in keeping with faith is not forthcoming."

He has been called semi-pelagian in his theology,[118] and Augustine would not like his insistence on the role of human effort. To an extent it comes from his businesslike, mechanical approach to the spiritual life: you can work at it, there are rules to be followed in the divine scheme of things. But he would also see it consistent with his overall vision of the synthesis of the divine and the human – in the person of Jesus, in the inspired Scriptures, where by an act of considerateness God employs human means for the benefit of limited creatures. Even the psalmist has to work at his craft like shipwright and builder; so too must the ordinary Christian at the task of salvation. On Psalm 45.13, "All the glory of the king's daughter is within," he remarks, "His reference to her colorful attire was well put: the garment was not of one hue. I mean, it is not possible to be saved from grace alone; instead, there is need also of faith, and after faith virtue, too." There is a deliberate sequence here and a balance.

There is no room for quietism in his spiritual theology, nor in

[117] That this view was not typical of all the Reformers has been pointed out to me by students of Calvin, who admired Chrysostom's homiletic skills, like John L. Thompson and David F. Wright.

[118] Cf Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 373: "Variants of such teaching were current in the Antiochene school too, though crossed with an intensified emphasis on individualism." Kelly finds it necessary to defend more particularly Theodore and Theodoret from accusations of a "Pelagianizing strain" in their works, generally unfounded. For further detail on Chrysostom's position, see my articles, "The spirituality of Chrysostom's Commentary on the Psalms" and "A pelagian commentator on the Psalms?"

his morality generally.[119] The Christian must take the initiative, and be busy about the serious business of cultivating virtue, on the one hand, and avoiding vice and the wiles of the demons, on the other.[120] Just as in the Genesis homilies[121] the sin of the first parents was diagnosed as indifference, sloth, neglect, ῥαθυμία *(rhathymia)*, so too in the conduct of the spiritual life. Unlike the attention we give to people of rank, he says on Psalm 4.1, "in approaching God, by contrast, we yawn, scratch ourselves, look this way and that, pay little attention, loll on the ground, do the shopping." The parables of Jesus, he rightly recognizes (on Psalm 49.4), were spoken to challenge us, and what needs challenging is our indifference. In one of the "binomials" in his thinking on which F. Asensio has remarked,[122] he promotes the opposite attitude, that of enthusiasm, *prothymia*, zeal, as in his comment on Psalm 9.10: "How is God to be sought, being everywhere as he is? With zeal and enthusiasm, and freedom from all worldly concerns." How this freedom might be achieved in their workaday lives, his congregation must have had some uncertainty; but they were left in no doubt as to their responsibility for "contributing everything of their own" to the work of salvation.

We may quarrel with Johannes Quasten's verdict on Chrysostom's Psalms Commentary as "by far the best of his homilies on the books of the Old Testament." Yet there is no doubting the scriptural and theological richness of the work, and the opportunity it gives us of seeing this theologian of the Word at work on material offering a particular challenge. It is therefore regrettable that, perhaps on account of its unavailability in translation, it has not figured largely in histories of Christian spirituality and hermeneutics; if only by reason of its length and genre, it has much to offer such historians.

[119] Cf Wenger, "Jean Chrysostome," 336-37: "De fait, il n'a rien d'un quiétiste... Prédicateur et moraliste, il est vrai toutefois qu'il a davantage insisté sur le rôle du vouloir humain que sur celui de la grace."

[120] Chrysostom's attitude to the moral law is interesting. He is a strong exponent of the natural law, perhaps to balance Jewish privilege in the Mosaic Law. It is unfortunate, and significant, that the long Psalm 119 on the Law is missing from the Commentary, probably owing to its length. See note 48 to Psalm 111, note 61 to Psalm 143, note 32 to Psalm 147.

[121] Cf Homilies 14,18,19,21.

[122] "El Crisóstomo y su visión de la escritura en la exposición homilética del Génesis."

For a balanced comment on the degree to which Chrysostom measured up to the challenge and on the purpose he had in mind in composing (and, it would seem, preaching), let us close with a further comment of Photius in Constantinople in the ninth century: "He may seem to have taken no account of individual ideas, or endeavored to avoid depth of treatment or the like, through ranking everything of less importance to the welfare of his listeners."[123]

[123] *Bibliotheca* (*PG* 103,505).

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Psalm 4[1]

On my calling upon him, the God of my righteousness hearkened to me (v.1). It is not simply[2] for us to grasp the fact he was heard that the inspired author[3] says this. Rather, it is for us to be taught that those too who call on God will succeed in being heard promptly and in gaining their request before the end of their praying. He did not say, note, "After my calling upon him he hearkened to me", but *On my calling upon him*. You see, this is all of a piece with the same God's promise in words addressed elsewhere to the person calling upon him, "While you are still speaking, I shall say, Here I am."[4] After all, it is not really abundance of words that generally wins God over, but a pure spirit and proof of good deeds. At any rate, see what he says in response to those living in sin who expect to bring him around by the plethora of words: "When you multiply your pleas, I shall not hearken to you. If you reach out your hands, I shall turn my eyes away from you."[5]

Before everything else, then, in your prayer you need to have confidence, and the object of your petition will be fully granted. Consequently, then, the inspired author did not say, "He hearkened to me," but *of my righteousness*, revealing his confidence in God and the fact that he habitually approaches him with this attitude.

Now, let no one think that in saying this he is boasting. I mean, his wish in speaking was not to exalt himself; instead, he introduced some instruction and sound exhortation that offered great benefit. Lest, you see, someone might say, That petitioner was heard because he was David, but I am not hearkened to because I am insignificant and paltry, he demonstrates that he does not hear him simply for what he is nor does he eavesdrop on you by chance. Rather, in every instance he gives close scrutiny to our behaviour. If yours is such as to plead in your favour, you will be heard in every respect. If not, even if you were David you would not succeed in winning God over.

Compare the behavior of the avaricious: having no regard for people's worth or any other factor but only for people with money, they beat a path to their door as though this is complete achievement in itself. In like manner, since God is enamored of righteousness, whoever comes to him possessing it will not depart emptyhanded. Conversely, the one lacking it and sullied with its opposite, even if making countless petitions, will achieve nothing further, because of not having the means of persuasion. So if you want to gain anything from God, come with this in your possession.

Now, do not think that righteousness in this case is a part of virtue: it is virtue whole and complete.[6] In that sense Job was righteous, having as he did every human virtue; it was not that he abstained from this vice and clung to that. We too likewise call a weight right if it is universally true, not if it succeeds in weighing gold fairly and lead the opposite, but giving just weights for all materials; measure likewise, fair in every case. That was the way Job too was righteous, fair in every case. It was not only in money matters, remember, that he maintained this equity, but in all other matters as well, nowhere exceeding due measure. That vice he avoided with the utmost care, you recall; hence he said, "And if on the other hand I discounted a charge of servant man or woman proceeding against me; or I thought myself not of human birth as are they."[7]

This assuredly is the worst injustice, pretentiousness and arrogance. You see, just as we call greedy the people wanting to take what belongs to others and not content with their own, so too we call people pretentious when they demand from their neighbor more than is due to them, when they present themselves in the most glowing light while belittling others. Now, this stems from no other source than injustice. For proof that it is in fact injustice, think on this. God made both you and that other person, and gave you everything in common and in equal measure with them. How then do you spurn them and rob them of the regard given by God, not allowing it to be in common but making it all yours, rendering them bereft not only of money but of good name? God granted every person one nature; he regaled them with the same position of eminence, the same process of creation. That statement, "Let us make the human being,"[8] is shared by the whole human race. How

then do you deprive people of their inherited being, consigning them to utter insignificance, and appropriating to yourself what is common to all?

The blessed author, however, is not like that. Hence he also said with confidence, *he hearkened to my righteousness.* Paul too often puts himself at center stage, not out of conceit or vanity, but to become an example to others, as for instance when he says, "I want everyone to be as I am, in chastity."[9] This is the way David too, when the moment required, brought to notice his own manliness, which came from the influence of God, when he claimed to have strangled bears and wrestled lions;[10] he too was not exalting himself – perish the thought – but thereby ensuring his credibility.

If I have righteousness, someone will perhaps say, what need is there of prayer, since my condition is sufficient to make a success of everything and the one in whose power it is to give knows what we need? Because prayer is no small bond of love for God, developing in us the habit of converse with him and encouraging the pursuit of wisdom. I mean, if someone has an association with a remarkable person and gains much benefit from the interchange, much more is this the case in conversing incessantly with God. We are, however, not as aware as we should be of the benefit of prayer, for the reason that we neither apply ourselves to it with assiduity nor have recourse to it in accord with God's laws. Instead, when on the point of conversing with some people of a class above us, we ensure our appearance and gait and attire are as they should be, and dialogue with them in this fashion. In approaching God, by contrast, we yawn, scratch ourselves, look this way and that, pay little attention,[11] loll on the ground, do the shopping. If on the contrary we were to approach him with due reverence and prepare ourselves to converse with him as God, then we would know, even before receiving what we asked, how much benefit we gain.

You see, the person who has been taught to converse with God as befits the one conversing with God will from then on be an angel. In this way the soul is released from the shackles of the body; in this way the mind is raised on high; in this way our abode is transferred to heaven; in this way one scorns things of this life;[12] in this way one attends on the very throne of the king, be one pauper or servant, commoner or dullard. God, after all, looks not for beauty

of utterance or turn of phrase, but for freshness of spirit; even if we say what just comes into our mind, we go away with our entreaties successful.

Do you see how easy it is? I mean, in the case of people, the one who brings a plea to anyone needs to have oratorical skills and be capable of flattering all the great man's retinue, and give thought to many other details so as to be acceptable. In this case, by contrast, there is need of nothing except a sober attitude, with no obstacle to being close to God. "I am a God who is nearby, and not a God who is far off," [13] remember. Being far away is on our side; he, after all, is always close by.

And why mention that we have no need of oratory? Often we do not even need a voice. I mean, even if you speak in your heart and call on him as you should, he will readily incline towards you even then. In this way was Moses also heard, in this way also Hannah. [14] No soldier stands by to scare people away, no bodyguard to cut short the proper moment; he is not the one to say, "Now is not a good time to make your approach, come back later." Rather, when you come, he stands listening, even if it is lunchtime, even if dinnertime, even if the worst of times, even if in the market place, even if on a journey, even if at sea, even if inside the courtroom before a judge, and you call on him, there is no obstacle to his yielding to your entreaty as long as you call on him as you should. There is no excuse for saying, "I am afraid to come forward and pray: my enemy is at hand." This obstacle too is removed: he does not heed an enemy, you see, or cut short your petition. Instead, you are always and without interruption able to converse with him, without any difficulty intervening.

There is in fact no need either of doorkeepers to introduce you, or of managers, guardians or friends; rather, when you make your approach in person, then most of all he will hear you, at that time when you ask the help of no one. [15] So we do not prevail upon him in making our requests through others to the degree that we do through ourselves. You see, since he longs for our friendship, he also does everything to have us trust in him; when he sees us doing so on our own account, then he accedes to us most of all. This is what he did too in the case of the Canaanite woman: when Peter and James came forward on her behalf, he did not accede; but when

she persisted, he promptly granted her petition.[16] I mean, even if he seemed to put her off for a while, he did it not to put the poor creature aside but to reward her more abundantly and render her entreaty more favorable.

Let us too study, therefore, how to converse with God; let us learn how we must make this entreaty. There is no need to take ourselves to a library, nor outlay money, nor hire teachers or orators or debaters, nor devote a great deal of time to learning this oratorical skill. It is instead sufficient to want to do it, and the skills fall in place. In this tribunal you will be able to speak not only for yourself but also for many others.

And what is the object of this skill in pleading? The art of praying: being of sober mind and contrite spirit, approaching him in a flood of tears, seeking nothing of this life, longing for things to come, making petition for spiritual goods, not calling down curses on our enemies, bearing no grudges, banishing all disquiet from the soul, making our approach with heart broken, being humble, practising great meekness, directing our tongues to good report, abstaining from any wicked enterprise, having nothing in common with the common enemy of the world – I mean the devil, of course. After all, even public laws take vengeance on the one who speaks to the king for others and is in communication with his enemies. Accordingly, if you too wish to speak for yourself and for others, get one thing straight: have nothing in common with the common enemy of the world.

This is the way you should be righteous;[17] and being righteous you will be heard, since you have such an advocate.

In tribulation you gave me space. He did not say, "You led away the tribulation," nor "You eliminated the temptations," but "You allowed them to remain" and *you gave me space.* You see, the inventiveness and resourcefulness of God are demonstrated particularly in this, not only in his bringing on tribulations but also in providing great relief from it while they linger. This also demonstrates God's power; it renders the sufferers more resigned when there is space for consoling the distressed spirit; the distress is not relieved, stiffening as it does the lax spirit and ridding it of indifference. And how, you ask, could there be space in tribulation? As there was for the three youths in the furnace, as in the lions' den.[18] He

did not extinguish the fire, remember, and then he gave them space; nor did he slay the lions, and at the same time he rendered him secure. Rather, though the furnace blazed more fiercely, and the savage beasts stood by on the spot, the good people enjoyed great relief.

Now, there are also other ways to understand space, such as when the soul, distressed by the onset of temptations, is relieved of disquiet and of many ailments; then most of all, you see, it enjoys space. I mean, many people who are untroubled in prosperity are the victims of unruly appetites, and are afflicted in spirit, from money, their bodies, and such other unruly sources. When they are overtaken by tribulation, they are freed of all those, and gain some space. Take as another example people suffering from fever: as long as they pander to their unruly appetites – I mean lavish banquets, potent wines and the like – their condition will become more straitened. But if they are prepared to put up with a little tribulation, they have the advantage of much space, and losing their high temperature they revel in good health.

And this happens in ordinary life. Nothing so induces relief, you see, as tribulation that leads one away from all the things of this life. How do you suppose it was with the Jews, who suffered tribulation even when enjoying prosperity? Do not these words speak of a spirit fevered and distraught and disturbed, "Make gods for us to go before us. After all, this Moses, who led us out of Egypt, we do not know what has happened to him"?[19] Are not these the words of a resigned spirit recovering from the concerns of this life, in so far as they give evidence in their tribulation of such fervent prayer as to win God's favor? Now, this prophet himself, when he enjoyed relief, how was he not distressed when straitened and torn apart by evil desire? But when he was overcome by tribulation, you know that he gained relief. The fire did not harm him, remember, and yet the flame was not extinguished at all. Nothing, you see, causes tribulation as much as the soul's being under siege from the passions. While other things make their assault from outside us, these develop from within, and this most of all is great tribulation. Even if the world annoys us, but we do not annoy ourselves, nothing will be a trouble to us. In fact, it is our fault whether we are distressed or not.

To learn also, however, from the apostolic teaching how much space is gained from tribulation, listen to Paul in person telling of the fruit of tribulation: "Now, tribulation produces endurance, endurance character, character hope, and hope does not put to shame." [20] Do you see space beyond telling, do you see a haven of joy? "Endurance," it says, "tribulation produces." I mean, what is more at peace than a man [21] of great endurance, capable even of bearing everything with ease? What could be stronger than a man of character? What could match the satisfaction that comes from that? He speaks, note, of three pleasures arising from it: endurance, character and hope of future goods.

Of these the inspired author spoke at this point in his love of wisdom, *In tribulation you gave me space.* Since he had said, you see, *God hearkened to me,* he tells us in what fashion he hearkened. Not in terms of money; he looked for nothing of that kind, note. Not to overcome enemies; he was not asking for that, remember. Nor in relief arriving in the midst of tribulation. *Have pity on me, and hear my prayer.* What do you mean? You made mention above of righteousness, here of pity and mercy: what connection do these have? Plenty, in fact, linked closely to what went before. You see, even if our good deeds are past counting, it is out of pity and lovingkindness that we are heard. Even if we ascend to the pinnacle of virtue, it is out of mercy that we are saved. We learn from this the need for a contrite heart along with righteousness. After all, even if someone who is a sinner prays with humility, which is an aspect of virtue, they will succeed in gaining great benefits; even if someone who is righteous makes an approach with presumption, they will be deprived of every good. The tax collector and the pharisee gave us examples of both. [22]

So a knowledge of the art of prayer is needed. Now, what is the art of prayer? Learn from the tax collector, and have no qualms about taking him as a teacher, since he acted so properly in this matter as to achieve everything through some paltry words. You see, since his intention was rightly formed, even a single word was sufficient to open heaven. But how was it formed? He admitted his own wretchedness, beat his breast, did not presume even to raise his eyes to heaven. If you too were ready to pray in this fashion, you would render your prayer lighter than a feather. You see,

if the sinner became righteous from prayer, consider how good the righteous person will be if learning to offer prayer of this kind.

For this very reason the psalmist at this point does not simply put himself forward but his prayer; righteousness is above, here below prayer, as he says, *have pity on me, and hear my prayer.* Cornelius too was heard for this reason, since he had this kind of advocate. "Your prayers and your alms," Scripture says, "have ascended before God."[23] Rightly so: works are what is heard, especially if properly performed, but not prayers pure and simple – only the prayers offered in accord with God's law. And which are they? Those that make requests it is fitting for God to grant, not beseeching him for what is opposed to his laws. And who is so bold, you ask, as to make God grant what is opposed to his laws? Those who intercede with him against their enemies; this, of course, is at variance with the law decreed by him. He says, remember, "Forgive your debtors."[24] But do you call on him against your enemies when he has bidden you pardon them? What could be worse than this absurdity? In prayer you should have the appearance, attitude and approach of a suppliant; so why do you adopt another guise, that of accusation? I mean, how would you succeed in gaining pardon of your own faults when you expect God to be the punisher of others' crimes?

So let your prayer be restrained, calm, bearing a kindly mien, gentle. Such is the prayer which is offered with gentleness, and not against one's enemies, as its opposite resembles some drunken, deranged woman, like some wild sow. Hence heaven is not accessible to it. Prayer offered with gentleness, on the contrary, is not like that; rather, it has something sweetly-toned about it, soft, befitting royal ears, pleasing, harmonious, musical. For this reason it is not expelled from the assembly, but departs crowned with success; for it has a golden lyre, vestments of gold. Hence too it pleases the judge with its effect, its appearance and its sound. On this account no one drives it from the heavenly halls. In fact, it rouses all that assembly with delight. This prayer is worthy of heaven; this is the language of angels, in uttering nothing bitter, everything gentle. When it comes to make supplication for those who have wronged and abused us, then the angels too stand in attendance, listening in complete silence, and at its conclusion applauding and praising

it, no end to their wonderment. Let us too offer prayer of this kind, and every petition of ours will be heard. When we make our approach to God, let us not think the assembly is anything but the whole world, or rather a gathering of the heavenly people above, the King seated in their midst, intent on giving ear to our prayer. Let us make a comparison of this subject. Let no harpist, no lyre player be so attentive to the proceedings, at the moment of going on stage, fearful of some dissonance being played, as we at the point of our entrance to the assembly of the angels. Let the plectrum be our tongue, which would utter nothing unpleasant but only harmonious and tuneful sounds accompanied by due attention. Let us approach God with invocation and supplication, plucking the strings on behalf of our enemies; this is the way, after all, to be heard on our own behalf.

This sound puts demons to shame, this gives us confidence; this puts the devil to shame and makes him retreat. The demon, you see, does not tremble so much at the one who expels him and drives him out of another person as he does at those who control their anger and get the better of their temper, because anger too is a savage demon, and the angry should be thought more wretched than the possessed. Being possessed, after all, does not cast one into hell, whereas being enraged and bearing grudges casts one out of the kingdom of heaven.

If we temper our prayer in this fashion, we shall succeed in saying with confidence, ourselves in converse with God, *hear my prayer*. So you will not only benefit yourself and pave the way for your petition but also bring gladness to the God who listens to you, since you ask for what is in keeping with his commands. It is in keeping with that sonship, it demonstrates that characteristic most of all. "Be merciful," Scripture says, "as is your Father in heaven,"[25] and again, "Pray for those who abuse you, so as to be like your Father in heaven."[26] So what could compare with this kind of prayer? This makes us resemble, not angels or even archangels, but the King himself. Now, consider the degree of confidence enjoyed in prayer by the one who comes to resemble the King (as far as is possible).[27]

Children of men, how long will you be dull of heart? Why do you love futility and seek falsehood?[28] (v.2). To whom does he address his re-

marks, making threats and giving counsel? Whom does he call "children of men?" Those living in sin, those inclined to evil. Why on earth? I mean, are not we children of men? While we are children of men by nature, yet no longer so by grace – rather, children of God. At least, if we maintain his image in virtue, the gift in our possession will be unsullied; those, after all, who have become children of God through grace must manifest this image also in their way of life. For proof that those who are more worldly and incline to evil he calls sons of men, listen to this: "Now, the sons of God saw the daughters of men." [29] You have contradicted yourself, you may say. Not at all: it gave the name sons of God here to those born before this to virtuous men, enjoying dignity from God, who later changed and became worse, forfeiting this dignity. You see, so as to aggravate the charge, it made mention of their dignity, adducing as the grounds of the accusation the most incriminating fact that, though of that nature and parentage, they fell into such awful wickedness. God said in another place, "I said, You are gods, and all children of the Most High. But as mortals you die." [30]

Notice the inspired author's sagacity. First he demonstrates God's power, resourcefulness, inventiveness, kindness and love, his giving us space in tribulation, and acceding to our requests out of pity. Then, when he considers the flood of evil in human beings and the tyranny of godlessness, as though overcome by discouragement he directs his attention to those living in sin, as if to say, How is it that with such a God, so loving, so kind, so powerful, you turned aside to godlessness? Take note of his exhortation, how full it is of spirit, of gentleness and of sound advice. What in fact does he say? *Children of men, how long will you be dull of heart?* There is an indication here of someone sternly upbraiding even after a lapse of time. I mean, if failure to grasp God's beneficence at the outset is a crime, what excuse will there be for blindness to the truth for such a long time?

Now, what is the meaning of *dull of heart*? Gross in spirit, carnal, attached to the earth, pursuing evil, conniving at wickedness, addicted to debauchery; that is what the carnal person is like, after all. Deploring the life of these people, he reveals the source of godlessness, indicating that it is this in particular that impedes their attaining to elevated thinking. Nothing, after all, renders a heart

so dull as evil desire, a feeling for things of this life and attachment to the earth. You would not be wide of the mark to call such a heart a heart of clay; hence he also called it dull, and said it was responsible for evils for the reason that, though it has the role of a rider, it not only fails to control the horse with the reins but is itself swept along and brought down. And while it ought to give wings to the flesh, to raise it on high and to lead it to heaven, it is instead dragged down with it under the heaviest weight of diseases. So when there is a rider like this, or a steersman, what chance is there of salvation? Just as when Scripture says, "If the light in you is in darkness, how complete the darkness is,"[31] so when the steersman is drunk and mimics the rolling of wave and wind, how will the ship be saved?

So what can make the spirit light? An admirable life, aspiring after nothing of the here-and-now and shackling our feet to nothing that is carried or carries us down. Some bodily things, after all, are normally carried downwards, like stones and trees and other such things, whereas others are carried upwards, like fire and breath and a kind of light feathers. So if you tie one of the things that are carried downwards to the light thing, the feathers or the breath are of no use, since the heavy thing tips the balance, gets the better of it and prevails. Likewise, too, if you have your feet weighed down, or a pernicious fluid invades your body, or some other ailment, there is no use the rest of the body being light. Now, if this is the case with bodies, much more so with the heart. Consequently, let us not weigh it down, lest it founder like ships carrying too much sand. This is up to us, after all. The heart, you see, is not like this by nature, but was created light and bouyant by nature, whereas we render it dull, contrary to nature. Hence the inspired author's accusation, whereas were it natural, he would not have made the accusation. So just as it is natural for us to walk, yet were we to weigh down our legs the practice would be against nature, with our being restrained, so too does it normally happen with the mind's feet (I mean, of course, our patterns of thought).

Why do you love futility and seek falsehood? Here he seems to me to be speaking of idols and of living in sin. Futile is the word used of that thing which is empty, when there is something in name but nothing in substance. The Greeks have many names for their gods,

but not a trace of substance; so too in many other matters: wealth has a name, but not a trace of substance; glory has a name, but not a trace of substance; power has a name, and the name remains unsupported by fact. So who would be so heedless as to go in search of bare names of things, and pursue hollow things that one ought avoid? Are not the pleasures and prosperity of life things of that kind? Do they not all mislead and deceive? Even if you cite glory, and wealth, and power, they are all futility. Hence Ecclesiastes also said, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." [32] This is the very reason the inspired author is distressed, seeing such absurdity in life. I mean, it is like this: if you saw someone avoiding the light to seek out darkness, you would say, "Why are you doing this strange thing?" So too the inspired author: *Why do you love futility and seek falsehood? Know that the Lord has worked wonders for his holy one* (v.3). Another translator says, "But know that he has worked wonders." [33]

Do you see the wisdom of the inspired author? How does it come about that he directs them upwards to a knowledge of God? From some utterly clear role and very familiar position, namely, by appointing himself an intermediary. I am a servant, he says, of the true God; learn therefore from me his power, his strength, his care. This is no small responsibility, after all, to be a leader in conducting others to a knowledge of God. The inspired author, you see, brings it out even from created things when he discourses of God's providence, dealing with the sun and heaven and earth and air, and extolling the Creator from the orderliness of visible things. He also takes his thought from God's servants and what happened to them of his doing. This in fact occurred in the case of Abraham, for example. They said to him, remember, "We know that you come to us as a king from God." [34] How did they know? From the victory, from the spoils, from the battles. This happened to the Jews as well. The wonders worked on their behalf, you recall, instilled fear in all the earth, as the Jericho prostitute said at the time, "Fear and dread of you has befallen us." [35]

So one way is through created things; another and clearer way is through God's servants, and from the beginning God communicated this instruction in each generation. At any rate, he taught the Egyptians from the example of Abraham, the Persians again from him, the Israelites from his descendants, [36] countless others, and

still others in Mesopotamia by means of Jacob. Do you see how the whole world was instructed from those holy people, provided they were willing? Before these, however, the deluge and the confusion of languages were sufficient to stir their thinking. Lest, you see, the event should in time disappear in oblivion, the place was given its name, and from that time it is called Babylon from the confusion of the languages[37] so that the listener, prompted by the name, should proceed to the origin of the events and learn God's might. In this way too all those inhabiting the west came to know all those things through trade connections with Egyptians. Otherwise, however, in the beginning and for a start there were not many races in that part of the world; instead, the bulk of population and association of peoples developed in areas of the east. Adam, too, remember, came from there, and it was there that Noah's families lived, and they were there after the tower, and for the most part roamed about the east. All the same, however, God appointed teachers for them in each race, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Melchizedek. Hence also this inspired author, from the history of the holy ones, lifts upwards those living in sin, in the words, *Know that the Lord has worked wonders for his holy one.*

What is the meaning of *he has worked wonders for him*? He has made remarkable, notable, conspicuous, obvious the one devoted to him. Accordingly, from the servant and from what happened to him learn the Lord's power. He did not say simply, "He has given him some good," but *He has worked wonders for him*, indicating that he has given it with great wonders, to everyone's great astonishment. Things happened this way in Abraham's case, too. He not only gave him his wife intact, you remember, but also rendered him remarkable: the gift for him was not only his suffering no mischance but also achieving fame in Egypt. In other words, while his suffering nothing unpleasant was due to his righteousness, his escaping from there to everyone's astonishment was due to assistance from others.[38] This happened with the three young men, with the lions, with the great fish and Jonah, and in every case he saves not simply people of all sorts but his holy one. Do you see how along with the knowledge of God he offers exhortation to a strict life, teaching us to place our hopes for salvation not only in God's goodness but also in the virtue of our own good deeds?

The Lord will hearken to me on my crying aloud to him. Having said that God has done wonders, he does not stop at that, but mentions as well another kind of prosperity. What kind in fact is it? Having God constantly as ally and helper, being at our side in every eventuality. He does this not once or twice or thrice, note, but constantly, he says, if we call on him. And note again in this his promptness. I mean, as he said above, *On my calling upon him, the God of my righteousness hearkened to me,* so here too, *on my crying aloud to him.*

So why is it, you ask, that many people are not heard? On account of the inappropriate requests they make. You see, in this case not to be heard is better than to be heard. So even if we were heard, we would not be happy about it; whereas even in the cases we were not heard, we would give praise even on that account. In other words, on the one hand, when we make inappropriate requests, we are better off for not getting them; on the other, when our asking is indifferent, God beguiles us into entreating him by delaying the response, which is no little gain. "If you have the sense to give good gifts to your children,"[39] Scripture says, remember, much more so our God, who understands what giving is, when to give, and what to give. Because Paul too asked and did not receive, since his request was inappropriate, as did Moses, and God did not accede even to him. So let us not desist when we are not heard, nor be distraught nor become numb, but persist with entreaty and request. God, after all, does everything for the best.

Be angry, and do not sin; what you say in your heart, repent of at bedtime (v.4). What I said before I repeat now. That is to say, since his intention is to lead them to knowledge of God, he rids their spirit of ailments. He knows, you see, that a corrupt life proves an obstacle to elevated thinking. So that is what Paul too was suggesting in saying, "I could not speak to you as spiritual persons but as carnal persons;" and again, "As though to infants in Christ I fed you milk, not solid food;"[40] and again, "On this matter we have much to say that is hard to explain, since you are slow to understand."[41] Isaiah as well, "This people seek me, and desire to know my ways, like a people that have practised righteousness and not forsaken my ordinance."[42] And Hosea: "Sow seeds of righteousness for yourselves, light the light of knowledge."[43] Christ in his teaching said, "Whoever does shoddy things hates the light and does not move to the light;"[44] and again, "How can you have

faith when you accept praise from one another and do not seek praise from the one who alone is God?"[45] and again, "His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, fearing they would be put out of the synagogue;"[46] and again, "Many came to believe in him, and on account of the Pharisees did not confess their faith."[47] In all these cases you could see a corrupt life proving an impediment to committed belief. I mean, just as pus that invades the pupil of the eyes dulls the vision and obscures one's sight, exactly so does the reasoning that is in thrall to vice obscure and blind the mind.

Hence too the inspired author, aware of this, says, *Be angry, and do not sin*. He does not dismiss anger, note, for it is useful, nor does he eliminate wrath, this too proving helpful, after all, in dealing with wrongdoers and the negligent. Instead, he speaks of wrongful anger, irrational wrath. Just as Moses in giving himself to moral directives takes as his starting point the first of the laws in the words, "Do not kill," so too does this author; but he goes further for the reason that the essence of religion was better known to him. That is, while the former eliminated murder, the latter directed his assault at the mother of murder – anger – which is the root and source of evil. Hence Christ too kept anger in place by saying, "The man angry with his brother rashly will be liable to hell's fire."[48] See the moderation in both cases: *Be angry, and do not sin*; the man angry rashly. In other words, it is alright to be angry for good reason, as Paul too was angry with Elymas,[49] and Peter with Sapphira.[50] Yet I would not class that as anger pure and simple, but as right thinking, solicitude, good management. A father too is angry with his son, but out of care for him. In the former case the one settling scores gives way to anger rashly, whereas in the latter case the one who sets at right others' behavior is the mildest person of all. Because God too, whenever he is said to be angry, is angry, not to take personal vengeance but to correct us. Let us also, accordingly, imitate this. Taking action against people in this way, after all, is divine, whereas the other way is human. God differs from us, however, not only in being angry for good reason but in the fact that anger in God is not a passion.[51]

So let us too not be angry rashly. Anger, you see, has been instilled in us for a reason, not for sinning but for checking others in their sin, not for it to become a passion and an affliction but for it

to prove a remedy for passions. Accordingly, consider the anomaly of vice, when the remedy proves injurious, when we inflict wounds through the means we should apply to heal the wounds of others. It is as if you were to take a knife meant for excising patients' gangrene, and rashly lay it into yourself, inflicting wounds on all parts of your body. Or as if you were a pilot who sinks his craft by his use of the tiller, which he should use to avoid the buffeting of unfavorable winds. This is the kind of thing anger is, a useful instrument for stirring up our tardy spirits, for imparting energy to the soul, for rendering us more concerned in our reaction to the fate of the wronged, for moving us to action against conspirators. This is precisely the reason he says, *Be angry, and do not sin.* Had this, however, been impossible, he would not have given the command. No one, after all, commands impossible things.

So in introducing the apostolic law and evangelical wisdom, and after saying the same things as Christ, he offers further exhortation in the following words: *What you say in your heart, repent of at bedtime.* What is the meaning of this saying? I mean, it seems far from clear. After dinner, he is saying, when you go to bed, when you are on the point of lying down, when no one is present and the silence is complete, with no disturbance and with profound peace, awaken the tribunal of your conscience, demand of it a settling of accounts, what evil designs you concocted during the day, hatching schemes, outwitting your neighbor, entertaining lethal desires. Bring these out into the open at that quiet time, apply your conscience to these unruly thoughts, tear them to shreds, do them justice, straighten the errant intention. This, you see, is what is meant by *repent of*: prick, prod what you said in your heart during the day. That is to say, what evil schemes you plotted, at bedtime and in a moment of such peace censure and punish; when no friend annoys you or neighbor harasses you or the press of affairs besets you, then is the time to take an account of the day's events. Why does he refer not to word and deed but to evil thoughts? To teach us this lesson *a fortiori*. You see, if we ought censure wicked plans lest they be put into practice, so much the more should the soul shrink in horror at deed and word.

Let this be your daily practice, and do not go to sleep, mortal creature, before giving thought to the day's transgressions; and next day you will be altogether more reluctant to attempt the same.

As in your money dealings you do not allow two days to pass without settling accounts with your slave lest the matter fall into oblivion, do this also each day with your own behaviour: call your soul to account at evening time, pass sentence on your errant reasoning, suspend it as though from a gibbet, interrogate it, bid it never attempt the same again. Do you see the ideal method of healing, how he applies both preventitive and remedial medicines? I mean, urging us not to fall into sin fills the role of preventitive medicine, as in *Be angry, and do not sin*, whereas *What you say in your heart, repent of at bedtime* is remedial. After sinning, you see, he then administers medicine, applying healing for the sin on his own account. Let us, then, perform this healing, which has no side effects. But if your soul cannot bear to recall its failings, to be ashamed and blush, say to it: No benefit comes to you from not remembering, only great harm. You see, if you do not remember for yourself, then your sins will be laid before all eyes. If on the contrary you do take stock of them, and promptly relieve yourself of them, you will not readily fall victim to others. In other words, the soul fearful of the evening judgement lest it be condemned once more under the same verdict, and be tortured and scourged, becomes more reluctant to sin. The advantage of this practice is so considerable that if we perform it consistently for only a month, we shall develop in ourselves for the future a habit of virtue. Let us surely not pass by such a boon. The person who sets up this court here, after all, will not pay heavy penalties there. "If we judged ourselves," remember, "we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord," Scripture says, "we are instructed so as not to be condemned along with the world."[52] So let us engage in this practice so as not to be condemned.

Sacrifice a sacrifice of righteousness, and hope in the Lord (v.5). Do you see the sequence of excellent advice? Do you see the expert counsel? I mean, after repenting of his sins, making them more reluctant to attempt the same failings again,[53] setting up the uncorrupted tribunal, and requiring an account of daily living, he moves to the practice of virtue in this way. Refraining from evil alone, you see, is not sufficient; instead, the practice of good must be there as well. Hence he moves to exhortation in the words, "Move away from evil and do good."[54] Abstaining from virtue, after all, suffices to put one in danger of punishment, not simply

committing evil. Because those likewise who failed to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, did not rob, were not greedy, did not take others' possessions; but since they failed to practice charity, for that reason they were handed over to undying punishment and to unending retribution.[55] Whence we learn that it is not abstaining from evil that is the beginning of our salvation unless there accompanies it the acquisition of good and the practice of virtue.

This, of course, is the reason why the inspired author, who had drawn us away from vice by compunction, rendered the practice of virtue more amenable, softened our hardness of heart and made it tender through compunction, begins his treatment of righteousness in the words, *Sacrifice a sacrifice of righteousness, and hope in the Lord.* What is the meaning of *Sacrifice a sacrifice of righteousness*? Seek after righteousness, make an offering of righteousness: this is the greatest gift to God, this an acceptable sacrifice, this an offering of great appeal, not sacrificing sheep and calves but doing righteous things. You see the life of the Church sketched out ahead of time, and in place of those material things the matters of the mind that should be sought. Now, righteousness in this verse, as I have said before, he does not speak of as a partial virtue, but as virtue in general; so we call people righteous who have the whole of virtue within them. This sacrifice requires no money, no sword, no altar, no fire; it does not dissolve into smoke and ashes and smells – rather, the intention of the offerer suffices. Poverty is no impediment to it, nor indigence a problem, nor the place nor anything else like that; instead, wherever you are, you are fit to offer sacrifice, you are priest, and altar, and sword, and victim. This, you see, is what things of the mind and spirit are like: they enjoy greater facility, they have no need of outside prompting.

And hope in the Lord. A different version says, "And put your trust in the Lord." Whoever renders God gracious and kindly through a righteous way of life enjoys thereby the greatest assistance, impregnable protection, wonderful influence. Do you sense the fruit of sacrifice at your side? Do you note at once the treasury of good things opening up in abundance? After all, whom is there left to fear if you have God as your ally? No one. Now, this is no little virtue, having confidence in him, putting trust in him. But

along with righteousness he also asks this virtue of us, to put our trust in him, to hope in him, to place no confidence in things of this life but rather detach ourselves from everything and fix our minds on him. After all, the things of the present life are like dreams and shadows, and have even less substance than they do, appearing and departing at the same time; when present they cause their possessors awful worry. Hope in God, on the other hand, is immortal, unchangeable, immovable; it is subject to no alteration, stands firm and steady, and renders unassailable the one who professes it in all diligence and with a proper disposition.

Many say, Who will give us a glimpse of good times? The light of your countenance has been sealed upon us (v.6). He had completed his exhortation about morals, moved on to the knowledge of God, adopted every means capable of arousing the minds of those in error, and showed his solicitude most of all from the example of those devoted to him and his providence in their regard. Then it is that he raises a certain objection introduced by the weaker and more materialistic people, saying, *Many say, Who will give us a glimpse of good times?* It is not the minority of people, upright and respected, lovers of wisdom, who say this. Rather, it is the confused multitude, bereft of judgement, locked in mindless thought. Now, what is the meaning of their words, *Who will give us a glimpse of good times?* The speakers are those who, in some cases, distort the providence of God; in other cases they are people given over to pleasure, indulgence and luxury, notoriety and naked power. In their love of such things as these they ask, Where are the good things from God? I am in poverty, and illness, and hardship, at death's door, the victim of contumely and abuse, while my neighbor enjoys the good life, luxury, influence, reputation and money. Some people look only for these things, bypassing things really worthwhile, as I say, virtue and a love of wisdom, whereas others, as I mentioned above, on those grounds distort the providence of God in asking, Where is God's providence? Our lives are in such a mess, most of us are in need and poverty and at the end of our tether. What evidence is there of loving care? Those saying this, you see, behave exactly like someone struggling to see the sun in the unwavering brightness of midday, and calling the light in question.

To demonstrate this, the inspired author provided an immediate response in the words, *The light of your countenance has been sealed upon us*. He did not say "appeared" or "shone" but *sealed*, making clear that, like a seal on the forehead, it is obvious to everyone; it cannot escape anyone's notice, nor can they miss a face beaming with light and emitting rays. Nor can they mistake, he says, your providence. You see, as the light is sealed, that is to say, engraved and stamped on the countenance, obvious to everyone, so too is the providence of your loving kindness. In this verse he uses *light* for support, care, defense, providence.

Then, having made this declaration, he adds confirmation. What kind is it, in fact? *You have made me the gift of joy of heart* (v.7). After castigating the heedless multitude, he gives the example of God's providence from those who are sound in mind and body, saying, *You have made me the gift of joy of heart*, that is to say, You have taught me to love wisdom, to overlook the things of this life, to know the things that are true and lasting, you have lifted my expectation upwards to sound hope, you have led me forward to the life to come, you have raised me from the enjoyment of present goods to the prospect of future goods. This is the excellent statement he made. You see, if you are on the point of succeeding to wealth or entering an important office, you are exhilarated not only at the moment of acceptance but also by expectation before the actual experience, bouyed up by hope and thus enjoying the whole period. So consider how natural this is for someone who has expectations of the kingdom living and immortal, and of those goods which eye has not seen nor ear heard nor have they entered human heart (cf 1 Cor 2.9; Is 64.4). Hence he said, *You have made me the gift of joy of heart*. That was a mark of great providence, to provide and prepare those goods at that time. If on the contrary more materialistic people, carnal and riveted to the earth, do not heed these things, it is not because of what is promised; rather, confusion and tumult arise on account of their folly. Hence he did not say simply, *You have made me the gift of joy* but *of heart*, suggesting that the joy is not in external things, not in slaves or gold or silver, not in clothing or groaning tables, not in the extent of sovereignty or the size of one's house. Such joy is not of heart but of eyes only. Many people with these possessions, at any rate, think life not worth living; they

carry around with them in their soul a furnace of despondency, exhausted by the multitude of concerns and oppressed by unceasing apprehension.

To me on the contrary, you say, joy is not in these things, but in the core of my intellect, in my understanding which is immaterial and gives thought to immaterial things. So if present realities give you joy, and you learn God's providence from them, gain a greater and deeper learning from future realities, for the reason that they are better, more stable and permanent. You see, if you believe God's providence takes the form of your being in wealth and prosperity, let your having wealth in heaven bring you much more to this conviction. If, however, you inquire, "Why is that these things are kept in store in hope and are not immediately obvious?" I should give this reply, that we believers regard the objects of hope to be more obvious than those that are obvious; such, after all, is the certainty of faith. But if you were to inquire again, "Why is it that we do not gain rewards here and now?" I should give this reply, that the present is the time for struggles and contests, the future is the time for wreaths and laurels. And this is an effect of God's providence, the gathering together of difficulties and sweat in this brief and passing life, on the one hand, and on the other the continuance of laurels and wreaths throughout an everlasting and ageless eternity.

It was especially when the majority of people were handicapped by limitations that he gave them these material goods. He led the Jewish people, at any rate, along such a way of living. Wealth abounded for them, remember, life was lengthened into old age, all diseases were absent; for those believing in God there was granted destruction of enemies, profound peace, trophies and victories, the blessing of large families, and everything of this kind. But when our Lord Jesus Christ came calling us to heaven and urging us to spurn the here and now, encouraging the love of those other goods, and detaching us from things of this life, it was appropriate for these things to be reduced, and all riches to be found instead in those other things, now that we had become perfect. In the case of children, too, their parents provide them when still small with such things as footwear and clothing, gold trinkets and armlets; but when they grow up, they take these things from them and

give them other things of greater importance, reputation in public life, prominence in high society, confidence in the imperial court, offices and influence, thus drawing them away from childish ambition. That is exactly what God did: he led us away from those trifling and childish things, and promised us the things of heaven. So do not pine for what is passing and fleeting, and let not your spirit be stunted. He did not leave you devoid even of these things. Since, you see, we are fleshly beings, confined to a body, it was not required of us to separate from it; rather, he supplies our needs of this kind generously.

That was the very reason for the inspired author's evoking the providence of that elevated and wise variety in saying, *You have made me the gift of joy of heart*, and then adding this as well, *From the fruit of their grain and wine and oil they have increased*. Now, in saying this, he touches on no small part of God's providence at this point, that which emerges in visible things. I mean, when he mentions grain and wine and oil, and the abundance of these things, he implies as well rain, and mildness of the seasons, the earth's conceiving and labouring and bearing, the flow of the air, the sun's course, phases of the moon, the galaxy of stars, summer and winter and autumn and spring, farming skills, advantages of implements, and the scores of other arts. You see, if all these did not work together, it would not be possible for fruit to ripen and come to maturity. So when he mentions grain and wine and oil, he provides the wise person with an occasion for proceeding in thought from the part to the whole, with the spreading out of the ocean of God's providence that emerges in perceptible realities. This is the reason that Paul, too, in one place becomes eloquent when discoursing of God's providence, and treats of the subject in the words, "He gives showers and seasons of fruitfulness, filling us with nourishment and our hearts with joy."[56] The inspired author, however, being restrained and making no mention of all the other things – fruits, fruit trees, species of plants, species of seeds, species of grasses, of meadows, of flowers, of gardens and whatever else exists – cites related things, which are also necessary for our life, thus distinguishing them from the others. God does not simply make us a gift of them, but in abundance and year by year. And should he ever, on the contrary, reduce their supply, in this likewise he re-

veals his providence, stirring up the indifference of the majority and stimulating them to seek from him these goods more ardently.

If, however, some should say that to give rain is not God's role but the idols', let us ask them, how does that become clear? The poets have told us, they say, that Zeus is the one who gives rain.[57] Yet they are the very ones who have said that he is also an adulterer, a murderer of children, a parricide, and guilty of other crimes worse than these. But these charges are not true, say they. Well, neither is it true that he gives rain, then. I mean, if you admit the one, you must also admit the others; but if you reject them, you reject that along with them. In our case, you see, whenever we offer witnesses to God's power, we accept everything said about him by them. So you have to accept also that he is an adulterer and those other things said about him by them, and learn from this that such crimes are far removed from God's power, and that such a being would not be God. The myth, however, contradicts itself, and the lie is proved by itself, despite your refusal to accept it, and completely rebuts the poets. It is clear that with their rebuttal all your claims are disposed of. They, after all, are the ones who came up with their names and assigned them; even one of the philosophers among you admits it.[58]

If, however, you leave them to one side and have recourse to allegories, I would ask you this: what on earth is Zeus? He is seething[59] substance, you say, the part above the lower air, which they call the upper air, on account of the seething and burning. So he is not a substance that has reason and judgement, but is unreasoning. After all, it is clear to anyone that the air by its nature has no reason or power of reasoning, something anybody knows unless duller than a stone. So now Zeus is disposed of, and his substance disappears. You see, if Zeus is air, but the air is what we said, from that fact the myth is exploded. Now, if he is air, he is the father of no one, and gave birth to no substance from which they fashion the sun and give it the name Apollo, calling it his son. The sun, after all, has no power of reasoning, or thought, or intellect, but is itself a natural creation, which moves and rotates by the law which God imposed on it under his command. In particular, it is not from the upper air that the rain comes, but from the clouds, which receive the water either from the sea or from the waters which are held on high above the heavens, as the biblical authors say.[60]

If, however, you do not believe the biblical authors, we can supply clear, unmistakable evidence that they were inspired,[61] and that they told us nothing on their own account but with the inspiration coming from that divine love which is higher even than the heavens. Everything said by them achieves its purpose, and everything reaches fulfillment in the truth of reality, whether it is a question of ancient things or recent. What was said by the inspired authors about the Jews came true, and the fulfillment of it was clear to everyone; likewise what was said about Christ in the New Testament – which demonstrates above all the divine character of both Scriptures. Now, if what is said about God in Scripture comes from God, it is all true. So have no doubts about the providence of God, but marvel at his care; though in fact there are evil people and good, he makes the world and the sun available to all and sends his rain on everyone.

But if he allows some people to languish in poverty and need, he allows it so as to correct their spirit, bringing their mind to love wisdom more. You know, after all, you well know that wealth is an encouragement to vice in those who do not take heed, whereas poverty is the mother of wisdom; the truth of this emerges every day. How many poor people are cannier and more sensible than the rich, and enjoy better health, their poverty responsible for keeping body and soul in good shape.[62]

In peace shall I take my rest and fall asleep. Because you, Lord, have left me hope-filled and secure (v.8). Lo, another manifestation of providence of great value: enjoyment of peace by those devoted to God. "Peace comes to those who love your Law," Scripture says, remember, "nothing can ensnare them."[63] Nothing, you see, is so calculated to bring peace as knowledge of God and possession of virtue, banishing afar conflict of the passions and not allowing one to be at odds with oneself. Unless, in other words, you enjoy peace of this kind, no matter if you are at peace abroad and no enemy assaults you, you are more miserable than the most embattled people in the world. You see, neither Scythians, nor Thracians, nor Indians, nor Moors, nor any other hostile races are capable of mounting such a conflict as an uneasy conscience gnawing at your soul, as untamed desire, as love of money, lust for power, addiction to mundane affairs.

Naturally: the former conflict is outside you, whereas this battle is within. Now, what arises within you is more troublesome than assaults from outside, and more likely to be fatal, as can be seen on all sides. For example, a worm growing inside a tree is more destructive of its quality; ailments developing within us cause greater harm to bodily health and strength than those emerging on the outside; external enemies are not so damaging to cities as enemies within. It is just the same with the soul: the wiles practiced against it from outside do not cause the harm coming from weaknesses developing within. If you have the fear of God, however, you will assiduously allay this conflict and calm your passions, suffocating those varied beasts that are your unruly thoughts instead of encouraging them to lurk in your den. Thus you will enjoy the purest and deepest peace.

This is the peace Christ regaled us with by his coming. This is the peace Paul besought for the faithful, saying in every letter, "May grace and peace be yours from God the Father." Whoever have this peace have no fear, not only of savage or enemy, but even of the devil himself. Rather, they mock the whole troop of demons, and are the most cheerful people of all, not distressed by poverty, not depressed by illness or infirmity, nor perturbed by any of the shocks that fall upon human beings, thanks to their strong and healthy spirit capable of withstanding these setbacks promptly and with ease. For you to learn the truth of this, consider the case of a slanderer, whom no one takes issue with: what does he gain by it? He is at odds with himself, you see, honing within himself thoughts more piercing than any sword, striking out against everything in sight, wounding himself in his encounter with each of the people he meets, being pleasant to no one, but regarding everyone as having a common enmity towards him. So what is the good of peace from without for that person when in himself he is ranting and raving, and his nature is his own worst enemy as it goes one way and another, waging within him awful war, countless bows and arrows, praying rather for deaths beyond number in preference to seeing any of his peers well-disposed and exhibiting joy? Again, another person, afflicted with greed for money, exposes his soul to countless wars and battles and rebellions, and in the grip of agitation and alarm cannot manage the slightest rest. People free of these

passions, on the contrary, far from being in this mess, are at anchor in a peaceful harbor, revelling in their good sense and subject to no such unpleasantness.

Hence the inspired writer, enjoying this providence, said, *In peace I shall take my rest and fall asleep*, indicating that for the person who does not have this peace no such harbor is open, available though it should be to all, but is instead closed to him – namely, the haven of sleep and night. These passions, in fact, destroy the tranquillity that is a gift of our nature, completely displacing the tyranny of sleep with another harsher tyranny. Jealous, slanderous, greedy and rapacious people, you see, carry around with them everywhere this warfare, bearing within them enemies lying in ambush. No matter where they retreat to, they cannot avoid conflict; even if they stay at home and go to bed, they are under attack from clouds of arrows, disturbances more violent than pounding seas, massacres and uproar and lamentation and other calamities more disastrous than those occurring in battle. Righteous persons, on the contrary, are not in this predicament; rather, in their waking hours they enjoy life, and at nighttime they take their rest with great satisfaction. What is the force of "take *my* rest"? Self-possessed and recollected, he means, not distracted by countless worries, nor anxious about what affects this or that one, nor rent with anxieties embracing the whole world; instead, giving thought to my own concerns and what affects me and those things particularly relevant to human beings.

Because you, Lord, have left me hope-filled and secure. Now, what he means here is like this: by my hope in what is to come and the expectation of you the passions within me have all been allayed. As Paul also says, "The slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, as we have our eyes turned not to what can be seen but to what cannot be seen."[64] There is no problem so great, you see, which is not rendered easy through hope in the esteem to be enjoyed from God. Hence he says, *You have left me hope-filled.*

Yet there is much excellent doctrine also in that phrase *and secure.* What is the meaning of *and secure*? Separated from the wicked. In other words, to maintain this peace with you, he says, I live secure, keeping my distance from corrupt people. Quite rightly,

too. As it often happens, you recall, that bodies perish from disease contracted through harmful vapors, exactly so is it common for the soul to sustain damage from converse with the wicked. And as a healthy eye is afflicted on seeing a diseased person, and a victim of leprosy transmits the disease to healthy people, just so does it frequently occur in the case of converse with wicked people. For this reason Christ too urges us not only to avoid such people but also to cut them off, saying, "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you."[65] In fact, he is not talking about eyes: what wrong could the eye do, after all, if the intention is sound? Rather, his directions have to do with friends and relatives, who are like these limbs for us and do us harm; he bids us even to spurn the friendship of such people so as to render our salvation more secure. Hence too in another place further on the psalmist says, "I did not take my place in the assembly of futility, nor shall I make my entrance in the company of the lawless."[66] Jeremiah too commends the one sitting apart and bearing the yoke from one's youth.[67] The Proverbs have much to say on this point, telling and urging everyone not only to avoid but to shun those whose advice is evil, and not spend time with them. After all, if things which are part of our nature change for the worse from unhealthy association, is it not much more so with those which depend on our free will? For example, complexion and the state of our health come to us by nature, yet it is possible for them to deteriorate from a change in habit. Likewise with our appetite for food: we often lose it through the evil effects of diseases. And you can see many other such things happening. Now, if natural things change, so much the more those that are dependent on free will, for the reason that they more easily undergo a change in an opposite direction. Far from thinking that association with evil people results in little harm, let us on the contrary avoid such people above all others, be they our wives,[68] our friends, anyone at all. Because this was the downfall even of those great men Solomon and Samson; the whole Jewish race perished in that way.[69] Wild beasts in fact do not generally strike us with the degree of ferocity of human wickedness. I mean, they bear their poison in obvious ways, whereas the latter daily inflicts its harm imperceptibly and noiselesly, little by little undermining the tenor of our virtue. For this reason God also puts blind-

ers on the roving eye, in the words, "The one who gazes on a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart," [70] such being the ease and high risk of the disaster.

Now, in your case, if you are about to take up residence in a city, you make many inquiries about the air quality, whether or not it is salubrious, temperate, dry; but if you are about to take stock of your soul, are you as exercised about its converse with people likely to associate with it instead of simply turning it over to whomever it chances upon? What excuse will you adduce, tell me, for being so negligent in its regard? I mean, how do you think it comes about that those who choose to inhabit the desert prove to be marvellous and conspicuous people? Is it not because they shun the hubbub and public places, and take up their dwelling far from the smoke of the city center and its affairs? Imitate them yourself by seeking out solitude in the center of the city. But how is this to be done? If you avoid evil people, if you seek the company of the good. In this way, you see, you will attain a security greater than those in desert places, not only by fleeing people who do you harm but in communion with those who can be of help. In fact, if you flee the wicked and seek out the good, on both scores there will be an increase for you in virtue and a diminution of wickedness. So for this to come about, adopt these practices in obedience to the psalmist's words, *Because you, Lord, have left me hope-filled and secure.*

At this point, however, I shall bring my words to a close, [71] having in adequate fashion, if I may say so, supplied the key to our enquiries, in Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be the glory and the power, now and forever, for ages of ages. Amen.

[1] See Introduction section 1 for reference to the loss, or at least absence, of commentary on Psalms 1-3 (and 89 others) of Chrysostom's current series, and for reasons for not including here the text of another extant commentary (probably Chrysostom's) on Psalm 3 available in the De Montfaucon-Migne edition.

[2] One of the key characteristics of Chrysostom's scriptural commentary, and Antioch's generally, is acknowledgement of *akribeia*, precision (not "accuracy," as often improperly rendered), found in the inspired text and requisite also in the commentator (and translator, one should add). One index of this appropriate Antiochene attitude in Chrysostom is the oft recurring phrase *ouch haplos*, "not simply." (See my "*Akribeia*: a principle

of Chrysostom's exegesis.") And he proceeds to vindicate his Antiochene credentials by attending to precise detail in this opening verse.

[3] Chrysostom's term here for David, with whom he credits all the psalms, is *prophetes*, a term he applies to Old Testament composers generally (but not to evangelists or Paul). He is using the term, not in the sense of the Hebrew or Christian Bibles, but rather like the Constantinopolitan creed of 381 (close to the time of his composing this commentary, after all) that refers to divine authorship of the Scriptures in the words, "He has spoken through the *prophets*" in the sense of the inspired authors generally. (See my "Chrysostom's terminology for the inspired Word.")

[4] Is 58.9.

[5] Cf Is 1.15. Should the reader feel that Chrysostom has plunged at once into his commentary on the text without first establishing a relationship with his congregation, remember this may not be the first psalm in the series. For a discussion, however, of the wider issue of the genre of this commentary see Introduction section 4.

[6] De Montfaucon notes that the philosopher Empedocles had spoken identically of righteousness.

[7] Cf Job 31.13-15. There is considerable discrepancy between Chrysostom's text of this passage from Job and its form in the Hebrew Bible and in the Greek version we have in our Septuagint (and our English translations). For a discussion of the Greek text Chrysostom is following in his commentary, see Introduction section 3.

[8] Gn 1.26.

[9] Cf 1 Cor 7.7-8.

[10] Cf 1 Sam 17.34-37.

[11] For Chrysostom, negligence, inattention, sloth, indifference, *rhathymia*, is a capital sin – the sin, in fact, of Adam and Eve, as his Genesis homilies insist (cf Homilies 14, 18, 19, 21 and Introduction section 13 to FOTC 74).

[12] We are today perhaps less at ease with Chrysostom's understanding of the relation between body and spirit, this world and the next, in which a dualistic element can enter at times. His own asceticism in early life, described by his biographers (cf D. Attwater, *St John Chrysostom, Pastor and Preacher*, London: Harvill Press, 1959, 31), perhaps confirmed this uneasy balance. For a more sustained and celebrated development of this theme, see *The Epistle to Diognetus* dating to a century before Chrysostom (text in J. Quasten, *Patrology* I, Westminster MD: Newman, 1950, 251-52).

[13] Jer 23.23.

[14] Chrysostom has in mind the voiceless prayer of Hannah at 1 Sam 1.13, and possibly the silent prayer of Moses in Ex 14, who simply stretches out his hand.

[15] Passages in Chrysostom's commentary, like this rhetorically artful development of God's readiness to heed the suppliant's prayer, conducted in the second person, lend credence to his editor De Montfaucon's statement of incredulity that a preacher could be content to intend the material for a purpose other than delivery and "allow it to lie on his desk."

[16] Mt 15.22-28; cf Mk 7.25-30. Peter and James, in fact, do not rate particular mention in these accounts; and we shall see Chrysostom making similar biblical slips in the course of the commentary (which might be adduced in support of the conclusion drawn in note 15 about the genre of the commentary).

[17] Beginning with his analysis of the art of prayer Chrysostom's prescription develops into a recipe for Christian asceticism generally and culminates in a return to his original theme of righteousness.

It may be noted at the close of his commentary on the opening words of this psalm that Chrysostom has oscillated between taking the phrase *of my righteousness* as an attribute of God and seeing it as a claim of the suppliant on God's response to prayer ("he hearkened to me, thanks to my righteousness" is a translation offered by De Montfaucon in this latter case; also, the "advocate" above is feminine, probably implying the δικαιοσύνη (*dikaiosyne)* of the suppliant). In other commentaries he has been thought semi-pelagian in his thinking in places (see General Index to FOTC 87, e.g.).

[18] Cf Dn 3.6.

[19] Ex 32.1. We shall find Chrysostom in these (and other) homilies no benign commentator on Jewish biblical figures and also no stranger to rationalizing. This attempt to accommodate the peevishness of the wilderness community to his argument about the value of distress for the soul is so involuted that it is not surprising to find De Montfaucon suspecting a textual problem: "Something is surely missing here in so far as these words are not the mark of a resigned spirit, nor did they win God's help but rather his ire." Perhaps it is a case of Chrysostom the rationalizer clutching at straws to make a tenuous point. Even his examples from Daniel hardly serve.

[20] Rom 5.3-5.

[21] As Introduction section 6 suggests, Chrysostom can be sexist in his thinking – as, for example, in this case where he chooses to speak specifically of the male, *aner*, as illustrative of endurance and other desirable qualities. Was his congregation on these paraliturgical, non-eucharistic occasions exclusively male?

[22] Lk 18.9-14.

[23] Acts 10.4.

[24] Mt 6.12.

[25] Lk 6.36.

[26] Cf Lk 6.28; Mt 5.44. Chrysostom's recall of verses from the Bible, like many a preacher's, is sometimes less than verbatim – unlike a desk theologian (cf note 16 above).

[27] Though Chrysostom can develop in his oratory a compelling momentum that must have been as infectious for his audience as it was second nature to him, his eastern reverence never allows him in his enthusiasm to infringe divine transcendence – hence the occasional reminder like this that stems the flow.

[28] The Septuagint in this first half of v.2 employs a *hapax legomenon* in βαρυκάρδιοι *(barykardioi)*, that I have rendered "dull of heart," which is not the failing the Hebrew is highlighting. Chrysostom below feels the need to explain the term.
The NRSV, anxious to avoid exclusive language, speaks of "people" being dull of heart, whereas Chrysostom wants to make a play on the distinction between their divine and human character; he does not, we have noted, share our linguistic sensitivity, and in fact a few lines further on speaks of good people being "born to virtuous men (males)." Responding to all these factors is a ticklish task for the modern translator.
[29] Cf Gn 6.1-2.
[30] Psalm 82.6-7.
[31] Mt 6.23.
[32] Eccl 1.2. This is the version which the *Jerusalem Bible* translator apologizes for offering, claiming the justification of its being "traditional" (at least from the time of the Authorized Version). Most other contemporary versions also offer it, whereas Chrysostom (and the biblical composer) did not intend the meaning of our "vanity" by their term (Grk ματαιότης, *mataiotes*); "futility" is closer to his meaning.
[33] We shall see Chrysostom in these homilies (as distinct from his other major Old Testament series, on Genesis) regularly bringing to our notice – if not to his congregation's – the existence of other Greek versions of a phrase or verse of the biblical text differing from the one available to him. His reason for doing so is intriguing, as we examine in Introduction sections 3 and 5. He does not generally evaluate the alternatives, and so it remains a bookish exercise; nor does he identify their provenance, as do his modern commentators.
[34] Cf Gn 23.6, if this meeting with the Hittites is what Chrysostom has in mind.
[35] Jos 2.9.
[36] De Montfaucon suggests that Chrysostom is being a little imprecise in his use of these peoples' names, that "Persians" is employed by him in places to cover a range of peoples, and that for "Israelites" one should understand here Ishmaelites.
[37] The reference is to Gn 11.9, on which Chrysostom in his Homily 30 on Genesis had commented, "the place was called Confusion, which is what Babylon means" (FOTC 82, 230). In fact, the Hebrew text at that place indulges in some popular etymologizing of Babel from the verb *balal*, "mix up," which would have been lost on Chrysostom; but the sense of the word and its identification with Babylon were not lost on a moralist like him.
[38] Chrysostom may be grasping the drift of the biblical composers' accounts in Gn 12 (and 20) of Abraham and Sarah at risk in Egypt (and Gerar); but his greater accent on Abraham's avoidance of "unpleasantness" than on the risk to which he exposed Sarah does not sit so well with modern readers (see FOTC 82, 472 n.9).

[39] Mt 7.11.
[40] 1 Cor 3.1-2.
[41] Heb 5.11.
[42] Is 58.2.
[43] Hos 10.12 (Grk).
[44] Jn 3.20.
[45] Jn 5.44.
[46] Cf Jn 9.22.
[47] Jn 12.42. Chrysostom has certainly made his point, this time by quoting text after text from Old and New Testaments. At other places in his homilies he reinforces his message less bookishly by reference to daily life – a more reliable index to some, such as his biographer Dom Baur, of actual delivery to a congregation rather than composition at the desk.
[48] Cf Mt 5.22, which Chrysostom quotes imperfectly – a point Dom Baur might also consider?
[49] Acts 13.8-11.
[50] Acts 5.7-10.
[51] As we suggested in note 27, Chrysostom's Antiochene theology can allow anthropomorphic thinking about God to proceed only for a limited time before he introduces a caveat.
[52] 1 Cor 11.31-32.
[53] Chrysostom seems to move here from the psalmist's own compunction to his listeners'.
[54] Psalm 34.14.
[55] Cf Mt 25.34-46.
[56] Acts 14.17.
[57] The title, which the Latin writers know as *Jupiter pluvius*, goes back to Homer.
[58] Chrysostom probably has Plato in mind.
[59] *Zeousa* in Greek.
[60] Chrysostom has strayed rather far from the subject matter of the second half of v.7 of the psalm (an unlikely digression in a desk theologian?). Perhaps his relish for polemic has led him off into some jousting with popular philosophy, whose fantastic ideas he has no difficulty holding up to ridicule, including the source of rain, on which, however, he is loath to dismiss as easily the equally outdated biblical cosmology. In fact, he launches at once into a further digression about the credibility of biblical statement before returning to his text.
[61] Chrysostom's doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture is unfailing and deep-seated – we might say "profound" were it not for the observation of an authority like J. N. D. Kelly that "few, if any, of the fathers seem to have tried to probe the deeper problems raised by their doctrine of inspiration." For his nevertheless profoundly theological teaching on inspiration, see my writings on the subject listed in the Introduction.
The biblical authors concerned in Chrysostom's discussion of ancient cosmology are naturally from the Old Testament; and, as we remarked in

note 3 above, to these alone he gives that term *prophetai* – though, as he adds here, the New Testament composers also incontestably enjoy divine inspiration.

[62] We know from other sources Chrysostom's concern for the poor in the society of both Antioch and Constantinople. It is perhaps an index of the contemporary impossibility of a war against want in the manner proposed by today's social crusaders that Chrysostom's response to the plight of the needy in his preaching is to fulminate against the rich, to urge his congregations frequently to almsgiving, and even at times to rationalize, as here, in a manner we might otherwise find patronizing and defeatist.

[63] Psalm 119.165.

[64] 2 Cor 4.17-18.

[65] Mt 5.29.

[66] Psalm 26.5.

[67] Lam 3.27-28.

[68] Again one gains the impression that Chrysostom's congregation is exclusively male.

[69] The precise force of this throwaway remark by Chrysostom is not immediately clear.

[70] Mt 5.28.

[71] Following a lengthy, if not uniform, treatment of this not unduly lengthy psalm, with digressions some of which we have remarked on, Chrysostom rather abruptly closes – without the kind of peroration one might normally expect if the preacher did not feel he had already tested his congregation's patience. While we do not expect a preacher, at his desk or in his pulpit, to maintain a strictly uniform length, especially as the psalms themselves differ in length, it is noteworthy that this psalm has come in for well over double the average length of commentary (if not the longest).

Psalm 5

For the direction. On a person receiving an inheritance.
A psalm of David.[1]

Let us first see what the inheritance is, and if it is coming to us too; then the time it is given.

It is really inconsistent of us, once a bequest of money has been made known to us as a gift coming our way, to become anxious and concerned, to hunt up the documents, spend a lot of money, take to writing, contest what is written down, and expend enormous energy, while in our present situation, on the contrary, although spiritual testaments have been publicly set before us, and all the books opened, we show little enthusiasm and lose heart, despite the fact the inheritance is not a material one. So let us apply ourselves, open the register, examine what is written there, and see for what reason this bequest has been left us, and what the nature of the bequest is. God did not leave us this bequest idly, but on a certain condition. On what condition, in fact? "Whoever loves me," the text reads, "will keep my commandments;"[2] and again, "Whoever does not carry his cross and follow me,"[3] and several others, which are written in the will.

Now, let us also learn the time when we are due to succeed to these bequests. In fact, it is not the present but the future; nay, rather, it is both present and future. "Seek the reign of God," remember, "and all these things will be given to you as well,"[4] that is, you will then get the full inheritance. You see, the present life falls under death's shadow, and we are still in a quite imperfect condition. Civil lawmakers have the practice of entrusting their patrimony to successors who have attained maturity and God does likewise. When we have attained human perfection and the measure of

maturity, and have passed to a life beyond death's shadow, then it is he entrusts to us that inheritance.

In the meantime, however, he has made his will, and left it in writing, and has told us what we are to do to gain the inheritance so as not to be struck out of the will and disinherited. But if the fact we are not yet perfect worries someone and calls in question what has been said, listen to Paul's words: "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I thought as a child, I reasoned as a child; but when I grew up, I finished with the things of a child."[5] He is speaking about the present and the future age. And again: "Until we all reach human maturity, the measure of perfection."[6] In other words, in the present life, he is saying, we are nourished by this created world, as if in the care of some nurse; but when we are on the point of being introduced into the master's house, we shall cast off the garments of corruptibility and clothe ourselves in incorruptibility, and thus change into another allotted state. This testament threatened to disinherit many people if they proved unfaithful to the conditions written in it. "What eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered human heart:"[7] so how would we be likely in this present life to take possession of those things of which even an inkling is beyond our understanding? For this reason they are kept in trust for us there. See the greatness of his providence. Whereas he assigned troubles to the present life so that hardship should be reduced by the brevity of time, he stored up good things in the life to come so that reward should last into an ageless future. He calls that allotment "kingdom." You see, even if it transcends the limits of language, and yet it is for us to grasp to the extent this is possible, he hinted at the future life, calling it at one time kingdom, as I just said, at another time marriage, at another sovereignty, using terms clear to us so as to open up our understanding of those realities, everlasting glory, unalloyed beatitude, life with Christ, to which nothing could be compared.

Now, what are the Church's conditions, or rather the conditions of the inheritance? They offer no problem. "What you wish people should do to you, do to them yourselves."[8] Do you see how he introduced nothing new, but only what nature had anticipated him in prescribing? What you yourself wish to have done to you at the hands of your neighbor, he is saying, put into practice yourself. Do

you wish for commendation? Give commendation. Do you wish not to be robbed? Don't rob. Do you wish to have respect? Give respect. Do you wish to be shown mercy? Show mercy. Do you wish to be loved? Love. Do you wish to hear nothing to your detriment? Say nothing of that kind. Note the precision:[9] he did not say, "Whatever you do not wish people should do to you, do not do yourselves," but "What you wish." In other words, since there are two paths leading to virtue, one freedom from evil, the other practice of the virtues, he proposes the latter, while implying the former by means of it. This he hinted at in the saying, "What you hate, do not do to someone else;"[10] he said it quite openly in the words, "Whatever you wish that people should do to you, do to them yourselves."

There is also another condition. Now, what is it? Loving the neighbor as oneself. What could be simpler than that? After all, hating is burdensome and the cause of problems, whereas loving is simple and easy. In fact, had he said, "Being human as you are, love wild animals," the command would have been difficult; but if he bade us, human as we are, to love human beings, what difficulty could there be in that, since commonality and kinship bring much influence to bear as well as encouragement from nature itself. This happens in the case of lions and wolves as well; in that case also natural kinship is an inducement to good relations. So what excuse would we have if we show kindness to lions and share our house with them but are not on good terms with our own kin? Do you not observe that for the sake of an inheritance many people chase after and fawn upon old people, and despite their youth and good health put up with all the unpleasantness of old age, gout and all the other ailments of advanced years, including a running nose, which is the price of paying them constant attention? And yet in that case money is at stake and a hope by no means certain, whereas in this case it is heaven, and before heaven being pleasing to God.

Now, who is the one receiving an inheritance? "On a person receiving an inheritance," the title says, remember. The Church, and its fullness, about which Paul says, "I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."[11] And John: "He who has the bride is the bridegroom."[12] After the first days,

however, the bridegroom loses the intensity of his passion, whereas our bridegroom remains constant in his love for us, and even increases its intensity, as John suggests in calling him bridegroom in so far as his desire is at its peak. It was not only for this reason, however, that he called him bridegroom, but because he also wishes us all to be one body and one soul on the basis of virtue and love, and because, just as the bride does everything to please the bridegroom, so should we be throughout life. In the way that the bride on that day is seated in the bridal chamber, concerned only for ways to please the bridegroom, exactly the same posture should be ours in this life as we consider one thing, pleasing the bridegroom, and preserve the modesty of the bride. This bride David also has in mind in the words, "The queen attends at your right hand, clad in gilt clothing, emblazoned in golden cords." [13] Do you wish to see her sandals, too? Listen to Paul speaking as bridal steward: "Have your feet shod in preparation for the gospel of peace." Do you wish to see her girdle, too, and how it is composed of truth? He will teach you in person: "Fasten the belt of truth around you." [14] Do you wish to see her beauty, too? You will learn it from him: "She has no spot or wrinkle." [15] Listen also to what Ecclesiastes says about her: "You are utterly beautiful, my dear, no flaw in you." [16] Do you wish to see her feet, too? "How welcome the feet of those who bring news of peace, and bring news of good things." [17]

What is really remarkable and productive of wonder is that after adorning her in this fashion he did not come to demonstrate his glory lest he dazzle her with his surpassing beauty and render her witless. Instead, he comes clad in the fashion of a bride, sharing equally with her as he does, after all, in flesh and blood. He does not summon her upwards, but approaches her himself, even in this case observing the procedure for the bridegroom which has him led to the bride. This is what Moses said, too: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother behind, and will cling to his wife." [18] And Paul: "This mystery is wonderful: I am referring to Christ and the Church." [19] So coming to her lodgings and finding them filthy, squalid, bare and bloodstained, he washed, anointed and fed her, and gave her a garment to wear the like of which you could not find elsewhere. What then does the inspired author say of her? A great deal; after all, he is her advocate, and he

foretells and predicts the majority of the things due to happen to her, such as the bridegroom, the betrothal, and the good fortune coming her way. For this very reason he composes his discourse about her even at this point, and begins, as do those public advocates speaking in court, by naming the person on whose behalf they are mounting their case, namely, "For the one receiving an inheritance." For what this beneficiary is pleading, let us listen.[20]

Give ear to my words, Lord (v.1). She calls the bridegroom Lord; this is the mark of a prudent bride, after all. I mean, if this happens with people closely related, the wife calling the husband lord, much more in the case of the Church and Christ, where he is her Lord by nature. Thus at any rate she calls him Lord not only as bridegroom but also as Master, and woos him to her plea. Since, you see, an inheritance has been bequeathed to her, but this inheritance comes into effect only if she carries out the directions, she implores and begs him to help her to secure the bequest and not be struck out of the inheritance. Hence she says, *Give ear to my words, Lord,* and says it with confidence since she is asking for the kinds of things he also wants to give her – just as, if you were to ask for things unbecoming to the provider, you would not succeed in winning your favor. When you pray against your enemies, against those who do you harm, these are not the words of a human being but of the devil. If swearing, after all, is from the devil ("anything beyond that is from the evil one,"[21] remember), it is quite clear that praying against one's enemies is, too. Consequently, if you say, *Give ear to my words,* utter those words which come from a gentle and loving person, containing nothing of the devil.

Heed my cry. She says *cry* here, meaning not force of utterance but the disposition of the intention. For God said to Moses even when he was silent, "Why are you crying to me?" He did not say, Why are you praying to me, but "Why are you crying to me?" since he made his approach with a serious disposition. At any rate, for you to learn that at this place too she refers not to the cry but to the disposition of the intention and the heightened anxiety, she did not say, Listen to my cry, but what? *Heed,* that is, Pay close attention. You see, even if she employs human expressions, nevertheless even in the human terms themselves she conveys what is being properly communicated.[22]

Attend to the sound of my supplication (v.2). Once again she refers to the internal sound. This was the way Hannah, too, made her appeal.[23] She did not simply say, "Attend to the sound of my prayer," but *my supplication*. It is required, you see, that the one praying adopt the posture and attitude of a suppliant. A suppliant, in fact, does not employ the language of an accuser, whereas the one praying against the enemy is rather accuser than suppliant. Do you see how she offered her prayer, making it worthy of being heard? This is the way we too, whenever we pray and want to be heard, should first present it so that it be prayer and not become accusation, and offer it in a fashion in keeping with his laws. *My king and my God*. What the inspired author constantly says – or rather what was a remarkable privilege of Abraham, as Paul says, "For this reason God is not ashamed to be called their God"[24] – she made her own and by her desire successfully achieved. She did not, note, simply say, king, but *my king and my God*, giving evidence of her love. Then she exposes the reasons why she should be heard. Now, what are they? *Because to you, Lord, I pray*. Who does not pray to God, you ask? While many seem to pray to God, they do it to make a show before people. Not she, however: she is caught up to God, leaving behind all human things.

In the morning hear my voice (v.3). Do you see the earnestness and contrite spirit? From the dawn of day, she is saying, "I shall perform this task." Let those heed this who come to prayer only after countless activities. Not she, on the contrary: from the dawn of day she gave the first-fruits. "One must precede sunrise in giving you thanks," Scripture says, remember, "and entreat you before the dawning of the day."[25] Now, you would not tolerate someone inferior to you preceding you in giving homage to the Emperor; in this case, however, while the sun pays homage you are asleep, and you yield pride of place to creatures and do not anticipate the whole of creation that is made for you. You do not give him thanks; instead, when you get up, you wash your face and hands but ignore the fact your soul is uncleansed. Do you not realize that, as the body is cleansed with water, so the soul is with prayer? So wash your soul before your body. Many evil stains besmirch it; expunge them by prayer. If, in fact, we hedged our mouth around in this fashion, we should lay a fine foundation for daily life. *In the morn-*

ing I shall stand close to you and watch. I shall stand close to you, not in terms of place, she is saying, but in deeds. In other words, such a person succeeds in being close to God. Being close or being far away, you see, comes from that; after all, God is everywhere.

I shall stand close to you and watch, because you are not a God who wants lawlessness (v.4). (Another translator says, *I shall consider the fact that you are not a God who wants lawlessness.*) *Nor will the villain dwell with you.* There is a veiled reference here to idols, that they took pleasure in these things, all kinds of lawlessness and the other forms of evildoing. *Nor will the villain dwell with you.* He will not be a friend of yours, it is saying, he will not be an intimate of yours. *Nor will the lawless remain before your eyes* (v.5). He shows in this verse that God hates evildoers,[26] teaching those near him to put themselves in such a condition, there being no other way to be near him. After all, if it were impossible to be an intimate of an upright person while at variance with his behaviour, much more so in this case. For proof, in fact, that the wicked cannot be near virtuous men, listen to what they say about the righteous person: "The very sight of him is a burden to us."[27] This was the case also with John, who while in prison and out of sight was a nuisance to Herodias, even though he was so far away from the poor creature; after his death, however, he depressed the conscience of the man who was tyrant at the time. So let none of those living virtuous lives consider they suffer some hardship, even if they fall foul of the schemes of the wicked. It is the perpetrators of evil who suffer from it, after all.

In your hatred of all those who are guilty of lawlessness, you will destroy all who speak falsehood. The Lord loathes the bloodthirsty and deceitful man (v.6). These thing are said not only for us to hear but also for us to be instructed while listening to them unceasingly both to conform our behavior to that of the bridegroom and to become his intimate. If this is not the case with us, we are bereft of influence from on high, a fate worse than death. *In his hatred of all who are guilty of lawlessness*, be they slave, he is saying, free, emperor, whosoever. It is not on the score of honors, you see, but on virtue that God is accustomed to reckon his friends. But since many of the less motivated people consider hatred to be of no significance, listen to how he induces fear of punishment as well: *You will*

destroy all who speak falsehood, switching his attention to sinners' lower motivation. The effect of the punishment, you see, will be no different from his hatred, even though this too is punishment beyond telling; rather, he will destroy those speaking falsehood. Even though the former is severe and worse than hell, being hated by God, yet while mentioning it for those capable of understanding, he added the latter for the less motivated. So do not be disturbed or upset, human being that you are, when you see some people speaking falsehood, being rapacious and greedy without suffering any harm; this will always be the case, after all. God's nature is like that, you see: he abhors wickedness, he both eternally hates and rejects it. Now, at this place the psalmist calls speakers of falsehood those living in wickedness, those pursuing false goals, those addicted to pleasure, to gluttony and to greed. He knows, you see, that all these are to be classed as lies.

He loathes the bloodthirsty and deceitful man. He refers here to the murderer, the schemer, the fraud, the one who has one thing on his lips and other things in his heart, the one who is a wolf in sheep's clothing, than whom nothing could be worse. In other words, while measures could be taken against an enemy in the open, the one who conceals his wickedness and yet practices evil is not easily detected and commits many crimes. Hence Christ too bids us be on the alert when they come: "They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are rapacious wolves."[28]

I, on the contrary, in the abundance of your mercy, shall enter your house (v.7). Since, you see, the Church has been gathered together out of such people – pagans, soothsayers, murderers, sorcerers, liars, cheats – she said, "You hate and abhor," indicating that it was not due to her righteousness and good deeds but to God's lovingkindness that she had been rescued from them and led into the precincts, so she added, *I, on the contrary, in the abundance of your mercy, shall enter your house*. I mean, in case someone should say, "So how is it that you, who are guilty of this and that, are saved?" she mentioned the manner of salvation: it was due to his wonderful lovingkindness, to his ineffable goodness. There are some, however, who do not welcome his mercy, plagued as they are with incurable ailments, as the Jews were. Grace and mercy, you see, despite being grace and mercy, still save those who are

willing and have grace,[29] but not those who resist the rein and refuse the gift, as the Jews proved to be, of whom Paul said, "Failing to acknowledge God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit to the righteousness of God."[30] Then after mentioning God's attributes, she spoke also of her own situation: *I shall bow towards your holy temple in fear of you*. In other words, when I am the recipient of grace, and offer what is mine to offer, she is saying, I shall offer you this sacrifice: *I shall bow before your holy temple in fear of you*. Not like many of those at prayer, scratching themselves, yawning, bored, she is saying, but in fear and trembling. People who pray in this fashion, in fact, put all evil aside, are led to the practice of every virtue, render God propitious to them.

Lord, guide me in your righteousness on account of my enemies (v.8). She gave expression to praise of God, to hatred of enemies, benevolence, caring. She spoke of her own salvation, she spoke of the way she was saved, she spoke of her initiatives after being saved: she confounded wickedness, gave encouragement to virtue. Even to people living in wickedness, provided they intended conversion, she offered solid ground of hope of being in a position to find mercy. Finally, she directs her words to petition in this appeal, *Lord, guide me in your righteousness*, instructing the listener by this statement to offer praise to God first of all and thank him for the benefits received, then request what they desire and in turn thank him for what they get.

Now, let us see what it is she requests. Surely nothing of this life? Nothing perishable? Nothing of passing value? Surely there is no mention of wealth? None of notoriety? None of naked power? None of punishment of foes? Nothing of this. Instead, what? *Lord, guide me in your righteousness on account of my enemies*. Do you see how she asks for nothing perishable, and how she requests help from on high? You see, those following this path have particular need of that assistance. Now, at this point she speaks of righteousness as universal virtue. And she properly says, *In your righteousness*. There is also a human righteousness, which depends on external laws, but it is inferior, possessing nothing perfect and complete, arising from human deliberation. It is your righteousness, on the contrary, that I seek, which has come down from you and

leads up to heaven, it is help I seek so as to attract your righteousness.

Now, that too was well put, *Guide*. The present life, you see, is a way on which guidance from on high is required. I mean, if we want to enter a city, we need someone to show us the way; much more if we are to travel to heaven do we have need of grace from above to point out and determine the way and guide us on it. There are many paths to lead us astray, after all. Hence let us hold God's right hand. *On account of my enemies.* Many people have risen up against me in opposition, she is saying, wanting to lead my footsteps astray, to deceive me and lead me by another path. So in view of such schemes, such assaults, guide me yourself. I have need of help from you, you see. Guidance, however, belongs to him, whereas being worthy of being taken by that hand comes from our zeal. I mean, if you were impure, that hand would not take hold of you, if you were greedy, if you had any other blemish.

Make my way straight before me, that is, make it obvious to me, clear, familiar; straighten it out for me. But another translator says, "Make your way level before me," make it easy, trouble-free.

For in their mouth there is no truth, their heart is full of impiety (v.9). This seems to me to be referring to those who live a lie, branding both their mouth and their mind as destitute of any good, and to those who spend their lives in wickedness. *Their throat is an open grave.* At this point she is talking either of murderous deeds, or of the proposal of deadly and foul teachings. You would not be wide of the mark if you thus described the mouths of those who uttered vile words as an open grave. They are, in fact, more noisome than a foul smell, arising as they do from a rotting soul. The mouths of the rapacious are like that, offering nothing healthy, only waste and pillage. So make sure your mouth is not a grave but a treasury. Treasuries, you know, differ markedly from graves: the latter corrupt what they receive, the former preserve it. Accordingly, keep for yourself the wealth that lasts forever, the search for wisdom, nothing fetid or rotting.

She did not simply call it a grave but an open one, so as to betray even greater disgust. I mean, whereas words of this kind should be suppressed, they even broadcast them, with the effect of revealing even further the disease. While in the case of the dead we do

the opposite by committing their body to the ground, these people go against that practice: what they should conceal and suppress in the depths of their heart they put on display, infecting many people and advertising it for all to see. Let us, on the contrary, avoid all such people like the plague. After all, if we bury the dead outside the city, much more should we banish from our midst people flaunting such words and such awful deeds and showing no readiness to keep them dark, since the mouths of such people are the ruination of all the city. *They flatter with their tongues.* You see another form of wickedness. Some such people conceal their wiles in their heart while mouthing smooth words; others employ such shrewdness as to cloak their wickedness in the words themselves while contriving plots and stratagems.

Judge them, O God; let them fall by their own counsels (v.10). Notice here, too, the mildness of her prayer. She did not say, note, "Punish," but *Judge them*, and make them put a stop to their wickedness; render their scheming fruitless, which we may pray for on their behalf so that the working of evil should progress no further in them. *In response to the multitude of their impieties cast them out, because they provoked you, Lord* – that is, what happened to me is of no concern to me: I grieve only for things done to you. This, you see, is the mark of a well-disposed spirit, not to avenge one's own injuries but to take drastic action against insults directed to God. Many people do the opposite to this, ignoring things done to God but taking redress with extreme severity for their own fate. The saints, however, do not behave like this; instead, they are extremely punitive of things done to God but heedless of their own fate.

Let all who hope in you rejoice (v.11). See the value of her prayer. Even those former people will become better, and will desist from wickedness; others will have great satisfaction both in the spectacle of their transformation and their conversion to a better way, and in seeing others becoming more zealous because of it. *Forever will they exult, and you will dwell in them.* This in particular, you see, is unceasing joy; other joys, at any rate, are no better than flowing streams, no sooner seen than gone by. The happiness that is from God, by contrast, remains steady and has firm roots, is both ample and lasting, interrupted by no unforeseen circumstance, but rendered more elevated by the very obstacles themselves. For the

apostles also rejoiced when scourged, and Paul exulted when subjected to distress; he was on the point of death, and spoke of sharers in his enjoyment: "But even if I am being poured out as a libation on the sacrifice and worship of your faith, I am glad and with all of you I rejoice. Now, likewise be glad and rejoice with me."[31] God dwells with those who find satisfaction in this way. Hence she too speaks thus, *Forever they will exult, and you will dwell in them.* Christ also indicated this same thing in his words, revealing the indissolubility of the enjoyment: "I shall see you again, and no one takes away your joy."[32] And again Paul: "Rejoice at all times, pray without ceasing."[33]

Those who love your name will boast in you. For these alone, you see, is it really possible to boast, these alone rejoice, these alone find happiness, whereas someone who takes pride in the things of this life is no different from people enjoying themselves in dreams. What human thing is it, after all, tell me, of such a kind as to permit one to boast? Strength of body? But that is not an achievement of our willing, and hence is no grounds for boasting, especially since the body weakens and collapses in a flash, and the strong person suffers from the effects of not using it properly. This can also be said of the bloom of youth and a shapely figure, of riches, of power, of luxury, and of all the things of this life. To boast in God, on the contrary, and in love for him, is a greater honor than all others and a distinction outshining diadems beyond telling, even if the one boasting is in prison. This honor is not interrrupted by disease, by old age, by the pressure of affairs, by variety of seasons, by death itself, at which times instead it shines more brightly.

For you will bless the righteous one (v.12). Many of those so disposed, especially those practising virtue, are reviled and mocked by people; and in order to avoid the risk of anyone of a more materialistic mind succumbing to this, see how she supports their resolve in the words, *For you will bless the righteous one.* What harm, after all, could come to you from the mockery of human beings, even the whole world, when the Lord of the angels praises and extols you? Just as, consequently, should he not bless you, no matter if all the inhabitants of earth and sea sang your praises, it would do you no good. So make it the complete object of your attention that he extol you, that he bestow the crown. If this were the case,

we should be the most exalted people of all, even if we were in poverty, in failing health, at death's door. For even the blessed Job, while sitting on the dunghill and running with blood from his wounds, teeming with countless floods of insects, suffering those deadly trials, spat upon by servants, by friends and by enemies, object of his wife's schemes, and reduced to poverty, hunger and that deadly illness, was nevertheless more blessed than anyone. How so? Because God himself blessed him in the words, "You are a person blameless, righteous, trustworthy, pious, innocent of every wicked enterprise." [34]

Lord, you have crowned us as with a shield of blessing. Again he has come to a conclusion in thanksgiving, offering hymns of thanksgiving to God. Now, what is a shield of blessing? The best of shields, a shield of God's design, the most beautiful of shields. What he means is something like this: you have protected me with the finest defense. Another translator, on the other hand, who reads *You will crown him*, suggests it is about the righteous person that this should be said, namely, "You will crown the righteous one in person, that is, your good will acts as a shield, in fact the finest sheild" – or, "With the finest defense you protect the righteous person, whose beauty is not robbed of its security and whose security is not bereft of its glory." I mean, what could be stronger, what could more appealing than the man protected by the right hand from above? This victory wreath is woven of mercy, as David himself says elsewhere, "Who crowns you with mercy and compassion." [35] It is also woven of righteousness, as Paul says, "Hereafter there is set aside for me the wreath of righteousness." [36] It is also a wreath of grace, as another author says, "She will defend you with a wreath of graces." [37] Yet it is also a wreath of honor, as Isaiah says, "There will be the wreath of hope, woven of honor." [38] The wreath, you see, has all these attributes – lovingkindness, righteousness, grace, honor, comeliness. The gift, after all, comes from God, offering a grace of many hues. It is also a wreath proof against corruption, as Paul says, "Whereas their purpose is to gain a corruptible wreath, ours is incorruptible." [39]

This is therefore what the psalmist is saying at this point, namely, "You have invested us with security and honor." You see, God's gifts are like that, generous and brimming with appeal, like vic-

tors' wreaths. With human gifts it is not so; instead, whereas the person enjoying honor is not completely secure in it, the one enjoying security is not completely the recipient of honor, nor would it easily come that way. But if it did come, it would be quickly snatched away. For example, authority figures are prominent and distinguished people, but they do not enjoy security; rather, by that very fact they find themselves in a particular position of insecurity on account of the public figure they cut. Outcasts and the marginalized, while enjoying security from the fact of their not being known, yet enjoy no public regard; on account of this very fact, their enjoying security, therefore, they receive little notice. With God it is not like that. Instead, both proceed in generous degree together, honor and security.

Considering, then, the magnitude of these good things, and above all how much it means to be pleasing to God, namely, arms and honor and security and countless other goods, let us run the course before us with endurance, never giving up nor coming unarmed to the battle. This kind of war, you see, does not allow the warrior to appear without arms; rather, equipment is dispensed with only when the spectacle is concluded, and the spectacle is concluded when the soul parts company with the body. As long as we are here, it is necessary to keep in training, whether staying at home or venturing forth or having meals, whether ailing or thriving. In the time of illness, in fact, the time comes for this struggle, when suffering troubles the soul on all sides, when pains besiege one, when the devil comes to the fore to provoke us to utter words of bitterness. Then most of all we must be on our guard, protect ourselves with breastplate, shield, helmet and other armaments, and constantly give thanks to God. Those are the devil's grievous shafts, that is the demon's opportune blow, then the time for the victor's distinguished wreath. For also in the case of the blessed Job (nothing forbids our having recourse to him again), this it was in particular that rendered him conspicuous, this sang his praises, this won him the wreath, the fact that in time of trial and disease and penury his purpose emerged steadfast, his intention unshaken in offering words of thanks to God and that spiritual sacrifice. The words he spoke were, in fact, a sacrifice: "The Lord has given, the Lord has taken away; as seemed good to the Lord, so has it hap-

pened. Blessed be the name of the Lord for ages."[40] Let us too always do just that, in trials, at critical times, under attack, giving glory to God and blessing him unceasingly, because to him be the glory for ages of ages. Amen.

[1] The titles now attached to some psalms are generally thought to be later additions to the psalmists' work (as even Chrysostom's mentor Diodore of Tarsus conceded, but not his pupil), and they are often obscure. Chrysostom's text seems not to have included the title properly belonging to Psalm 4, unlike this psalm; his extant commentary on Psalm 3 (not part of this series) also begins with a title, which he finds fruitful for commentary.
The initial phrase occurring here and on many other psalms seems to be a kind of musical instruction for conductor or performers.
The second phrase, in the Hebrew, seems to be specifying the instruments to be played (flutes in this case). The Septuagint, however, which Chrysostom is following, offers it in a quite different sense, apparently confusing the term for "flute" with a Hebrew word similar in appearance meaning "inherit." The error leads Chrysostom, himself no Hebrew scholar and unaware of the solecism, into an early and lengthy digression on inheritances – grist to his moral mill. (The Latin version, the Vulgate, will later also adopt the error.)
[2] Jn 14.23.
[3] Mt 10.38.
[4] Lk 12.31. Chrysostom, of course, in this sustained metaphor of inheritances, bequests, wills, testaments and written clauses is playing upon his congregation's familiarity with the application of terms like "testament" and "writings" to holy Scripture. In other contexts it suits him to speak of it in terms of an inspired Word *spoken* (see bibliography for treatment of his doctrine of scriptural inspiration).
[5] 1 Cor 13.11.
[6] Eph 4.13.
[7] 1 Cor 2.9; cf Is 64.4.
[8] Mt 7.12. Chrysostom's comment on this verse, to the effect that morality is basically human and only secondarily religious, being based on the natural law, strikes us as very contemporary.
[9] See note 2 on Psalm 4 for Chrysostom's adherence to this Antiochene exegetical principle of *precision*, attention to detail in the text by an attentive commentator. This attitude, which might pejoratively be called "worm's eye," is not so helpful in reminding him that his digression has not allowed him to engage with the psalmist's own words to this point – unless, of course, he believes he is doing so in wrestling with the psalm title.
[10] Tob 4.15.

[11] 2 Cor 11.2. Chrysostom felt encouraged to identify the beneficiary of the inheritance as the Church, ἐκκλησία (*ekklesia*), because of the feminine in the (erroneous) title he is quoting.
[12] Jn 3.29.
[13] Cf Ps 45.12-14.
[14] Cf Eph 6.14-15.
[15] Eph 5.27.
[16] Cant 4.7. Chrysostom is somewhat astray in his attribution of these words from a book of the Bible – as happens elsewhere, we noted.
[17] Cf Is 52.7; Rom 10.15.
[18] Gen 2.24.
[19] Eph 5.32.
[20] Thus we have received from Chrysostom, on the basis of a faulty understanding of the psalm's title, a lengthy prologue to his commentary on the text itself, to the extent that he now fairly gallops through the verses. And on the same basis the psalm is given an ecclesiological and Christological bent. Whether his congregation suffered from such lapses on the part of the commentator, which as purists we might regret, is debatable.
[21] Mt 5.37.
[22] Chrysostom's whole approach to the biblical text, for all its critical inadequacies, is based profoundly on the credal acceptance of the Incarnation, which in his view (acknowledged by the popes and Vatican II) is replicated in the enfleshment of the Word in the text (see *Dei Verbum* 11 and references to Chrysostom there). While this theology wonderfully dignifies author and text (and reader and commentator), it also admits the limitations (*astheneia* in his terms) of the human medium in conveying the divine message. It also requires the commentator to take the human medium seriously, as is true also of the humanity of Jesus – hence the correlative principle of *akribeia*, honored by Chrysostom also in this passage.
[23] Cf 1 Sam 1.13.
[24] Heb 11.16.
[25] Wis 16.28.
[26] Chrysostom is having difficulty maintaining consistency in his interpretation of the psalm as the voice of the bride, the Church, as distinct from the (male) psalmist. The examples he gives from people's lives, as usual, are in the masculine.
[27] Wis 2.15.
[28] Mt 7.15.
[29] As we remarked in note 17 on Psalm 4, Chrysostom is anxious to preserve the element of human effort in the work of salvation, to the extent of being thought in places semi-pelagian. His anxiety to preserve what he considers a necessary balance emerges throughout this passage.
[30] Rom 10.3
[31] Phil 2.17-18.

[32] Cf Jn 16.22.
[33] 1 Thess 5.16-17.
[34] Cf Job 1.1.
[35] Ps 103.4. Chrysostom in his culture envisages the reward awaiting righteous people in terms of a victor's crown, such as the wreath or garland of laurels leaves awarded to victors in the stadium; so he can describe the different leaves from which this wreath is woven.
Perhaps he feels uncomfortable with the interpretation he has given to these closing words of the psalm. They would seem to provide a less difficult visual image if read "Lord, you have crowned us with blessing as with a shield;" a "shield of blessings" not unexpectedly leads him to work harder in his commentary. See note 47 to Psalm 4.
[36] 2 Tim 4.8.
[37] Cf Prv 4.9.
[38] Cf Is 28.5.
[39] 1 Cor 9.25.
[40] Cf Job 1.21. These closing words of the psalm, with which Chrysostom had some difficulty initially, have led him into a disproportionately lengthy commentary on the theme of suffering, struggle and reward – a theme that often elicits from him longwinded eloquence – to the extent that he closes abruptly without the customary doxology.

Psalm 6

Lord, in your anger do not censure me, nor in your rage correct me (v.1). When you hear of anger and rage in God's case, do not get the idea of anything typical of human beings; the words, you see, arise from considerateness.[1] The divine nature, after all, is free of all these passions. On the contrary, he speaks this way so as to make an impression on the minds of more materialistic people. For in our case, too, when we converse with foreigners, we use their language; if we speak with children, we babble away with them, and even if we are extremely gifted, we show considerateness for their undeveloped state. What is surprising in our doing this when we do it also in actions, like biting our nails and feigning anger, all for the sake of instructing the children? God likewise, wanting to make an impression on materialistic people, made use of such words. For in so speaking, you see, his concern was not for his own glory but for the benefit of his listeners. For to make the point again that he is not given to anger, he said elsewhere, "Surely it is not I they provoke, but themselves?"[2]

Now, how would you go about presenting him to the Jews: that he is not angry and does not hate the wicked? Hatred, after all, is a passion. Nor that he oversees human affairs? Seeing, after all, belongs to bodies. Nor that he hears us? This too, after all, belongs to the flesh. But from this another evil teaching would have developed, namely, that everything is outside divine providence. Being unwilling to hear such things of God, many of the people of that time would have completely denied knowledge of his existence. With this profession of ignorance, everything would have been lost. But with the opposite teaching adopted, correction quickly occurred. I mean, the one who believes that God exists, even if not having an adequate impression of him but entertaining something

more materialistic, will be persuaded in time that nothing like that is true of God. On the other hand, what is the use of proving God's immunity from passion to the one who believes that God exercises no providence, does not care for things in existence, or even does not exist himself? For this very reason he first of all spoke to them about those things, and when they had got the idea of God's existence, he gradually refined their thinking, led them to the fullness of belief, spoke of more exalted matters, and then introduced God's immunity from passion.[3] Another inspired author, remember, says, "He suffers neither hunger nor weariness."[4] And the author who spoke of his being angry is also the one to add, by way of indicating that the divinity is not subject to passion, "Surely it is not I they provoke, but themselves?" And the one who said he is in the Temple is also the one to say, "I am not a human being, I am the Holy One in your midst, and I shall not enter the city," that is, I am not confined to place.[5] Now, if he did not take action against everyone, he left it up to the more perceptive person to gauge from words that the one who is free of tyrannical passions, without which it is impossible to live, is much more proof against the others. Hence he also says, "Surely you are not asleep like a human being?"[6] And in a range of places he prompts discussion of his immunity to passion.

So at this point, too, when you hear mention of anger, do not get the idea of a passion. After all, if people who devote themselves to sound philosophy remain above the level of anger as far as this is possible, how much more so that being who is imperishable, incorruptible, ineffable, incomprehensible? Do you notice that physicians too, in their cutting and cauterizing, do not act out of anger but with a view to healing, not out of anger with the sufferers but in pity for them, ridding them of ailments? So when the psalmist says, *In your anger do not censure me*, he means, "Do not require my sins to be penalized, nor prosecute me for my crimes."

Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak (v.2). We all have need of this appeal, even if we are responsible for countless good deeds, even if we attain to the summit of righteousness. Hence the same psalmist further on says again, "No one alive will be found righ-

teous in your sight,"[7] and this, "If you take note of crimes, who will stand firm?"[8] Paul too: "I am not conscious of any fault, but I am not justified by this."[9] And another author: "Who will boast of having a pure heart? Or who will claim to be free of uncleanness?"[10] We all stand in need of mercy, therefore, but we are not all worthy to receive it. Even if it is mercy, you see, nevertheless he seeks out the worthy recipient, as he said himself to Moses: "I shall have mercy on whom I have mercy, I shall have pity for whom I have pity."[11] So those who do something worthy of obtaining mercy will say, *Have mercy on me,* whereas those who disqualify themselves from encountering this forgiveness will say in vain, "Have mercy." I mean, if mercy was due to come upon everyone, nobody would be punished. But he too exercises a choice, and seeks out the worthy and appropriate person to enjoy it. Many people, at any rate, have often proved responsible for the same sins without paying the same penalty for the reason that they have other factors that contribute to them. If you do not mind, let us dwell on this matter at this stage.

All the Jews sinned and all were idolators, but not all paid the same penalty; instead, some fell while others enjoyed pardon. In the case of sins, you see, it is not only the nature of what is done that is in question but also the intention, the time, the cause, and the consequences of the sin, whether some persisted while others repented, whether by chance, by guile or of set purpose. Many factors have to be examined, difference of time, condition of community living. For example, some sinned in the Old Testament, some sin also in the New, but each group does not pay the same penalty; instead, the latter pays a harsher one. Paul indicated this in saying, "Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses. To what degree, do you think, will worse punishment be deserved by the one spurning the Son of God and treating the blood of the covenant as profane?"[12] Now, when he says, "To what degree will worse punishment be deserved," he indicates aggravated penalty. Some sinned before the Law, some under the Law. Again the former pay a lighter penalty. To make this clear he said, "As many as sinned apart from the Law will also perish apart from the Law."[13] That

phrase "apart from the Law" suggests not a harsher but a lighter penalty. Why on earth? Because the former have nature as accuser, while the latter have the Law along with nature; and the greater the instruction they benefited from, so much the greater punishment they will be liable to. Again, you can see the same thing happening in position and rank, and it emerges also in sacrifice. For the whole sinful people, at any rate, as great a sacrifice is offered as for the priest alone, the reason being that the higher the position, the harsher also the punishment for those in sin. For this very reason the woman of no rank who fell by the wayside was removed from the community, whereas the daughter of the priest was burned alive.[14] You can see also from other examples pardon and extremity of penalty; for instance, one sinner pays the penalty in one case while another enjoys the good life, one undergoes greater punishment in that case while another less, if not completely absolved in the latter case. Christ suggests as much in presenting Abraham saying to the rich man, "Your lot was good, whereas his was bad; now he is comforted while you are suffering."[15] He received the full punishment, causing him to suffer terribly, whereas others received not full but partial punishment, and so suffered to a less degree. You may, however, see the difference in punishment arising from a keener or a simpler intelligence, when Christ says, "The servant who knew his master's will and did not perform it will receive a severe beating, whereas the one who did not know it and did not perform it will receive a lighter beating."[16] And you would find many other factors contributing to a difference in punishment, and to a difference in mercy and kindness. Now, consider also the case of the first people created. Eve sinned, and Adam sinned; it was the one sin. Both ate from the tree, but they did not receive the same punishment.[17] Cain took life, and Lamech took life; one was given mercy, the other punished. One person gathered wood on the Sabbath, and was granted no forgiveness;[18] David committed murder and adultery, and enjoyed lovingkindness.

So let us spend some time examining this; it is worth our while studying these things compared with being caught up in the gossip and cabals in the market place. It is of considerable value not

only to resolve such matters but also to study them, even if we do not resolve them. In fact, we are obliged to be occupied with these matters, and to devote all our best moments to them. Why is it, then (I must return to my original thought), that whereas all the Jews made the calf, some were punished but some not? Because some repented and forsook their very nature, after having slaughtered their neighbors in the name of religion, whereas others were obdurate. So whereas their sin was equal, the consequences were not. Now, why also in the case of Adam and Eve was the punishment not the same even if the sin was? Because being deceived by one's wife and by the serpent were not equal. Hence Paul branded the former as deceit: "Adam was not deceived, whereas his wife was deceived and transgressed."[19] But why did the man gathering wood not meet with lovingkindness, too? Because it was an example of extreme lawbreaking, infringing the commandment right from the outset, and a deep fear had to be instilled into the others. This happened also in the case of Ananias and Sapphira.[20]

Let us, therefore, when we sin, consider if we are worthy of mercy, if we did anything to have mercy shown us, if we repented, if we proved better people, if we turned over a new leaf. In other words, salvation of the penitent is salvation that comes from divine mercy.[21] This is the way the psalmist at this place, at any rate, expects to be saved, by tears, by laments: *Every night I will soak my bed*, he says, remember, *I will drench my couch with my tears*, (v.6), that is, with remorse. *My bones are shaken, and my soul severely shaken* (vv.2-3). He did not mention these things straightway; instead, he had recourse to the infirmity of nature, saying, *Have mercy on me, O Lord, because I am weak*. He spoke this way to show that this alone is not sufficient; if it were sufficient, you see, we would all have been saved on that account. We are all human, after all.

Now, in my view, even if something more precise ought be said about this, perhaps he seems not to be saying even as much as this. Instead, he hints at the weakness coming from temptations, putting even this forward as no slight claim for meeting with mercy and lovingkindness. This at any rate is what he suggests in proceeding in these words, *I have grown old amidst all my foes* (v.7). You

see, even tribulation borne in a spirit of thanksgiving usually provides a foundation for deep lovingkindness and renders God propitious. Hence he seems to me to suggest as much at this point, too, in the words, *Heal me, Lord, for my bones are shaken, and my soul severely shaken.* He did not say, "Release me," or "Yield to me," but *Heal.* In other words, he appeals for his former wounds to disappear. Now, *bones* here means complete strength, and *shaking* means affliction, punishment, penalty. *Heal me, Lord, for my bones are shaken, and my soul severely shaken.* So, as in the case of physicians there are three factors, or rather four, or even five – the physician, medical science, the patient, the illness, the power of the medicines – and a kind of battle or warfare develops.[22] If on the one hand, you see, along with the physician, medical science and the medicines there goes as well the patient's cooperation, they overcome the illness; if on the other hand the patient withdraws from a position on the battle line, he reduces himself to ill health, or if he sides with it against the physician, the medicines and medical science, he goes backwards. In just the same way does it happen with us, too – or, rather, not the same but much more unexpectedly. In the case of physicians, you see, it frequently happens that the patient is caught up with the illness, medical science and the medicines, and nothing does any good, nature being weak, medical science at a loss, and the treatment ineffectual on account of misuse. With God, on the contrary, this is not so; rather, if he stands by the physician, the wound must be completely cured. It is not, you see, human skill, fallible as it might prove, but divine power which prevails over nature and illness, wickedness and all evil. For just that reason this author also made his approach to God in tears as to a physician, and asked, *Heal me, Lord, for my bones are shaken.*

Some, on the contrary, say that in this verse he is speaking of that disturbance which comes from sin.[23] In other words, just as when fierce winds blow on the sea they disturb everything, and the sand on the bottom is brought to the top, and the mariners are placed in danger, so too in our case when the soul is disturbed, the body is affected, everything is overwhelmed with the storm, our vessel in the end is awash with disturbance, pitch darkness en-

shrouds everything that forsakes its proper place, and confusion is total. This usually happens particularly in the case of licentious desires; it happens also in time of anger and in disasters. All these things, you see, disturb both soul and bones, the pupils are dilated, and the eyes cannot see straight; as with a distracted chariot rider the horses move in erratic fashion, so when our thinking is deranged everything is confused, everything is turned upside down and loses its way. Now, how this disturbance develops, it is also necessary to explain. It is not in fact a case of saying that, as at sea it comes from the force of the winds, so in the soul it comes from some unforeseen circumstance. Rather, it happens on account of our indifference.[24] We are in fact responsible both for its happening and its not happening.

To cite an example: with the onset of desire, provided you do not fan the flame, the furnace is not ignited unless you supply fuel for the flames. Now, the furnace is not ignited unless you concern yourself with comely features, unless you are too caught up in other physical charms, unless you descend to spectacles of lawlessness. Unless you fatten the flesh with indulgence, unless you drown your faculties in wine, the flame is not fanned, the furnace is not ignited, the wild beast does not become wilder, the purity of intention is not undermined as by howling gales. Is he saying, then, that these measures suffice to dispel the flame of sin? These alone do not suffice; instead, others also need to be applied – prayers unceasing, converse with holy people, fasting in moderation, simple fare, necessary occupation, before everything else the fear of God, the impending judgement, unbearable punishments, the promises of good things. Through all these means you will succeed in taming unruly desire and stilling the raging billows.

You, Lord, how long? Turn to me, Lord, rescue my soul, save me for your mercy's sake (vv.3-4). He constantly invokes this word *Lord*, as though adducing some claim to pardon and grace. This, after all, is our greatest hope, his lovingkindness beyond telling, and the fact that he is such a one as to be ready to pardon. That phrase *how long?* is the mark of someone exhibiting not resentment and bad grace but suffering and grief, unable to bear the burden of tempta-

tions. *Turn to me, Lord, rescue my soul.* Two things he stipulates here, his turning and his rescuing my soul. This in fact is the particular object of concern of the righteous, his being reconciled, being merciful and propitious, and not turning away. On this, you see, another follows, the saving of his soul – not the way most people, and especially the more materialistic, search after one thing alone, how to enjoy present prosperity. They are not like that, however; rather, how to enjoy the salvation that affects the soul, than which nothing is more important to them.

For in death there is no one to remember you; in Hades who will praise you? (v.5). See how many reasons he gives for salvation: *for I am weak,* he says, *for my bones are shaken,* for I ask it from the Lord, *for in death there is no one to remember you* – not implying that our existence lasts only as far as the present life: perish the thought! After all, he is aware of the doctrine of resurrection.[25] Rather, it is that after our departure from here there would be no time for repentance. For the rich man praised God and repented, but in view of its lateness it did him no good.[26] The virgins wanted to get some oil, but no one gave any to them.[27] So this is what this man requests, too, for his sins to be washed away in this life so as to enjoy confidence at the tribunal of the fearsome judge.

Then, to teach the listener that the lovingkindness of God should be accompanied by our own efforts (even, after all, if it is weakness we adduce, if disturbance, if God's goodness, if the very thing he said, but our own efforts do not follow them, they are no good to us), see what he added: *I grew weary from my groaning, each night I will soak my bed, I will drench my couch with my tears* (v.6).[28] Let those of humble life listen to the repentance shown by the king in his purple raiment; let us listen and be chastened. He was not merely distressed, but was even wearied by his groaning; he did not simply weep, but even soaked his bed; not one or two or three days, but night after night. He speaks not only of the past but also of the future. I mean, do not think that, having done this once, he allowed himself relief afterwards; instead, he continued doing so without cease all through his life. Not like us, who in many cases practise this for one day, or not even one, and then give ourselves over to merriment and luxury and indulgence. Not he; he persisted

in ceaseless weeping.

Let us also imitate this confession. I mean, if we are unwilling to lament in this life, there will be no option at all in the next life but to mourn and lament; there to no purpose, here on the contrary with profit; there to our shame, here on the contrary in all propriety. For proof, you see, that it is necessary, listen to what Christ says: "There will be weeping there and gnashing of teeth."[29] But it will not be like that for those who weep here; instead, they will enjoy great consolation: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be consoled."[30] "Woe to you rich, because you are receiving your consolation."[31] Let those who have beds of silver listen to what the bed of the king was like: not jewel-encrusted, or gilt, but washed with tears. His were not nights of repose, but nights of mourning and lamenting. Many cares would beset him at night, a time which all people devote to rest but which he would devote to confession, lamenting the more earnestly then. You see, while it is always good to weep, it is particularly so at night time, when no one resists this wonderful experience, but given good will one is able to give free rein to it. Those who have tried what I speak of know the great elation stemming from such a flood of tears. Tears like this can extinguish an unquenchable fire, can stem the flood sweeping us to our condemnation. Hence Paul too wept night and day for three years,[32] correcting unnatural passions. Far from correcting our own, we give ourselves over to merriment and indulgence, and bury the night in utter stupor. Some are sunk in a sleep resembling death, while others pass sleepless nights more dire than death, devising fraud and usury and other schemes at that time.

Not so are sober people, tending their souls' welfare, applying their tears like a shower, promoting the growth of virtue. The bed that receives tears like that gives no access to any evil or licentiousness. The person who sheds such tears places no value on things of the earth, and instead frees the soul from any siege, rendering the mind clearer than the sun. Do not think I am directing these remarks only to monks; in fact, the exhortation is for people in the world as well, and for them more than the others, they after all being in particular need of the remedy of repentance. The one uttering groans like this will rise with spirit in better condition

than a calm haven, expelling every passion; such a one, filled with great joy, will approach the house of God in confidence, will converse with neighbors pleasantly, no anger lurking within, after all, no lust inflamed, no hankering after possessions, no envy, nothing else of this kind. All these passions, you see, like savage beasts lurking in their dens, those groans and tears in the night succeeded in taming.

My eye is wild with anger (v.7). Do you see a contrite spirit? Having mentioned repentance, he refers again to the passions, the tumult in the mind, the fear arising from God's ire. He refers at this point, note, to the eye of the soul, that penetrating and rational vision, which the knowledge of one's own sins is in the habit of disturbing. Since, you see, he kept his faults before his eyes in every circumstance, he also considered God's ire, living in fear and not without grief like the multitude, but in conflict and trembling. Such disturbance is the mother of tranquillity, such fear is the basis of contentment. The person so disturbed drives out every tempest; not to have the soul in such a condition means undergoing stormy billows. Just as a ship without ballast is at the mercy of the force of the wild blasts and quickly founders, so too a soul living without grief is subject to countless passions. Hence Paul gave evidence of this passion in saying, "Quite insensitive, they abandoned themselves to licentiousness in the pursuit of every impurity in their greed."[33] Like a steersman who, as long as he is ill-at-ease out of concern for the mariners, ensures tranquillity for all, whereas if he is asleep, unconscious of this, he is the cause of great trouble, so it is with human beings: those who are under stress, anxiety and perturbation bring their mind to a state of stillness, whereas those who permit themselves the stupor of indifference are responsible for the sinking of the vessel.

I have grown old because of all my foes. What is the sense of *I have grown old*? I have been weakened by my foes, he is saying. In other words, our life is a struggle, and our existence beset with countless foes, who prove to be stronger when we fall into sin. Hence we should do everything to escape their clutches, and never come to terms with them; this, after all, is the surest path to insecurity. Paul touches on the horde of those enemies in saying, "Our wrestling is

not with flesh and blood, but with the powers and the authorities and the cosmic rulers of darkness of this age."[34] Since, then, the horde of enemies is of this kind, we must constantly be on the alert, and avoid the assault of sin. Nothing, after all, is so calulated to age us as the nature of sin. Hence Paul also bade us rid ourselves of the ageing that comes from this source in his words, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."[35] So when you have grown old because of sin, renew yourself by repentance.

Depart from me, all you who practice evil, because the Lord has hearkened to the sound of my weeping. The Lord heard my supplication, the Lord accepted my prayer (vv.8-9). This too is no insignificant way leading to virtue, the avoidance of wicked people. It is what Christ also requires of us with much insistence in bidding us cut off the friends who take the place of indispensable limbs for us, should they prove an obstacle to us, or their company bring us any harm. He says, remember, "If your eye prove an obstacle to you, pluck it out; and if your hand prove an obstacle to you, cut it off and cast it from you,"[36] not referring to limbs – perish the thought – but to old friends, whose friendship we must scorn when it proves of no benefit to them or to us, but rather harm. Not only did the one practicing this virtue not pursue such associations, but he also bade those people leave his company. This is the fruit of repentance, this the benefit of tears. In this way, after all, the contrite heart is no longer shackled by desire. Let us too do exactly this: no matter if someone is wearing even a crown but does us harm, let us scorn his friendship. Nothing is more vile, after all, than a man,[37] be he even a king, when under the yoke of evil – as nothing is more regal than someone, be he even a captive, who possesses virtue. *Because the Lord has hearkened to the voice of my weeping.* He did not simply say, "Because he has hearkened to my sound," but *the sound of my weeping*. Do you see how he introduces as well his own situation with much profusion, his sound and weeping, meaning here by sound not the intensity of the crying but disposition of mind, and by weeping not only that of the eyes but also of the soul? You see, the person who sets about repentance and is heard by God is easily

able to achieve this good as well, namely, the avoidance of association with the wicked.

May all my enemies feel shame and confusion. May they be routed and utterly put to shame in a flash (v.10). This prayer brings the greatest benefit, namely, shame and retreat. I mean, those running badly, experiencing shame and retreat, will desist from wickedness. In other words, it is as if we saw someone about to fall down a cliff and checked his headlong fall with the words, "Fellow, where are you heading? A cliff lies in front of you," just so does this author demand that the evil people reverse their course. Likewise, too, unless you were quick to restrain a galloping horse, it would soon be lost. Likewise, too, when as frequently happens the poison of some serpent spreads through the whole of the body, physicans very promptly stop its spreading further, cancelling its harmful effect. In exactly the same way do we behave, very promptly checking the evil in us lest it develop further and aggravate the ailment. The wounds of sin, you see, get worse when neglected, and the effects of disease and ill-health do not stop short at wounds but even bring about undying death; similarly, if we dealt with small beginnings at the outset, greater consequences would not develop.

Now, consider this. The person who takes the trouble not to give offense will not have fighting skills, either; the one without fighting skills will also achieve the art of friendship; the one who achieves the art of friendship has no enemy, while the one who is without an enemy and instead gives evidence of love will achieve the whole of virtue. Do not neglect early signs of evil lest it grow worse. If Judas had checked the love of wealth, he would not have proceeded to tamper with religious funds; if he had stopped at that point, he would not have leapt to the pinnacle of evils. For this reason Christ also rejects not only fornication and adultery but also the roving eye,[38] pulling up the root from below so as to make the conquest of vice easier. He did this, too, in the case of the Jews, in a more materialistic fashion and as it were in riddles, since his message was directed to more carnal people; at any rate, he still did it that way. What way was that? He did not allow any intermingling of different animals,[39] he did not allow them to eat the blood of brute beasts,[40] he did not allow them to hold pledges

overnight,[41] thus stifling the growth of capital sins from these: from the first homosexuality, from the second homicides, from the third acts of cruelty and inhumanity.[42] Now, however, sins of every kind are practised, without restraint and quite unashamedly; hence everything has gone upside down.

So when you feel a slight movement of passion, do not see it as slight, but consider that what develops from it gives rise to the worst abuses. I mean, when we see a little wick catch alight at home, we are alarmed and panic-stricken; it is not the first stages we have in mind, you see, but our mind moves from those first stages to the outcome, and we are alarmed and race around in an effort to quench the blaze completely. Evil ignites the soul more seriously than this fire. Hence the need to take preventitive measures. If we are negligent, after all, correction proves more difficult. You could see this happening also in the case of a ship, the sailors taking fright, not when they see the sea overwhelming them, but even when it is about to. Accordingly, let us not be indifferent to the slightest sins but suppress them with great severity, so as to be free of the worst sins, and attain to those future goods, grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit be glory, power and honor, now and forever, for ages of ages. Amen.

[1] We have noted already Chrysostom's reluctance, and Antioch's generally, to speak in anthropomorphic terms of God. To accommodate the scriptural use of such terms, Chrysostom is able to invoke the dogma of the Incarnation, the paradigm for an economy in which spiritual realities are mediated by material ones. This economy he sees as an (or the prime) example of divine considerateness, *synkatabasis* (not "condescension"), for our human limitations. See Introduction section 7 and my "On looking again at *synkatabasis*."

[2] Jer 7.19.

[3] One is impressed here with the educational dimension that Chrysostom the pastor recognizes in the theological principle of incarnation and *synkatabasis*. Augustine the educator in the *De Catechizandis Rudibus* speaks likewise, but perhaps without Chrysostom's theological backing, of the need to speak "with respect for the listener's capacity and resources," and further observes: "Much depends on what the matter in hand suggests and what the audience present indicate not only what they can take but are even keen to hear" (7,11; 26,51).

[4] Is 40.28.

[5] In quoting this part of verse 9 of chapter 11 of Hosea, Chrysostom strangely omits the introductory words "I am God." The concluding clause, which he interprets to support his point, is acknowledged as obscure in the Hebrew; the *NRSV* goes even further in Chrysostom's direction with "in wrath" for "in the city."

[6] Jer 14.9.

[7] Ps 143.2.

[8] Ps 130.3.

[9] 1 Cor 4.4.

[10] Prv 20.9.

[11] Ex 33.19. As we have had occasion to note of each of the preceding psalms, Chrysostom has some difficulty accepting the utter gratuity of divine grace in his anxiety to preserve the role of human effort – something that is consistent with his correlative anxiety to respect the role of the human author in the composition of the Scriptures, a truth itself related to the Incarnation. Hence at this point his insistence on the prior worthiness of the recipient of divine mercy – though unfortunately his quotation of Exodus runs counter to his argument. His Antiochene realism seems to have something legalistic about it: divine justice requires a balance and a retribution that gratuitous mercy plays havoc with. His trusted mentor Paul would not support him in this.

[12] Heb 10.28-29; cf Dt 17.2-6; Ex 24.8. The argumentation at this point somewhat softens Chrysostom's unsympathetic attitude to the Jews of the Old Testament and his own time that emerges not infrequently. His underlying rationale for it will emerge most clearly in commentary on Psalm 110 below. See Introduction section 6.

[13] Rom 2.12.

[14] Does the example, adduced for Chrysostom's (male?) congregation, reflect the social patterns of his society as much as Old Testament mores? A biblical basis for his bias he proceeds to supply?

[15] Lk 16.25.

[16] Lk 12.47-48.

[17] For Chrysostom's conviction of the far greater responsibility of the woman for the Fall than the man (whose fault is rather that endemic human weakness of *rhathymia*), see below and Homily 16 on Genesis (FOTC 74, 214-15).

[18] Cf Nm 15.32-36.

[19] 1 Tim 2.14.

[20] Cf Acts 5.1-11.

[21] Cf note 10 above.

[22] The phrasing and incomplete sentence structure here suggest a preacher

thinking on his feet.

[23] Rarely does Chrysostom show an acquaintance with other commentators, though as expected a large number of the Fathers produced a commentary on the Psalms – not in all cases independently of one another (see the meticulous study of Marie-Josèphe Rondeau in the bibliography), though Chrysostom's seems idiosyncratic.

[24] For Chrysostom's habitual diagnosis of this basic flaw in our spiritual life, see note 16 above and Psalm 4, note 11.

[25] It is perhaps on first principles that Chrysostom makes this hasty endorsement of the psalmist's (David's) insight into a doctrine generally obscure in the Old Testament; such an "inspired author," *prophetes*, could hardly have been in the dark, he would want his congregation to think. And there are verses, like 11.7, that might encourage him in this view. More recent scholarship, however, would instead accentuate that obscurity: "Neither Israel nor early Judaism knew of a faith in any resurrection nor is such a faith represented in the psalms" (Sigmund Mowinckel). The rebuttal of this view in his commentary on the Psalms by Mitchell Dahood on the basis of a Ugaritic substrate to biblical terms has not won a wide acceptance.

[26] Cf Lk 16.19-31.

[27] Mt 25.1-13.

[28] The discrepancy and inconsistency of tenses in Chrysostom's Greek version of the Psalms (by comparison with modern English versions and the Hebrew text) is explained by grammarians as an inadequate grasp of the force of the original verb form. As M. Zerwick remarks, at times "the future is a servile rendering of a Hebrew imperfect, for this latter is often used with future sense, but is of itself atemporal." Unaware of this, Chrysostom proceeds to make moral capital of the future form he finds before him.

[29] Mt 8.12.

[30] Mt 5.4.

[31] Lk 6.24.

[32] Cf Acts 20.31. We have to concede in this picture of the weeping king and weeping apostle and the exhortation to his congregation to follow suit a ring of conviction arising from the preacher's personal experience.

[33] Eph 4.19.

[34] Eph 6.12.

[35] Rom 12.2.

[36] Cf Mt 5.29-30.

[37] *Aner* again – this time an unconscious and doubtless unintended compliment to womankind.

[38] Mt 5.28.

[39] Cf Dt 22.10.
[40] Cf Lv 17.10.
[41] Cf Dt 24.13.
[42] We might wonder whether these conclusions represented the hermeneutical consensus of the day, were it not for our experience of Chrysostom's weakness for rationalizing: scriptural data serve his point at times, rather than vice versa.

Psalm 7

A psalm of David,
which he sang to the Lord about the words of
Hushai the Benjaminite.

O *Lord my God, in you have I hoped; save me from all my pursuers, and deliver me* (v.1). It would be good for you to have such a precise knowledge of the Scriptures and the stories they tell as to make unnecessary for us a longer sermon in explaining their teaching.[1] Since, however, some people are caught up in worldly business, while others are victims of indifference,[2] they are ignorant of them, and we must draw the sermon out to greater length in explaining the psalm's theme.

Now, pay close attention. What, then, is the psalm's theme? "A psalm of David, which he sang to the Lord." Another version: "A psalm on David's ignorance." Another: "David's not knowing." And instead of "Hushai" it says "Ethiopian."[3] Yet the content is also obscure to you because you do not know the story. Since, however, my duty is not simply to find fault with you but also to instruct you, I must take up the narrative. David had a son Absalom, an intemperate and corrupt young man. At one stage he rebelled against his father, drove him out from kingship, home, and country, took possession personally of everything in his stead, having regard neither for nature nor for upbringing, not for age nor for precedent. On the contrary, he was, to put it in a nutshell, so cruel and harsh, more like a beast than a human being, that he broke though all these impediments, trampled on the very laws of nature, and filled everything with alarm and trepidation. All limits, you see, were transgressed – boundaries of nature, respect for people, piety towards God, lovingkindness and mercy, recompense for nurture, regard for old age. I mean, even had he not been pre-

pared to respect David as his father, he ought to have as an old man; even had he ignored his grey hair, he should have been ashamed before his benefactor; but if not even this, before someone who had never wronged him. Instead, lust for power expelled all this respect, and turned the human being into an animal.

This blessed man, who had given him birth and rearing, as a vagabond and a fugitive roamed through the desert, like a refugee in a foreign land, beset with the troubles that come from that condition, while that rogue luxuriated in his father's possessions. So when things were in this state, the armies arrayed with him, and the towns under his control, Hushai, an able fellow, friend of David's, remained steadfast in his friendship in those changing times. Seeing him often wandering in the desert, he rent his garment, scattered ashes on himself, and wept long and loud, gaining some consolation from his tears, nothing else being possible. His friendship, you see, was the result not of circumstances, nor of power, but of virtue; hence, despite the change in government, his friendship did not change. So when David saw him behaving like this, he said to him, "This is the sign of a friend, someone kindly disposed to us, but it will bring us no advantage. Instead, there is call for planning and looking for ways to clear the dire obstacles in our path and for us to find the way out of these troubles." After saying this, he exposed this plan to him: "Go off to my son, adopt the guise of a friend, disrupt his plans to my advantage, and bring the advice of Ahitophel to naught." Now, this Ahitophel had the tyrant under his thumb, and was clever in military matters and clever in conducting battle and warfare. Hence David had greater fear of him than of the tyrant, so crafty was the fellow in his schemes.

On hearing this Hushai obeyed, and was guilty of no mean-spirited or unmanly thought. He did not say, "What if I am apprehended? What if my pretence is detected? What if my play-acting comes to light?" Ahitophel is crafty: perhaps he will outsmart this ruse and bring it to light, and I will perish all to no purpose. With no such thought in his mind he gained entry to the tyrant's army, entrusting everything to God and committing himself to the utmost risk. I am telling you this not only for us to praise him but to

learn as well all the grievous things David suffered, and for us to bring out whatever else of benefit it is possible to gain from the story. See, what is of constant concern to most people – why do good people suffer tribulation while wicked people are at ease – it is possible to unravel here. I mean, the righteous man was in difficulties, whereas the man of blood, the parricide, the one who by nature itself was enemy and foe enjoyed prosperity in royal halls. Yet neither did the scoundrel reap any gain from that, nor the holy man any harm; instead, the former became liable to worse tribulations, the latter emerged more illustrious, purified by tribulation like gold in a furnace.

So from this incident learn first of all not to be dismayed in such disasters, when you see troubles befalling righteous people. Secondly, after this, not to change in response to the times, but recognize the bonds of friendship. Thirdly, taking risks for virtue's sake. Fourthly, keeping hope alive under pressure, waiting for help from God. For that man Hushai made no account at that time of armies, dread of the tyrant, troops of horses, squads of armed warriors, fall of cities, or David's solitude, isolation, and weakness. Instead, his eyes were on one thing alone, God's unassailable assistance and his favor, and on that basis he judged each side, finding one unsound and the other strong; one man was behaving unjustly, the other was keeping himself in the company of the just. Accordingly, he took his stand, not with a vast number of people but with help of virtue, and thus won God's favor. I tell you this so that we may cultivate those with right on their side, be they ever so weak, and shun the support of those in the wrong, be they ever so strong. Evil, after all, even with the whole world on its side, is weaker than anything, whereas virtue, even should it chance to be isolated, is more powerful than anything, having God standing with it, you see. So who can save the one at odds with God? Who can destroy the one helped by him?

All this, then, Hushai ruminated on,[4] and with high hopes he went off to where he was sent. When he came near, he saw the tyrant in triumphal procession, and he went up to him. Now, since he had seen Hushai frequently, and being carried away with the love of power, he did not scrutinize him closely but made fun of

him; upbraiding him he said, "Off with you, and your mate with you" – not deigning to mention his name through hatred and deep enmity. By no means alarmed or put off, Hushai replied to him, "When God was with him, I sided with him; but since he is now with you, it makes sense for me to take your side."[5] This flattered the tyrant and puffed him up, and without closer examination (this vain man believed anything, after all, and really suffered the consequences of it) he played into his enemies' hands, admitting him at once among his familiars and listing him among the closest of his friends. Now, it was God who arranged all this, being close at hand and in command of developments. As well, there was a proposal made of war, and different arguments were adduced by different people as to whether it should be waged at once or put off for a while. Ahitophel came on the scene, that crafty adviser who promoted his own views, and he offered this advice, "Let us attack your father, now that he is in difficulty and disarray. Were we to leave him no ground to stand on, you see, we would have him; if we were to attack him now in his state of unpreparedness, it would be no trouble at all for us." On hearing this, the tyrant summoned Hushai, too, under guise of deserter to his cause, and gave him the opportunity to participate in giving advice.

It was not according to human procedure for the recent arrival to be shown such regard and thought worthy of being asked for advice on such matters. Rather, as I said before, when God is in control, difficulties become easy. Hushai was introduced, given encouragement, and asked to speak on the proposal. So what did Hushai say? Ahitophel, he said, has never made a mistake.[6] Do you see the man's shrewdness? He did not reject his opinion out of hand, but damned it with faint praise. At first commending him, you see, for giving correct advice on former occasions, he thus belittled his opinion on this matter. Now, he said something like this: I am surprised how he could make a mistake now; I mean, his idea seems to me to be wide of the mark. I mean, if we attack now, your father, utterly enraged like a rampaging bear, despairing of his own life and fighting with heightened fury, will give no heed to his own safety but fall on us with the utmost severity. But if we give him a little breathing space, we will attack with better preparation, greater

security, with no problems and the utmost ease; so we will make our withdrawal with him held fast in our net, as it were. Absalom praised this opinion, and declared his the more advantageous. Now, Hushai had said this with the intention of giving David time to find his feet, catch his breath, and form a fighting force. So having rebutted Ahitohel's advice, he sent a report of everything to David by means of some men under cover, including the fact that the tyrant had endorsed the plan of his which would present David with the victory. That is the way it turned out, at any rate. Since he had been given breathing space, you see, David got ready and attacked and won the crown. Ahitophel with great shrewdness and cleverness took this in and realized the game was already up, the plan being disastrous for Absalom; and finding the shame unbearable he went out, put a noose around his neck and hanged himself, and so ended his life.

So when David learned all this, he wrote the psalm,[7] offering songs of thanksgiving to God and attributing the whole strategy to him. Hence he begins this way, *O Lord my God, in you have I hoped; save me.* Not in Hushai, nor in human wisdom, nor in that man's shrewdness, nor in my advice, but *in you.* Let us therefore act likewise: even if some achievement comes to us through human beings, let us give thanks for them to God, both for the benefits that fall to us through our own means as well as through others. If we act like this, in fact, nothing will be difficult or devious. That is actually what David did, as if to say, I placed the hope of salvation not in Hushai's advice but in your help. See the wonderful frame of mind with which he speaks, which was customary with him. He did not say, note, "O Lord God," but *O Lord my God;* and elsewhere, "O God, my God, I look for you at break of day."[8] I mean, he had need of him even while in the company of everyone, but particularly on his own because of the intensity of his longing. This is the way God acts with righteous people, and being God of everyone equally he says he belongs to righteous people individually. "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob."[9]

Note the sensible attitude. After saying *O Lord my God* he did not say, "Punish the enemy, destroy the foe." Instead, what? He

looks only to what concerns himself, saying, *Save me* (that is, do not let me suffer abuse) *from all my pursuers, and deliver me.* See how despite his sufferings he did not make specific mention of the parricide; acknowledging his nature in misfortune and seeing his son in strife he was not unmindful in his peril of his broken heart. So loving and affectionate was he for his offspring – or, rather, so sound in his thinking. Far from being a despot by nature, you see, it was rather the mildness of his attitude that rendered him like that, and he laid the blame more on the army than on the tyrant – hence his words, *Save me from all my pursuers, and deliver me.* Do you see how he made no harsh mention even of them? I mean, he did not say, "From those warring against me, from those plundering my goods, from those living it up in my palace," but *from my pursuers.*

Lest like a lion he should carry off my soul, with no one to ransom or save me (v.2). To be sure, he had assembled an army, and had a large number with him; so why does he say, *with no one to ransom or save me*? Because he considers not even the whole world as help should he not enjoy influence from on high, nor does he think of it as solitude if he is alone, as long as he shares in help from him. Hence he also said, "A king is not saved on account of great power, nor will a giant be saved by virtue of his strength."[10] Some, on the other hand, take this verse in a spiritual sense, saying lion and pursuers are devil and demons.[11] You see, when he saw his son snatched from him and swallowed up, he begged that he might never suffer this fate, and mentioned the reason why his son did. Now, what was the reason? For his wickedness, he says, God withheld help from him. Hence he says, *with no one to ransom or save me.* For proof that the devil is called a lion by Scripture, listen to it saying, "Your enemy the devil prowls around like a lion roaring and looking for someone to devour."[12] And this inspired author himself says elsewhere, "You will tread on the lion and the serpent."[13] This beast is wily, you see; but if we are on the alert, this lion and serpent will be less than dirt in importance, neither will it mount an assault against us directly, but if it does mount an assault, it will be trodden on. "Walk on snakes and scorpions,"[14] Scripture says, remember. He goes around in an awful rage, in fact, like

a lion; but if he attacks those who have Christ, and his cross on their forehead, and the fire of the Spirit, and the lamp that is never spent, he will not succeed even in looking them in the eye but will turn tail, not daring even to face about. And for you to learn that the words are not froth and bubble, consider, pray, the example of Paul. I mean, he too was human, but this lion had a such a healthy respect for him as to shun his garments and his shadow. Rightly so: he could not bear the fragrance of Christ emanating and ascending from him,[15] and had not the strength to raise his eyes to the lamp of his virtue.

O Lord my God, if I have done this, if there is guilt on my hands (v.3). This must everywhere be our concern, not simply to pray but to pray in such a way as to be heard. It is not sufficient that prayer effects what is intended, unless we so direct it as to appeal to God. For the Pharisee too prayed and achieved nothing,[16] and again the Jews prayed but God turned away from them in their prayer;[17] they did not pray, you see, as they should have prayed. Hence we were bidden to pray the prayer most likely to be heard. He suggested as much in the preceding prayer as well, begging to be heard not unconditionally but with the proviso that he made an effort of his own. Now, what effort was that? This: "Every night I will soak my bed, I will drench my couch with my tears." This: "I grew weary from my groaning." This: "Depart from me, all you who practice evil." This: "My eye is wild with anger."[18] All these, you see, suffice to win God over: lament, tears, groans, parting company from the wicked, living in fear and trembling of judgement. Elsewhere too he said, "God hearkened to my righteousness; in tribulation you gave me space."[19] In other words, being heard happens in this fashion: first, of course, worthiness to receive something; then, praying in accordance with God's laws; third, persistence; fourth, asking nothing earthly; fifth, seeking things to our real benefit; sixth, contributing everything of our own.

See, at any rate, the many people who were heard in this way: Cornelius for his way of life;[20] the Syrophoenician woman for her importunity;[21] Solomon for the manner of his asking: "Because you did not ask for wealth," the text says, "nor for the lives of your enemies;"[22] the tax collector for his humility;[23] others for different

reasons. As being heard, therefore, is due to reasons such as these, likewise not being heard is due to other reasons, even when the petitioners are good people. I mean, who could be better than Paul? Yet since he asked for what was unsuitable, he was not heard. "For this," he says, "three times I besought the Lord, and he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you'." [24] Who likewise could be better than Moses? Yet he too was not heard, God telling him, "Enough." [25] You see, since his request was to enter the Promised Land, and this was not expedient, God refused him. Along with these instances there is also a different reason for not being heard, namely, when we pray while persisting in our sin. God spoke to Jeremiah about this also in connection with the Jews: "Do not pray for this people. Do you not see what they are doing?" [26] They have not desisted from their impiety, he says, and you are offering prayers on their behalf? I will not, however, hearken to you. Again, when we pray against our enemies, we are not only not heard but we even cause provocation. Prayer, you see, is a medicine; but if we do not know how to apply the medicine, neither will we gain the benefit from it. [27]

Let us see, then, what this man too says in his prayer: *O Lord my God, if I have done this.* What is the meaning of *if I have done this*? I am suffering, he says, as if I were the one to have risen against my father, as if I had transgressed in this way. Yet he cannot bring himself even at this point to mention the offender by name, only to be ashamed and mortified on his son's behalf. As if a nobleman saw his own wife committing adultery and did not even permit himself to bring her name out into the open, just so in this man's case: he did not say, "If I rose up against the one who gave me life, If I proved a parricide," but *If I have done this.* Why do I say this? he says. What virtue is there in not proving a parricide, a crime you would not see even among wild beasts? *If there is guilt on my hands.* It is not of this guilt I am speaking; but no other guilt would be found on my hands, either, he is saying. Now, he says this not out of self-glorification but under compulsion to mention his own virtuous actions. Yet even to this point it is no great matter compared with what is now to be said.

If I have returned evil for evil (v.4), he says. Pay close attention:

this is no off-the-cuff remark. It is a fine thing, you see, not to do evil; but much more so, and the mark of a person of sound values, not to requite the one who does evil to you. And yet the Law provided for this, demanding an eye for an eye, and knocking out a tooth for a tooth.[28] No breach of the Law was involved; yet this man's values were so sound that he not only did not break the Law but even outdid it to a marvelous degree and proved superior. In other words, he did not think that virtue was satisfied unless the commandments were surpassed. So, just as Paul did, though under instruction to make his livelihood from the Gospel, yet in fact not doing so but preaching the Gospel *gratis*, in like manner accordingly the blessed David also, when the Law allowed him to requite the one who wronged him, did not adhere to that standard but even surpassed it. Now, this is required of us, not only not to repay but even to show favor. "Pray for those who abuse you," Scripture says, remember, "do good to those who hate you."[29] Now, in the case of David it was no little thing not to take vengeance, but an even far greater thing than the Law's precept. Hence he says, *If I have done this, if there is guilt on my hands, if I have returned evil for evil.* I mean, in the case of my son even nature forbade me; but I am speaking about wronging others or even requiting them. What excuse would we have, then, what pretext offer, if after the coming of Christ we fell short of the measure of those living in the Old Testament, and that when a higher level is expected of us? "If your righteousness does not exceed that of the Pharisees," Scripture says, remember, "you will not enter the kingdom of heaven."[30] I mean, just as there is no parity between the one doing good while living by the Law and the one before the Law, neither is there between the one living by grace and the one by the Law; instead, the timing makes all the difference. Paul suggests this difference in the case of vice and of virtue; see how he admires the former person, and declares the latter to be deserving of worse punishment, speaking this way: "When the gentiles, who do not have the Law, by nature perform the works of the Law, without having the Law they are a law unto themselves."[31] Do you see how he praises and exalts those living virtuously apart from the Law? Note further how he shows that those who sin while

living under grace are deserving of worse punishment than those who go astray while under the Law, in these words, "The one who set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses; how much worse punishment, do you think, will that person be thought to deserve who has spurned the Son of God and treated the blood of the covenant as profane?" [32] Again, to show that those living before the Law were deserving of less punishment than those living by the Law, he says, "All those who sinned independently of the Law will also perish independently of the Law" [33] – that is, with greater clemency, since they have as accuser not the Law but only nature; "all those who sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law" – that is, more severely, since they have as accuser the Law along with nature.

Then let me fall helpless into my enemies' hands. Then may my foe pursue my soul and overtake it, and may he trample my life into the ground, and bury my honor in the dust (v.5). Do you see the righteous man's confidence and his utterly clear conscience? I mean, had he not had complete confidence in himself, he would not have raised these petitions. Now, what he means is something like this: If I have done wrong, if I have taken vengeance, let me suffer such and such a fate. He passes sentence on himself, and does not ask to be judged according to norm but to pay a penalty well beyond what is appropriate; he makes himself liable to a penalty from which the Law excludes him. See what it is: *May I fall helpless into my enemies' hands*, he says. *Then may my enemy pursue my soul and overtake it, and may he trample my life into the ground, and bury my honor in the dust*. That is to say, may he ruin my good name and reputation, may he destroy my honor along with my life. What is the meaning of *may he bury my honor in the dust*? Humiliate, trample on: may I be an easy prey for my enemies, he is saying. Who could be more bloodstained than Absalom, who pursued his father, and such a father, so mild and reasonable, whereas he was so licentious, intemperate and haughty? What indeed? Surely his father did not repay him in kind and return evil for evil, and keep his crimes fresh in his memory? Not at all.

And if you examine the story of Saul, then best of all you will see this voice shining through. After countless kindnesses and tro-

phies and victories, this man wronged him and plotted against him, and was daily exercised to destroy him; he then fell into David's hands once or twice or more often, while asleep, when trapped as if in prison, and bereft of bodyguards. Though many people urged him to assassinate and annihilate him, he spared him and kept his rage under control, though well aware that in allowing him to escape he would be releasing his foe and implacable enemy. Yet not even the recollection of the past nor fear of the future nor anything else of that kind tempted him to that awful execution; instead, he pondered within himself, held his hand and restrained his anger, and preferred to undergo risk and be the object of plotting, and be banished from his very own country and from freedom rather than assassinate and annihilate the enemy who without reason or cause was plotting against him and thirsting for his blood despite those countless favors. From many other incidents as well it is possible to recognize his sound atttitude; hence he also calls down on himself many harsh curses, like returning without success, his enemies prevailing over him with ease, dying unhonored, suffering this at the hands of his enemies – a fate much more painful in his eyes than death. So he leaves no stone unturned to ensure his being remembered after his death. Accordingly, see all the curses he calls down on himself: labouring to no purpose, being vanquished by his foes, dying, not even an end like anyone else's, deletion of any record of him, being dishonored. He would not have called down these curses on himself had his conscience not been completely clear. But if he had an enemy, that was no fault of his; he had given no occasion for it, after all. I mean, what occasion had he given to his son? what to Saul? The former, who had committed deeds deserving of punishment, he restored and won his friendship, taking occasion to correct him; whereas the latter, though thirsting for his blood, he often had in his power but kept from death.[34]

So do not consider if he had enemies but if he was responsible for making them such. I mean, this was not Christ's command, either, not to have enemies – this, after all, being beyond our control – but not to bear hatred. This, you see, is within our control, whereas the former is not completely so. On the other hand, being

hated without cause is not a decision of ours but of those who bear the hatred. The wicked, you see, are in the habit of hating without reason or cause. Christ too, remember, they hated for no good reason, as he says, "They hated me without cause."[35] The apostles had the false apostles as enemies, and the prophets the false prophets. In other words, this must be our concern, not how to avoid having enemies, but how to avoid justification and reason for them, and how to avoid bearing hatred or revulsion even if we are hated time and time again. That is what enmity is, after all, bearing hatred and revulsion. So when I am hated and bear no hatred, those people have me as an enemy, not vice versa. When I pray for them and wish to do them a kindness, how can I have such people as enemies? Hence Paul said, "As far as is possible for you, be at peace with everyone."[36]

Let us therefore offer what is ours to offer, and by that very fact we will have sufficient praise. What is it that is ours? Such, for example, as this: does someone bear you great hatred and opposition? For your part love them and treat them kindly. Does someone insult you and abuse you? For your part commend and praise them. Yet even so they do not relax their enmity? Well, then, they are paying you a greater tribute. Wicked people, you see, provide us with more conspicuous recompense the more trouble they take not to forsake their opposition, and they undermine themselves the more. Whoever bears hatred and refuses to be reconciled pines away and is destroyed, spending their waking hours in unceasing conflict, whereas the one who is above such onslaughts is removed from the storms and, by comparison with the other, gains the greatest benefit from efforts to be reconciled with them and avoid conflict, thus freeing oneself from hostility and fighting.

So let us avoid warring with others, and root up the cause of it, vainglory and avarice. It is, after all, on account either of money or of empty praise that someone is hostile. If, on the other hand, we rise above those things, we shall also be above falling victim to enmity. So if people abuse you, bear it in good spirit; they are abusing themselves, after all, not you. If they strike you, do not resist; they themselves, after all, are stricken with the blow of their anger, you only with their hand, and they win themselves a poor reputa-

tion in the sight of all. If, however, this seems to you difficult to accept, consider this: if some deranged person ripped your clothing, who would you say is the worse off, you in sustaining the injury or the one who inflicted it? Clearly the latter. And so, in the case where clothing is rent the perpetrator is worse off than the victim, whereas where the heart is broken, anger in fact being the cause, do you not think that that person suffered worse than you who endured nothing at all? In other words, make no mention of the fact that it is your clothing that is torn but of prior importance that person's heart. You see, just as fever would not develop unless the bile flowed over and surpassed its proper limits, in like manner anger would not become immoderate unless the heart were ruptured. So just as if you saw someone falling victim to fever, and if its effects were multiple and dire, you would not want to become infected by the disease, so too in the case of anger. Far from imitating or mimicking that evil, have pity on that person who lets the wild beast within off the leash, and more than anything else harms and destroys himself. For proof, in fact, that such people do harm to themselves, you could listen to those many people breaking up such disputes by offering advice like this, "Spare yourself, you are doing yourself harm."[37] That is the kind of thing this vice is: it does harm only to the one giving it birth, causing problems in every direction. So let us not be intent on requiting them and allow ourselves to be driven from a safe haven. After all, if someone is on the point of being shipwrecked and is going under, and abuses you while you are seated on the shore, you would not be upset by that or leave dry land to be a partner in his shipwreck. So think of it this way: the person who abuses you in a drunken rage, as though thrown into the sea by a fainting fit or a wild storm, goes under, falling victim to his anger, while you by putting up with it bravely enjoy yourself in harbor and on shore. If, however, you are drawn into imitation of the same behavior as his, you will cast not him but yourself into the sea.

Rise up, O Lord, in your anger; be exalted in the boundaries of your enemies (v.6). He spoke this way to indicate it is possible also not to rise in anger, as when he says, "Arise, Lord, save me, my God."[38] Now, when you hear that word "Arise," do not get the impression

of anything bodily. You see, as sitting is not said of God in bodily fashion, neither is this. "You are seated for eternity," Scripture says, remember. So what is it, then, that is suggested by sitting? Steadiness, stability, constancy of nature, steadfastness – something, therefore, which he also indicated through its opposite. Having said, you see, "You are seated for eternity," he added, "but all of you perish for eternity."[39] So as sitting is not bodily, neither is rising; but while in the former passage stability is indicated, in this passage rather being vengeful, consuming. Now, sometimes sitting suggests holding trials, as when he says, "Seated on his throne, the one making righteous judgements,"[40] and Daniel, "Thrones were set in place, and the court was in session."[41] It can also suggest royalty, as when he says, "Your throne, O God, for ages of ages, the rod of your rectitude, the rod of your kingship."[42] Hence that phrase, "Sit on my right,"[43] indicates parity of esteem. Now, what is the force of that phrase *in your anger*? This once again must be taken in a sense appropriate to God. I mean, in God anger is not a passion, but retribution and punishment.

Be exalted in the boundaries of your enemies. Another version says, "In rage against your enemies." Another, "In the bile of those afflicting me." Another, "In the delays of those forging bonds." The Hebrew, on the other hand, says, "in the boundaries," "*bebaroth*."[44] Note once again how in this place he is not taking vengeance for himself, but says this for the glory of God. He did not, note, simply say, Punish my enemies, or your enemies, but *Be exalted*. How is he exalted who is on high and has always been the most high? Being on high, after all, is of his nature, and is in no way either diminished or increased; he is perfect, you see, and in need of nothing, and has been ever thus. So how and in what fashion is he exalted? He is exalted in the minds of the majority of people. For instance, he often showed long-suffering, whereas his enemies thought it an example not of long-suffering but of humiliation and weakness. So he also is humiliated, not in reality, but in those people's thinking. You see, just as the sun appears dim to those with eye trouble, just so does God too appear weak and lowly in their minds. But just as the sun, though thought like that, is not dim, but the trouble lies with their weakness, so too God is not weak, even if thought to

be, which is an effect of their misunderstanding. So what is the righteous man saying? Be exalted in the presence of my foes, take vengeance and show your power so that those thinking you to be humiliated from what they experience may see your glory. Do you see his concern, not looking to his own advantage but God's? Now, that phrase *in the boundaries* some read as "in the heads," while others, "Let none of your enemies escape." It is a great virtue of the righteous man, however, when he has the same enemies as God and the same friends, as it is a great vice when God's friends are his enemies and God's enemies his friends. So just as God is said to have enemies, not out of hatred or revulsion of them, but out of loathing for their wicked deeds, so too the righteous man has enemies, not taking vengeance on them but abhorring their wickedness.

Awake, O Lord my God, in the command you have laid down ("in judgement," another version says). *The assembly of peoples will encircle you* ("let it encircle you," another version says); *turn back over it on high, Lord*[45] ("turn towards it on high," another version says; the Hebrew, however, says, "Over it," *"Oualea."*). What is the meaning of *in the command you have laid down*? For us to give assistance to the wronged, he is saying, and not neglect those suffering others' scheming. In other words, what you have decreed for us communicate also to us personally in your deeds. Others, on the other hand, say it also means something else, namely, he promised to be hostile to his enemies. *The assembly of peoples will encircle you.* Do not get the idea of anything human here, either; I mean, even if the expression is like that, the sense is appropriate to God. So what is the meaning of *will encircle you*? It means it will sing your praises, praise you, do you great honor. Since, you see, when they did this in choir, they stood in a circle in the temple around the altar, and offered thanksgiving this way, he implied their praise by reference to the manner of their standing. Now, what it means is something like this: Take vengeance, lend assistance. This, in fact, will serve to elevate you in the presence of your enemies and bring you great honor in your temple. See how he is anxious not for his own good name but for God's. His intention at every stage, note, is that God be praised amidst both his enemies and his own. *Turn back over it on*

high. Over it – over what? The assembly, he is saying – that is, for its sake *turn back on high*: exalt us, lift us up, perform lofty things, make it conspicuous and manifest, return it to its former well-being.

Now, observe that instruction is at every point mingled with the supplications. Having said previously, remember, "Have mercy on me, and hearken to me," he turned his words towards counsel in speaking thus, "Sons of men, how long will you be dull of heart?" [46] And in this psalm, having said, *Turn back on high, O Lord,* he adds, *The Lord judges peoples* (v.8). Another version, however, says, "The Lord will pass judgement." He instructs those who think everything happens idly and by chance that a certain providence has concern for developments, being responsible for the reason behind what happens. Now, at this point he is speaking of a judgement that is both in the future and also in the present. In the former case, you see, it will be universal and manifest, whereas here and now it is partial in its retribution, both to stir up the more slothful and to stimulate the less fervent to an appreciation of the providence for all things.

Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness (another version: "according to my observance"), *and according to the innocence that is in me. Let the evil of sinners be brought to an end* (another says, "May harassment of the unholy be completed"). *And you will direct the righteous* (another: "You will settle the righteous"). [47] How is it that the one who says, "Do not enter into judgement with your servant," [48] says here, *Judge me according to my righteousness*? Because they are saying different things. In the former case with the words, "Do not enter into judgement with your servant," he is suggesting, Do not find against me, do not examine my life by comparing it with the kindnesses on your part. Hence he added, "For no living thing will be found righteous before you." In the latter case, on the other hand, he means this: he does not want to be judged on God's terms but on his own; hence he said, *according to my righteousness,* that is, according to the righteousness that is mine. Now, by righteousness at this place he means not ruling with lawless hands – as he said above, *If I have done this* et cetera. He suggests the same thing in *according to my innocence*: I wish to be judged according to this, he is saying. The righteous man's confidence is

strong here. Yet he says this under the force of necessity. What necessity, then? From the fact that he got a bad name among many stupid people on account of what he suffered. Most stupid people, after all, are inclined to blame life for what happens to them, as Job too found out. This was the reason they said to him, ignorant of any evil on his part, "You have been punished unfairly for your sins." [49] Paul, too, was thought to be a criminal and malefactor by the savages since he had a viper on his hand. Hence they said, "This person was saved from the sea, but justice has not allowed him to live." [50] Shimei, too, called David a murderer, [51] giving that faulty verdict on him as a result of circumstances.

Lest you also suffer this fate, therefore, come, let us discuss these matters a little. [52] I hear many saying, in fact, "If God loved the poor, he would not let them be poor." Others again say, when they see someone struggling under prolonged weakness and disease, "Where is such-and-such a person's almsgiving? Where are their good deeds?" So, lest you fail like that, let us be precise in our attention to these matters. You see, since anyone with sense could not be a hater of good or lover of evil, how are you so bold as to say this about the Lord, that God hates those in poverty, even if they are virtuous, and loves those in riches, even if they are evil, opening your mouth in blasphemy and failing to realize the magnitude of your impertinence? So, lest you fail like that, listen to what God loves and hates. Whom then does he love? The one who keeps his commands. "I will love him," Scripture says, remember, "and will come to him" [53] – not the one enjoying wealth, not the one enjoying good health, but the one responding to my decrees. Whom, on the other hand, does he hate and abhor? The one not carrying out his commands. When, then, you see someone not carrying out his commands, even if keeping good health, even if very affluent, put them among those who are hated, whereas number the virtuous, even if you see them ailing, even if penniless, among those who are loved. The marks of love, you see, are to be found amongst the latter, not the former. Do you not notice even in worldly circles that the king's friends are particularly those who go more readily into danger in battle, bear wounds, and are sent to foreign parts? Have you not heard, "Whom the Lord loves he diciplines,

and chastises every child he accepts?"[54]

But many are scandalized, you say, to see this. Not through them but through their own stupidity. Here on earth, you see, we have no reward for our troubles; rather, this is the place for contests, whereas prizes and wreaths come later. Consequently, do not look for rest and repose on the occasion of bouts and on the day for the pentathlon, nor confuse the proper moments. But many people are too weak, you say. On the contrary, God has provided for them, and allowed many people, even of the righteous, to enjoy prosperity even here below, not for themselves but for the sake of weaker people. So that if those suffering tribulation scandalize you, those enjoying relief will give you strength; and if those of the wicked enjoying prosperity are a scandal to you, those suffering punishment and vengeance will keep you on the straight and narrow. Do you not recall Christ saying, "In the world you will have tribulation?"[55] So why do you look for rest when he says that? Do you not recall him saying, "The world will rejoice, whereas you will always have grief?"[56] So that it was likely that the more thoughtless would be scandalized if the opposite to what he said took place; but if everything happened according to plan, what reason is there for you to be scandalized?

For what reason, you ask, did God so ordain? Do not pry or be inquisitive. After all, "what is molded will not say to the one molding it, 'Why did you make me like that?'"[57] Hence the prophet also censured the Jews on the grounds that, though they were weighed down with countless sins, they were scrutinizing the ways of God: "They are anxious to know my ways, like a people acting righteously and not forsaking God's judgement."[58] Their behavior was like that of some servant who has given offense and, though guilty of innumerable faults, neglects to calm the ire of his master, and instead requires an account of why on earth he behaved like that. So, then, do not inquire about these matters, nor cease to weep and lament, and wash away your own sins. I say this, not that I am at a loss to give an explanation, but in my wish to propel you away from this inquisitiveness and in the direction of concern for your own salvation.

So, what was the reason he so ordained? To spare the human

race. You see, he allotted troubles to the here-and-now, where life is short, whereas he stored up the wreaths for the future, where living is ageless and without end. These troubles are quickly dissolved and move away, whereas those goods are undying, never coming to an end. Now, in different ways he also trains souls for love of virtue. I mean, in one case when the soul chooses it with difficulty, not yet having received the prize, it is anxious to be related to it in all diligence, whereas in another case when it shuns evil with pleasure, never enduring punishment, it is trained to hate and abhor it. And so from this it will also acquire the habit of enmity towards wickedness and of love for virtue.

There is also a further explanation. Now, what is that? That tribulation in particular stirs us to sound thinking, and makes us stronger. And as well as this there is another. Now, what is this? He wants to instruct us to scorn present realities and not to become captivated by or attached to them. For this very reason he also allotted trials and tribulations, and also caused even useful and attractive things to be passing.

Let the evil of sinners be brought to an end, and you will direct the righteous. What is the meaning of *be brought to an end?* Inflict punishment, it means, and you will remove them from evil. You see, just as ulcers respond to stinging ointments, burning and cutting, so too evil is checked by punishment. Aware of this, then, we should lament not those who are punished, not those chastised, but those who sin with impunity. I mean, the first evil is sinning; the second is for sinners to meet with no treatment. Now, some would even say, and rightly so, that the latter is the first evil, and a worse one. To make a comparison: the problem is not to be ill but to receive no treatment when ill; we lament not simply the ulcerous condition but simply being a sufferer instead of being in the hands of the physician. Of the ones being cut and burned we would say they are on the road to recovery, not considering the pain from the cutting but the health coming from the cutting. Likewise, in the case of the soul, we should lament and grieve not for those being punished (they are being led to health, after all) but for those sinning with impunity.

If chastisement is an obstacle to wickedness, you will say, why

do we not daily pay the penalty of sin? Because if this happened, the human race would be snatched away ahead of time and the opportunity for repentance removed. Look, anyhow, at Paul's case. I mean, if he had paid the penalty for his persecuting by being done away with, how would he have had an opportunity of repenting and of doing those countless good deeds in the wake of repentance and of guiding the whole world, so to say, away from error in the direction of truth? Do you not see physicians, too, when someone is suffering many wounds, not applying as much treatment as the type of wounds requires but as the expectation of the patient's strength suggests, lest in treating the wounds they prove too much for the patient? For that very reason God neither punishes everyone indiscriminately nor everyone as they deserve, but with compassion and leniency; often by punishing one he has brought many to a better frame of mind by means of that one. This frequently happens in the case of the body, too: amputation of one limb guarantees health for many others.

Now, note the righteous man's loving spirit, how in every situation he has an eye to what is of common advantage, the removal of evil, not for him to settle scores with his enemies but for his enemies to abstain from wickedness. Let this in every case be our concern, how the progress of evil may be stopped and we may lament those still affected by it, even if they are clad in silken garments, and bless those living a life of virtue, even if they are suffering extreme poverty, getting beyond externals to the intention of each individual. Then, you see, we shall discern the riches of one and the poverty of another. I mean, what difference does it make if one is clad in a dazzling robe on the outside? What difference is there between the factories and the timbers that support them? How is this person better off than those receiving the goods for sale? The righteous person's wealth, however, is not of this kind; rather, it is steadfast and firm. Yet if the wealthy fail to perceive they are poverty-stricken, that is not surprising. Neither do sufferers of insanity perceive their illness, and on that account most of all are deserving of pity, not felicitation. In fact, if they realized, they would be off to the physician; as it is, however, this is the worst feature of their complaint, that though suffering it they are

unaware they are suffering it. So do not fix your eyes on the satisfaction the rich find in their wealth; rather, weep for them on that very account in particular, that they do not realize in what evil they find themselves. Far from it being human to take heart from that, it is a mark of extreme illogicality.

And you will direct the righteous. What is the meaning of this? With punishment of the wicked, he is saying, the righteous become more attentive. And so two good things ensue from this: the former desist from wickedness and the latter progress further in virtue. In other words, just as an ailing person who sees someone undergoing burning or cutting is rendered more attentive about health, exactly so in this case, too. I mean, many people, even those who seemed to be on their guard, were scandalized at that time, still being rather unsettled by the prosperity of the wicked. Hence this composer also said elsewhere, "My steps had nearly slipped, for I was envious of the lawless."[59] Again, another composer: "Why does the way of the unholy go well?"[60] And Job raised many such questions. But at that time it was those who were rather unsettled who uttered these utterances and searched these searchings; now, on the contrary, there is no excuse for anyone disturbed by these things, despite being schooled in such sound values, in receipt of such teachings about future realities and instructed in clearer ideas about hell and the kingdom including the fact that there each one will receive due reward.

The righteous God examining hearts and entrails. My help is from God, who saves the upright of heart (vv.9-10). Another version says, "The examiner of hearts and entrails, the righteous God, my defender." Another: "The righteous God." The Septuagint,[61] however, said as follows, "God examining hearts and entrails. My righteous help from God." He mentioned that he would judge the world; he further says as well how he will judge it. He said that he has no need of witnesses, nor of evidence, nor of proof, nor of documents, nor of anything else like that: he personally is in possession of knowledge of things beyond telling. So let no stupid person say, "How will he judge the earth in all its being?" Having made it when it did not exist, after all, he will also judge it now it exists. Now, at this point he refers to unspoken thoughts of the mind as

entrails, to our most intimate and profound thoughts, hinting at this by reference to the position of the organs.

What does *examining* mean? What the alternative version spoke of as "testing." If, however, the expressions are human, the ideas are nevertheless appropriate to God. You see, just as Paul in saying, "he searches the hearts,"[62] uses "searches" for having a clear awareness, so this author likewise employs *examining* for precision in knowing. Now, close examination involves stripping bare, which is characteristic of precise knowledge and awareness, as Paul also says, "Now, everything is naked and laid bare to his eyes."[63]

My righteous help. Another version, "My righteous defender."[64] What is the meaning of *my righteous help from God*? May it turn out aright for me, he is saying; I ask for nothing wrong, after all. And so if we would enjoy assistance from above, we ought make such requests as have the righteous man's intention, winning favor by the nature of the request. *Who saves the upright of heart.* This is his role, this his habit. Since, then, I did not rule with unjust hands, nor yield to passion in taking vengeance, accordingly may help for me come from God. Aware of this, therefore, let us make no requests of such a kind as impede the granting. Whenever you ask for something against your foes, for instance, helping you is not righteous – in fact, it is at odds with the law of the provider; if you ask for wealth, if you ask for good looks, if you ask for anything of this worldly, passing kind, it too is at variance with the sound values of the soul. So let us ask with a view to gaining our petition.

God is a righteous judge, strong and long-suffering, not giving vent to anger every day (v.11). Another version says, "delivering rebuke every day." The Hebrew, on the contrary, "for the whole of life."[65] Another version, "threatening, rebuking, not punishing." Now, what it means is like this: If he is righteous, he will be completely intent on punishing the wicked; if he is strong, he will be completely capable of doing so. But where, you say, is the evidence of his lovingkindness if he judges according to righteousness? Firstly, in not administering justice promptly, but most of all and before all else in forgiving all sins in the washing of regeneration; secondly, in granting repentance as well.[66] I mean, if you reflect that we sin every day, then in particular you will see the extent of his

lovingkindness. To bring out this very point he made an addition in the words, *God is a righteous judge, strong and long-suffering.* Are you at a loss to understand why, since he is able and willing, he does not punish? Learn, he says, that he is long-suffering, and does not give vent to his anger every day. You see, in case any stupid person should think that he does not take action for reasons of weakness, he shows the reason for the delay, namely, that his long-suffering is of vast extent. I mean, since he is long-suffering with the intention of leading you to repentance, when you gain nothing from this remedy, he also takes action. To be sure, we deserve to be punished every day. In fact, if this had not been the case, he would not have uttered as an awesome threat, *not giving vent to anger every day.* Instead, he said it in the light of the facts requiring it, though God's lovingkindness held due punishment in check. Do you notice here too how he reveals God's restraint, calling punishment anger? No one, after all, inflicts anger on another; rather, they themselves are affected by the anger, while it is punishment they inflict on another. It is therefore nothing other than punishment he indicates in saying, *not giving vent to anger every day.*

And how does he say *every day*? Let everyone consult their own conscience, and then they will see. I mean, who avoids (to make no mention of each person's unspoken sins) these common failings? What, then, are such failings? Does a day pass when we do not pray with indifference and great distraction? Now, that this deserves an angry response is clear at this point. Tell me: if you presented yourself yawning before a judge, and the judgement went against you, would he not immediately execute the sentence and despatch you into exile? To be sure, you say; he's human, after all. In other words, when human beings are insulted, they have no grounds for resentment, having been insulted by their peers; but when God is insulted, he has grounds for taking retribution. This sin, you see, is greater than that done to a human being. In doing this, human beings are looking to their own advantage, whereas God is looking to yours. So on this score this is more deserving of displeasure. I mean, scorning those who seek their own advantage is not the same as scorning the one seeking yours. This, in fact, is deserving of greater anger, when you have not the sense to set

about requesting what is of benefit to you. Now, who is there who has not insulted his brother for no reason? Don't tell me it was his servant he insulted; after all, "in Christ there is no male or female, no slave or free."[67] Again, who has not made accusations that are false? Who has not looked on a woman with lustful glances? Who has not been envious? Who has not sought vainglory? Who has not been guilty of idle gossip? Now, all these faults are liable to punishment.

If we failed to be zealous about worldly things and were not zealous about spiritual things either, we would deserve pardon; but as it is we are bereft of this excuse. I mean, we are active about the former, but listless about the latter. Now, in case those who hear that God is long-suffering become more careless, he added, *If you do not repent, he will wield his sword* (another version, by contrast, says, "He will whet his blade"). *He has strung his bow, and prepared it* (another says, "He will stretch it"). *In it he has prepared instruments of death. He has produced his arrows for those on fire* (another says, "For burning").[68] What will those say at this point who claim God is in human form on the basis of the reference to his having hands and feet and eyes? Surely there are no bows and arrows in heaven, no whetstone and sword and quiver? Of course, another author says, "Under your gaze mountains are overturned in your presence."[69] And the psalmist himself says, "Who gazes on the earth and makes it tremble."[70] Now, if by simply looking at the earth he even melts the stuff of rocks, much more does he have the power to do it in the case of human beings. So why on earth is the one who merely by looking is capable of turning the world upside down – or rather merely by willing (it is clear, you see, that having made it simply by his will, he can also destroy it by will alone) – claimed to have sword and bow? After all, if "in his hands are the bounds of the earth,"[71] and "those who inhabit it are like locusts" and "all the nations are like a drop from a bucket and will be reckoned as a turn of the scale,"[72] and the angel leaving his presence destroyed in a flash a hundred and eighty-five thousand[73] – why say an angel? Flies and locusts and worms destroyed the army of the Egyptians[74] – how does he need a bow on the spot? How a sword?

Why on earth, then, is such language used? For the reason of the materialism of the listeners,[75] and for the purpose of startling their thinking through the familiar names of these weapons. What need has he of weapons, after all, in whose hand rests the spirit of us all and before whose gaze no one can stand their ground? But, as I said before, this language is used in this way on account of the materialism and crassness of the listeners. Now, what is the meaning of *and he will wield*? He will sharpen. So he has need of a whetstone? Is there rust on the blade? Would anyone with sense be bold enough to take these words in the way they are spoken? As I said before, however, he is outlining punishment in all this, and proceeds to employ materialistic expressions so that even those extremely dull may understand that one should not stop short at the expressions but derive from them ideas appropriate to God. And so if anyone wonders why on earth anger and wrath are mentioned in connection with God, much more will they wonder in this case. If, however, these things are not be taken in the sense spoken but in a sense appropriate to God, it is clear that this is true also of anger and wrath: the materialistic character of the expressions is there to get through to the materialism of the listeners. For this very reason, far from being content even with these words, he proceeded to a still more human manner of expression so as to heighten their fear. That is, he depicts him not only holding a sword but even fully armed. You see, since no one is made fearful to the same degree by hearing that the sword is being sharpened and that the bow is in his hands, he terrorizes the mind of the listeners with the human images in the words, *He has strung his bow, and prepared it*, frightening the listener by indicating God's long-suffering and anger together. He did not say, note, "He fired it," or "He dispatched it," but *He has strung and prepared it*, that is to say, It is ready for firing.[76]

Why are you surprised if this expression is used in the Old Testament when even in the New, in addressing the Jews, John says something similar? "But even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees."[77] So what is this? Is God imitating a woodcutter chopping wood with his axe? Is this the way to take axe and wood? Not at all; neither is it the way to take chaff and grain when he says,

"His winnowing fan is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, and gather the wheat into his granary, whereas the chaff he will burn in unquenchable fire."[78] What then is the axe? Retribution and punishment. And what are the trees? People. What is the chaff? The unworthy. What is the grain? The virtuous. What is the winnowing fan? The judgement. Likewise in this verse sword and bow and arrows are punishment and retribution.

Then he conveys the delay, and postponement of the punishment, though not a long postponement; instead, he presents it as being at the door by the stringing and preparing of the bow. Now, the *instruments of death* refer to arrows. Just as instruments of farming perform farming, those of navigation help us to sail, those of weaving produce woven material, so too instruments of death result in death. Then, to interpret what are the instruments of death, he adds, *his arrows*, showing the rapidity of the punishment, whenever he chooses. What is the meaning of *for those on fire*? For those being punished, for those being chastised. Then is the fire not sufficient, but arrows are required?[79] Do you see that everything is said in a figurative manner and with a view to clarity, and with the purpose of heightening fear in every way? What he is saying, you see, amounts to this: he prepared punishments for those due to be punished. Had he not spoken in this fashion, however, he would not have frightened them to this degree; but by making mention of arrows and swords and bow and despatch and stringing and instruments of death and setting fire, he increased the anguish by the variety of terms. Then, to assuage the fear in turn, he added *for those on fire*. In other words, in case any of the more stupid people should think he was directing his hand against everyone and was armed against all and sundry, he added *for those on fire*. It is what Paul also hinted at in saying of the powers-that-be, "It is not in vain that they bear the sword."[80] Now, if the sword of the powers-that-be has this chilling effect, much more in God's case. Yet this is a mark of no idle lovingkindness, instilling fear and exaggerating punishment in word to prevent their happening in experience of the real thing. This was the reason, after all, that he strung the bow, this the reason he prepared it, this the reason he inserted the arrows, this the reason he prepared himself for retribution, so that

he would not have to proceed to retribution.

He elaborates his message by emphasizing the severity and intensity of the punishment through the term *wields*, its proximity by the term *has strung*, its ineluctable approach should they not change by the term *has prepared*, revealing the guilty parties by the term *for those on fire*, so that he may instruct them by every means and check their wickedness. If, however, these had been indications of anger and rage, he would not have given notice to those on whom he was about to inflict it. Anger, you see, does not allow this to happen; rather, it acts in contrary fashion, especially when it reaches its very peak and turns to punishment and the delivery of retribution. Enemies, at any rate, and those intent on inflicting punishment not only give no clue but even conceal their purpose while mounting attack lest those due to be punished get to know of it and escape. This is not God's way, however – quite the opposite: he gives notice, allows a delay, instils fear by word, and does everything to avoid inflicting what he threatens.

This is what he did also in the case of the Ninevites. There too, remember, he strung the bow, wielded the sword, prepared the arrows, and did not deal the blow. Does it not seem to you that the prophet's words are bow and arrow and sharpened sword when he says, "Three days yet, and Nineveh will be overturned?"[81] But he did not fire the arrow; it was prepared not for firing, after all, but for placing back in the quiver. You see, while soldiers are armed for the purpose of meting out punishment, God on the contrary does not act that way; instead, his intention is to bring us to our senses through fear and to stay the hand of retribution. Let us not be alarmed, therefore; the fear generated by the words is an index of deep lovingkindness, and the more intolerable his words, the more these utterances arise from great gentleness. For fathers, too, when they do not wish to punish their children, put on a fit of anger; and in like manner God himself, not wishing to punish, heightens fear through his words. He says he is also preparing hell so as not to cast us into hell; this is surely the reason also why many statements about retribution occur in the Gospels, more than those about the kingdom. Since, you see, in the case of less perceptive people the promise of good things is not so conducive to vir-

tue as the fear of painful things, and less of a discouragement from evil, for that very reason he is given to dwelling on the latter and constantly adduces it. Consequently, let us not be depressed by harsh words; they have much to offer us, after all. Instead, let us consider his longsuffering and righteous judgement and not give up hope of salvation – he is long-suffering, remember – and let us not lose heart – he is righteous, remember. Herebelow he gives evidence of great long-suffering, whereas there those who have not benefited from it he hands over to the experience of punishment. Lest it happen to us, let us already herebelow forestall retribution.[82]

Lo, he was in travail with injustice (the Hebrew, on the other hand, for *was in travail with* has *"jebal"*), *had conceived trouble* (another version says, "and having become pregnant"), *and gave birth to lawlessness* (another, "deceit"). *He sank a pit, dug it out, and will fall into the hole he left* (another, "into the ruin he had caused").[83] He said that God is ready for retribution; he said that he is inflicting punishments. He brought the listener to his senses by the means of the prospect of the impending anger from heaven. Then he teaches a lesson also from the facts themselves, showing that even before retribution evil itself is a punishment. Paul too, therefore, suggested as much in saying, "Receiving in their own persons the due recompense for their error,"[84] and thus bringing to notice those suffering the extreme penalty for their wickedness. You see, since many of the more materialistic people were normally brought to their senses particularly at the sight of those suffering, hence his reason for giving them attention. Christ too did this, having a lot to say about hell and drawing to our attention those being cast into it, like the rich man in the time of Lazarus,[85] the foolish virgins,[86] the man who hid the single talent;[87] and in this life those who were buried in the ruins of the tower and those whose blood Pilate mingled with the sacrifices.[88] Likewise Peter too had a lot to say about hell, and struck terror into them most of all when he brought to notice those being punished, and before people's eyes demonstrated the retribution meted out to Ananias and Sapphira,[89] as Paul did in the case of the magician.[90] In another way, however, he made a similar point when he recalled those in the wilderness,

speaking as follows: "I do not want you to be unaware, friends, that all our ancestors were under the cloud, and all were baptized into Moses, and ate spiritual food and drank spiritual drink; but God was not pleased with most of them. Instead, they perished and fell."[91] You see, since he was speaking of future things – I refer to hell and punishment and retribution – he provided proof of them also from past examples, bringing to notice the very ones who had been punished, some from snakes, some from the destroyer.

That is exactly what David is doing here, too, speaking either of Absalom or of Ahitophel. I mean, the words, "For my sake spare the young Absalom," and, after the calamity, "Who would give me death in your place?"[92] are not from the same man as these words now. The former he spoke under the impulse of nature, whereas in this case he was inspired by the Spirit.[93] Still, whether he spoke about Absalom or about Ahitophel, what he said deserves attention; in my view the significance has little to do with the characters. What, then, do we learn from this verse? It shows that the one who digs a hole for his neighbor falls into it, and like the women in travail suffering birth-pangs, the one practicing trickery is himself stricken and suffering before wronging the neighbor, not with a twinge but with great severity. So, wishing to present the keenness of the pain, he called the experience birth-pangs. You see, wherever Scripture wants to indicate to us some pain as unbearable, it describes it by the term birth-pangs. Hence, elsewhere too it says, "Birth-pangs gripped the inhabitants of Philistia,"[94] that is, fear, trembling, distress, pain. Again, Paul as well: "Now, when they say, 'Peace and security, the unforeseen ruin befalls them, like the birth-pangs to a pregnant woman'."[95] Here two things are referred to, the unbearable pain and its unforeseen character. Hezekiah too: "Birth-pangs have come to the woman in labor, but she has not the strength to give birth,"[96] indicating by birth-pangs his intolerable fear and distress.

Exactly so the inspired author in this case, too. You see, even should a person be guilty of countless evils, the judgement exercised by conscience is not destroyed; it is part of our nature, after all, having been placed within us by God from the beginning. Even if we dispute its rulings countless times, it keeps on protesting,

punishing, condemning, and there is no one living in sin who does not suffer countless pangs, both in intending evil and in putting the intention into effect. For example, who could be more wicked than Ahab? But all the same consider the great pain he suffered in coveting the vineyard.[97] At any rate, king though he was and with power over everything, with no one to gainsay him, since he could not bear the verdict of conscience, he went home disconsolate, head down, all upset, gloom written all over his countenance, betraying in his face the signs of the verdict of conscience, incapable of concealing the distress affecting him from his disappointment. This at any rate was the way he was interpreted by his wife.

Certainly the traitor, the one driven headlong into such awful wickedness, since he could not bear the pain coming from the judgement of conscience, slipped a noose around his neck and thus ended his life.[98] Since, then, the one living in wickedness suffers such things, so the one living in virtue enjoys tranquillity and peace of mind. Now, consider. If a person wanted to wreak vengeance on someone or perpetrate injustice, see the dire consequences to be suffered. They would be filled with anger, stricken with rage, arouse countless waves of thought, rush down paths beyond number, fear and anguish and trembling seize them, under the onset of anger and the impulse of rage, how to carry it off, how to be avenged; even before the one destined for undoing, it is themselves they ruin. By contrast the person who drives out wrath is freed of all such problems – and rightly so. In this case the person is quite in control, and brings everything to completion; not so in the former case, where instead all depends on time and place, on schemes, mischief, weapons, skullduggery, obstacles, flattery, servitude, pretence. Do you see the ease of virtue, on the one hand, and the problems with evil, on the other? the tranquillity of the one and the turbulence of the other?

This, therefore, was what the inspired author was describing in saying, *Lo, he was in travail with injustice, conceived trouble, and gave birth to lawlessness.* From this he shows that injustice, far from being in keeping with nature, is even foreign to it. Hence it even weighs us down, and until we are free of it, it wraps us in pain. For the fetus in accordance with nature clings to the stomach until it is properly developed; hence it stays put, and has no difficulties. Af-

ter reaching full term, however, if it stays inside, the delay is contrary to nature, and from this pains arise. Accordingly, nature being obstructed makes every effort to expel it, having done everything in its power and brought it to completion, and at this stage is incapable of carrying it any longer. In the one case the conception happened first, and then the birth-pangs; whereas in this case he first had the birth-pangs, and then he conceived and gave birth. So what is his meaning? That in the former case the pain of the birth came at the right time, whereas in this case there was pain from the outset. In other words, as soon as anyone intends some wicked deed, even before fixing it in their mind, upset and tumult invades their mind. With the woman, you see, once a simple seed is implanted, it keeps developing towards the formation of the child to be born, while in the case of the person hatching plots one scheme is implanted today, and tomorrow another; there are countless implantations of these wicked affairs, and day after day conceptions and birthpangs lay waste the mind giving birth to them. I mean, this birth is not as it is with women; instead, like vipers they tear apart the womb, and the young emerge by breaking the ribs. That is what it is like with plots and crimes, too. Struggle as we might times beyond counting, however, we should never succeed in presenting in word the anguish the evil suffer. Hence someone else says, "The evil person, on the contrary, drains the dregs of evil in person." [99] After all, what could be more burdensome and grievous than the lot of the envious, the schemer, the one hankering after others' goods? These passions torture the mind in a fashion worse than any executioner.

And so he was right to call thoughts like this birth-pangs. Yet as women have children as a result of intercourse, and if their bodies are healthy, the chances are the children will be likewise, whereas if the mothers are in poor health, the babies will imitate the condition of the parents, so in like manner is it with our thoughts. If you have intercourse with good people, so will your offspring be; but if with bad people, and do not take care, you will derive much harm from it. Listen at any rate to what the inspired author says: "Through fear of you we conceived in the womb, suffered birth-pangs, and gave birth to the spirit of salvation." [100] But of those coming from the devil, "They smashed vipers' eggs, and weave a

spider's web."[101] Let us therefore shun the wicked. I mean, how is it not absurd, when it is possible for us to conceive and bear children to God's commands, not to wish to do so but rather to go after unions with the wicked, behaving in this like a woman who has the right to have relations with a king but declines and instead in preference to him chooses to take for her mate a brigand and housebreaker?

He sank a pit, dug it out, and will fall into the hole he left. Again he is employing figures of speech: as he conveys the trouble by means of the birthpangs, so by the pit he indicates escape with difficulty. *And will fall into the hole he left.* Another author says the same: "Whoever digs a pit for his neighbor will fall into it."[102] Now, this is a sign of God's lovingkindness, to give to plotting the characteristic that the net encircles those hatching the plots, with the result that they desist from the strife and scheming against their neighbor. This happened in the case of Moses, too. The man due to be done away with, remember, was saved, whereas Pharaoh perished by the very means he planned against the children. Having ordered the children to be done away with, you recall, he obliged the mother of Moses to expose the child out of fear. Pharaoh's daughter took the cradle from the river, discovered the baby and fed it.[103] When he grew up, he destroyed them all. From this incident, too, there shines forth particularly God's inventiveness, the heavy correction of the wicked, and the relief of the fugitives. That is what happened in the case of the noble Joseph, too. After they cast him into slavery, remember, they suffered all the things they suffered without doing him any harm but actually did him a favor, whereas they were subjected to that awful tragedy.

While it is possible to mention many similar examples, consider also other crimes. Has someone committed fraud? They have ruined themselves. I mean, in many cases they helped the one they defrauded, while betraying their own soul. Did someone wrong another? They pierced themselves with the sword. You see, it is not experience of ill-treatment but the actual evildoing that really constitutes suffering. Hence Paul too exhorts us to be wronged rather than do wrong;[104] and Christ exhorts us to accept blows and, far from returning them, offer ourselves for suffering.[105] This is a

mark of great strength, this produces endurance, this achieves strength of spirit, this makes us rise above the passions. You see, the person who wrongs another, striking or abusing him, has first fallen into the power of the passions and is in thrall to them, and then seems to be wronging the neighbor, whereas that very person has suffered a worse fate and has been enslaved in the ultimate slavery.

His trouble will turn back on his own head, and on his head his wrong will descend (v.16). They say that these things refer to Ahitophel and Absalom; the head of each was lowered in punishment, after all. The former used a noose, remember, to put an end to his life, whereas the latter went under a tree, was caught up by the hair, and suspended for a long time. Judas too put an end to his life with a noose in this way, aware that he had committed all the crimes through the wickedness of his own head. Ahitophel, realizing that David had him completely surrounded, went off and hanged himself. Absalom was suspended against his will and not immediately done away with; instead, he was first hung up as though in a courtroom and fixed to the stocks, and with God passing sentence from on high he was suspended for a long time and then scourged by his conscience. Whereas he was longing to bathe his right hand in the blood of his father's throat, his father for his part was urging the soldiers to spare him. [106]

Hence the verse did not arise from empty boasting, because even after his death he mourned him. For you to learn that the way things happened was not due to human exertion, but that the whole legal process was conducted by God, his hair and a tree ensnared him, an unreasoning creature betrayed him, his hair played the part of rope and the tree the part of stocks, and in the place of a soldier a mule brought him to justice. Consider the anomaly: while he was undergoing this ordeal, none of his friends dared approach him and let him down, despite the length of time that ensued. God it was instead who arranged that he should not be taken down nor carried off in bonds to his father, since his paternal pity betrayed signs of a pardon uncalled for. What is really remarkable is that the man who freed the father from the son's clutches did away with the son, as if taking the role of a harsh prosecutor; yet though

he was the one to do away with him, the sentence had been passed by God.

For proof, you see, that the verdict had been given from on high, listen to his way of presenting it; after saying, remember, *On his head his wrong will descend*, he said, *I shall give thanks to the Lord for his righteousness, and sing praise to the name of the Lord most high* (v.17). Let us be thankful, he is saying, not out of satisfaction with the slaughter of others but in acceptance of the verdict from God. Who is able to give him thanks for his righteousness? Now, who will praise him for what he is? No one. What is the meaning of *for his righteousness*? In the sense of "for the reason of his righteousness." I shall sing to the Lord most high. His, after all, are the fruits of victory, his the trophies, not mine. You see, just as in war when the king proves victorious the bystanders sing songs of praise and offer congratulations to him, so shall I do, he says. Hence he did not say, "I give thanks," but *I shall give thanks*, indicating that he has neither forgotten the good results after they occurred nor become more indifferent, but stays alert and is awake, not because God requires this but because it is useful and beneficial to us. In other words, just as he accepted sacrifices, not out of need for sacrifices ("If I were hungry, I would not tell you,"[107] he says, remember) but to encourage respect for him in human beings, so he also receives songs of praise, not needing honor from us but desirous of our salvation. Dear to God's heart, after all, is our growth in virtue.

Now, nothing so moves us to give ourselves to virtue as constantly conversing with God and ceaselessly giving thanks and praise to God. The person who praises God, however, is one struck by his righteous judging, his long-suffering. How his long-suffering, you say, if the tryant was done away with? It really was deep and lengthy. He let him go, remember, for a long time so that he might be moved to repentance; and he entrusted the palace to his keeping so that on seeing the place where he grew up and was reared and the reminders of his father he might be moved to repentance. I mean, had he not been a wild beast and had a heart of stone, all those would have been sufficient to bring him round: the table at which he was a sharer with his father, the house, the council chambers where words were spoken to reconcile him after his

committing that murder; with these there were other signs sufficient to soften his heart. He heard, remember, that his father was roaming as exile and vagrant, that he had endured the most awful sufferings. Now, if these things did not soften his heart, the fate of Ahitophel, his hanging and death, should have brought him to his senses so as to lead him to repentance in view of everything. He was not in ignorance of his friend's fate, after all. Now, what fault did he have against his father in doing these things? That he had banished him from his sight? But on that account he should have been amazed and welcomed the decision to treat mildly one who had proved to be a slayer of his brother. Rather, he had no fault against him; instead, in thrall to an improper lust, despite as well his father's aged condition, which meant his expectations were all but realized, he could not wait even an instant. Yet how did he not give thought to the fact that, if he took arms against him and prevailed, he would lead the most miserable life of all, accursed, unclean, and deprived of his prize?

Where now are those who bewail poverty? How far worse is this fate than poverty? How far worse than sickness? How far worse than pain? These were not the kind of complaints David addressed to himself; rather, he neither bewailed nor lamented in words like these, "What a fine recompense I get for pondering his law day and night, I who once enjoyed such esteem and am now lower than all, I who spared my enemies and am given into the hands of my uncontrollable son." He said nothing like this, nor did he think it; instead, he bore everything philosphically, having as sole consolation in these happenings the fact that they occurred with God's knowledge. As the three boys also said, "But if not, let it be known to you, O King, that we will not worship your gods, and will not bend the knee to the golden image you have set up."[108] If on the other hand someone had said to them, "What is it you hope for as you die? What are you looking forward to, what are you hoping for after death, after the fire (there was not yet any expectation of resurrection, remember, at that time)?" they would have heard, "This is our highest recompense, to die for God." In like manner, this too David considered the greatest consolation, the fact that God though aware of it did not prevent it. A lover, you see, would

choose to be slaughtered ten thousand times for the beloved, even if there were nothing to hope for from her after death.

This is the very reason why we too should undergo all suffering: not in expectation of the kingdom, nor through some other hope of future goods, but for God himself. Many people, however, are still so recalcitrant and slothful as not to aspire to virtue even with the offer of reward. God for his part is not heeded even when promising the kingdom, whereas the devil is loved for procuring hell. What could be more dreadful than such madness? Why do I mention hell? Even in this life, before hell, he is the cause of pain and shame, mockery and countless punishments, and still has many people running after him. Consider at least the adulterer, whose life is more miserable than anyone's, and who even before going to hell is suspicious of everything and scared of shadows, can look no one in the eye, is afraid of everyone known and unknown, seeing before his eyes naked swords, impending death, executioners, bailiffs. Does self-control have anything like that to put up with, even if beset with countless difficulties? Is not the temperate person always content, the adulterer always in pain?

This can be observed also in the case of others – those who surrender to impulse and those who control it, those who rob others and those who give their all for God or, better, send it on ahead. The latter put down anchor in a safe haven, whereas the former are caught in a channel of this world's evils and all day long turn this way and that. Besides these, though, consider the victims of avarice: when old age comes upon them and their intemperance is not sufficient for enjoyment, and the fear of death presses upon them, what terrible pangs they suffer! Virtuous people are not like that, however. Instead, they rejoice and are of good heart most of all at the time when they reach old age, enjoyment not waning for them but rather blossoming. So whereas for the adulterous, the intemperate, the avaricious and the bon vivants age is the death knell of enjoyment, for people living virtuous lives that is the time when enjoyment is heightened. And so even before hell, and before the torments deriving from it, this is also sufficient to depress the mind.

With this in mind, therefore, let us shun evil, choose virtue, love

God, not for what he has but for what he is. Thus in the present life we shall follow the path of virtue, narrow perhaps in itself but rendered broad by the intention of the wayfarers. May it be our good fortune to arrive at its summit, thanks to the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ages of ages. Amen.

[1] Chrysostom's congregations were certainly fed a scriptural diet, by comparison perhaps with others since that time. In his Genesis homilies, he can even allow them to decide on moot points of interpretation. But in the Psalms commentary he laments their lack of acquaintance with the Bible, and especially its narratives. For Chrysostom the moralist, the Bible, especially the Old Testament, is hagiography; not always appreciating the dogmatic purpose of the composers, he sees the Spirit (in the patriarchal narratives, e.g.) "stirring us to emulation and imitation of such fine men" (Hom. 57 on Gen).

[2] A fair summary of Chrysostom's view of the obstacles to spiritual growth: attachment to things of this life and indifference.

[3] Again we wonder why a congregation lacking even a basic acquaintance with biblical narratives is treated to an array of alternative translations, unnamed and unevaluated. Could a marginal paleographic note have crept into the text? Or is a young, inexperienced preacher feeling unsure of himself?

[4] Chrysostom has summarized and interpreted in typically moralistic fashion the incident of Hushai's response to the isolated David's appeal. He shows no awareness of the Deuteronomist's theological purpose in 2 Samuel 15-17, namely, the ineluctable operation of the word of Yahweh despite the machinations of some and the shortcomings of others, including David. To Hushai are attributed pious motives of which the biblical text knows nothing (though this would be germane rather to the Chronicler's purpose: cf 1 Chr 27.33). Preachers, alas, have been known to "use" the Scriptures thus even in more enlightened times.

[5] Like many a preacher Chrysostom can tell a good story, and so he finds the narrative material of Genesis less of a struggle than the Psalms, generally speaking. So here his paraphrase of the story of Hushai's duplicity (despite the pious slant he lends it for his congregation's benefit) is well done – except that he misses the ambiguity of the retort in this verse 2 Samuel 16.18 which would have been grist to his moral mill.

[6] Chrysostom's editor De Montfaucon is quick to point out that the biblical text does not support Chrysostom here, suggesting the supposed remark by Hushai is a lapse of memory, not unexpected in a preacher. We have preferred above to see a preacher swept along by his own narrative skills and prepared to take liberties.

[7] Relating the title to the psalm has, as with Psalm 5, led Chrysostom into a lengthy proemium – perhaps about ten minutes of paraphrase of the Hushai and Ahitophel incident from the Former Prophets, which the preacher clearly enjoyed (if not the congregation, wondering when the psalm proper would begin). Was it worth it? The result: an unduly (even impossibly?) lengthy commentary.

[8] Psalm 63.1.

[9] Ex 3.6.

[10] Psalm 33.16.

[11] Chrysostom again betrays his awareness of other commentators, including those who are prepared to give the text a spiritual sense. As we suggest in Introduction section 7, Chrysostom as a true Antiochene shows reluctance to move from the literal sense into the range of spiritual senses identified (diversely) by interpeters elsewhere in the East and also in the West. The sense he allows here, *kata anagogen*, is probably not the specifically anagogical sense in Cassian's schema, or the typical sense in Gregory the Great's, but just a generally spiritual sense (see my *Making Sense of Faith*, ch.7). As usual he feels the need to justify even this movement from the literal/historical sense with the support of other scriptural statements.

[12] 1 Pet 5.8.

[13] Psalm 91.13.

[14] Cf Lk 10.19.

[15] Cf 2 Cor 2.14-16.

[16] Cf Lk 18.10-14.

[17] Cf Is 1.15.

[18] Psalm 5.5-8. Once again Chrysostom is anxious to uphold the role of human effort in the process of salvation; grace is not quite a gratuitous movement on God's part.

[19] Psalm 4.1.

[20] Cf Acts 10.4.

[21] Mk 7.29.

[22] 1 Kgs 3.11.

[23] Lk 18.13-14.

[24] 2 Cor 12.8-9.

[25] Dt 3.26.

[26] Jer 7.16-17.

[27] Faithful to the principles of Antiochene realism, Chrysostom has his feet on the ground not only in biblical commentary but also in his approach to spirituality. We do not look to him for ascent into mystical experience; in fact, his spiritual guidance of his congregation is of a pedestrian kind, mechanical even.

[28] Chrysostom is referring to the talion law found at places in the Old Testament (and other ancient codes), which Jesus himself quotes at Mt 5.38 and departs from it, as had rabbis of his time, feeling it was harsh.

Chrysostom also takes it this way, though as Joseph Blenkinsopp says of the talion provision in Dt 19.21, "the idea was to restrict indiscriminate vendetta by applying a rough principle of equity."

[29] A conflation of Lk 6.28-29, an understandable liberty for a preacher.

[30] Mt 5.30.

[31] Rom 2.14.

[32] Heb 10.28-29.

[33] Rom 2.12.

[34] Cf 1 Sam 24.7. While we had occasion to remark in note 27 on the pedestrian quality of Chrysostom's teaching on prayer, he really does resonate with the situation of the righteous sufferer in both Old and New Testaments. Is it experience that lends to this commentary on the verse a conviction lacking in other matters?

[35] Jn 15.25; cf Psalms 35.19; 69.4.

[36] Rom 12.18.

[37] It is interesting that Chrysostom in dealing with the angry and even violent person does not invoke religious motivation and remedies as much as those from nature and even self-interest. At this point, too, he seems to refer to counsellors of his time who treat such problems on a similar basis.

[38] Psalm 3.7.

[39] Chrysostom's editors are at a loss to locate a scriptural text exactly corresponding to this cited by him (in which singular "you" and plural "you" are not so clearly differentiated in English). Psalm 92.8-9 perhaps comes closest – and again we make allowances for a preacher's accuracy of recall.

[40] Psalm 9.4.

[41] Cf Dn 7.9.

[42] Psalm 45.6.

[43] Psalm 110.1. Again Chrysostom overwhelms his listeners with a series of biblical texts, this time out of his perennial concern that they should not think of the divine in anthropomorphic terms – advice he offers in connection with the following verse as well.

[44] Once again Chrysostom's display of erudition comes to grief. The Hebrew term he transliterates means "in the rage," the sense of the second alternative reading he cites (that of Symmachus), not "in the boundaries" as his version goes (stemming from another Hebrew word of similar consonants differently vocalized, which presumably his Septuagint text is translating; cf his version of the title to Psalm 5, and note 1 there). "A little knowledge..."

[45] V.7.

[46] Psalm 4.1-2.

[47] V.9.

[48] Psalm 143.2.

[49] Chrysostom here assembles three scriptural heroes whose misfortunes are misjudged by people unable to read God's hand in life's ups and

downs. Not all serve his purpose equally; the case of Job could be strengthened by taking, as the Bible in fact does take, his friends as less positive than represented here.

[50] Acts 28.4.

[51] 2 Sam 16.7.

[52] Warming to the theme of the righteous and misrepresented sufferer, which we noted above appeals to Chrysostom (from personal experience?), he now prepares to move away from the text despite the fact that the commentary on this psalm is already running to great length.

[53] Jn 14.21,23 loosely recalled.

[54] Heb 12.6.

[55] Jn 16.33.

[56] Cf Jn 16.20, to which the addition of "always" strengthens the preacher's case somewhat.

[57] Rom 9.20. We have left the text about the righteous sufferer so far behind that Chrysostom is now contradicting himself. Having begun with the need to discern God's providence behind life's disappointments, he is now reproving any who want to look for explanations. He allows himself to rationalize, but his Antiochene sensitivity to infringement of divine transcendence leads him to discourage his audience from going too far that way. Shortly after, he feels the need to rationalize even this inconsistency – and plunges back himself into his original discernment.

[58] Is 58.2.

[59] Psalm 73.2-3.

[60] Jer 12.1.

[61] Introduction section 3 explains that Chrysostom is using an edition of the Septuagint, of which several developed in antiquity, as distinct from the translations by individuals such as he cites here and elsewhere. It is rare that he acknowledges a different LXX form, as here.

[62] Rom 8.27.

[63] Heb 4.13.

[64] Chrysostom, with the imperfect memory of many a preacher, does not quote his text and its variants in quite the same form as he did immediately before.

[65] Another misguided venture into the Hebrew original, or at least a misreading of a transliteration of the Heb. *zo'em*, "(God) is angry," as *zoen*, "life."

[66] Chrysostom has in mind the not uncommon practice in his time of delaying baptism until a relatively late stage of life. It has been noted how rarely patristic figures make much of the moment of their baptism.

[67] Cf Gal 3.28. Chrysostom began leading his congregation through a daily examination of conscience with a somewhat fulsome account of the dire consequences of distraction at prayer. Now he reverts to rather more serious grounds for provoking divine wrath.

[68] Vv.12-13.

[69] Sir 16.19.
[70] Psalm 104.32. As we have often seen, Chrysostom has no patience with those, like the Anthropomorphites, who would infringe divine transcendence; we have seen him careful not to do it himself in his preaching. But the figurative language of passages like this in the Psalms pushes him to defend his Antiochene position and explicate his hermeneutical principles (see Introduction section 7). His reluctance to concede a sense beyond the literal or historical sense is patent.
[71] Psalm 95.4.
[72] Cf Is 40.22,15.
[73] 2 Kgs 19.35.
[74] Chrysostom may have the plague of locusts in mind, Ex 10.11-17, or the possible cryptic reference to it at Wis 16.9.
[75] It is noteworthy that Chrysostom, the preacher of the Word, envisages the psalms being communicated directly to an audience or congregation, not unlike his own ministry. David is no mere writer for readers – something we should remember in the liturgy.
[76] For an Antiochene like Chrysostom (and his "surprised" audience, evidently) the figurative expression in these verses presents a challenge rather than, as might be true of the other ancient school of interpretation, an opportunity. Still, his Antiochene realism, while making him seem reluctant and concessive in interpreting it, also equips him well through his acceptance of the principle of incarnation to recognize the materialism, concreteness, *pachytes*, of the language, especially the anthropomorphic expressions. On the other hand, his characteristically nitpicking style of commentary runs the risk of demystifying the imagery for his listeners, as a delicate flower or tiny creature does not survive the dissecter's knife.
[77] Lk 3.9.
[78] Mt 3.12. His choice of this NT passage leads him a little further in his interpretation of the psalm verse, giving it an allegorical sense where each item is given individual meaning – a rare venture for Chrysostom (and only with NT support), and he does not dwell on it, but settles for a brief summary of the drift of the passage.
[79] This sentence does not appear in all manuscripts.
[80] Rom 13.4.
[81] Jonah 3.4. In case we think Chrysostom has had another lapse of memory in failing to respect the "forty days" found in the Hebrew text and most ancient and modern versions, we should note that the Septuagint also reads "three," a reading doubtless influenced by the reference to the length of Jonah's stay in the belly of the fish at Mt 12.40.
[82] Commentary on the psalm is blowing out to massive proportions, hermeneusis of vv.12-13 preoccupying Chrysostom, as we have seen, and leading him from his generally moral comment to the less familiar allegorical and finally to a restatement of moral content. There is still, however, no sense of urgency to conclude. If his biographers tell us he was

capable of two-hour sermons, one wonders if his congregations were!
[83] Vv.14-15.
[84] Rom 1.27.
[85] Lk 16.19-31.
[86] Mt 25.1-13.
[87] Mt 25.14-30.
[88] Lk 13.4,1.
[89] Acts 5.1-11.
[90] Acts 13.6-11.
[91] Cf 1 Cor 10.1-5.
[92] Cf 2 Sam 18.5,33.
[93] As we remarked in note 61 on Psalm 4, Chrysostom is unwavering in his commitment to the divine inspiration of the biblical authors. His more frequent term for their being "inspired" is ἐνηχούμενος, (*enechoumenos*), whereas here and rarely elsewhere (e.g., on Psalm 111: *PG* 55,289) the more transparent term ἔνθους, ἔν-θεος (*enthous, en-theos*) occurs. See my "Chrysostom's terminology for the inspired Word."
[94] Ex 15.14.
[95] 1 Thess 5.3.
[96] Cf Is 37.3. Chrysostom is not so literalist in his approach to Scripture and language generally as to be unable to accommodate figure and image (as distinct from allegory) within his acceptance of a literal and historical sense. As in this case, he can speak perceptively of the force of imagery – provided he does not kill its emotive power by dissection. (His ability to elaborate on a biblical narrative he proceeds at once to demonstrate.)
[97] Cf 1 Kgs 21.4.
[98] Cf Mt 27.5.
[99] Prv 9.12. Despite the exorbitant length the commentary is taking, Chrysostom is gilding the lily in his elaboration of the birth image in this verse – and he is not done with it yet. What a poet was lost to Alexandrian exegesis in him!
[100] Cf Is 26.18, Chrysostom's text (and sense) differing from Hebrew and even other LXX forms.
[101] Is 59.5.
[102] Prv 26.27.
[103] Ex 2.1-10.
[104] 1 Cor 6.7.
[105] Cf Mt 5.39.
[106] Chrysostom has lit upon the repeated reference to heads in v.16 and found a significance in it we might question, even allowing for his preference for an historical setting for each psalm. Such preference he seemed to abjure above in commenting on vv.14-15: to the question whether Absalom and Ahitophel were the object of the verses he remarked, "the significance has little to do with the characters" – perhaps a predictable remark for a moralist happy to lift words from their setting, but offset here with his

more usual preference to historicize his moralizing. (Judas's head also serves his moral purpose; does the omission of that more notorious head of Holofernes suggest some sensitivity about canonicity?)

[107] Psalm 50.12.

[108] Dan 3.18. Those opening words of the quoted verse, "But if not," completing as they do the previous verse about the boys' hope that their God would deliver them, strike one as strange here, suggesting the composer of the commentary is reading from a Bible rather than simply retrieving a telling example from memory. This time Chrysostom agrees that belief in resurrection was not generally expressed in the Old Testament.

Psalm 8

For the direction, on the winepresses.
Another version, Triumphal ode on the winepresses.
Another, To the one responsible for victory, on the Getthitis.
The Hebrew, on the other hand, Lamanasse, 'al hagetthith.[1]

O *Lord, our Lord, how wonderful your name in all the earth!* (v.1). Another version, "How great your name!" In the psalm before this he had said, "I will give thanks to the Lord for his righteousness, and sing praise to the name of the Lord most high."[2] Here he fulfills his promise by offering him a hymn of praise. In that former psalm the words were spoken as it were on behalf on one person: "O Lord my God," it says, remember, "in you have I hoped, save me;"[3] here, on the contrary, on behalf of many: *O Lord, our Lord, how wonderful your name.*

Now, keep silence, and listen carefully. In the theater, when satanic choirs sing, a deadly silence falls so that people may hear those dreadful songs. The choir is supported by men acting and dancing, some unholy musician among them leads them in the performance, some pernicious satanic song is performed, celebrating an evil and disgusting demon. In this church, on the contrary, the choir is composed of holy men,[4] the choir master is the inspired author, the song comes not from satanic impulse but from spiritual grace, it is not a demon that is celebrated but God. If that is so, how is there no need to keep complete silence and listen with reverence?[5] After all, we are fellow worshippers with the powers above. Those heavenly choirs, you see, both Cherubim and Seraphim, have this charge, to sing God's praise constantly. Singers from those choirs appeared even on earth in the company of shepherds at their watch. Let us therefore listen to this song too.

When people sing a king's praises on earth, they speak in terms of his rule, of his trophies, of his victory, of conquered peoples, of defeated foreign races, and the like. This blessed psalmist sings a similar hymn of praise: he tells of victory and trophy, and battles waged, not like those others but far more difficult. See how he begins: *O Lord, our Lord.* You see, whereas of others who do not believe in him he is lord in one fashion, he is doubly so for us: creating from what did not exist, and being known by us. And see how from the outset he cites the summit of his beneficence. I mean, if you learn how he became your lord, in winning over the hostile and giving life to the dead and dying, you will see clearly that this is the summit of his beneficence.

Struck by this, then, the inspired author says, *how wonderful your name,* that is, really wonderful. To what degree wonderful, however, he did not say; measuring it, you see, was beyond him – instead, he had recourse to exaggeration and hyperbole. Where are those who busy themselves with prying into the being of God? You see, if on mentioning his name he was so full of wonder as to be amazed, what excuse would those people have who claim to know his being while the inspired author does not succeed in discovering even to what degree his name is wonderful? *How wonderful your name.* Through this name, in fact, death was dissolved, demons imprisoned in bonds, heaven opened, gates of paradise thrown wide, the Spirit sent down, slaves made free, enemies become sons, strangers become heirs, human beings become angels. Why speak of angels? God became man, and man became God; heaven accepted the nature from earth, earth accepted the one seated on the Cherubim along with the angelic host. The wall was removed, the partition dissolved, what were separate were united, darkness was banished, light shone, death was swallowed up.

Aware of all this and more than this, the inspired author cried out in the words, *How wonderful your name in all the earth!* Where does that leave the children of the Jews, who act shamelessly towards the truth? I would be glad to ask them, in fact, about whom these things are said. About the Almighty, they will say. But it was not his name that is wonderful in all the earth. Isaiah testifies to this in the words, "Because of you my name is profaned among the nations."[6] Now, if those honoring him proved responsible for

his being profaned, how was it wonderful? That it is wonderful by nature is clear; yet among human beings at that time it was an object not of wonder in most cases but even of contempt. That is not the case now, however; on the contrary, when the only-begotten Son came, everywhere his name was wonderful along with the Christ. "From the rising of the sun," Scripture says, "to its setting my name is praised among the nations;"[7] and again: "In every place incense is offered to my name and a pure offering, but you profane it."[8] Another author says, "The whole world together has been filled with the knowledge of the Lord."[9] And again, "They will come claiming, Our fathers got for themselves false images."[10] Do you observe that all the references are to the Son? It is his name, note, that has become wonderful in all the earth.

Your magnificence has been exalted above the heavens. Another version: "You have displayed your praise above the heavens." You see, since he made mention of earth, he redirects his attention also to heaven, something he invariably does, revealing the whole world praising its Lord. This in fact is what he reveals here too in saying, "Wonderful herebelow, wonderful on high." I mean, it is not only human beings but also angels who laud what has happened, and give thanks for the benefits conferred on mankind, something they did from the beginning, mounting a choir on earth. It is either this, therefore, that he is saying, that angels also sing praise, or else he wishes to bring out God's greatness. You see, whenever Scripture wants to say something remarkable, it gives prominence to the distance between these elements, as when it says, "As the height of the heavens above the earth," and again, "as far as the east is distant from the west, he removes our sins from us."[11] In this verse, accordingly, he is amazed at the events, how mighty, how extraordinary; he has arranged, that is, for the being inferior to all to be superior to all.

Out of the mouth of infants and sucklings you have brought complete praise (v.2). Another version: "Out of the mouth of babes you have laid the foundation of power." Another: "You have formed strength." Now, what he means is something like this: Here most of all you have displayed your strength, exerting your irresistible force, and rendering the faltering tongue unmistakable in its confession. The hymn-singing by the children in the Temple,[12] remem-

ber, he prophesies at this point. Why is it, pray, that while passing over the other marvels, raising of the dead, cleansing of lepers, expulsion of demons, he recalls the marvel of the children? Because those things happened before this, and even if not so, they also had something in common, even if not of the same fashion. I mean, a corpse was raised in the time of Elisha and a leper cleansed,[13] and a demon driven out in the time of David, when Saul was possessed;[14] whereas a chorus of suckling children spoke up for the first time then.

So let not the Jew be shameless in claiming that these words were spoken about the events in the Old Testament, choosing a sign happening for the one and only time then. Especially as these events were a type of the apostles: though being infants and more speechless even than fish, they hooked and landed the whole world. Yet for proof that this most of all is God's power, see also in the Old Testament the inspired author saying this about the Father himself. In conversing with Moses, remember, he says, "Who has made people deaf and mute, seeing and blind?"[15] And again, "Giving a clear tongue to the stutterers."[16] And again: "The Lord gives me a tongue for teaching, for knowing when I should speak the word."[17] And in the beginning he says, "Come, let us go down and confuse their speech."[18] So the proof is extensive and convincing. You see, in the other cases, being shameless they might cavil at something, unreasonable though that would be, whereas in this case they would have nothing to object to, the very nature of the case in its starkness confuting them. That was the very reason that he did not simply say *infants*, lest anyone should think he was referring to guileless and rather simple creatures; instead, he added *and sucklings*, revealing their age by the addition of the feeding. He did not simply say *infants*, you see, but those at the breast, not yet partaking of solid nourishment. Consequently, this is wonderful, not only because they uttered a cry, and an unmistakable cry, but because it was rich with good things. I mean, the praise that the apostles had not yet sung the children gave voice to. From this fact another matter is hinted at as well, the need for those coming to the teachings to become children in their thinking. After all, unless you accept the kingdom of heaven as a child, Scripture says,[19] you cannot enter it.

On account of your foes. He states also the reason why this marvel happened; some, you see, did not happen on account of the enemies but so that those making an approach might enjoy benefits and others be instructed. This one, on the contrary, happened for the sole purpose of stopping the mouths of the enemies; another version identifies them more precisely in saying "On account of those shackling you." They were binding him to the cross being carried, remember. *To destroy enemy and avenger.* Another version: "So as to make an end of your enemy, who wreaks retribution even on himself," referring here to the Jewish people. You see, while they drove out the Christ as their enemy, they pretended to be avenging the Father in doing this. Hence to deprive them of this excuse he said, "Whoever hates me hates my Father also,"[20] and again, "Whoever believes in me believes in the one who sent me,"[21] in one way and another associating the Father with himself in honor and dishonor. Note the precision of the inspired author: he did not say "to punish" but *to destroy,* which another version explains more clearly in saying "to make an end of," that is to say, to annihilate their shamelessness, not to teach them; the disease they are suffering from is incurable, after all. Seeing this marvel, at any rate, and having no grounds for contradicting it, they turned to him with the words, "Do you not see what it is they are saying?" Though they then should have reverenced him and expressed wonder, they were instead greatly at a loss; while they ought to have said to one another, "Do you not see what it is they are saying?" they discharged themselves of this obligation and said it to Christ. Why was it not a voice from angels that was uttered? Because that would have seemed to them an illusion, whereas this they had no grounds for contradicting. Now, what did the children say? Nothing troublesome or annoying, nor calculated to upset them; only something revealing in particular his harmony with the Father: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."[22]

On that occasion, therefore, he destroyed their shamelessness, but later their city; and there is no part of the world that is unacquainted with the misfortunes of the Jews. Instead, it is like the situation with a crippled body: it goes about everywhere, displaying its disabilities. And as judges in executing a number of murderers impale one so that with their death the living may come to

their senses through these sufferings recently inflicted, so too in this case he made an example of them, not of the dead but of the living. It is not one place that they inhabit; now they are scattered in all parts of the earth. If you ask the reason, you will find none other than the crucifying of Christ.[23] Why, tell me, did it not happen as they say? If it had happened sometime, however, they would have been separated in one nation, in a few years; now, on the contrary, it is not like that – they suffer unending punishment. If you ask them, "Why did you crucify the Christ?" they reply, "For his being an impostor and a sorcerer." Should you not have been honored for this and gained additional territory as people pleasing to God? I mean, the one who does away with an impostor and sorcerer does away with an enemy of God; and who does away with an enemy has a right to enjoy esteem. Now the contrary is true: whereas Phinehas was so esteemed by God for doing away with a harlot as to be granted even the priesthood,[24] you instead, who ought be esteemed more than he, at least on the score of doing away with an impostor, wander about in all directions as vagabonds and outlaws. So your sufferings are due to no other cause than the fact that you crucified your champion and benefactor and teacher of truth. I mean, had he been an impostor and adversary of God, and instead of being God had wished to be God, and had arrogated to himself the majesty of God, you should have been esteemed more than Phinehas and Samuel and all those who showed such zeal for the Law. Now, however, what you never suffered as idolators, as profaners, as infanticides, you suffer now, and there is no relief from those troubles, in thrall as you are to the laws of the Romans as vagabonds and exiles and fugitives, roaming earth and sea, wanderers and nomads, homeless and enslaved, having forfeited freedom, fatherland, priesthood and all the rights you enjoyed before, dispersed amidst savages and countless other races, hated by all people, loathed, vulnerable to abuse by everyone. And rightly so: you are not in receipt of reward for disposing of God's enemy; that is stuff and nonsense. What you suffer now, in fact, is the lot, not of those who do away with God's enemies, but of those who destroy his friends.

But they retort: "Friend, it is for our sins that we suffer these things." Are you now admitting to being disobedient? Which sins?

Tell me. I mean, surely it is not now for the first time that you have sinned? It is only that now you have become more reasonable. But this is not yet the case; I would rather put it to you, Why is it that while constantly sinning you previously experienced lovingkindness from God, but now no longer, and – what is even more contradictory – because you are now sinning less? After all, in those days you had yourself initiated in the rites of the Baal of Peor,[25] you worshipped a calf,[26] slaughtered your sons, did away with your daughters,[27] despite having the benefit of signs; whereas these days you do not behold a sea parted, a rock split, prophets arising, you do not enjoy the customary providence, and yet you give evidence of greater reasonableness. So what on earth is the explanation why, when your sins are less and your good sense more, punishment and retribution are worse? Is it not crystal clear even to the utterly stupid that it is because your sin is now worse? I mean, as long as you sinned against the servants, you met with pardon, even though killing and stoning prophets; but when you laid hands on their Master, then an incurable ulcer affected you. Hence four hundred years have now passed since the city was destroyed down to its very foundations,[28] the priesthood wiped out, kingship terminated, separate tribes abolished, all those august and famous institutions brought to an end, leaving you not a trace – something that never happened before. In the beginning, on the contrary, when the Temple was destroyed, there remained the prophets, the Spirit's gifts and miracles, whereas now, for you to learn clearly that God has irreversibly turned away from you, even these have been taken. Servitude, captivity, deprivation of everything has befallen you, and what is worst of all, abandonment by God.

God did this in the manner of someone dealing with a headstrong slave, who, frequently chastised without reforming, is stripped of his clothes and allowed to wander naked as vagrant and nomad, begging and rejected everywhere. Previously, on the contrary, your situation was not so desperate: you had prophets among you, in Egypt, in Babylon, in the wilderness – Moses in Egypt, in Babylon Daniel and Ezekiel, in Egypt again Jeremiah. Marvels were added to marvels, the people became more prominent, captives from your ranks became more elevated than kings. But now all those advantages are gone, and retribution is worse

than before, not only because of passage of time but also through your dereliction of duty. So why is it, tell me, that when you sinned more you enjoyed such providence, whereas when, as you claim, you were so observant of the Law your sufferings were worse? On these grounds, in fact, you convict God of injustice in showing esteem for you in your sin but punishing you for your proper behavior. You see, if you did away with an impostor, as you claim, you behaved properly; or, if God is just (as he certainly is), he ought to esteem you, not punish you; but if he punishes you, it is obvious that your sins now are worse. Now, if at present you do not act profanely, nor kill your children, as before, what other sin is there on account of which your sufferings are worse? Is it not obvious that the monstrous episode of the Cross was the climax of your evil? This was more the cause of your downfall than idolatry, making a calf and killing of children. There is no comparison, after all, between killing your own son and crucifying your Master. For this reason, when you killed your sons, you enjoyed lovingkindness; but when you killed God's Son and your Master, then you were punished as undeserving of pardon.

How many years from the Exodus from Egypt up to Christ's coming? I think there were fifteen hundred or more. So how is it that he put up with you in all these sins, whereas he has banished you now when most of all he should have awarded you the crown, even if you were guilty of many sins? The achievement was far and away your greatest, after all, if in fact you had killed an impostor. But as well as this you seem now to keep the sabbath, not worship idols, and are particular about observing the other commandments.[29] So when your life is better and your achievement such as you claim, then it is you suffer extreme hardship. What could be more ridiculous than this madness? Than this stupidity, blaspheming against God in your wish to concoct a defense of your own? I mean, if the sin against Christ were not worse than all those but even a righteous act, as you claim, and an act of virtue, why on earth does he punish you in your virtue but spare you in your sin? This is something, after all, that God or even a human being in their right mind would not bring themselves to do.

But what have they to say in response to this? He banished us so that we might become teachers of the world. Stuff and nonsense. Those, you know, who are due to be teachers must first them-

selves be virtuous in performance and then be sent on that mission; such were the prophets, the apostles. But they were so perverse and full of every wickedness, how could they be dispatched as teachers? Let us see, then, what their life was like even before this. We will find, in fact, that they were more troublesome than wild animals. They proved, remember, to be parricides, infanticides, idolatrous and grasping; the inspired writings abound with these crimes. Jeremiah highlights your lust in the words, "They proved to be lusty stallions; each one was neighing after his neighbor's wife."[30] What could be worse than this lasciviousness? They were not like human beings in mating with other people's wives; hence he called their frenzy neighing. He accuses them not only of immorality but even of adultery, and this committed without restraint, as in the case of brute beasts. Another inspired author says, "They went into the woman and made coverings; son and father to the same girl."[31] So why, tell me, did he send you for us to learn immorality and adultery and that father and son should share the same bed? And what of Ezekiel? "What you have done is not even in accord with the custom of the Gentiles."[32] Did he, then, send as teachers those who were worse than Gentiles? Tell me. Who could bear their blood crimes? I mean, sons and daughters they sacrificed to demons, and incinerated them. David too reveals this in saying, "They sacrificed their sons and daughters to the demons."[33] Was it for these crimes he sent them out, for human nature to learn that sons should be slaughtered, and daughters too? Are you not ashamed, do you not hide your face when you contrive such absurd claims? After all, another author says, "You shed blood upon blood; cursing and falsehood and theft and murder and adultery are poured out on the earth."[34] Another says that "you have acquired a harlot's visage, ashamed of nothing."[35] Again, another: "Your rulers are like wolves of Arabia."[36] Yet another: "There is no one with sense, there is no one seeking after God. All have gone astray, together they have proved good for nothing."[37]

So was it this you went out teaching – shamelessness, folly, immorality, adulteries, homicides, every road to evil? Do you not cease to oblige us to flaunt your evil practices? You are the ones "borne from the womb and instructed up to old age;"[38] you are the blind, casting one another into a pit. "If a blind person leads a blind per-

son," Scripture says, remember, "both will fall into a pit."[39] Would you, who constantly had the benefit of the prophets without ever becoming better for it, intend to be teachers of others? Will you not stop speaking so foolishly, and acknowledge your evil? This, after all, has ever been your downfall, not being prepared to know even the basis of your sins. This is the precise reason for judges' practice of bidding people follow behind those sentenced to scourging and cry out in explanation of the reason for the scourging, whether theft or rape. In just the same way God too has you accompanied everywhere, bidding the inspired authors follow behind you to explain the reason for punishment.[40] Everywhere in the world, note, they are bound to you, even to this day crying out to you. Even if you enter the synagogue, you will hear them ceaselessly making these statements. David for one says, in foretelling that piratical court of Caiaphas, that it was for this reason that you came to grief; his words, remember, were: "Let us burst the bonds they have imposed on us, and cast their yoke from us," to which he added, "Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his anger."[41] Isaiah too, after saying, "Like a lamb he was led to the slaughter,"[42] added, "I shall give the wicked for his tomb, and the rich for his dying;"[43] and again elsewhere in speaking about the vineyard, "I waited for it to do righteousness, but it did lawlessness, not righteousness but shouting."[44] Now, what shouting? "Crucify, crucify!"[45] And he adds, "I shall knock down its fence and it will be trampled on; I shall command the clouds not to shed rain on it."[46]

So this was not the reason you were dispersed; rather, for the outrage on the Cross, as is clear also from the inspired authors. For you to learn the power of Christ and learn from yourselves the lesson you did not take from the inspired authors, take note at least of the evidence of events. I mean, what the Law did not teach you the power of Christ achieved in abundance. After all, as long as you had the Law, you killed, sacrificed your children, committed adultery; but when the sun of justice shone, many of your evil practices diminished and you adopted a more reasonable way of life, reforming in emulation of us. Hence he dispersed you, so that you might learn the style of life he had produced on earth; he destroyed the Temple, drawing you away from evil even against your

will. On the spot where the Temple was demolished Christ was buried so that as you moved away on account of that tomb you might see the monument to his power and that word borne out which said, "Not a stone will remain upon a stone in this place."[47] Everywhere, in fact, there are his trophies and the reminders of his power. If, however, as you claim, he was a profaner and an enemy of God, even if you had committed countless sins, it would not have been necessary to be punished in that way; yet even if necessary, not at that time, in case anyone should think you were paying the penalty for that crime. Did you not hear God saying, when you were in captivity, that "it is not for your sake that I do it, but for mine, in case my name be profaned?"[48] And yet at that time your wickedness was aggravated. Nevertheless, he says, in case the savages think I am weak, I pass over your sins and save you. Whereas he then saved you in your lawbreaking at that time lest his name be profaned, at this time on the contrary did he not do so? I mean, even if you had committed countless sins, you should not have suffered anything like this, provided Christ was an impostor, lest anyone think that was the reason you so suffered; instead, you ought to have been saved. But even if you had to suffer, as I said before, not at that time.

Now, however, these things have happened together. I mean, when the Cross proceeded, the apostles shortly after went out, and immediately a bitter assault was made against that city; the omen in the Gospels, "Woe to women with children at the breast or pregnant," and all those similar things took effect; and that omen, "Then there will be such distress as has never occurred before,"[49] was fulfilled. Women ate children, remember, the enemy ripped open the bellies of corpses, a savage fire spread everywhere, everything was covered in blood, there were unheard-of tragedies, the whole world was filled with Jewish evils. Considering this, therefore, acknowledge your Lord. Did you not murder the prophets? Did you not suffer such a fate? Did you not overturn altars? Did not such a disaster befall you? Did you not worship a calf, become initiates of the Baal of Peor, and deny your nature? Have you not experienced such wars? Were you not saved despite your ingratitude in the midst of these benefits? So whence have these countless troubles come upon you? Is it not crystal clear to you that it is because you

rose up against the Master, not the servants? On that score there is no relief from the evils befalling you, nor will there be. Had there been, you realize, the inspired writers would have foretold it. As it is, however, they spoke of captivity, nowhere of return, even though they constantly mingle pleasant things with punishments and set limits. Jeremiah, remember, set a limit of seventy years,[50] and Daniel likewise three and a half weeks;[51] and it had been foretold that they would serve 430 years in Egypt.[52] About this captivity, however, time or limit is nowhere set; instead, your house is left bare, and your fortunes get worse as each day passes.

Giving precise consideration to all these matters among yourselves, and enlarging on their theme ("Give the wise an opportunity," remember, "and they will be wiser"),[53] you will be able to censure their shamelessness and ingratitude. *Because I will look at the heavens, the works of your fingers* (another version, "In fact, I see the heavens"), *moon and stars which you have set in place* (another, "you have prepared;" another, "you have placed").[54] After saying, "You have destroyed your enemies," he provides the proof of this conspicuous victory. You who were crucifed, he is saying, note, you who were done away with, have emerged as creator of the world. Hence he says, *I will look at the heavens*, indicating that previously not many knew this, whereas later all will know it. Why did he not proceed to all parts of the universe? Because having touched on the more relevant of visible things, there was no need of teaching about the others. Accordingly, the point of his foes being destroyed was that the one who was driven out and done away with by them should emerge as creator of all visible things. And why did he not say "your hands" instead of *your fingers*? To show that visible things are a work requiring the least power, and the extraordinary aspect of creation, namely, that the stars hang there without falling; at any rate, though the very nature of the foundations required, not that they be suspended above but lie below, still the excellent architect and creator produced a surprise in making most of the visible things surpass the logic of nature.

Why does he have nothing to tell us of incorporeal powers, and from them reveal his creation? Because for the time being his concern was that they learn about the visible things. Hence the Father too, in communicating with the Jews on this and that, does not say,

I made the angels and the Cherubim, but "I stretched out heaven; my hand laid the foundation of the earth, my right hand made it firm," [55] and he always spends his whole discourse on the visible things, treating everything systematically with a view to the salvation of the listeners. You see, since they were rather materialistic, they were led on from the visible things rather than the invisible. For this reason, too, Paul's invariable practice in opening his public speaking was to take as his point of departure the words, "O God, maker of heaven and earth and sea, and of everything in them;" [56] he invariably took his theme from the periodic rains and from the human race. You see, if I were to say that he made the Cherubim, two matters would require attention, both the fact that there are Cherubim and that he made them, whereas in the case of the visible things, I need only demonstrate that he made them.

Hence the discourse is simpler, having as it does visible confirmation as witness of the words. I mean, the listener sees their magnitude and beauty, their use and position and regular movement. As so it is my concern to show that God brought it into being. What is the reason that he makes no mention of the sun, but only of the moon and stars? The main reason was that in saying this he hinted also at that. You see, since some people set the night apart from God's creative activity, by mention of the moon he confirmed it, demonstrating that he is creator also of it. Both the variety of the stars and of the phases of the moon are no little confirmation.

What is it about human beings that makes you call them to mind, or children of human beings that makes you consider them? [57] Another version: "What is it about each man that makes you remember him?" Another, in place of "consider them," says "will consider them." After speaking of creation, and hinting at the whole from the part, he then inserts a reference to the care for human beings. Even those former statements, after all, were made with a view to the human race, even though bearing on his providence; all of creation, you see, is for the human being. Except, however, that it is a different form of providence he exercises, and on this topic he inserts the reference not idly but with great deliberateness, giving thanks for the world, and speaking of all his bounty and the magnitude of the dispensation carried through in their regard. You see, if the human being was nothing previously, much more so when Christ came, after so many terrible sins. He shows that the coming of

Christ, far from being unrelated to sparing them, arose from deep lovingkindness. It was, in fact, like some skillful physician who left those in good health to come to us in our illness, being of no consequence. This at any rate is what he indicates by saying, *What is it about the human being?* instead of, "It is nothing, it is something worthless." Taking full account, note, of such marvellous care and such wonderful providence on God's part, and the arrangements he put in place for the salvation of the human race, he is struck with complete wonder and amazement as to why on earth he considered them worthy of attention. Consider, after all, that all the visible things were for their sake. For them the design implemented from the time of Adam up to his coming; for them paradise, commandments, punishments, miracles, retribution, kindnesses after the Law; for them the Son of God became man. What could anyone say of the future they are intended to enjoy? So all those things are going through his mind when he says, To be thought worthy of such wonderful privileges, what must the human being be? I mean, if you consider what was done and is being done for their sake, and what they will enjoy afterwards, you will be stricken with awe, and then you will see clearly how this being is an object of such attention on God's part.

You have made them less than angels only by a little (v.5). Another version: "less than God by a little." Another: "somewhat less than God." Now, the Hebrew reads "*Outhasreou mat me eloeim.*" Here he alludes to the condemnation and the ancient sin by giving attention to death. But this too the Only-begotten destroyed by his coming. *With glory and honor you have crowned them.* Another version: "With glory and dignity you will crown them." This can be taken in both a literal and a spiritual sense. He is referring in fact to the control entrusted to human beings when they were created; he is referring also to the later benefits they enjoyed following the coming of Christ. In the beginning, remember, they heard the words, "Your ways and the dread you inspire will affect every beast on earth;"[58] also, "Let them have control of the fish of the sea;"[59] and later, "Walk on snakes and scorpions."[60] But leaving those aside, he develops his thought from more lowly examples, leaving the other ideas for the consideration of those capable of grasping them more keenly.[61]

You see, the glory and the honor that occur in the New Covenant are greater, when they have Christ as head, when they come to fulfilment in his body, when they become brother and co-heir with him and achieve resemblance to his body, when they receive greater glory than Moses, as Paul explained. He showed that, unlike Moses' recourse to a veil, instead God's face would be revealed and all would contemplate his glory;[62] and hence he also says, "What once had glory has no glory now compared with the exceeding glory."[63] Hence the inspired author speaks of this glory in a spiritual sense. I mean, what could be its equal, when we join the angels in a choir of praise, when we are brought into sonship, when not even the Only-begotten is spared for our sake? Is there any purple robe, is there any diadem found to be more brilliant than these privileges, when we mock at death, when we are raised to the immunity from passion enjoyed by the incorporeal powers, we who once enjoyed no honor, no glory, only loathing? Adam enjoyed honor from the very moment of his creation, without having done anything evil or anything good. How, after all, could he have done it, not being in existence? Whereas in our case, despite being guilty of countless crimes, we enjoyed far greater honor. "No longer," Scripture says, "do I call you servants; in fact, you are my friends."[64] No longer are the angels ashamed of us; instead, they even minister to our salvation. An angel came to Philip, remember,[65] and to many others; they announced good news to mankind.[66] Our inheritance is not on earth, however; rather, we are sharers in heavenly goods, partners with Christ, called into fellowship with the Only-begotten.[67]

All this he implies by reference to glory and honor. Hence he also said, *With glory and honor you will crown them,*[68] forecasting what was to come. *You appointed them in charge of the works of your hands* (another version: "You have caused them to have authority over the works of your hands"). *You have put all things under their feet, all sheep and oxen, even the beasts of the field* (another version: "the wild beasts"), *the birds of heaven, the fish of the sea, the creatures that travel the paths of the sea. O Lord, our Lord, how wonderful is your name in all the earth* (vv.6-9). Just as in speaking about creation he does not only touch on the powers above but brings his remarks to bear on material things as well, so also in teaching about the honor done to human beings, after hinting at those ineffable bodiless crea-

tures which he had enumerated, he now spends more time on material things, for the reason that they are clearer to more materialistic people than those others.

Now, what are they? The earthly control given to human beings, and the really remarkable fact about it, as he had hinted at in particular, namely, that the creature that had enjoyed honor before the Fall God did not deprive of honor even after its sin. The text says, remember, *You have made them less than the angels only by a little*, that is, you condemned the sinner to death; you did not really strip them of the gift when you condemned them to death. This surely is the reason why after saying the former thing he adds the latter, to show God's lovingkindness beyond all telling in allowing them, diminished even though they were by their own sin, to be crowned with the honor of glory, and in not abolishing their control. If he did subtract some little thing, however, that too was a mark of his solicitude. Whereas before their disobedience they ruled the wild beasts, after their disobedience a little of this authority was withdrawn. I mean, they rule them even now by certain skills, but with fear and trembling. He did not remove their control completely, you see, nor permit it entirely; instead, whatever animals were required for nourishment and labor he allowed to remain submissive, but no longer the more savage animals, the purpose being for them to be given by the contest a reminder of the ancient sin of their first parent, Adam. And hence great benefit accrued to us even from their not being very submissive to us. I mean, what good would it be to have the lion submissive and tame? What benefit would it be to have the leopard meek and mild? None; it would only be pride and stupidity. For this very reason he allowed those animals to remain out of control, whereas the useful ones he made submissive to us, oxen for ploughing, sheep for covering the nakedness of our bodies, beasts of burden adapted to transporting our wares, birds and fish so that our diet might be richer.

You see, just as a man by disinheriting his son deprives him not of everything but of a part so as to bring him to his senses, in just the same manner too with God – or, rather, not the same manner: quite the opposite. I mean, when a human being disinherits someone, he deprives him of the larger part and leaves with him with the smaller. God, on the other hand, left the larger and deprived

them of a little part, and did this for their good, lest they prevail over all the others too easily. This too is an index of God's care, however: by heightening their wisdom, depressing their arrogance and undermining their idleness (they would become unruly, after all, if it was all too easy), he mixed some difficulty as well with the advantages of life, and allowed them to enjoy life neither beset totally with problems nor freed totally from them. Rather, things conducive to their good he let them have free of trouble and exertion, but things conducive to indulgence accompanied by trouble and exertion, desiring as he does to undermine a false sense of security on our part.

If, however, someone were to ask, "But what good are the wild beasts?" we would reply, firstly, they produce in us humility of spirit, keep human beings on the alert and remind them of the extreme arrogance of their nature when the brute beast proves fearful to them. As well, many medicines for ailing bodies come from them. The person raising the question, why on earth were wild animals made, will ask also why at all do we have phlegm and gall? After all, these complaints, when aggravated, turn out to be more troublesome than wild beasts, and cause damage to the whole body. Anger lurks within us, and desire likewise; these cause worse harm than wild beasts to people not repressing and checking them. And why mention anger and rage when even our eye enfolds us in sufferings worse than wild beasts, piercing us with a dangerous lust? For this reason, however, we shall not ask, "Why were these animals made?" Rather, we shall give thanks to the Lord for them all. In other words, what a leash is for a child, a wild beast is for human beings. I mean, if despite being constrained by such threats most people are carried away into awful arrogance, consider the excesses to which evil would advance if even this constraint were removed. That is the very reason the body we have is made vulnerable to disease and suffering, under siege to many problems; the earth surrenders its produce with difficulty; life is quite full of hardships. Since life is a school, and leisure and idleness prove the downfall of most people, consequently he added occupation and effort for us as well, so that the impulses of our mind might be checked as though by some bridle. Now, consider that both the creatures that swim through the depths and those swept up on high the Lord brought into submission to you by your skill. Why

at all did the psalmist not proceed to mention all the visible things, crops and seeds and trees? From the part he implied the whole, and left treatment of them to the scholars. Once again he concludes in the same way that he began, *O Lord our Lord*, applying the same words before the proof as after the proof. Accordingly, let us too be utterly constant in saying the same words, marvelling at his care, amazed at his wisdom, his lovingkindness, his providence for us.

While these things have been said by us as commentary, you may prefer that we conduct our treatment in more polemical fashion,[69] and ask the Jews, "Where did the children sing their song? Where did such a song destroy an enemy? When did his name become wonderful?" But they would not be able to nominate another time than this, which demonstrates more clearly than the sun the force of truth. Hence he says, *I will look at the heavens, the works of your fingers,* though in any case Moses had already said that "in the beginning God made heaven and earth."[70] These considerations and those mentioned before, however, suffice to deal with the Jews. But since those uncircumcised people who imitate and emulate their ideas, namely, the followers of Paul of Samosata, say that Christ belongs to the time when he came from Mary, let us also ask them how, if Christ is of that time, he created the heavens. The psalmist, after all, here says he is the same person who brought forth complete praise from infants and babes at the breast and made the heavens. If, however, he is creator of the heavens, it follows that he was before them; he did not take his beginning from Mary, but was even before Mary.

Consider the wisdom of the inspired author: he does not present him simply as creator, but creating with great facility. *I will look at the heavens, the works of your fingers* – not that God has fingers, but to show that the visible things require the least power, teaching by terms we have grown up with the truths that are above us. For when he also says, "He measures the sky with finger and thumb and the earth in his fist," he says so, not to imply fist and finger span, but out of a wish to present the infinity of God's power.[71] So how do some people presume to assert that the Son is subservient? After all, the one who exerted not even the whole of his power when heaven had to be made – why do I say whole? Not even the least, just the very slightest – how could he be subservient? How subservient if "whatever the Father does, that too the Son does

likewise?"[72] I mean, how "likewise" if one is subservient and the other creator? How does the psalmist claim the works are Christ's in saying at another time, "From the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands,"[73] whereas here he says *I will look at the heavens, the works of your fingers*? They are in fact the works not of subservients but of creators; if someone is subservient, the work is not attributed to that person but to the one who creates. So too the words spoken previously by Moses were spoken about the Son, namely, "In the beginning God made heaven and earth" and "Let them have control over the fish of the sea."[74] The one, you see, who brought forth perfect praise from the mouth of infants and babes at the breast is the very one who visited the human being. What, therefore, Moses says about the Father, Paul takes with reference to the Son, demonstrating great equality.

So when it is possible for the saints to attribute indiscriminately to the Son what is said about the Father ("All things were made through him," remember),[75] where at all does the term "subservient" occur? You would find it nowhere. Yes, he claims, the saying reads "through him." What, then, of the fact that the same thing is said also of the Father? Listen to how it is: "God is faithful, and through him you were called into fellowship with his Son."[76] And again: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, through the will of God."[77] And again: "Because through him and from him and for him are all things."[78] Now, why do they claim he is subservient? So that we may honor the Father. Yet the Son says, "So that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father."[79] Now, it is clear that the one who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, either. So why, you ask, do I speak of the Son as the Father? I do not. He did not say, after all, In order that you may call me Father. What then? In order that you may honor the Son remaining as he is as you honor the Father. If, on the contrary, you were to speak of the Son as Father, you would confuse everything. Consequently, by preserving this distinction honor is given jointly. The reason, you see, that he spoke of Son and Father was for you to avoid confusing the persons. Now, if there were not the same substance, how would equal honor be required?

So why, you ask, does Christ make mention of many humble matters? To teach us humility, and for the reason of the human

condition and the Jews' lack of perception, and because of the need to lead the human race gradually to understanding, and on account of the immaturity of the listeners; he especially makes such remarks on many occasions with the listeners' queries in mind. The more elevated things, after all, are an index of dignity alone; rather, whatever you say about God is greatly inferior to that being, and is a mark of considerateness.[80] I mean, what would you like to say about God? God is great. But this is a trifling remark in respect to God: greatness as far as it goes is finite, whereas God is infinite. This is a trifling remark in respect to God. I mean, the fact that he is infinite I know, but what he is or where he is I do not know. Even if you say that he is wise, that he is good, and these are infinite attributes, you would said nothing worthy of that substance, and yet we must in our language arrive at a sense appropriate to God. Accordingly, if these so comprehensive attributes do not do justice to his dignity, what excuse could they lay claim to who presume to limit even these?

So let us shun their gatherings; and when we come to learn his origin before all ages, his creative power, his absolute authority, his unchanging relation to the Father, the considerateness of his dealings with us, the varied nature of his providential care of us (all of this, after all, and much more the treasure contained in the psalm teaches those of us who attend with assiduity), let us hold fast the precision of the teachings and give evidence of a worthy way of living so that we may attain to the future goods. May it be the good fortune of all of us to be granted this, thanks to the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit be honor and glory for ages of ages. Amen.

[1] As we noted in regard to the title on Psalm 5, the Septuagint and therefore Chrysostom (and evidently some other ancient versions) failed to recognize the titles as musical directions. Modern translators and commentators admit ignorance of the sense of the Hebrew term *gittith;* Chrysostom's eighteenth century editor De Montfaucon thought it referred to a musical instrument, whereas the ancients chose to see in it the Hebrew "gat," winepress.

[2] Psalm 7.17.

[3] Psalm 7.1.

[4] Chrysostom seems clear that participants in both these holy and unholy assemblies are male ἄνδρες (*andres*).
[5] A point seems to be being made about the need for silence in church – a natural concern for a preacher with something to say, especially if he can claim the psalmist as authority for it. Is there a particular problem in Chrysostom's church on this occasion, or is is just a stock-in-trade remark, albeit reiterated? (See Introduction section 4 for the manner of recital of the psalm on these occasions.)
[6] Cf Is 52.5.
[7] Mal 1.11.
[8] Mal 1.12.
[9] Is 11.9.
[10] Jer 16.19.
[11] Psalm 103.11-12.
[12] Cf Mt 21.15-16.
[13] Cf 2 Kgs 4.35; 5.14.
[14] Cf 1 Sam 16.23. In his anxiety to give the psalm a Christological bent, Chrysostom wants to relate this verse of the psalm to the children praising Jesus in the Gospel accounts, and is not content to confine the implied marvels to the Old Testament as his hypothetical Jew might prefer. His rationalizing is rather tortuous, as he grudgingly admits.
[15] Ex 4.11.
[16] Is 35.6.
[17] Is 50.4.
[18] Gen 11.7.
[19] Mt 18.3.
[20] Jn 15.23.
[21] Cf Jn 12.44.
[22] Mt 21.9. In fact, these were the words of the crowd before Jesus' entry into Jerusalem; in the Temple what the children cried out was "Hosanna to the Son of David" (v.15).
[23] Chrysostom's hostility to the Jews of his day and of his vicinity is justified here and elsewhere (e.g., on Psalm 110) both deductively and inductively: the Jews crucified Jesus and so deserve to suffer; the Jews are suffering wherever you find them, and so must have sinned. The depth of his feeling on the subject is suggested by the way he warms to his theme, the point of the verse left far behind. (See Introduction, section 6.)
[24] Cf Nm 25.6-15. In fact, the act of atonement that Phinehas got credit for was disposing in one blow of an Israelite man, named in the text, and the Midianite woman, named in the text, whom he had taken into his tent. Chrysostom, speaking to his male congregation, chooses not to mention the former.
[25] Cf Nm 25.3; Hos 9.10.
[26] Ex 32.
[27] Cf Psalm 106.37-38.
[28] De Montfaucon, who places this commentary during Chrysostom's

period in Antioch, notes that he is quite wide of the mark in his chronology here; but four hundred sounds more impressive than a figure closer to three – even for this advocate of precision. (Soon after, he makes a similarly generous estimate of the period since the Exodus.)

[29] The psalm long forgotten, Chrysostom is so carried away with his polemic against the Jews as to keep going around in circles, in the course of which he pays them indirect compliments about the benefits given them by God in the past and their contemporary observance.

[30] Jer 5.8.

[31] Amos 2.7, with an obscure reference not found in the Hebrew or some LXX versions.

[32] Cf Ez 5.7.

[33] Psalm 105.37, a bloodthirsty text Chrysostom has already quoted – perhaps a stock-in-trade jibe.

[34] Cf Hos 4.2.

[35] Jer 3.3.

[36] Perhaps a collation of similar verses from Zeph 3.3 and Ez 22.27, excusable in a preacher.

[37] Cf Psalm 14.2-3.

[38] Cf Is 46.3-4.

[39] Mt 15.14.

[40] Does Chrysostom see himself following in this tradition and discharging this role? There is a smugness also in his later remark that Jews of his time had, by comparison with Old Testament practices, "reformed in emulation of us."

[41] Psalm 2.3,5.

[42] Is 53.7.

[43] Is 53.9, where LXX differs from our Hebrew text.

[44] Cf Is 5.7.

[45] Lk 23.21.

[46] Is 5.5,6.

[47] Mt 24.2.

[48] Ez 36.22.

[49] Cf Mt 24.19,21. For the following horrific detail Chrysostom could be calling upon legendary accounts or the books on the wars with Rome by the contemporary Jewish historian Josephus.

[50] Cf Jer 29.10. The biblical authors, of course, speak often of "return" ἐπάνοδος (*epanodos*), particularly from Exile, as in this passage from Jeremiah; but Chrysostom is obviously referring to relief from the punishment he sees ensuing from the Crucifixion.

[51] Dan 9.24. The Hebrew speaks of seventy weeks (of years) at this place, as do the Greek versions generally. Chrysostom may have picked up his three and a half from the vision in Dan 7 of the reign of Antiochus IV, where this number in being half the perfect number 7 suggests a period of evil – not Chrysostom's intention at this point, but also not atypical of imperfect recall by a preacher.

[52] Cf Gen 15.13, where in fact the figure cited is 400.
[53] Cf Prv 9.9. There seems an implied apologia on Chrysostom's part here for his "enlarging on the theme" of v.2, or even bypassing it, in the interests of his extended, heated and repetitive digression/polemic.
[54] V.3.
[55] Cf Is 48.13.
[56] Acts 17.24 somewhat elaborated.
[57] V.4. Chrysostom's text speaks of the human being, *anthropos*, leading modern inclusive versions (like the NRSV and ours) to opt for a plural to preserve that nuance; another ancient version that he quotes (more sexist than he) renders the Hebrew in terms specifically of the male, *aner*.
[58] Gen 9.2.
[59] Gen 1.26.
[60] Lk 10.19.
[61] As an interpreter of the psalm, Chrysostom is in a quandary here. He concedes the verse can be taken in a historical (or literal) sense and in a spiritual sense; the latter, which his tradition does not encourage him to develop and yet to which his recent polemic against the Jews entices him, he has to admit is not faithful to the psalmist's concentration in the following verses on the "more lowly examples" from nature. But he cannot resist making some passing comparison of Old and New dispensations.
[62] 2 Cor 3-4.
[63] 2 Cor 3.10.
[64] Cf Jn 15.15.
[65] Cf Acts 8.26.
[66] Cf Lk 2.10.
[67] 1 Cor 1.9.
[68] This time Chrysostom quotes v.5 in a different form from above, confused by his own array of variant versions.
[69] Chrysostom, sincerely or otherwise, gives the impression here that he is resisting a desire in his congregation to hear him tilting further at doctrinal errors and opponents (as if he had not already strayed from his commentary at great length to that end). Paul of Samosata, of course, was no contemporary teacher, having been condemned for his trinitarian errors at the synod of Antioch in 268; so in the Christological debate that ensues here Chrysostom can hardly claim urgency of need. Has he simply found that this psalm has insufficient to offer the commentator on its own?
[70] Gen 1.1. For Chrysostom Moses is the author of Genesis.
[71] Cf Is 40.12. Once again these two principles of Chrysostom's scriptural commentary are enunciated: respect for divine transcendence, and acknowledgement of divine considerateness for human limitations (*synkatabasis*). He might (though here he does not) proceed to relate these to the Incarnation in confutation of this deviant thinker.
[72] Jn 5.19.
[73] Psalm 102.25.
[74] Gen 1.1,26.

[75] Jn 1.3.
[76] 1 Cor 1.9.
[77] 2 Tim 1.1.
[78] Rom 11.36.
[79] Jn 5.23.
[80] Chrysostom's insight into the limitations of human language, and in fact of all aspects of "the human condition" he refers to here, is coupled with his appreciation of divine transcendence and considerateness, as mentioned in note 71. He is thus able to see how theological error can arise through linguistic or intellectual shortcomings, though he suspects malice on the part of some individuals and groups, like the assemblies of followers of Paul of Samosata. This psalm, which for much of the time has receded into the background, he finally claims as a "treasure" of theological propositions.

Psalm 9 [1]

For the direction, on the son's secrets. A psalm of David. [2]
Another version, A triumphal ode on the son's death.
A psalm of David. Another, of the son's youth.

I shall confess to you, O Lord, with all my heart; I shall describe all your marvels (v.1). This is a long psalm. Now, the wisdom of the Spirit determines that: he did not make them all short, nor draw them all out to great length. Instead, he varied the book suitably, rousing us in our indifference with a lengthy one, and alleviating tedium with some brevity. [3] *I shall confess to you, O Lord, with all my heart; I shall describe all your marvels.* Confession takes two forms: condemnation of one's own sins, or thanksgiving to God. Now, what is the meaning of *with all my heart*? With utter enthusiasm, with zeal, he is saying. Not for prosperity's sake – quite the contrary. This, after all, is a particular mark of thanksgiving, this an index of a sound attitude, rendering thanks amid difficulties, giving glory for everything, not only for benefits but also for punishments. This, in fact, is the means to greater reward. You see, in giving thanks for good things you discharged a debt, whereas for bad you put God in your debt. In other words, the person who was well off and acknowledged the favor discharged a debt, while the one who was in trouble and gave glory created indebtedness. In response to thanksgiving of this latter sort, therefore, God bestows many other good things time after time, with the result that we are left with no sense of hardship. No one, after all, is distressed about the things they are grateful for, the result of this being that we gain a further benefit, ridding ourselves of discouragement. I mean, when you lost your possessions and gave thanks, the loss could not cause you pain to the extent of the joy caused by the thanks. This deals a deadly blow to the devil: it puts our thinking

on a sound basis, and ensures we have a correct estimate of worldly affairs.

Many people, you see, do not have a correct appreciation of the things of this world; as a result they also feel discouraged. It is like deranged people fearing what is not fearsome, often being frightened of what is not real, and running from shadows. People dreading the loss of wealth resemble them. Fear, in fact, comes not from nature but from choice. I mean, if such a development were distressing, all those suffering the loss ought be troubled; but if not all those of us affected are troubled, in this case the trouble comes not from the nature of things but from the immature attitude. For example, just as someone in the dark is frightened of a rope, thinking it is a snake, is suspicious of everything, and regards friends as enemies, so too people of limited intelligence, as though overcome by profound darkness, instead of recognizing the nature of things become trapped in the mire, not treating grass as grass; full of avarice they do not notice the stench, whereas if they get out they detect it then. And like people spellbound by an ugly woman, who realize her deformity on coming out of the spell, so too are the avaricious smitten. How, you ask, will I succeed in coming out of the spell? Once again I shall employ the same example of the man spellbound by the ugly woman: if he has constant association with her, he feeds the furnace, whereas if he distances himself gradually, the passion will gradually diminish. So too in your case: distance yourself gradually, give in to the inclination only slightly, and gradually the distance will become considerable. Make but the beginning of reform. Do you have a house you do not need?[4] Sell it, and give the proceeds to the needy, considering not that your house has gone to others but rather that it has gone to your own. Think not of the loss but of the gain, not that you have been deprived of it herebelow but that you will be master of it in that other place.

In this way you will succeed completely in describing God's marvels. This, you see, is what the psalm speaks of from the beginning. Avaricious people, for example, are not free to devote much time to this: they are completely taken up with interest, contracts, bonds, goods for sale, wills, prices of properties, prices of houses, profits, shops; there is no end to talking and thinking about them.

Now, where people's treasure is, that is where their heart is, too.[5] They talk about these matters, they care about these matters; and just as servants care about their master's affairs, so too this person cares about the Master's affairs: what was his bidding? What job has been done? What job is not yet done, and needs to be?

Hence I exhort you, once freed from that obsession, to devote yourself to those stories, each day describing the different marvels worked by God, affecting you and affecting the community, for the good of all and for the good of each individual. The events of daily life, after all, are replete with these stories;[6] wherever you make a start, you will see your beginning turn into a gushing flood, be it from heaven or earth or air, from brute beasts or seeds or plants; whether you choose to describe ancient favors, before the Law or under the Law or in the age of grace, whether what accompanies our departure from this world or during death itself, you will find these countless floods of stories. So what utter stupidity would it not be for people who have such wonders to describe, which give rise to enjoyment and profit and benefit, to defile their thinking in the mire by telling rather of avarice and rapacity?

If you prefer, let us leave aside the things on high and talk of the earth, its magnitude, its position, its advantages, its nature, its constant giving birth, the variety and diversity it offers in its produce, seeds, grasses, plants, flowers, meadows, gardens.[7] Of these things let us further make a distinction between trees according to each one's appearance, position, height, fragrance, fruit, season, usefulness, and take into account all the other aspects, the fruitfulness and lack of fruitfulness of the earth itself. No part of it is useless, after all: it bears iron, bronze, gold, silver, not to mention spices and medicines of all sorts and varieties. Who could tell of the usefulness of water both potable and brackish, the advantages of the mountains, the mines of the various rocks, the springs to be found in them, the trees suitable for roofing and building? All this is the fruit of wilderness;[8] this it is that brings forth living things and beasts. Who could tell of the creeks, the springs, the rivers? You see, as women who have given birth enjoy a flow of milk to provide nourishment for their offspring, exactly so the earth puts forth for orchards and gardens the rivers and springs like breasts, and provides ample watering. But whereas with women the child has

to move to the nipple, in this case by contrast it puts forth the breasts all over and showers the nourishment from on high.

Wilderness has another advantage, too. It is more suited to the health of the body, providing purer air to breathe, and the possibility of surveying the whole world from on high, of reviewing one's values in solitude, and of gaining a respite from life's concerns. Who could tell of the birds that sing, the way the animals live that are there for the hunting? Wilderness has another advantage, too. It often takes the place of walls for farms, with mountains stretching up to heaven, with ravines and cliffs. Who could tell of the grasses growing in them, providing an important service to ailing bodies? But if the usefulness of solitudes and mountains is so great, the abundance of good things so great, if you touch on the arable land and the sloping plains, think of the amount of sources for your stories. I mean, just as in our body there are bones and nerves and flesh, so too on the earth some things are mountains, some ravines, some rich farms, but all of them are useful. Why mention the earth, such a wonderful element? If you wish to mention simply a single tree, its appearance, its usefulness, its fruit, its foliage, its season, all its other characteristics, you will find plenty of material for description; if you mention the position of the mountains, all the other natural beauties, if you proceed to include in your account human beings themselves, the shaping of their very body, you would find countless oceans of stories arising there as well.

Accordingly, let us give time to these matters; from this will come the greatest enjoyment, from this profit, from this sound thinking beyond words. Hence to suggest as much he added, *I shall find happiness and shall rejoice in you* (another version, "and take pride"). *I shall sing praise to your name, O Most High* (another, "I shall sing to your name").[9] This is no small index of sound values, finding happiness in God. I mean, the one who finds happiness in God, as should be the case, drives out every earthly pleasure. Now, what is the meaning of *I shall find happiness in you*? Having such a Master, he is saying, is pleasure for me, is rejoicing for me. If anyone experienced such pleasure as should be experienced, they would take no account of any other pleasure. This, after all, is pleasure properly speaking; at least as far as all other things are concerned, they are pleasure in name only, bereft of substance. This lifts human

beings above this world, this liberates the soul from the body, this gives it wings in heaven's direction, this elevates it above worldly things, this gives freedom from evil, and rightly so. You see, those who aspire to bodies that are radiant have no sense of worldly things but are interested in one thing only, the longed-for vision; what in future will people who love God as he ought be loved take notice of in this life, helpful or harmful? Nothing. Instead, they will be above it all, taking delight in imperishable things, especially since the one they love is of that nature. After all, people loving those other things are quickly if unwillingly brought to a point of oblivion since what they love perishes and wastes away. By contrast, this love is infinite, everlasting, possessing the greater pleasure and the greater gain; furthermore, the lover is encouraged by the fact that this will never be destroyed.

I shall sing praise to your name, O Most High. This is a particular habit of a lover. Those in love, you know, sing songs to their beloved; even if they are not in sight, they comfort themselves with the song. That is just what the inspired author does: since it is not possible to see God, he composes songs to him, holding converse with him in song, stirring up desire, and gaining the impression of seeing him – or, rather, stirring up the desire of many people through the singing of hymns and songs. In other words, just as lovers recite the praises of their beloved and bandy their names about, exactly so does he in the words, *I shall sing praise to your name, O Most High.* See how he lifted himself up from the earth, and raised his whole person towards that being, directing himself to God. Hence he keeps his name constantly on the move, this after all being the way with a lover.

When my enemy is turned backwards, they will lose heart and perish before your face (v.3). Another version, "When my enemies are turned back, stumbling and disappearing from your sight." This, too, is a particular mark of a lover, talking continually of favors received and taking pleasure in them; it both arises from affection and also arouses affection in turn. Now, you would not be wide of the mark in saying he is speaking here of enemies as he imagines them. They too, note, are turned backwards when they encounter a noble spirit. I mean, just as a spear that strikes a shield pierces it if it is soft, whereas it has no effect if it is firm and repellent but bounces back

with its point blunted, so the same thing happens with the spirit. That is to say, if the shafts dispatched by the devil encounter a spirit that is soft and flabby, they penetrate to the depths, whereas if it is firm and stronger, he goes away unsuccessful, having done nothing harmful to it. The benefits are twofold, or rather three: he has done it no harm, but rather made it stronger, and has also emerged from the episode weaker himself.

Now, notice how he proclaims God's strength: *They will lose heart and perish before your face.* Once more, on hearing "face," do not form an impression of anything bodily. At this point, in fact, he is suggesting God's power, his manifestation, the facility of his strength. Just as he says elsewhere, "He gazes on the earth and makes it tremble," [10] so here too he says the same thing. His gaze, you see, is sufficient to destroy his enemies. I mean, if the presence of holy people renders demons' power feeble, much more God's. If a flash of his lightning strikes terror into everyone, consider that indestructible power of his, how it terrifes, how it destroys the wicked.

Do you see the style of hymns? Do you see the form of praising, and how he is talking about his power? By this means he is teaching us no insignificant truth in saying, *I shall sing praise to your name, O Most High. When my enemy is turned backwards.* What is it, then? That not only in hardship but also in easy times he was on the alert. Many people, remember, who fall on evil times become more zealous, whereas in good times they become more indifferent and lax; as the psalmist says about the Jews further on, "When he took their lives, then it was they sought him out." [11] This man is not like that, however; he stays awake and alert. Now, this is of no little help towards sound thinking.

Because you have awarded me judgement and a verdict in my favor (another version, "you have been my advocate"). *You have sat on your throne giving right judgement. You have rebuked the nations, and the unholy one perished* (another version, "you destroyed"). *You have wiped out his name for ages of ages* (vv.4-5). Note once more the man's sound thinking, how he himself wreaks no vengeance on the enemies but yields to God's judgement, observing the apostolic precept, "Do not avenge yourselves." [12] It is not only this you can see, but also the fact that he suffered this fate unjustly. After all, if he

had not suffered unjustly, God would not have avenged him. *You have sat on your throne giving right judgement.* He speaks in rather human terms by mentioning throne and seat, whereas the phrase *giving right judgement* is customary with God and expresses something remarkable of his essence. I mean, it is not something you can say in connection with human beings. They do not consistently give right judgements, you see, even if they are righteous over and over, ignorant as they are of what is righteous, sometimes from incompetence, sometimes from laziness. God, on the contrary, is free of all these impediments; knowing and willing a righteous verdict he delivers it. So the phrase *You have sat on your throne* means You have judged, prosecuted, taken vengeance.

You have rebuked nations, and the unholy one perished. You see how he has no need of weapons – sword, bows, arrows; rather, those things are mentioned in more human fashion. After all, God has only to censure, and those destined for punishment perish. For you to learn his might, however, listen to what follows: *You have wiped out his name for ages, and for ages of ages.* You have utterly destroyed, rooted up and so wiped them out that memory of them has also disappeared.

The enemy's swords have finally failed (another version says, "the ruins," while the Hebrew is *Arboth*). *You have destroyed cities* (v.6). What does this mean? That in foiling his plotting and planning you have left him bereft of his own weapons. God's anger is like that, you see: it razes and destroys everything. Or what another translator teaches us in saying "deserts," implying that he razed not only their inhabited places but also their uninhabited places, and laid waste their cities. Such, in fact, is the way the righteous man waged war, such the way he put down his foes, not employing light and heavy weapons but enjoying grace from God. Hence for him the war was glorious and famous, and his victory overwhelming.

Their memory disappeared with a crash. Another version, "with them," while the Hebrew is *Em.*[13] What is the meaning of *with a crash*? He speaks of utter ruin, or the enormity of the evils. And this is actually a mark of God's care, that he does not do this secretly, so that some people should become better from others' disasters. So he indicates the notoriety of the ruin.

The Lord remains forever (v.8). Another version, "will be seated." Being seated, you see, is often used to express abiding being, as Jeremiah also shows in his words, "You are seated forever." [14] The Hebrew here is *Jeseb*. The inspired author refers continually to the destruction of humanity, demonstrating the interminability of their being, and that whereas the human race is perishable, their being and greatness are without end. Now, God does this to make fear come upon them, so that they may tremble before him on two counts, for the greatness of his glory and for the worthlessness of their being, and also in consideration of his abiding forever and punishing ever in marvelous ways. If, on the contrary, something also needs to be said in a spiritual sense, that is not be discouraged.

In some things, you see, it is possible to find a fuller sense, whereas others should be understood only at face value – for example, "In the beginning God made heaven and earth." [15] Other statements, by contrast, are to be taken differently from the surface meaning – for example, "Spend your time with the stag you love, with the filly that has won your favor;" and again, "Let these things be yours alone, and let no stranger share them with you, your well is for you to drink from." [16] I mean, if you take this saying as it occurs and do not depart from the surface meaning but stay at that level, it reflects little humanity, the counsel to share water with no one. The sense, however, is to do with one's wife, to find enjoyment in her in moderation, calling her a spring and a stag, out of regard for the chastity of marital intercourse.

That is true of this verse, too, while in other places we must take the words as we find them, and the meaning arising from them, like this example, "As Moses lifted up the serpent." [17] We must accept that this happened – it did happen, in fact – and what meaning comes from it, namely, a type of Christ. So at this place too you would not be wrong to take these words in reference to Jewish history. *You have sat on your throne giving right judgement. You have wiped out his name for ages, and for ages of ages. The enemy's swords have finally failed, and you have destroyed cities. Their memory disappeared with a crash.* The fate of those who crucified Christ is notorious everywhere in the world and their cities destroyed; the devil's wiles are defeated, and Christ's providence has overtaken every-

thing. These considerations, however, we should leave to the scholars to work out, and proceed to the next verse.[18]

He prepared his throne in judgement (another version, "he placed it for judgement"). *He personally will judge the world in righteousness, he will judge peoples in equity* (vv.7-8). Do you see how he gradually elevates his theme? I mean, after he mentioned a throne, he reveals the kind of throne, not composed of timbers or of any material thing, but of righteousness. In righteousness he is seated, it says, note: *He will judge the world in righteousness.* He foretells both present and future things. That is, while the general judgement is reserved for that time, the particular is for this; after all, he puts many things into effect here and now lest the heedless form the impression that present realities do not fall under his providence. If, on the contrary, not everyone receives their crown in this life, do not be surprised. "He has prepared a day," remember, "on which he intends to judge the world,"[19] whereas for the present there is arena, contest, struggles. Hence not everyone receives their just desserts; instead, rewards are reserved there for those who do well and punishments for those who fail. Here, on the contrary, forebearance and long-suffering, so that sins may be wiped away through repentance. For even murderers, while they are on this path, have the power to change and be free of punishment; but once they fall under the verdict of the judge, then comes sword, executioner, gallows. Likewise here, too: as long as we are in this present life, it is possible to change and escape retribution; but once we arrive there, our tears will count for nothing.

He has prepared his throne in judgement, note. Now, if you were to take this word *he has prepared* at face value, you would not be wide of the mark: all is in readiness, after all, to do with punishments and crowns and verdict. There is no delay or passage of time or slowness on God's part, since the living do not by any means have precedence over the departed, as Paul says: "We the living, who are left alive for the coming of the Lord, will by no means have precedence over the departed."[20] See the inspired author's wisdom, how he tells of present things, how future things. Present: *You have rebuked nations, and the unholy one perished.* Future: *He has prepared his throne in judgement. He personally will judge the world in righteousness.* Now, he does this so that those unconvinced by those realities will accept the proof from present ones.

The Lord has proved a refuge for the poor (v.9). Another version, "for the worn out;" another, "for the bruised." He constantly calls himself poor and beggarly, despite his being in a palace. So too elsewhere, "But I am beggarly and poverty-stricken."[21] He was aware, you see, he was well aware that all human things have less substance than a shadow, and that nothing belongs to us in such a way as virtue does, whereas all other things are like leaves attached to us on the outside. The fact that virtue belongs to us, you see, is clear from this: wherever we go, we take it with us, but not those other things – so it belongs to us to a greater degree, whereas those other things are far removed. As therefore we say that what is close to us belongs to us, so we call virtue ours to a greater degree than money, since it is always close to us.

Now, take note, I ask you, of the psalmist's prudence and his spirit of sound values: though possessing horses, armies and countless other resources, he bypassed all those and wins grace from on high, and attributes his salvation to God. He did not say, note, "My armies have proved your refuge, nor money, nor ramparts;" instead, *The Lord has proved a refuge for the poor.* He personally established me in safety, he is saying; nothing in fact is equal to that refuge on the score of ease and security. The other refuges may be subject to scheming, and cannot be found promptly and readily, but are obstructed by time and place and countless circumstances; this by contrast you find close at hand, provided only you search for it diligently. "Even while I am talking to you, lo, I am at hand,"[22] remember; and "I am a God close by, not a God far off."[23] Consequently, there is no need of running around or travelling about; rather, those sitting at home can gain this refuge. Sometimes he rescues people from danger, sometimes he renders them more conspicuous and more powerful than their adversaries, in both cases at the appropriate moment. Whenever the beneficiaries behave with moderation, he supplies both benefits. If, on the contrary, they do not exhibit virtuous behavior to a high level, he confines himself to one benefit lest by the addition of the second they fall into lazy ways. Now, for you to learn that this often contributes to lazy ways, Hezekiah got carried away on that score; still, instead of even disregarding him in that way, when success in battle went to his head, God supplied him with the corrective that comes from illness.[24]

Help in good season, in tribulations. What is the meaning of *in good season*? In time, he says, at an opportune moment. He calls it a good season on two grounds, because he brings help and because it is in time. He calls tribulation good season here, note. Why on earth? Because it is the mother of sound thinking, rescues a person from death, and most of all wins God's grace. At that time indifference is removed, and dissipation too; at that time we are made more zealous about supplication. As winter is a suitable time for tilling the earth, so is tribulation for caring for our soul. While we always have need of his help, even in prosperity, it is particularly so when we are in tribulation. *Help*: he implied something else as well in this word, namely, that we too should be active. In other words, the helper lends help to the one who is active. So we should not give up, but offer our prayers, our alms, and everything in our power. For it is to fighters that allies lend help, not to those who have given up and lie idle. If, then, you want to enjoy assistance from God, do not give up what you have to offer. This was the way Job, too, was helped, standing firm and offering all kinds of resistance; likewise with the apostles, who remained busy.

Let those who know your name hope in you (v.10). Another version, "they will trust." The inspired author does this constantly, changing his words from prayer to exhortation as befits a teacher of the whole world, who proposes the treasure of his teaching in public. Rightly did he say, *Let those who know your name hope in you.* In other words, those who know you, he is saying, your support and assistance, have hope in you as sufficient anchor, sufficient assistance, impregnable tower, the one who not only promises relief from problems but does not permit us to be alarmed by the problems even when present. You see, people who are rid of human concerns and dependent on hope from above not only secure for themselves the speediest liberation from problems but are not even alarmed and disturbed by the problems themselves, helped as they are by that unassailable hope. This, at any rate, was the way with the three children: they were not only released from the furnace but were not even alarmed during their time in the furnace.[25] They experienced, you see, assistance from God. Hence another version says, "they will trust," that is, they will have confidence. Greater, in fact, than the sway based on fear is the security based on hope

in God. The one is human, the other divine and invincible. When he said that he proved a help, that he proved a refuge, he also shows how. How, then? When we remain constant in our hope in him. If, however, he does not relieve the problems at once, this too proves to be for your testing. You see, just as it happens that, though quite capable of not allowing troubles to beset you, he does allow it so as to make you stronger, so too, though quite capable of giving you relief from the outset, he delays and postpones so as to heighten your vigor, exercise your hope and make your recourse to him more zealous. His invariable custom is not to permit you to suffer tribulation to the point of growing weary, nor enjoy relief to the point of giving up.

Because you have not abandoned those who seek you out. Another version, "You, after all, have not abandoned." And another author says, "Look back on the generations of old and see who hoped in the Lord and was confounded? Or who called on him and he abandoned him?"[26] How is God to be sought, being everywhere as he is? With zeal and enthusiasm, and freedom from all worldly concerns.[27] You see, we are unaware of many of the things we have before our eyes and in our hands; instead, we run about in this direction and that, searching for what is already in our grasp when our mind is set on something else. So how can we seek God? When we earnestly direct our mind in that direction, when we free it from worldly interests. The seeker who drives out everything from the soul moves towards what is being sought. We must not simply seek but seek out. Those who seek out do not only take it on themselves to conduct the search but enlist other aids to finding what is sought. But in the case of worldly things we often do not find what we have sought for, whereas in the case of spiritual things this is impossible, as it is inevitable that the searcher makes the discovery. In fact, if we merely make the effort towards searching, God will not permit us to be rebuffed; hence he says, "Everyone who seeks finds."[28]

Sing praise to the Lord, who dwells in Sion (another version, "who is seated"). *Announce among the nations his doings* (another, "among the peoples his schemes").[29] What do you mean? Does the one whose throne is heaven and his footstool earth, in whose hands are the bounds of the earth, dwell in Sion? Yes: he refers here to his

dwelling, not for him to be circumscribed (his greatness, after all, is unbounded) but to indicate his affinity with the place and his feeling at home there with a view to winning the Jews over to him through this considerateness; for with us, too, a home is so called on account of our feeling at home there. He is also said to dwell in us, not because he is circumscribed by us, but because he is at home with us. Now, in a spiritual sense Sion refers to the Church: "You have approached Mount Sion," remember, "and Church of the firstborn." [30] Rightly is the Church called a mountain on account of its being firm, solid and unshakeable. You see, just as it is impossible to shake a mountain, so too the Church of God. *Announce among the nations his doings.* He wants them to be heralds of God's favors, and never conceal his favors. He always looks for this, for the sake both of the speakers and of the listeners; it is of benefit to latter and former, after all, provided they give heed.

Because the one who avenges blood remembers them (v.12). Do you see which doings he refers to? His favors. He also touches on an important truth here: there is no murder committed that goes unpunished and is not fully avenged. Moses indicates as much in Genesis in the words, "I will avenge your blood." [31] This is proof of his boundless providence, of his intense care. Yet if he does not promptly take vengeance, do not be surprised: he gives the sinner the opportunity of repentance. *He does not forget the cry of the poor.* Note once again the esteem in which the poor are held. Now, he is referring not simply to the needy but to those poor in spirit, as Christ says. [32] These most of all are heard when they pray, you see, the humble and contrite of heart. Now, he stipulates two things, prayer and humility. "On whom will I cast my gaze," Scripture says, remember, "if not on the humble, the still, the one who trembles at my words?" [33] Everywhere you will find humility to be the basis of prayer. The Lord, you see, is near to the contrite of heart. And so the one who prays must be rid of resentment, as Paul also says in the words, "Without anger and dispute." [34] Well did he say *the cry of the poor*, meaning by *cry* the state of mind, not the tone of voice; by the phrase *He does not forget* he indicated that they were calling on him constantly without gaining their object straight off. So what is his meaning? Do not think that God has forgotten and hence he has not taken vengeance; it belongs to God

to investigate such matters, after all, even if no one implores him, but when they do implore, and the plaintiffs are humble, much more so.

Have pity on me, Lord, see my lowly state at the hands of my enemies. You are the one who raises me from the gates of death so that I may proclaim all your praises in the gates of the daughter of Sion (vv.13-14). Another says, "singing of your hymns;" another, "your songs of praise." See him given constantly to prayer: though freed from troubles and made secure, he does not cease from praying again in the words *Have pity on me*, and implores him for future benefits. You see, we always stand in need of God's providence, but especially at a time of freedom from troubles. I mean, another battle follows which is more difficult than the former, that against indifference and obtuseness; then it is that the devil comes panting more aggressively. And so it is especially after being freed from troubles that we have need of that grace so as to cope with good times more easily. For the Jews, too, on being freed from the Egyptians, found themselves in a more difficult contest, against obtuseness and indifference. Then it was, at any rate, that they met their death, owing to their inability to mount a proper defense. Because, you see, it was not against gluttony nor against pusillanimity that they made a bold showing; instead, they imitated the vices of the Egyptians, which led to their ruin. David, too, after being rid of the problems with Saul and his other enemies, enjoyed relief, and then fell foul of a more challenging contest, that involving uncontrolled lust, which really hurt him even more. Hence the need to be fearful is most urgent at the time when we are free of troubles. In other words, just as we are not so afraid of a wild animal in chains as on the loose, so too we need not fear evil so much in time of tribulation, as it is shackled by faintheartedness and other bonds at that time, after all; rather, it is after respite that we need to fear. For this reason you will often find success productive of greater troubles than failure. Thus it was after military success that Hezekiah, too, was on the point of perishing. Hence the psalmist also says elsewhere, "It was good for me that you humbled me."[35]

He looks for pity once more after being freed, and adduces his claim to pity, namely, his suffering: *See my lowly state at the hands of my enemies;* and a further claim, *You are the one who raises me from*

the gates of death. In other words, I take refuge in the one who is protector and carer and always offers me his hand. Do you notice him thankful for past favors in his request for future ones, and speaking of a twofold beneficence? He did not say, note, "You are the one who frees me from the gates of death," but *You are the one who raises me*: God's favor did not stop short at dismissing their troubles but also made them admirable, full of promise, famous and exalted. He did not say, "From the gate," but *from the gates*, indicating the extent of the dangers. [36] *So that I may proclaim all your praises in the gates of the daughter of Sion.* What he urged the others to do he does himself: *Announce among the nations his doings*, he said, remember. This I too will now put into practice; I will not do it simply in the presence of one person, or two or three, but in open company.

I will rejoice in your salvation. This is my crown, this my diadem, erecting a trophy thanks to you, enjoying salvation thanks to you. Let us too in this manner seek not to be saved at any price, not to be freed at any price and in any fashion, but in God's way. Now, I make a point of this on account of those who employ charms in their illness and go looking for other forms of sorcery to relieve their ill-health. This in fact is not be saved but to be lost. The most powerful salvation, after all, is being saved by God.

The nations have become stuck fast in the destruction they have caused (v.15). Another version, "they have sunk." He is referring to vice as destruction; nothing, after all, is so destructive as vice. In fact, nothing is weaker than the wicked; they are undone by their own weapons, as iron is by rust and wool by a moth – so too is the wicked person by vice. And so even before punishment by God, vice itself requires satisfaction from the guilty one. You see, much has been said about satisfaction from on high and the grace of God, whereas it does not come promptly but is frequently delayed and postponed; the effect is to make many people more indifferent. So he shows punishment to be at the gates and the wicked enduring it, as Paul also says, "receiving in their own persons the due recompense for their error." [37] Notice, too, how appropriately he employs the words: *they have become stuck fast*, he says, that is, they were forcibly restrained, there was no escape from his stratagem.

Further: *Their foot has been caught in this trap which they had hidden.* The wicked, he is saying, are shackled in bonds no one can

undo. This happened in the case of the apostles and of the Jews. When they made war on the apostles, remember, they did them no harm but involved themselves in countless troubles, expelled from city and freedom and everything else; whereas the apostolic preaching was magnified, the schemers were undone. And those who cast the three children into the Babylonian furnace were in turn caught up in it themselves, as was exactly the case with Daniel.[38] In Daniel's case, however, this was as it should be, since they had thrown him in; but in the case of the three children, why on earth was it that, for the king's sin, those standing in front of the furnace were themselves punished? Because even those incinerated were themselves accomplices in the tyrant's orders, and bent the knee to the golden image. *In a trap which they had hidden.* See how he brought out into the open the charge against them that beggared description: since the deed was utterly shameful, for that reason they conceal it in an endeavor to escape notice.

The Lord is known in making judgements (another version, "he was known in making judgement"),[39] that is, punishing, avenging, prosecuting. Do you see another form of beneficence arising from punishment? I mean, it is not simply that he makes those who are punished more observant, but he also insures that the basis for knowledge of God is more obvious; you would actually see him taking an interest in human beings from this. At any rate, when he allowed the herd of swine to tumble down the cliff and drown in the sea,[40] then in particular were they astonished. In the Old Testament, too, the Jews "sought him out when he took their lives,"[41] as the inspired author says. Why at all does he not do this frequently? Because he wishes people to practice virtue not through compulsion but by choice, as recipients of kindness rather than punishment. How much better is it, you ask, to be good by necessity than evil by choice? It is not possible to be good by necessity: the person turned virtuous under pressure will not always be virtuous, but rid of the compulsion will revert to vice. By contrast the person formed to be virtuous by choice remains firm once having reached it.

The sinner is snared in the works of his own hands. He did not say God's hands but the sinner's hands. Do you see how he varies the treatment, introducing the retribution from above and adding the penalty coming from vice? In what way retribution from above?

The Lord is known in making judgements. In what way the penalty coming from vice? *The nations have become stuck fast in the destruction they have caused.* And again the penalty from wickedness, *The sinner is snared in the works of his own hands.* He neither mentions solely the retribution on God's part, note, since he often delays and postpones it; nor only that coming from vice, since many people even revel in it. Instead, he reinforces his argument from both directions. Hence he says, *He is snared in the works of his own hands.* Another version, "his wings." So do not think you are preparing schemes against another when you do your plotting: you are weaving nets for yourself.

Song, diapsalma. Another version, "A voice continuously;" another, "Chanting continuously," whereas the Hebrew is *Engaon sel.*[42]

May the sinners be turned back to hell, all the nations who have forgotten God (v.17). Another version, "they will turn back." Again he dwells on the same matters, indicating that vice has punishment reserved for it, that impiety produces death and sin perils. *Because the needy will not be forgotten forever, the patience of the poor will not perish forever* (v.18). Another translator says, "The expectation of the meek will not be forgotten forever." He well said *forever,* implying that no one seeks after relief endlessly. After all, how would the fruits of patience be demonstrated if relief were always in the future? Now, what he means is something like this: The wicked will pay the penalty and suffer extreme punishment; God in fact will by no means allow the wronged to be subject to scheming. This fact consoles the the latter and alarms the former, and demonstrates God's lovingkindness, namely, that delay puts some people to greater test and leads others to repentance. Note once again the esteem in which the poor are held – not simply poor but contrite of heart. They are in fact particularly suited even to patience, or rather these are closely related to one another, humility to patience, patience to humility. But if you were to ask, "How is poverty humility?" we would reply that it is very suited to virtue. I mean, the rich are distraught and afraid, whereas the poor cope with everything easily, through frequent practice in poverty as though in a gymnasium. Hence Christ too said that with riches it is difficult to enter the kingdom. What is the meaning of *the patience of the poor will not perish forever*? Never, he is saying; instead, it will doubtless

reap its own reward. This is impossible with earthly things; rather, they fall short of their goal in many cases, all effort wasted. Both farmer and merchant, for instance, wait for a result, but owing to the unreliability of the winds both fall short of the fruit of their labors. By contrast, this cannot happen with God; instead, it is completely inevitable that the goal be reached. Now, this is no little grounds for consolation, to be always confident of the outcome.

Rise up, O Lord! Do not let human beings prevail. Another version, "let them not be emboldened." *Let nations be judged in your sight.* Another, "before your face."[43] Having mentioned evil being in control of most people, and spoken of vice – robberies, avarice, murders – he implores God for assistance for the wronged. Such, you see, are the feelings of holy people, not to be concerned only for themselves but to implore God in such a fashion as though concerned about one house, the world, or one body, the mass of humankind. What is the meaning of *Rise up, O Lord*? Go on the offensive, he is saying, lend help, punish the wrongdoers. It was right for him to employ the names without adornment in saying *Rise up* and *Do not let human beings prevail* so as to indicate that they are insignificant, of the earth, dust and ashes. *Let nations be judged in your sight*: what does this mean? Let them pay the penalty for their sins, he is saying. They have not profited from long-suffering; require an account of their crimes.

Appoint a lawgiver over them, Lord. Let nations know that they are human. Diapsalma (v.20). Another version, "continuously." What is the meaning of *Appoint them a lawgiver*? Since, he is saying, they get up to anything as though a law unto themselves, and are unwilling to pay the penalty, proceed against them, and let them have retribution in place of warning. This is what another translator also suggested in saying, "Set terror on them, Lord." Note how he does not look for punishment for them but warning and correction and a life that is not lawless. There will, you see, be retribution in place of warning, he is saying; yet not for them only but also for others. For you to learn how great the benefit, and how he curtails the ailment, listen to what follows: *Let nations know*, he says, *that they are human*. Now, what he means is something like this: Many have lost even this, they forgot their nature, they were driven headlong into madness, they had no knowledge of themselves. Well did he

add the word *continuously*[44] to indicate not only in difficult circumstances but also in prosperity. If now you punish them, however, when they have a healthy respect for you and the memory of the fate that has befallen them, they will recognize their own nature, even if they succeed to good times. Do you see how he makes supplication for them, and demands that their madness be cured? Having no knowledge of themselves, in fact, is an effect of utter madness and a worse state than frenzy. I mean, one is an ailment of necessity, the other of corrupt choice.[45]

[1] Chrysostom will begin his commentary by taking note, and warning his congregation, of the length of the psalm in the form he and his contemporaries knew it. In the present Hebrew Bible and our modern versions this long form has been divided into two (giving rise to conflict of numbering between Hebrew and versions depending on the Septuagint, like the Latin); but the originally acrostic pattern of the whole and lack of a title for the second half suggest it was once all of a piece, as Chrysostom's form retains – even though there is a change of tone between thanksgiving and lament after v.20. Not working from the Hebrew text, of course, Chrysostom attributes the psalm's length not to the alphabet but to the Spirit!

[2] The LXX and other ancient versions, as we have noted before, have not chosen to read the psalm titles as musical direction and yet are prepared to risk a popular etymology of the Hebrew terms *Muth Labben* in this case, on which today's scholars are content to remain agnostic.

[3] It would be interesting to know the contents of this "book" of psalms Chrysostom is using. While in commenting below on the psalm we know as 150 he speaks of the psalmist "closing the book" with it, there are ninety-two psalms not included in this series of commentary. And some of our oldest Greek manuscripts, harking back to fourth and fifth centuries, like Codex Vaticanus and Codex Alexandrinus, omit about thirty of our psalms.

[4] Had there been women in Chrysostom's congregation, as seems from the text unlikely, they would have had to think of examples more suited than these to their situation in society.

[5] Cf Mt 6.21. Chrysostom seems well acquainted with the commercial dealings of his contemporaries, frequently taking them as a theme in his commentaries.

[6] Reference to the marvellous deeds of the Lord in the psalm's opening verse sets Chrysostom off on a litany of reminders of divine revelation and beneficence in the experience of ordinary people. His congregation should take account of these and give expression to them – even if v.2 prompts the preacher to urge them to take no notice of things of this world, a more usual theme of his.

[7] Chrysostom proceeds to reveal himself to be a true naturalist, if not "greenie," in his acquaintance with the environment in all its variety and indeed its taxonomy.
[8] In giving credit to ἡ ἐρῆμος (*he eremos*) for all these reminders of God revealing and bestowing, Chrysostom (who had experience of life as a solitary) is thinking less of the harsher, desolate, infertile aspects of country life in that part of the world. He is not often seen as a romantic.
[9] V.2.
[10] Psalm 104.32.
[11] Psalm 78.34.
[12] Rom 12.19.
[13] Once again Chrysostom's foray into linguistics betrays his limitations. His LXX text erroneously presumes a Hebrew form *Ome*, otherwise unattested, to give the sense "with a crash," though our Hebrew text reads *Emma*, "with them," as one variant Greek version suggests (correcting the LXX misreading). De Montfaucon, in chiding Chrysostom for not providing the full form of the latter, is also unaware of the form the LXX must have had in mind.
[14] Bar 3.3.
[15] Gn 1.1. Many times already we have seen Chrysostom in commentary on these psalms conceding the propriety of going beyond – but not ignoring – the literal/historical/face value meaning of the biblical text. He admits there is another level of meaning, which he terms anagogical or metaphorical, in spiritual rather than literary terms, as patristic and medieval hermeneuts generally did in distinguishing the various possible senses. The process of recognizing such fuller sense he knows as *theoria* (the verb occurs here, the noun in commentary on Psalm 112 [*PG* 55,313]); it does not bear the pejorative connotation for him that ἀλληγορία *(allegoria)* generally does for the Antiochenes, though we have seen him briefly flirt with allegory in Psalm 7. As Albert Vaccari pointed out, the essential difference between the two processes as generally practized was that "allegory of its nature excludes the literal sense." Chrysostom here is realist enough to admit that failure to admit such a spiritual sense involves the commentator at times in absurdity. But he is also gratified to find some New Testament encouragement for a specifically typological form of this sense. See Vaccari's article and my "Chrysostom as Old Testament commentator."
[16] Prv 5.19,16-17. The preacher's choice of these proverbs and comment on them suggests again an exclusively male congregation.
[17] Jn 3.14.
[18] Is this a case of false humility on Chrysostom's part in deferring to "the scholars," or is he talking with tongue in cheek, having discoursed at such exorbitant length on this topic of the Jews' suffering for their treatment of Christ in commentary on the previous psalm? He doffs his cap to scholars again in commenting on Psalm 109 on a similar theme (*PG* 55,262).
Or is the explanation rather that he did not proceed immediately from one psalm to the next, or follow any particular sequence? The style of this

commentary as we have it, compared with the Genesis homilies, is such that connections and resumés are conspicuous by their absence. See note 6 on Psalm 11 and my "Chrysostom's Commentary on the Psalms: homilies or tracts?"

[19] Acts 17.31.

[20] 1 Thess 4.15.

[21] Psalm 40.17.

[22] Cf Is 58.9.

[23] Jer 23.23.

[24] Cf Is 38. Chrysostom is so little enamoured of "lazy ways" in the spiritual life that he proceeds almost at once to his frequent theme of the value of human effort, on which he has been thought guilty of overemphasis.

[25] Cf Dn 3.

[26] Sir 2.10.

[27] We have had occasion to note before these key elements in Chrysostom's ascetical teaching. For him indifference, *rhathymia*, in place of enthusiasm, is a capital failing (it was in fact the occasion of the Fall, in his view), as is absorption in things of this world. One wonders how Chrysostom's congregation in their daily lives might not be bewildered by this directive, as we can find it dualistic, except that he generally supplies practical examples of unhealthy absorption.

[28] Mt 7.8.

[29] V.11.

[30] Cf Heb 12.22-23. Predictably, Chrysostom does not spend much time on Sion's being a dwelling of the Lord; he sees the fact and the expression as an instance of considerateness, *synkatabasis*, aimed at the conversion of the Jews. Notably, too, Chrysostom does not develop the identification of Sion and Church; in fact, Church is not a topic on which Chrysostom generally expatiates.

[31] Gn 9.5.

[32] Mt 5.3.

[33] Cf Is 66.2.

[34] 1 Tim 2.8.

[35] Psalm 119.71.

[36] In his commentary on these verses Chrysostom is exemplifying his Antiochene virtue of precision, which he recommends also in his listeners. Small details in his text – the compound verb "seek *out*," the plural "gates" – are brought into service, even if we might quibble about the significance he gives them. For a similar preoccupation in the Genesis homilies see my "*Akribeia*: a principle of Chrysotom's exegesis."

[37] Rom 1.27.

[38] Cf Dan 3.22; 6.24. Chrysostom, we have seen, is fascinated with this story, which for him illustrates egregiously the moral of innocence vindicated and evil requited. Not being satisfied to leave it as a piece of apocalyptic moralizing for a people under persecution, however, he has to iron out every wrinkle.

[39] V.16.
[40] Mk 5.13.
[41] Psalm 78.34.
[42] Even modern commentators admit ignorance of the meaning of these terms, presuming they are liturgical and specifically musical directions. For the time being Chrysostom, who has taken no note of them in the text of "earlier" psalms, is content to leave well alone. (See note 7 on Psalm 140.)
[43] V.19.
[44] Unwisely but characteristically, Chrysostom cannot resist the temptation to get more mileage from this alternative translation of the obscure Hebrew term *selah* (cf note 42), which is grist to his mill in preference to the rendering in his LXX.
[45] See note 1 for reasons why the Hebrew text and its modern versions conclude the psalm at this point and number the lament that follows as Psalm 10. It might be as well to follow suit, though Chrysostom and his LXX text just press on.

Psalm 10[1]

To what end, Lord, do you stand aloof, do you show scorn in prosperity, in tribulation? (v.1). So says the inspired author, beseeching and imploring on behalf of the oppressed, not accusing – perish the thought. For many of the oppressed in their pain make a plea before the suitable moment for judgement to be given. It is like patients for surgery who before the incision is yet completed beg the surgeon to stay his hand; they request a favor which is not in their best interests, and put up with it owing to their inability to bear the pain. Often they protest to the surgeons, "You tormented me, you ruined me, you left me a wreck;" it is the pain, not the brain, that is speaking, however. That is just what many pusillanimous people also say in their tribulations, failing to put up with their troubles. Zephaniah employs such language, too.[2] But this was in the Old Testament, when the challenges were appropriate to the times, whereas it is quite out of keeping with the values of the New.

The poor person feels the heat of the arrogance of the ungodly, who are caught up in the schemes they hatch (another version, "let them be caught up"). *Because sinners are applauded in their soul's desires, and the unrighteous blessed. The sinner exasperated the Lord* (vv.2-4). The inspired author takes on the role of a suppliant, and in entreaty on behalf of the wronged he mentions also the passions roused, which stem from human weakness; the wronged are distressed before punishment and retribution arrrive, unable to cope with the prosperity of the wicked. Now, this too is no small retribution. Then he demands that they pay the penalty, and that their wiles be turned back on them; and he mentions an intolerable form of evil. What kind is it? *Because sinners are applauded in their soul's desires.* For what should be hidden, he is saying, for what there is to be ashamed of, for this there is admiration and applause. Now, how can a cure

for this then be applied when evil is applauded? This happens these days, too, after all. Such and such a person is admired for being influential; another for taking venegeance on enemies; another for being prudent in amassing the possessions of everyone. And when they have lost themselves, people say, "They have found themselves," and others say other things – but not a word have they to say about spiritual things. Nowhere is there a prompt round of applause for the person who remains aloof from business, nor for the lover of poverty – only for the money-getter, the rogue, the flatterer, the toady engaged in enterprises of no use to anyone.

This is what the inspired author laments, that evil has so prevailed as to be something to be proud of and spoken openly about, and what is more regrettable, that it is is shameless, and not simply applauds itself for its achievements but also has others to applaud it. What could be worse than this folly? *The sinner exasperated the Lord.* Another version: "Because when the sinners took credit for their soul's desire and the greedy congratulated themselves, they exasperated the Lord. When their anger mounted, they did not seek him out." Another: "Because they sang praise to the desire of their soul, and the greedy in congratulating themselves ridiculed the Lord. The ungodly in exaltation of spirit will not seek him out." The Septuagint,[3] on the other hand: *The sinner exasperated the Lord; in the force of his anger he will not seek him out.* Do you see the extreme to which vice has advanced? Why do I say, he asks, that it distresses the poor? It exasperates God himself. *And in the force of his anger he will not seek him out* – God, he means, whereas another version indicates this refers to the ungodly when it says, "their exaltation," that is, stupidity, imposture. Do you see the extreme folly and the corruption? To those of the same stock they are enemy and foe, adversary of virtue, lover and patron of vice. Well does another translator say, "God has no place in their thinking," indicating that they do not seek God out, that they are shrouded in darkness, that they have no fear of him before their eyes. Instead, just as a discharge dulls the pupil of the eye, so does wickedness dull the mind and carry it over the cliff.

God is not before their eyes (another version, "through the whole of their thoughts"). *Their paths are besmirched at every moment, your judgements are expunged from their view* (another, "your judgement

is removed").[4] Do you see the fruit of vice? Their light is extinguished, their thinking impaired, they are taken captive by wickedness. Just as the disabled person constantly falls into a pit, so too these people, since they do not have the fear of God before their eyes, are totally absorbed in vice – not a case of now in virtue and now in vice, but permanently in vice, mindful not of hell, nor of the judgment to come, nor of accounts to be rendered. Instead, rejecting all these aids as though bridle and bit, they are like a ship without ballast that is at the mercy of winds and fierce billows, with no one to guide their thinking. Do you see the wicked in the actual condition of vice having to give an account? After all, what is worse than an unbridled horse, a ship without ballast, a maimed individual? Yet more miserable than all these is the person living in vice, having extinguished the light coming from the fear of God, and given over to captivity.

They will gain dominion over all their enemies. They said in their heart, in fact, We shall not be moved from generation to generation, free of trouble (vv.5-6). Another version, "They fanned the flame in all their enemies, saying in their heart, We shall not be overturned from generation to generation. That is, we shall not be in trouble." Do you see the folly? Do you see the unutterable ruin? Do you see the destruction gradually increasing? Do you see the things prized by the mindless, in reality full of deep misery, and how they sink from sight? Those people are applauded in their sins, commended in their wrongdoing. This is the first pitfall, sufficient to trip up the unwary. Hence it is much more necessary to welcome those who censure and corrrect us than those who applaud and flatter us to the point of destruction. The latter, in fact, prove the ruination of the stupid, and impel them to worse evil – as though even by puffing up these sinners they led them on the way to folly. For that reason Paul too said this to the Corinthians in regard to the immoral: "You are puffed up; should you not rather have mourned?"[5] The sinner we need to mourn deeply for, not applaud. Do you see the perversity of evil, that it not only escapes accusation but even meets with blessing? Hence from their own folly they augmented the wickedness of the plaudits, they forgot the fear of God and his judgements; hence they forgot their own nature as well. Those who forget the judgements of God, after all, in time come to be ignorant of themselves.

See at any rate how they think: *We shall not be moved from generation to generation, but shall be free from trouble.*[6] What could be more stupid than this attitude in a human being, subject to death, caught up in affairs of the moment, subject to countless changes, to come up with such fantasies? Now, where did this spring from? From stupidity. You see, whenever a heedless man enjoys great prosperity, prevails over his enemies, is praised and admired, he proves more to be pitied than anyone. In fact, by not expecting any change he does not even cope with prosperity sensibly; but on falling upon hard times he is disturbed and upset, being out of practice and heedless. Job, on the contrary, was not like that; instead, even in prosperity he daily expected hard times. Accordingly he said, "The fear that I feared has come upon me, and what I dreaded has met me face to face. I am not at peace, not at rest, I have enjoyed no respite; rage has come upon me."[7] Hence another composer also said, "Remember the time of famine in the time of plenty, of poverty and need in the day of wealth."[8] These people, on the contrary, once corrupted, have no regard for human limitations, but consider their state immovable on account of their success – the basis of ultimate folly and destruction, and the occasion of utter ruin. In no way deem the rich fortunate, those who prevail over enemies, those applauded for this. Fearsome, after all, are these pitfalls and hazards for the heedless, hurling them to the very depths of impiety.

Whose mouth is full of cursing, bitterness and treachery, under their tongue suffering and trouble (another version, "useless"). *They lie in wait with the rich in ambush so as to slay the innocent* (another, "lying in ambush by the halls"). *Their eyes watch for the needy, they lie in ambush like a lion in his lair* (another, "as in his den"), *they lie in wait to rob the poor, to rob the poor in the act of releasing them* (another, "in release of them"); *in their snare they will humiliate them* (another, "in the net"). *They will stoop and fall down in their act of dominating the poor* (another, "But they will be bruised and bent as they join forces with the strong against the weak").[9] Do you see them turned into a wild beast? In any case, just as the inspired author describes them as a wild beast, so he talks about them in those terms, making a show of their tricks, ambushes, schemes. What could be more pitiful than this, what could be more desperate, to feel the need of the possessions of the poor? So shall we call these people rich, tell me?

Are they not robbers and housebreakers? Get away with you, say you. I mean, what difference does it make if they do not actually undermine the court buildings? If they do not come by night, but rather extinguish by their scheming the light of the one giving judgement? If their assault is made not while people are asleep but when everyone is awake? They are, in fact, more aggressive than those criminals. Even with burglars the laws are more severe on those who do their robbing during the day. Do you see their moral bankruptcy and cruelty? Moral bankruptcy, because they lust after the goods of the poor; cruelty, because far from being moved by their plight they aggravate their penury when they should pity it and ameliorate it.

Still, they do not get up to this with impunity: when they exert their power, when they seem to prevail, when they think they are unassailable, then it is they perish, so that the inventiveness of God, the patience of the poor, the errors of these miscreants, and the forebearance of God's long-suffering may come to light. Hence it is that justice does not follow close on their heels, since God in his long-suffering summons them to repentance; but when they profit nothing from the long-suffering, then he admonishes them with retribution. Those who are wronged, you see, came to no harm; rather, they emerged better and more conspicuous from their tribulation. God for his part displayed his own long-suffering by showing restraint and forebearance, but along with long-suffering his power and resourcefulness as well, because when they outdo themselves, that is the time he prevails over them. Having persisted in their obduracy, they pay the ultimate penalty. Now, coming to their senses is no trifling experience for those who are well off. Consequently, when you prevail over your enemies, and all the winds blow fair for you, do not go to head with a life of sin; rather, at that time fear the more. The power of sin grows stronger, remember, any pretext of yours is rendered futile, the offer of pardon is cancelled for you as you persist in sin.

In fact, they said in their heart, God has forgotten, he has turned his face away lest he see in the end (v.11). See how deep the ruinous pit into which they fall, what notions they come up with, which in their shame they dare not disclose, but which they entertain amongst themselves in their struggle against the truth and their

efforts to obscure what is clearer than the sun on account of the blindness of their mind. *Rise up, O Lord my God, let your hand be lifted up; do not forget the needy* (another version, "raise your hand"). *For what cause did the impious provoke God? In fact, they said in their heart, He will not demand an account of us. You see that you understand hardship and anger so as to give them over into your hands* (another version, "You see that you have in sight hardship and provocation so as to give them into your hand;" another, "so that they may be given into your hands").[10] While the lawless, robbers, the avaricious say this in the belief of escaping scot-free, the inspired author on the contrary demolishes their values and expatiates on his theme of longsuffering. He said initially, note, *He has turned his face away lest he see in the end*, whereas the same author now says the opposite: You see, you understand, you are long-suffering up to the point of their falling into your hands. What is the meaning of "up to the point of their being given into your hands"?[11] It is a rather human expression, but what it means is this: You bide your time, you are forebearing, with the result that they are given over to the excess of wickedness. You are capable, of course, of destroying and subduing them from the outset; yet beyond telling is the ocean of your forebearance, observing them, not pursuing them but awaiting their movement to repentance. If, however, they prove unresponsive, then you will punish them when they profit nothing from your long-suffering.

For proof, in fact, that he has much to say about the wronged, listen to how he argues his case from what follows. *The poor are left to your mercies, you have been a help to the orphan.* Another version, "You have proved to be;" another, "You will be." What he means is something like this: This is your role, this is your remarkable quality. He would not abandon his own, he would not betray them. As, you see, it belongs to a craftsman to build, to a helmsman to steer the vessel, to the sun to shed light, so too it belongs to you to be the champion of orphans, to extend a hand to the poor. No one is their patron in this way, but you alone. The words *are left* indicate this, in fact. No one else, he says, but you alone are the champion of orphans and poor.

Break the arm of the lawless and wicked. Their sin will be searched for, and they will not be found because of it (v.15). Another version, "Let

their impiety be sought out lest they be discovered." It is not simply the lawbreakers he demands be shattered but their strength, their power, the source of their wickedness; then he demands that they give an account and provide an explanation of their doings. And to show the extent of the wrong, he says, "If this happens, they will not succeed in standing firm, nor will they be visible, but will perish and depart the scene, their deeds put to the test." Let then no one lament the condition of orphans, the condition of the poor; the more this condition is exacerbated, you see, the greater the degree of help from God. Let no one be arrogant about the pinnacle of power or be puffed up: it is a precarious and risky position, and topples the careless with great ease.

The Lord is king for ages and ages of ages (v.16). At this point he gives a reply to those fearful and upset at the sight of sinners not paying the penalty at once. What is there to fear, he asks? What is there to be afraid of? Surely, after all, the judge has no limited tenure? Surely, after all, the exercise of his kingship has no limit? Even if the criminals do not suffer now, they will in good time; the one who requires it of them bides his time and rules forever.

You will perish, nations, from his land. You have hearkened to the desire of the needy, Lord; your ear took heed of the readiness of their heart (another version, "your ear listened to their heart's proposal;" another, "you have readied your ear to heed their hearts"). *To judge orphaned and humbled lest human beings be encouraged to further arrogance* (another, "To judge orphaned and oppressed").[12] Do you see the inspired author devoting further attention to the treatment of the wicked? Their lot in particular, after all, is to suffer. I mean, whereas the wronged endures the loss of possessions, they by contrast run the risk of ultimate retribution. What if they are not sensitive to the ailment which afflicts them? This is the extent of their insensitivity, and on this account they are to be pitied; this is a mark of their unbalanced attitude. For children, too, make no account of fearsome things, but frequently even plunge their hands into fire, whereas they are in fear and trembling at the sight of mere masks. The avaricious are like them, fearful on the one hand of poverty, which far from being fearsome is actually the basis of security, while on the other hand they give high priority to ill-gotten gains and material advantage, which are more fearsome than

any fire. Avarice, after all, is in every instance evil. Accordingly, the inspired author urges us to put an end to it, threatening and frightening us, beseeching God to rise up and punish such insensibility. Hence he adds as well, *You will perish, nations, from his land,* threatening them with destruction, and demanding that he become helper and vindicator of the wronged, so that the latter may enjoy respite and the former come to their senses.

Let no one, therefore, set their heart on a superfluity of possessions. From this source arise numerous evils for the heedless – folly, indifference, jealousy, vainglory and others far greater than these. For you to be free of all these, however, cut the root: if it does not survive, the evil shoots will not sprout. Hence these things, too, are said, not simply for us to hear but to change our lives and give evidence of great virtue in Christ Jesus, to whom be glory and power for ages of ages. Amen.

[1] Our Hebrew text and modern translations of it begin numbering verses anew at this point, unlike the LXX on which Chrysostom was commenting; see notes 1 and 45 of Psalm 9. While he gives no sign of interruption, we have thought it best to keep to the numbering of these modern versions.

[2] It is not clear which part of this prophet Chrysostom has in mind; he does not quote him often.

[3] The disparity of versions alternative to the Septuagint, and of them all to modern translations (themselves diverse), shows the obscurity of these verses. Once again we wonder to what extent Chrysostom's congregtion found helpful an array of such lengthy and diverse alternatives.

[4] Vv.4-5.

[5] 1 Cor 5.2.

[6] Not quite in the form that Chrysostom cited originally – but how could a preacher recall his text exactly from that original range of variants?

[7] Job 3.25-26.

[8] Sir 18.25.

[9] The question has been raised, we noted, as to whether this commentary on the Psalms was ever delivered in the form we are reading; the text seems to leave the question open. At this point, at any rate, Chrysostom must have had a sheaf of notes with him to be in a position to list these variant translations, as we noted above in note 3, where we questioned also their helpfulness to a congregation. The display of scholarship (which Chrysostom himself belittled in the first half of the LXX's single psalm) might itself confuse a preacher attempting to recall all details of his text correctly, as we have observed; and in any event Chrysostom at this stage

in his commentary on a psalm whose length he has blamed on the Spirit is rushing through the verses at an unusually rapid rate. In fact, he now abandons his commentary on the text and settles for mere moralizing.

[10] Vv.12-14. This lament is proving not only repetitive but obscure, as the diversity in modern translations betrays. Chrysostom finds it uninspiring material, not even moved to quote other biblical authors in support, as is his wont; he seems intent on closing as briskly as possible.

[11] Predictably confused by his own procedure here, Chrysostom quotes as though his text what is in fact the variant he cited from a translator of two centuries earlier, Symmachus.

[12] Vv.16-18.

Psalm 11

For the direction. A psalm of David.
Another version, Triumphal for David.
Another, For the author of victory.

I *trust in the Lord; how will you say to my soul, Migrate to the mountains like a sparrow?* (another version, "Go away to the mountains like a sparrow;" another, "Move") *Because, lo, the sinners have bent the bow, they have prepared arrows for the quiver, to shoot in the dark the upright of heart* (another version, "as in the gloom"). *Because what you have perfected, they have destroyed* (another version, "Because the laws are dissolved;" another, "Because the teachings will be abolished").[1] Great is the power of hope in the Lord, invincible citadel, unassailable rampart, insuperable reinforcement, tranquil haven, impregnable tower, irresistible weapon, unconquerable power capable of discovering a refuge where none seems possible. Through this power unarmed people are armed, women get the better of men, and children prove to be easily more powerful than those who practice warlike arts. What is surprising if they overcome enemies when in fact they have even prevailed over the world itself? I mean, the elements in defiance of their own nature changed for the betterment of those people, the wild beasts were no longer wild, nor the furnace a real furnace.[2] Hope in God transformed everything, you see: bared teeth, confining dungeon, natural ferocity, and hunger giving teeth to nature, no protection on any side, mouths close to the prophet's mouth – yet hope in God was more potent than any leash, stopping their mouths and pulling them back.

These very things this author also pondered in his wisdom, and responded to those bidding him take flight and run, and secure his

salvation from the security of distant places: *I trust in the Lord: how will you say to my soul?* What are you claiming? I have the Lord of the universe as my ally, the one creating everything everywhere without difficulty I have as leader and support, and you send me to the wilderness, and provide for my safety in the desert? After all, surely the help from the desert does not surpass the one capable of anything with complete ease? Why would you have me, armed to the teeth as I am, scuttle away as though with no armor or equipment, and bid me turn fugitive? You would not then bid me, with army in support and protected with ramparts and weapons, take flight to the desert? Would you not rather appear ridiculous to recommend this, and root up and put to flight as a fugitive the one with the Lord of the universe in support on account of hostilities from sinners?

Along with these arguments, you see, I have another reason for not fleeing. I mean, when even God lends assistance and sinners are on the attack, how would extreme shame not be incurred by the one who recommended imitating the timidity of birds? Do you not realize how the opposing army is more flimsy than a spider's web? After all, if the earthly emperor's foe, wherever he is, lives in danger, in fear and trembling, much more the foes of the God of all. In fact, wherever they go, they have everyone as enemies, even their own nature. You see, just as the elements and the beasts fear his friends, and all of nature respects them, so even brute creation opposes and scorns his foe and enemy: some accordingly, even before they touch the ground, the beasts destroy, others are consumed by fire. Yet they have bows and quiver, and everything ready for them: They have prepared them, the psalmist says, remember, for the quiver; but there is no efficacy in them, we have nothing to fear from them. After all, if we saw someone with bow unstrung, we would not fear him, either. I mean, what is the good of weapons if strength is lacking? Likewise in this case, therefore, if God's favor is missing. But they hatch plots, and their approaches are not honestly made. More than ever I ridicule them on this account, that they fire their shots in the dark. Nothing, you see, is more vulnerable than a man at his scheming: no need for him to become captive to others' weapons – he falls victim to his own hand, and is snared in his own plot. What could therefore be more vulnerable, when he is carried off by his own devices?

In addition to these factors, however, you can mention another as well: sinners wage war not only on those who have help from God, and do so with deceit, but also on the innocent and those who have done them no harm. Now, it is not just by chance that this too renders them vulnerable. You see, just as those who kick against the goad do it no harm but rather bloody their own feet, likewise these people.[3] Yet in addition to these there is still another factor undoing the impact of their warfare. What is that? *Because what you have perfected,* he says, *they have destroyed.* Now, what he means is something like this: They wage war and hostilities against you, doing violence to your law and your commandments. They endeavor in fact to do violence to your commandments and these things you have perfected. He is saying either this, or that they are also law breakers. This too is no slight basis of their vulnerability, their not observing your commands and going to war on account of it. This is the reason, you see, that they are hostile to the upright and hatch plots against them, because they do not heed your commandments.

So he first told of the vulnerability of the enemy, and demonstrated it not from the experience of others but from what was proper in his own case. He did not say, remember, "They have no resources, no forts, no allies, no cities, they are unskilled in warfare;" instead, he bypassed and spurned all these things as of no account, and said that they were lawbreakers, that they waged war on people who had done them no wrong, that they laid waste the things of God. Only then he mentions as well the battle array of the righteous, and shows from it their martial arts. Let us too likewise distinguish the strong and the weak; yet let us not be frightened of those things which frighten ridiculous people. What in fact do they say? He is awful, he is wicked, he is surrounded with piles of money and influence. On that account I mock him most of all. These are the trappings of weakness, after all. But he knows how to come up with schemes, they say. You are quoting me yet another form of weakness. Why is it, then, that many such people come out on top? Because you do not know how to give a good account of yourself, because you too enter the lists over the things that make them weaker, glory and influence. Steer clear of the grounds of such a contest, and by other means repel your assail-

ants – the braggart with moderation, the avaricious with indigence, the intemperate with continence, the begrudging with friendliness; in this way you will easily overcome them.

As I said before, however, see how, after describing the weakness of his adversaries, he mentions also the armor of the righteous. He adds, in fact, *The righteous, on the other hand - what did they do?* That is to say, With the others deployed in such a fashion, do you inquire whence came the armour of the righteous? Listen: *The Lord in his holy temple; the Lord, in heaven his throne* (v.4). Do you see how concisely he describes his support? What did he do, you ask? He took refuge in the God who is in heaven, who is present everywhere. He bent no bow, he prepared no quiver, as the opposition did, nor deployed forces under cover of darkness; on the contrary, he omitted all these preparations, he threw up hope in God as a rampart against everyone, and set in opposition to them the one who has no need of any of these things, not times, not places, not weapons, not supplies – just the one accomplishing everything with his will. Do you see the support, invincible, willing, efficacious?

His eyes look attentively on the poor, his gaze examines human beings. The Lord examines the righteous and the ungodly, but those who love wrong hate their own soul (vv.4-5). Another version, "his gaze tests;" another, "the Lord, righteous examiner;" another, "he tests righteous and ungodly, and his soul hated the lover of wrong;" another, "those who love wrong hate their own soul."[4] Do you see a ready ally, a well prepared aid, present everywhere, seeing everything, gazing on all things, having as his particular role – even if no one requests it – to exercise providence and care, to pursue wrongdoers, to assist the wronged, to award recompense to the virtuous, to assign punishment to sinners? He is therefore ignorant of nothing: his eyes in fact look attentively on the whole world.[5] He is not simply aware of things, however: he also wants to correct them. Hence an alternative reading also suggested as much in saying "righteous." If in fact he is righteous, he will not simply overlook these happenings. He rebuffs the wicked, he praises the righteous. Then what he said in the previous psalm to indicate that wickedness itself is sufficient to destroy them he suggested here too in adding, *Those who love wrong hate their own soul.* Wick-

edness, after all, is the soul's enemy, its foe and ruination, and so the wicked person pays the penalty even before punishment is imposed.[6] Do you see how he shows on every score that his adversaries are easily apprehended when he has such an ally, and they are hoist on their own weapons by which they protect themselves, consumed by them and damaging themselves? Do you see the ease of reinforcement? There is no need, in fact, to go on the march and run about and use up resources, since God is present everywhere and sees everything.

He will pour on sinners snares, fire and brimstone, and stormy wind, their portion of the cup. Because the Lord is righteous, and loved righteous deeds; his face saw honest actions (vv.6-7). Another version, "He will rain coals on the lawless;" another, "their face will see honest actions," that is, the face of the righteous, or of God himself. He had mentioned the punishment that comes from evil, but since many scorn it he then startled the mind of the wicked with a bolt coming from on high, employing language in unmistakable fashion and going on the attack by means of fearsome terms. Fire and brimstone, note, stormy wind and coals he says are rained on them from on high, intending to present by the figurative use of words the inescapable nature of the retribution, the overwhelming character of the punishment, the facility of the thunderbolt, and the consuming action. What is the meaning of *their portion of the cup*? This is their lot, he says, this their fate, in this their life is spent, in these they are consumed. Then the reason as well: the one who surveys all things will not allow this to pass unpunished. As another inspired author says, "Your eye is too pure to look on evil deeds, and you cannot gaze on troubles."[7] This is also what this author brings to our attention in the words, *Because the Lord is righteous, and loved righteous deeds*. This is also God's chosen role, to accept righteous deeds, acts of virtue; nor would he finally tolerate what is done differently.

For that very reason he began the psalm with the words, *I trust in the Lord; how will you say to my soul, Migrate to the mountains like a sparrow?* You see, those who trust in the things of this life are in no better situation than the sparrow, which relies on the wilderness and is a prey to all. People who put their hope in money are like that. Just as the sparrow is snared by children with bird lime and

trap and countless other devices, so too the wealthy by friend and foe. They are much more vulnerable than the sparrow, with many to set traps for them and, more immediately, evil tendencies of their own. They are migrants, constantly reacting to developments, fearful of the long arm of the law and the emperor's wrath, the wiles of flatterers and the deceit of friends. In time of war their fear is greater than anyone's, in time of peace they suspect treachery, their wealth never being secure or proof against loss. Hence they are always taking to flight and migrating, searching out wilderness and eyries, preferring the dark and looking for the black of night in noontime, adopting disguises to achieve it.

Good people, on the contrary, are quite different. "The ways of the righteous shine like the sun," remember.[8] I mean, far from opting for scheming and lawlessness, their souls are at rest. Those other people, by contrast, are forever hatching schemes, forever in gloom and apprehension, like burglars and housebreakers and adulterers; they see darkness where there is full sun, their souls possessed by dread. How then is this darkness to be dissipated? If you separate yourself from all these things and come to depend on hope in God, sinner though you be ten times over. "Consider generations of old," Scripture says, remember, "and see: who was confounded for hoping in the Lord?"[9] It does not say "righteous" but "who?" Even if one is a sinner, it says. This is remarkable, in fact, that even sinners who cling to this anchor are invincible. It is, you see, a particular mark of an option for God that though weighed down by such awful evils they are still buoyed up by his lovingkindness. In other words, as the one trusting in man is doubly cursed, so the one trusting in God is blessed.

So tear yourself away from all these things, and cling to this anchor. God, after all, has an eye to everything, judges good deeds, and not only judges but brings them to fruition. Hence, after speaking of his righteousness, the psalmist showed also his punishment, by fire and by tempest; but God does this to show his care for those people, through punishment bringing them to temperance. For all these reasons, therefore, let us come before him, and remain ever with our eyes on him. This, you see, is the way for us also to gain many good things in Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be the glory for ages of ages. Amen.

[1] Vv.1-3.
[2] Yet again Chrysostom shows his fascination with the story of the three young men and Daniel as a paradigm of the persecuted relying for deliverance on the Lord – an affinity based on personal experience?
[3] Skilled rationalizer though he is, Chrysostom here is not bringing much depth to this oft-recurring theme of the plight of the innocent sufferer, being content with some shallow platitudes and cute comparisons, which would hardly be of much solace to anyone experiencing such trials. There is an unwonted casualness about his brief commentary on this psalm.
[4] This time Chrysostom lists as many as four variants – though the fourth seems to be his own Septuagint text! The preacher – or his copyist – could easily make the mistake.
[5] 2 Chron 16.9 voices a similar sentiment, though it is something of a homiletic platitude; and we have remarked how Chrysostom's relative lack of commitment to his commentary on Psalms 10 and 11 betrays itself in absence of reference to other parts of the Bible.
[6] This in fact, as he claims, is a point Chrysostom made "in the previous psalm" in commenting on verses 16-18 of Psalm 10 and 15 of Psalm 9 (the one psalm in his LXX text). Does this necessarily imply he commented on them immediately before Psalm 11 and is thus moving sequentially through the Psalter? See note 18 on Psalm 9.
[7] Hab 1.13.
[8] Prv 4.18.
[9] Sir 2.10.

Psalm 12

For the direction. On the eighth.
Another version, To the author of victory on the eighth.
The Hebrew says *Aseminith.*[1]

Save me, O Lord, because there are no holy people left, because truthfulness has decreased among human beings (v.1). Another version, "Because the faithful among humankind are no more." While being virtuous is hard, and more challenging on one's own, it is particularly so when the one practicing it experiences a dearth of good men.[2] I mean, just as travel involves hardship, and much more so when the traveller is alone and has no one with whom to share the journey, so too in this case. In other words, fellowship and fraternal encouragement are no little thing. Hence Paul too says, "Understanding how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds."[3] This is the very reason why the ancients deserve beatifying, not for practicing virtue but for doing so despite a great absence of virtue and a dearth of people anywhere practicing it. This, at any rate, is what Scripture also suggests in saying, "Noah was righteous, perfect among his contemporaries."[4] On these grounds we admire Abraham, on these grounds Lot, on these grounds Moses, for shining like stars in pitch darkness, roses among thorns, sheep amidst countless wolves, following the opposite path to everyone else and never calling a halt. You see, if this very practice involves difficulty in company, when one is at variance with a number, and when travelling alone in the opposite direction to the crowd one has many difficulties to experience; and if on shipboard it is difficult, with the waves pushing you back, to direct the ship in the opposite direction, much more difficult is it in the case of virtue.

For this very reason this righteous person too, being the only one to embrace it, everyone else going in the opposite direction, takes refuge in the providence of God, saying, *Save me, O Lord.* So at this point the words mean nothing but this: My need is for the hand from on high, grace from the heavens, help of that kind. Travelling as I am a path different from everyone else, I have great need of providence. He did not say, "Save me because I am holy," but *because there are no holy people left,* indicating that those who were so have been lost, since evil has prevailed and infection overcome. This is also what Paul is afraid of in saying, "Do you not know that a little yeast affects the whole batch?"[5] And again, "Bad company corrupts good habits."[6]

Now, what is the meaning of *truthfulness has decreased*? Truthfulness is manifold. As with colors and other types of things, some are true and others false: there is true purple and false purple, and so too with saffron, precious stones, perfumes, and other things of this kind. This is the way with the virtues, too. Truth, you see, is what exists in reality, falsehood is what does not. So since these things were distorted and obscured, not having lost their substance of themselves but banished by human beings, hence he did not simply say *truthfulness has decreased* but added *among human beings,* wishing to indicate just that. Now, consider this. There is true ornamentation, and there is false. So what is the true ornamentation? That of the soul. What, on the other hand, is the false? That of the body. There is true wealth, and there is false; the false is to do with possessions, the true is to do with good behavior. There is joy false and true, beauty, influence, glory. Most people, however, bypass the truth of these things and pursue the false forms. Just as, after all, there is a true human being and a false, the true who lives and acts but the false in writing only, just so can you observe with the virtues also.

They have told lies to each other. Their lips deceitful, they have spoken evil with a double heart (v.2). Another version, "they speak with different hearts." He mentions two evils here, that they told lies and that it was to each other; he calls lies either what is false or what is idle and useless. Paul too says something like this in the words, "Do not lie to one another."[7] What is even worse is that all were corrupt. Hence he did not say, "This one and that one," but *each.*

The evil, in fact, was not simply superficial but deep down and from the heart: *with a double heart*, which another translator turns as "with different hearts" to teach us that there was great duplicity in their heart. This is more cruel than enemies of all kinds. They, after all, are open in their stratagems, and from this fact they are easily detected, whereas these people put on a public face but are different in reality, and thus render themselves difficult to detect by those against whom their schemes are directed, and are much more harmful than those who conceal their swords.

May the Lord utterly destroy all deceitful lips and boasting tongue, those who say, "We will give our tongue free rein (another version, "we will hold power"). *Our lips are our own* (another, "they remain with us"); *who is our master?"* (another, "who will lord it over us?")[8] Do you see the solicitude of the inspired author, how he prays for them? The remark is not against them, note, but on their behalf. He did not ask for them to be destroyed, note, but for the evil to be done away with. He did not say, Them the Lord will destroy, note, but *the deceitful lips*. Again, he asks for the destruction not of their being but of their tongue, their folly, their deceit, and for an end to be put to their arrogance. Mocking their lack of understanding he says, *Our lips are our own; who is our master?* The words of insane and deranged people. For this very reason Paul says the opposite to them in the words, "You are not your own; you were bought at a price,"[9] and bids them not to live for themselves.[10] Your lips are not yours, he is saying, but the Lord's. He it was, in fact, who made them, who fitted you together, who breathed life into you. But you – what do you have? Not all that we have, by contrast, is ours; for even the possessions we have others have entrusted to us, and the land we lease others have given to us. Exactly so has God let these things out on lease to you, not for you to bear thorns but to convert the seed into something useful; not for you to make folly flourish by them, not for deceit, but for humility, benediction, and love. He gave you eyes, not to indulge in unrestrained gazing but to embellish them with temperance; and hands, not for striking but for giving alms. How on the contrary do you claim *our lips are our own* when you make them slaves of sin, of immorality, of impurity?

Who is our master? O, what a diabolical remark! O, what a demonic spirit! Do you see, human being that you are, all of nature

proclaiming your Lord's strength, wisdom, care, providence, while your body, your soul, your life, all things visible and invisible are all but crying out, raising their voice and trumpeting the Lord's power, and you say *Who is our master?* This is a mark of madness, of frenzy, this the sign of a corrupt spirit. On this account come countless evils. Others by contrast confess the Lord, but deny the fact of judgement and punishment, buying a brief joy at the cost of heavy punishment; choosing to buoy themselves up by not remembering hell, they forget by this fearlessness that they are casting themselves into the depths of destruction. Hence I urge you both to remember hell and to talk about hell; in this way keep your soul in good condition. There is much value, after all, in discussion of this kind. It is not idly, in fact, that God has made this threat and already brought it to our attention; instead, it is to make us all the better for the fear. Hence too the devil goes to great trouble and effort in his wish to abolish memory of it. So do not expel that memory or ask, "Why do I concern myself unduly?" Concern yourself unduly? That is undue suffering when you are suffering in hell. This is the due time for concern, not then. This is shown by the example of the rich man in the story of Lazarus, who gained nothing from his untold sufferings.[11] Had he, however, suffered at the due time, he would not have been tormented in the way he was.

"On account of the hardships of the poor and the groaning of the needy I shall now arise," says the Lord. "I shall put them in safe-keeping, and speak openly there" (v.5). Another version, "I shall give salvation a clear place." Learn how great is the force of lowliness. The power of the needy (by "needy" I mean the contrite of heart) is the recompense for their difficult lot. You see, it is not life or virtue the psalmist mentions here, but their difficult lot that stirs God to action and summons him to punishment and vengeance. This is what is remarkable about the person bearing injustice nobly, this is the extent of the providence from God for the abused: in place of the most eloquent appeal is the disaster befalling the unfortunate. Mighty is the force of groaning, calling down grace from on high. Be in fear of it, you who wrong the needy. You have power and wealth and resources and favor of the courts; but they have weaponry more potent than all those, groans and laments, and the in-

justice itself, which wins help from the heavens. This weaponry digs up dwellings, uproots foundations, lays waste to cities, this weaponry casts entire races into the sea – the groanings of wronged people, I mean. God has regard for their right attitude when the abused utter no recrimination, but simply groan and lament their own misfortune.

Now, what does it mean *I shall put them in safe-keeping, and speak openly there*? With boldness, he says, "I shall be their champion obviously and clearly so that all may know." And when is his way of saving them not so obvious? When it is in secret rather than obvious; he has no need, you see, of credit from human beings. Now, however, when it is likely that their enemies will fall upon and abuse them, and mock them with the claim that they have no help from God, he says, In obvious ways shall I bring my salvation to them, so that even their opponents may come to their senses and become better by knowing from experience the help coming from the Lord.

The sayings of the Lord are undefiled sayings, silver purified, a testing in the ground (v.6). What is the relation of this to what has been said? A close connection, in fact. Do not think that this is said to no purpose, he is saying, you see, nor that the threat is idle; his words are pure, free of falsehood. I mean, just as silver that is purified contains nothing foreign or base, so too whatever words God speaks must take effect absolutely. *Silver purified, a testing in the ground.* Another version, "purified, yielding to the ground." Now, the Hebrew for "yielding to the ground" said *Baalil laares*, that is, cast in a mold, flowing into the ground. *Refined sevenfold.* Do you see how he demonstrates what is free of falsehood, what is true, from the comparison with metal? You see, just as it is molded, purified, subjected to that process many times, and is then rid of foreign matter, carefully refined, so is God's sentence.

You, O Lord, will guard us and preserve us from this generation forever (another version, "You will guard them;" another, "You will guard it and preserve us from this generation forever;" another, "together with the eternal generation"). *The godless prowl around* (another, "will prowl;" another, "they will walk around in a circle of the godless"). *In your eminence you have multiplied human beings* (another, "when vile human beings are exalted;" a further version,

"At the top they were sold cheaply to human beings"). [12] Now, the Hebrew says *Charm zollo lebne Adam. You, O Lord, will guard us and preserve us.* See him frequently – or, rather, constantly – taking refuge in God and seeking assistance from that quarter; the help, in fact, is all-powerful, at no time interrupted. We stand in need of no human resource, he is saying: you are the one who guards us constantly. What is the meaning of *the godless prowl around*? According to the Septuagint the meaning to be taken is this: Even if the wicked prowl, we shall come to no harm; you will guard us, after all, raise us up and glorify us. According to the other translator, on the other hand, the sense to be taken is this: The godless will be thrust out when you elevate the vile human beings – that is to say, when you glorify us, though considered base as we are and humiliated, you will expel and get rid of them.

Now, what is the meaning of *in your eminence*? By way of saying, You made them like you, in so far as it is possible for you to be like a human being. "Let us make the human being in our image and likeness," [13] Scripture says, remember. In other words, what he is in heaven, that we are on earth; and as no one is superior to him on high, so no one on earth is like this living being in virtue. "Be like your Father in heaven," [14] Scripture says. He actually gave us a share in his name: "I said, You are gods," Scripture says, "and all of you children of the Most High." [15] And again: "I have appointed you Pharaoh's God:" [16] he made him creator of corporeal and incorporeal things. Whereas at one time Moses transforms created nature and at another time others transform different elements, he directed us to build ourselves as a temple for him. Even if, therefore, you do not create heaven, nevertheless you create a temple for God. [17] For heaven is remarkable for this, that it has God dwelling in it – us too, in fact, through Christ: "He raised us up," Scripture says, remember, "and seated us with him at his right hand," [18] and gave us the task of doing greater things than he himself did. "The signs that I perform," Scripture says, remember, "he too will perform, and will perform greater ones than those." [19] In the Old Testament, too, one transformed the sea, [20] another held back the sun, another bade the moon stand still, [21] yet another diverted its rays towards himself, [22] the children in the furnace restrained the force of the element in the furnace, [23] the raging flames lost their roar, and in bondage fell to hissing. Wild beasts, too, knew to re-

spect God's friends; despite the pressure of hunger, they became more restrained.[24]

Let the gluttons respect the beasts' abstinence. Lions recognized Daniel, and became restrained; we behold the Son of God coming to us, and are not restrained. They preferred to perish from hunger and not touch the body of the holy man; we see Christ going about naked, wasting away with hunger, without dispatching to them what is superfluous of ours; instead, we live in luxury and ignore the holy ones. Again, the land supplied another friend of God with so many gifts from its bosom, so much produce as never previously.[25] Why are you surprised if they won such respect when even their garments and their shadow struck awe into the demons, the dead and diseases?[26] Angels honored human beings, and paid them extraordinary respect.[27] How could they not intend to honor them, after all, when God himself had done so? This can be seen in both the Old and the New Testaments. Hence the psalmist says, *In your eminence you have multiplied human beings.*

Considering, therefore, the greatness of the honor, let us ensure a reward worthy of it, lest the excess of the honor prove a means to punishment for us. May we, who have both learnt and taught these things, be delivered from this fate, in Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom belong all glory, honor and adoration for ages of ages. Amen.

[1] The Septuagint title for this psalm (as also for Psalm 6, ignored there by Chrysostom) correctly translates the Hebrew term as "the eighth," seen by some as a musical statement about octaves on the basis of its occurrence also in 1 Chr 15.21, a book in which liturgical music is to the fore. Mowinckel, however, authoritatively denies that the music of the Israelites was based on an octave scale, preferring to note that the number eight plays an important part in many ritual acts. Our author is wisely noncommittal.

[2] Chrysostom's male congregation is presumably not meant to see a compliment here to more numerous good women.

[3] Heb 10.24.

[4] Gen 6.9. We have noted before that Chrysostom has an affinity with the figure of the solitary (even contrary?) righteous sufferer.

[5] 1 Cor 5.6.

[6] 1 Cor 15.33, Paul quoting the pagan dramatist Menander, to give the only occurrence of *homilia* in the New Testament, the word evidently meaning social and then linguistic intercourse, interchange, communication. In

the ninth century Photius will insist on the term for Chrysostom's Genesis homilies in place of *logoi* on the basis of the degree of rapport with the congregation - not so patent a feature of this commentary in the form we have it.

[7] Col 3.9.

[8] Vv.3-4.

[9] 1 Cor 6.19-20.

[10] Cf Rom 14.7.

[11] Cf Lk 16.19-31.

[12] Vv.7-8, offering a challenge to ancient and modern translators; Chrysostom proceeds to a rare differentiation (if not evaluation) of the available versions.

[13] Gen 1.26. Strangely, after a brief and bare commentary on the psalm to this point, and after one more daunting assemblage of divergent variant translations, Chrysostom takes up one final obscure phrase and launches into the heavily scriptural documentation that marked passages on "earlier" psalms - almost as if to rescue it from mediocrity and finish on a high note. One cannot fail to be struck by the unevenness of treatment.

[14] Not quite what Jesus says at Mt 5.45,48, but a helpful adaptation to the preacher's point; *akribeia* has its limitations.

[15] Psalm 82.6.

[16] Ex 7.1.

[17] Cf 1 Cor 6.19.

[18] Eph 2.6.

[19] Cf Jn 14.12.

[20] Cf Ex 14.21.

[21] Cf Jos 10.13 for both sun and moon - though it is Joshua alone who gets the credit for both.

[22] Cf 2 Kgs 20.9-11.

[23] Cf Dn 3.

[24] Cf Dn 6.22.

[25] Perhaps Job 42.10 is in mind here.

[26] Cf Acts 19.11-12; 5.15.

[27] Cf Gen 18 and 19.

Psalm 13

For the direction. A psalm of David.
Another version, A triumphal song of David.
Another, For victory.

How long, O Lord? Will you forget me in the end? (another version, "Do you forget me completely?"). *How long will you avert your face from me?* (another, "hide") *How long shall I hold counsels in my soul, sorrows in my heart day and night?* (another, "anxiety in my mind daily")[1] This too is no slight benefit, to get a sense of God's forgetting. Yet do not think that forgetting is what we are experiencing, but abandonment. Many people, admittedly, are sufferers of it without either knowing or regretting it. This blessed man, on the contrary, not only knew it but also calculated its duration. I mean, that cry *How long?* comes from someone implying the duration is lengthy; hence he regrets and laments it. For your part, however, I ask you, note how his distress arises in no way from any worldly concern, or money, or reputation, but is exclusively about divine favor.

Whence comes his knowledge that God had forgotten him, does the text say? Since he knew also when he remembered him, and he was wise enough to know what forgetting meant and what remembering. Not like the majority of people, who, when they are wealthy, when they enjoy a good reputation with human beings, when everything goes favorably for them, when they better their foes, then think God remembers them. Hence neither do they understand when it is God forgets them. They do not recognize the sign of God's remembering, you see, nor do they grasp the sign of his forgetting. I mean, if they do not understand the tokens of friendship, neither will they recognize those of hostility. That is to say, many who are given these signs God forgets, and them most of all,

whereas those in difficulties he often remembers. Nothing, after all, brings remembrance by God so much as doing good, being sober and watchful, practicing virtue; likewise, nothing prompts forgetting so much as living in sin and giving oneself to greed and rapacity. So for your part, dearly beloved, when you are in trouble, do not say, "God has forgotten me," but when you are living in sin and everything is going favorably for you. After all, if you knew this, you would quickly abandon evil things.

How long will you avert your face from me? This is forgetting of a long duration. He is indicating God's actions from human gestures, note, and thus depicts his anger and punishing. God turns his face away likewise when we fail to act in keeping with his commands. "When you stretch out your hands," Scripture says, remember, "I will avert my eyes from you." Then also the reason: "Your hands drip with blood."[2] Yet this too is likewise a mark of great care, abandonment and averting of the face; he does it to woo us more gently. When a besotted lover dismisses and abandons the one spurning him, far from expelling him from his thinking he intends to win him over and bind him to him.[3]

Now, after mentioning his turning away, he mentions also his forgetting and the consequences of it for him. What in fact are they? What he goes on to mention: *How long shall I hold counsels in my soul?* For example, just as the sailor on leaving port wanders in every direction, and the person deprived of light bumps into many things, so too the one who encounters God's forgetting is caught up constantly in worries and cares and sorrows. On the other hand, this is also no slight factor in winning God over to you, your worrying, caring, wasting away, sorrowing, giving thought to his turning from you. Paul too said as much in writing to the Corinthians about himself: "Who is the one to cheer me up if not the one pained by me?"[4] This is no slight advantage, you see, dearly beloved, to sense God's turning away, to suffer, to be pained. In this way, after all, we shall quickly win him over to us.

How long will my enemy be exalted over me? Consider, hearken to me, O Lord my God. Give light to my eyes lest I should ever fall asleep in death (vv.2-3). You see, just as when God defends us and stands by us, everything damaging is removed from us, so when he keeps his distance and forgets us, our soul is cut in twain, our heart plunged in sorrow, those who do harm fall upon us, and life be-

comes craggy and precipitous. Now, this is allowed to happen for our advantage, so that through the whole of it those more indifferent people may be goaded into becoming more zealous and return to the condition from which they fell. "Your falling away will instruct you, after all," Scripture says, "and your wickedness censure you."[5] And so even abandonment by God is a form of providence. You see, when the one who exercises providence and care is slighted, he ignores and abandons us to some extent so that at that point indifference may be expelled and the negligent may turn more zealous.

Consider, he says, see the enemy exalted over me; even if not for my distress but for his arrogance and folly, hearken to me. What are you asking? To prevail over your foes? It is not this he is asking, but for the eyes of the heart to be illumined and the darkness to be dissipated which obscures the clear vision of the soul and darkens the mind's eye. This I ask: *Give light to my eyes. Lest my enemy ever say,* seeing me cast down into the death of sin, *Thus have I prevailed over him* (v.4). I have got the better of him; what I longed to see has come my way. What is the meaning of *I have prevailed over him*? That even if he is not absolutely strong, yet he has proved strong against me. Our defeat clothes him in strength, makes him look strong, powerful and invincible.

Do you see that, when we sin, not only do we shame and destroy ourselves and fall headlong into death, but we also declare to be strong and powerful the foes by whom we are defeated. And not only this: we also bring them to a state of joy and exultation. Bless me! What stupidity! What madness! To be of assistance ourselves to our enemies, and make their soul rejoice and exult through the pain and distress they cause us! See how absurd it is. Whereas we should conquer the enemy ("His swords have finally failed," remember, "and the godless has been destroyed"),[6] whereas we should conquer, we are beaten; and not only this, but we make him appear powerful and strong. Nor does the extent of our madness and extreme derangement stop at this point: we prove the cause of bringing him to a state of joy and exultation. Sin in reality is the height of madness and extreme evil. *They will rejoice if I am shaken.* The inspired author adduces three reasons to justify his importuning the Lord to have regard to him and direct his face to

him, and hearken to his request: the power and strength of the enemy, and before that their arrogance and exaltation, and third their rejoicing and exulting. It is as if to say, If you do not turn your face to me, Lord, in response to my request, to my difficulties, then in response to the enemies' boasting, for the reason that they pride themelves on their strength, for the reason that they take satisfaction in my troubles, laugh at my fall.

Hearken to me, give light to my eyes. Remove the deep sleep which in my sins I have fallen into and little by little am drifting towards the death of the soul. I mean, if I am but shaken from your watchful care, this is taken by them as a cause of joy, boasting and strength; they take great pride in this, and are intolerable. If, on the other hand, I were carried off to my death, what would they not get up to? Do you see how great a loss the inspired author considers it, no less than punishment and retribution, that the common enemy is delighted, is seen to be strong, appears exalted? After all, if he had not considered these evils great and intolerable, he would not have proposed them as an appeal to God and for winning his favor. Let us also do likewise, and give thought and expend effort lest we puff the enemy up, lest we show him to be strong, lest we give him joy; instead, let us do the opposite, make him humble, lowly, weak, dejected, gloomy. You see, if he were to see sinners reforming, all these things would happen together.

But I trusted in your mercy (v.5). What change of heart did you have, therefore, in making these petitions, for him to have regard for you again, hearken to your prayer, illumine the eyes of your mind? What grounds do you have for them, in fact? Let others speak for themelves, he is saying, if they have anything worth saying; for my part I know one thing, I say one thing, I have set all my hope on that, I set my sights on that – your mercy, your lovingkindness. *But I trusted in your mercy.* Do you see the inspired author's humility? Do you see the man's sound attitude? Though having countless virtues, and being in a position to importune God on their account, he makes no mention of them; instead, he has recourse to God's mercy alone. And so it is clear that when he says, "If I have done this, if I have returned evil for evil,"[7] and similar things, he says them under great pressure to do so; were there no such pressure, he would say none of them, but rather set his sight on God's mercy and lovingkindness in place of all supplication.

Then in his conviction that he will not be deceived in his hope, he adds, *My heart will rejoice in your salvation.* Do you see a hope-filled soul? He asked, and before receiving he gives thanks as though having received, sings praise to God and achieves all that had been anticipated. Now, whence came this sound hope? From his exceptionally sound attitude, from his great enthusiasm for his request; he knew that God hearkens to the person asking in this way, from great fervor and resourcefulness of heart. Just as, then, those who request slothfully and negligently hardly appreciate the gift on receipt of it, so too those who make their request with heightened zeal and enthusiasm have a sense of receiving the gift even before receiving it, out of the intense and pure attitude they have, as divine grace infuses them with joy; hence they give thanks and put themselves into a position to receive it. [8]

My heart will rejoice in your salvation. This gives joy to my soul, he says, being in possession of your salvation; it gives joy to my soul, because you are its salvation. Do you see the different kinds of exultation? Exultation of enemies at someone's fall, and exultation of the soul in its own salvation? One by the devil, the other by the saved. One brings defilement for those even seeming to exult and for what they exult in; the other means salvation and encouragement for those exulting. We find joy and exultation in this exultation and joy, whereas we shun the former and loathe it.

I shall praise the Lord who has done me favors, and sing to the name of the Lord most high (v.6). In memory of these favors I shall offer praise to the Lord, because he has done me favors, humbling the enemy, filling him with shame, revealing his weakness, hearkening to my prayer, turning his face towards me, dispersing the mist and gloom through which I was being brought to my death. Like some indelible record I shall dedicate this song of praise in return for the favors done to me, [9] not only singing it now and recounting these favors in my thoughts, but also praising and singing to the name of the Lord in time to come, carrying around in my soul the unforgettable magnitude of his kindness. Such a soul, therefore, not only escapes more readily from evils if overcome by them, but also proves more careful about ever falling into similar troubles again. You see, since it carries this kindness in its memory at all times, obviously it has in mind the problems from which it was freed by encountering this kindness. On the other hand, having also remem-

brance of those evils, it carefully gives thought to the source of the evils that afflicted it and the cause of its being caught up in the evil. Then, with this in mind, he fortifies himself on all sides lest he become the victim of similar ills. In this way he then both gives his own life proper arrangement and guidance, and also offers abundant thanks to the one who delivered him. As he discovered a deliverer, so also he begged for a guardian at any cost for the future.

Let us also imitate this, and even if we have been caught up in some sin, let us promptly come to our senses, and make our fall an occasion of greater care and the basis of never sinning again. How, then, will you do that? You will have David for your teacher. You have sinned? Do not be somnolent in your sin, but rouse yourself: consider at once that God has turned his face from you, that he has forgotten you; then weep, groan, bathe your bed each night in your tears, part company with the workers of iniquity. These are the lessons of David, after all. He said to himself, *How long, O Lord? Will you forget me in the end? How long will you avert your face from me?* Recite this not with your tongue, but much earlier in your heart; recite also David's other appeals. When you have said everything, hope in his mercy – hope, have no doubts. "The one who doubts," Scripture says, remember, "is like a wave of the sea tossed and driven by the wind. Let no such person expect," it says, remember, "to receive anything from God. A man in two minds, after all, is unstable in all his ways." [10] So hope in his mercy, have no doubts, and you will gain your request completely; once gained, however, do not prove ungrateful for the favor and unappreciative, but make a record of the kindness and offer it as a thanksgiving song to the Lord.

Perhaps you do not know how to compose it yourself: call together the poor, employ their tongues and bring them into your service; be assured he will hearken to the song they sing on your behalf as willingly as to the Davidic song. You see, just as the song composed in different keys produces a sweeter melody than a single one, so too the song coming from the poor in different ways makes a sound that is sweet and attractive to the God who hearkens to the voice of the poor. [11] Set up for yourself and for God a monument of this kind: for him, as a record of his kindness; for yourself, as a demonstration of thanksgiving, of gratitude, a sign of constant remembrance to carry always in your heart, set your life in

order. Rather, let us set ourselves in order so as to become worthy also of that heavenly community of good things in Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be the glory and the power for ages of ages. Amen.

[1] Vv.1-2. As usual in this series, Chrysostom (insofar as our present text conveys his manner of delivery) plunges straight into his commentary without the resumés or other retrospective glances that mark a series like the Genesis homilies. Yet in this case there seems, in the opening phrase "This *too* is no slight benefit," a hint at his opening to the previous psalm, where he began with mention of "fellowship and fraternal encouragement" as no slight benefit.

[2] Is 1.15.

[3] Is it because of the psalmist's anguished appeal to God that Chrysostom takes as his example here (for his male congregation) the love between males?

[4] 2 Cor 2.2.

[5] Jer 2.19. We have had occasion often to observe that, in Chrysostom's view, indifference, sloth, *rhathymia* is a particular threat to the spiritual life.

[6] Cf Psalm 9.6. Chrysostom's rhetoric here gives a convincing impression of his being carried away with his theme. (For an evaluation of this impression of spontaneity and of the point raised in note 1, see my "Chrysostom's Commentary on the Psalms: homilies or tracts?")

[7] Psalm 7.3-4.

[8] In note 5 we remarked on Chrysostom's diagnosis of spiritual debility as due to *rhathymia*, indifference. The opposite of this debilitating characteristic, and highly commended by him, is enthusiasm, zeal – *prothymia* and σπουδή (*spoudē*). This pair of opposites is one of a number of "binomials" of which F. Asensio speaks in his article on the Genesis homilies cited in our bibliography. It is interesting that the positive virtues, or at least *prothymia*, have not figured to such an extent in this commentary.

[9] In this beautiful statement of the psalmist's purpose in the psalter, and of the Church's adoption of the psalms in later worship, Chrysostom may be indebted to another lyric poet, the Roman moralist Horace, who made a similar claim for the permanence of the record he was leaving in his odes (the word Chrysostom employs of the psalms here): *Exegi monumentum aere perennius.*

[10] Jas 1.6-8.

[11] Cf Psalm 34.6. Chrysostom is alert to the situation of the poor in his congregation and contemporary society.

Psalm 44[1]

To the author of victory, for the sons of Kore.

O *our God, we have heard with our ears, our fathers told us the work you performed in their days, in days gone by* (v.1). Another translator says, "in the days before;" another, "those from of old." While it is the inspired author who recites this psalm, he recites it not in his own person but in the person of the Maccabees, describing and foretelling what would happen at that time.[2] The inspired authors are like that, you see: they span all times, the past, the present, the future. Now, who the Maccabees were, what they had to put up with, and what they accomplished, it is first necessary to tell so that the outline of the theme will also be clearer.[3] When Antiochus, who was called Epiphanes, attacked and destroyed everything, you recall, and forced many of the people of the time to betray their ancestral way of life, these men held firm and were in no way led astray by these trials. When the war waged furiously, and they were unable to achieve anything further, they went into hiding – as did the apostles as well. You see, instead of always coming face to face with the dangers in the open, sometimes it would happen that they took to their heels and escaped detection. After they had some breathing space, however, like thoroughbred hounds bounding out of their hiding place and peeping from their lair, they learned how to save no longer only themselves but also as many others as possible.

Traversing the city and the whole countryside, they gathered together all the people they found to be in good condition; many, on the other hand, who were in difficulties and had lost heart they won over, persuading them to return to their ancestral Law. They insisted, you see, that God is loving, and never withdraws the salvation that proceeds from repentance. Now, with assurances like

this they assembled an army of high-minded men. They were fighting, in fact, not so much for women and children and households, not over the subjection and enslavement of their country, but for the Law and the ancestral way of life; their general was God. Accordingly, they took up battle formation and put themselves into the line, and routed their adversaries. Their trust was not in weapons; instead, in place of all military equipment they had a sufficient cause to fight for. So they went into battle without putting on a show or raising battle cries, as some do, and without enrolling flute players, as happens in some armies; instead, they called on God to come from on high and assist them by stretching forth his hand, since it was for his sake they were fighting and for his glory they entered the lists.

Let us see, then, what this army of God's has to say, fortified as it is with spiritual help, and on the point of engaging the enemy. *O God, we have heard with our ears.* Some of those positioned with them, you see, observed both the size and array of the forces of Antiochus, their success and the fact that they took everything by surprise; considering as well their own weakness and numerical inferiority, they became more cowardly and timid. So the psalmist stirs their courage by showing that everything depends on God's leadership, and as victory is possible without armies if he lends assistance, he directs some words of encouragement and advice to the troops in the form of a prayer, and by conversing with God gives them greater spirit. Now, this is no small element in encouragement; in fact, his words would not have had the same effect directed to them as when also recited at length to God. For this reason he also went on to say, *Not with their own sword did they get possession of the land, nor did their right hand save them* (v.3). This, you see, was part of his winning over those less well prepared for hardship, those looking for victory in human terms. So all his prayer is an exhortation to the soldiers, bidding them to commit everything to God, and leave the victory to depend on hope from that quarter.

Now, why did he not say simply "We have heard" but *We have heard with our ears*? With what other part of the body does one hear? Surely the words are not superfluous? Far from it: it is a common practice with human beings, when discoursing of things of which they are quite assured and delivering a speech about things of extraordinary importance to those not so completely convinced, al-

ways to make mention of their ears, claiming to have heard with their ears. Not only in the case of this action, however: we usually do the same with others as well, calling the senses themselves as witnesses. So it is characteristic of people convincing the listener to make particular mention of the ears. We do the same also with eyes and hands, as when we say, We felt it with our hands. Now, the apostles also said, "What our eyes have seen, what our hands have touched."[4]

Now, see also in this their virtue from the outset: despite having suffered such numerous and terrible hardships for God, driven out of their country and from freedom, exposed to dangers, others also made fugitives, taking to mountain tops and wilderness, all the time they said nothing of it, like "We have to put up with this for your sake – come to our aid." Instead, as though bereft of such pleas and lacking confidence in their own virtue, they had recourse in these words to the original favors worked by God for their forebears. That they had not the confidence to do so is not surprising, after all, necessity driving them to this; but the fact that those who had grounds for making capital out of their virtuous deeds did not demand to be saved on that account but from God's lovingkindess, which their ancestors also enjoyed, is a sign of their great humility. Yet from this they also provide themselves with no slight basis of their enthusiasm; appeal to God in itself is sufficient, after all, to bring wars to an end.

Our fathers told us. Listen to this, all you who are heedless of your children, who ignore their singing diabolical songs, while you pay no attention to the divine stories. Those men were not like that, however; on the contrary, they passed their life without interruption in stories of God's great deeds, and achieved a double advantage. On the one hand, it was a good experience for them to keep in mind the divine favors, and they were the better for it; on the other, their offspring gained no little grounding in the knowlege of God from these stories, and were moved to imitation of virtue. For them, you see, books were the mouths of their forebears, and these stories were a feature of every study and every employment, nothing being more agreeable nor more profitable. After all, if mere adventure stories, fables and fictions generally divert the listeners, much more do these stories reveal his beneficence, power, wisdom and care, stimulate the listener with enjoyment, and make them

more observant. You see, those who were present during the events and eyewitnesses passed them on for our hearing, and hearing is equally effective for faith development as sight. Those not present or eyewitnesses were, in fact, no less believers than those who were present and eyewitnesses; on the contrary, this fact was for them no little encouragement to faith.[5]

Now, let us see what stories they told, and if they recall a similar theme. You see, someone intending to make a request and gain what is asked needs to ask a favor similar to one granted to others. Now, what I mean is something like this. A slave asks us for a gift, for instance: if he proves that someone else was given it, he provides the strongest justification for getting it, unless the example suffers from some difference. Now, the difference I refer to is one of person or circumstance. I mean, if the recipient was the same sort of person as the petitioner, and the request similar, the example stands; but if the former person got it by right and the latter not so, there is need of greater inducement. What I am saying, however, needs to be clarified from the Scriptures. After the Canaanite woman heard, "It is not possible to take the children's bread and give it to the whelps," she replied, "Yes, sir; after all, the whelps eat of the scraps from their masters' table."[6] Paul likewise in his letters said, "If others share this rightful claim on you, much more do we,"[7] hereby making a greater claim on the basis of difference of person. And again in his letter to Philemon he said, "Because the saints' feelings have been lifted through you, brother; hence, though I have confidence enough in Christ to bid you do your duty, I appeal rather to your love."[8] This is a similar example, when someone who is the first to receive opens a door, as it were, to the second, provided the one about to make the request is a similar type of person or requests the same thing. The appeal often proves demanding, however, when it is not only for things given to others but for those already in our possession, as is the case in Paul's words in his letter to the Philippians, "Because even in Thessalonica you sent me more than once what I needed."[9]

Hence in many cases of people giving things to others this requirement is made, not to let still others know, lest the favor done to one should prompt many applicants to the giver, as though there were no option available to the one giving once but to give also to others. Yet while it is reasonable for human beings to make this

requirement, insofar as they become the poorer from giving, God on the contrary proclaims to others and broadcasts his giving with a view to providing these others also with an inducement to ask him for the same in turn. It is by giving, you see, that his riches are shown to be greater. Hence Paul says, "He is prodigal to all, prodigal even to all who call upon him."[10] Do you see a certain new nature to wealth? Imitate this prodigality in your case, too. You see, when you use up the wealth put aside, then you increase it; whereas if you put it under the bed, then you decrease it. And what is surprising if this happens in the case of spiritual things when in fact this is the case also with carnal things? I mean, if people out of miserliness do not dispose of grain laid up at home or sow it in the fields, they are putting it in the mouth of worms, whereas if they scatter it a more abundant crop is produced.

Take heed of this, all you who are backward in almsgiving. Take heed of this, all you who reduce your wealth by hoarding it. Take heed of this, all you who are no better off than those who are rich only in their dreams. Present realities, you see, are no better than a dream; rather, just as people imagining in sleep they have money, even in control of a king's ransom, are more indigent than anyone once day dawns, so too with this life, because you can take nothing to the next, you will be more indigent than anyone, even if in possession of everyone's property. You were rich in dream only, after all. So if you want to prove to me your affluence, prove it to me when day dawns, when you reach your real homeland; in this life, by contrast, I refrain from distinguishing rich from poor. In fact, there is here no truthful distinction based on reality, but rather only fine sounding words. I mean, just as people generally call the blind "visually challenged" whereas the term does not correspond to the reality, since on the contrary they most of all have no vision, just so do I claim also that in this life the term "the rich" is applied to those who have nothing to their name in the next life. In fact, when they are rich here, then most of all I know they are poor; in other words, were they not extremely poor, they would not be extremely rich. I mean, just as the sightless, were they not completely blind, would not be called "visually challenged," so should we think of things herebelow.

Let us therefore put aside the deception of terminology, and adopt instead the truth of reality. Reality, you know, does not de-

pend on terminology; on the contrary, the nature of things frames the terms in accord with their proper being. Such and such people are called rich, but in fact are not. How are they not rich, when they abound in silver, gold, precious stones, golden garments and everything else? Because it is not gold, or garments, or possessions, but almsgiving that makes them rich; the rest are rubbish, they are wood and straw, after all. For what garment, tell me, will succeed in clothing the naked wretch standing in that fearsome dock? As Paul also said in fear, "If we are clad, we shall not be found naked." [11] What possessions will succeed in rescuing the one at risk? What slaves will attend the master under the lash? What dwellings? What precious stones? What baths will be sufficient to wash away the dirt of their sins? How far do you deceive yourselves? How far do you ignore the truth of reality, yawning in your dreams while being on the very threshhold of judgement?

Let us, however, return to our theme. [12] *Our fathers told us the work you performed in their days, in days gone by.* It is also possible for us to take this verse in a spiritual sense. If their fathers narrated it also to them, yet the grace of God allowed us as well to learn their story through the visitation of the Spirit. Now, how would one take it in a spiritual sense? By referring it to the achievements of the new grace, namely, that we have been lifted up to heaven, that we have been thought worthy of the kingdom, that God became man, destroying the barrier of the partition. [13] But let us go back now to the historical sense. *The work you performed in their days, in days gone by.* He recalls some ancient account, and presents former achievements. For what reason does he not mention anything new and recent? Because when dealing with human beings it is natural that we conduct a narrative of recent events, and gain their interest from them insofar as their memory is failing, whereas with God everything is known, old and new equally. "Behold," Scripture says, remember, "you know everything, the most recent and the ancient." [14] It makes no difference whether one tells an old or a new story, provided it be appropriate to the theme.

So which ancient story is it, in the words of the text, that he wishes to tell? Let us listen. *Your hand destroyed nations, and you planted them; you afflicted peoples, and you expelled them* (v.2). Do you recognize which war he is referring to, which victory, which triumph, or do you still require clarification from us? At this stage I

am inclined to think many have a general idea of what is being referred to, but for the sake of those who do not know there is need to supply some comment of our own. So which triumphs is he recalling? Which successes? Some in Egypt, some in the desert, some in the land of promise, but especially those in the promised land. You see, those who reached Palestine were not the same ones who went out of Egypt: these all fell in the desert. [15] When at any rate those born of the others and those reared in the desert entered Palestine, Scripture says, they had no need of weapons; instead, they captured cities by a mere shout, and crossing the Jordan they overran the first city that stood in their way, Jericho, as though by dancing rather than fighting. [16] I mean, they went out fitted with weapons not as if for battles but for a festival and dance, bearing arms for appearance sake rather than security; wearing sacred robes and having the Levites preceding the army, they encircled the wall. It was a marvellous and extraordinary sight to see, so many thousands of soldiers marching in step and order, in silence and utter regularity, as though no one was about, with that daunting harmony of trumpets keeping everything in time.

Let those who are disorderly in church be ashamed of themselves. After all, if there was such good order when the trumpets sounded, what excuse will they allege, when God himself speaks, for impairing the clarity of hearing of those stories on account of their own disorder? [17] But what was the reason, does the text say, for his not mentioning those who left Egypt? Because all had passed on, because they had paid the penalty. But what was the reason for all perishing? Because they had sinned seriously. Now, in this he was making a further provision, that those destined to occupy Palestine should not have witnessed the vices of Egypt, the superstition, all the impiety, and should have no model of such awful wickedness. They were so overcome, you see, by the practices of the Eyptians, so much under their influence, that despite such wonderful marvels they did not expunge completely even in the desert the remnants of deceit. If, however, they had also adopted Canaanite models more harmful than the former ones, to what extremes would their impiety not have reached? For that reason he kept the new generation itself in the desert until the offspring of those others reached manhood.

In saying this we are not speaking on our own account, but adducing the evidence of the Scriptures. Through Ezekiel, remember, God reproaches them with this very thing, that after leading them into the desert and talking much with them he was not listened to. [18] But what was the reason why he bade them bear arms when they were about to make an assault on Jericho? I mean, it would have been more marvelous if they had done it without arms. To be sure, in bidding them do something of the human sort or get some additional assistance of a material kind, he does so with considerateness for our human limitations. [19] I mean, what assault would the wearing of arms have been able to achieve against the walls? What would the sound of trumpets? In other words, had the war been against human beings, it would have had some effect to rely even on arms, whereas if a wall had to be toppled, what was the reason for bearing arms? Now, again in Gideon's case those taken were equal to those not taken; all were obvious, remember. [20]

So why did this happen? So that they might be brought to faith when given these orders. The soul, you see, grows up with the body, never sees anything bodiless, and hankers after material things, and so needs to be guided from visible things to the intellectual. Hence the inspired authors also felt the need in speaking of God to make mention of parts of the human body, not so as to fashion that undefiled nature on the model of limbs, but to teach the soul raised on material things the beliefs that transcend humankind by reference to human things. Since, then, God's power is also an intellectual thing, he provides something material lest the people of the time fail to come to faith. You see, if he had said, In seven days the city will be overwhelmed while you are at rest and do nothing, perhaps many would not have believed, whereas in fact like some foundation he lays down these commands in the human mind.

In case you think what I have said is a kind of guesswork, [21] I want to tell you a story from former times that confirms my words. There was a Syrian called Naaman. Infected with leprosy and ashamed of the condition for the extreme danger it exposed him to, he came to Palestine (necessity obliges me to cut the story short) [22] in the desire to find some cure for his condition from the prophet. So he arrived, and standing at the man's door he addressed the

physician. But though he hearkened to him, instead of coming out he sent him off with instructions to bathe in the river Jordan. Since, however, the direction was short on ceremony, gave attention to externals while lacking elevated purpose, he was unconvinced. What did he say? "I told myself that he would come out and lay his hand on me, call upon his God and dispel the leprosy."[23] Do you see how his spirit required some visible manifestation? I mean, his failure to accept that a word from the physician sufficed and instead required a touch was an index of the shortcomings of the patient.

Now, many other difficulties are solved for us in this instance. Hence Christ too does not in every case heal by word but also by touch; he placed his hand on the mouth and the tongue, remember, and he healed those coming to him, sometimes by word only, sometimes doing everything by willing it. So why did he do this? Because of the limitations of those coming to him. For proof that this happened on account of their limitations, he commended those who had no need of such gestures. "Amen, I say to you," he said, remember, "not even in Israel have I found such faith"[24] on the occasion when the centurion did not require him to come to his house but said his bidding sufficed. In the case of Hezekiah, at all events, nothing like this happens, only a prediction, nothing of a human kind being involved;[25] for this reason, of course, even in the case of the man jealous of his wife some concrete procedure was required.[26]

Now, if you wish to take this in a spiritual sense ("All these things happened to them as types," Scripture says, remember, "and were written for our instruction, confronted as we are with the ends of the ages"),[27] think of the best of the Church's teachers employing the word in place of a trumpet to throw down the walls of their adversaries, and the peoples armed in the panoply of Jesus.

Now, the number of the seven days gives us an explanation of the sabbath. You see, such requirements of the Law had not been given originally. Hence with regard to the sacrifices God says, "Who asked this from your hands?"[28] And again: "Surely prayers and dedicated meats will not remove your sins?"[29] And again: "Did you offer me victims and sacrifices for forty years in the desert?"[30] And again: "To what end do you bring me frankincense from Saba

and cinnamon from a distant land?"[31] And again: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire."[32] And again: "Is it holocausts and sacrifices God wants, or giving him heed?"[33] And, "Had you wanted sacrifice, I would have given it."[34] And again: "A good hearing in preference to sacrifice."[35] And in spurning the festivals he says, "I hate, I reject your festivals. Remove from my hearing the sound of your songs; to the hymns of your instruments I will not listen."[36] And, "I cannot bear a great day, my soul detests your fasting and rest."[37] And again, "This is not the fast that I chose."[38] And again Ezekiel said: "I shall give you commands that are not good, and by them you will not succeed in living."[38] Thus the sabbath too finds explanation in this text.

But why did the prophet say, "Who asked this from your hands?" I leave this to you to explain: you will be in a position to find such explanations if you give evidence of a pure life. After all, if he summoned Cornelius on account of his excellent life to knowledge of ineffable things,[39] and on account of his diligent reading he caused the eunuch also to find knowledge,[40] much more will he teach you things that are less obscure since you are already enjoying faith, provided you give evidence of an upright life. You see, just as an impure life is an obstacle to knowledge of these things (as Paul says, "I could not speak to you as to spiritual people, since there were quarrels and jealousies among you,"[41] and Isaiah likewise, "They were anxious to know my ways as if a people of righteous behavior"),[42] so a pure life and zeal in the search provide guidance. "Seek," Scripture says, remember, "and you will find."[43] The parable of the man asking for loaves of bread from his friend already asleep also indicates this.[44] Hence Solomon, too, when he asked for spiritual things, received as well what he had not asked. But when you have importunity, spiritual request and a pure life, consider how great will be the ease of attainment – even though, admittedly, importunity is effective even on its own account: "I tell you," Scripture says, remember, "even if he will not give it to him for friendship's sake, he will give it to him if only for his effrontery."[45]

But let us return to our theme. *The work you performed in their days, in days gone by. Your hand destroyed nations, and you planted them.* See how he employs the language in proper fashion. You did

not at that time simply bring things to the stage of victory and defeat, he is saying; instead, everything moved on a further stage, even though before this the odds were not even. Some were in possession, remember, the others were newcomers; yet such was the turnaround that the former were pulled up by the roots and the others made inhabitants with citizen rights. Hence he says of the former, *Your hand destroyed nations*, but of the Jews *He planted them*. Now, he refers to his power by *hand*. Now, if he so rapidly rendered more powerful than the dwellers of that place those who came from another place and who held no city or dwelling place or anywhere to settle down and take root, he is saying, how much more is it the case that he will not despise us after our rejection from our ancestral home? What is the meaning of *you planted*?[46] You fixed firm; what is planted, you see, becomes firm and stable. Who so? Why not "they transferred," tell me? Why not "they were driven to foreign parts?" They were driven, to be sure – not, however, through the weakness of the one casting them aside but through the wickedness of those planted. I mean, if those faults of theirs had not been an obstacle, nothing would have prevented their remaining at home.

You afflicted peoples, and them you drove out. Some claim this refers to the Egyptians; it seems to me, on the contrary, that it is also said of the nations. He called them to account, you see, demonstrating in both ways his own power, both in destroying his enemies and in organizing his own people.

It was not by their sword, in fact, that they succeeded to the land (another version, "It was not by their blade, in fact, that they succeeded to the land"). *Nor was it their arm that saved them, but your right hand, your arm and the light of your countenance* (another, "illumination"), *because you were pleased with them* (v.3). In truth, all those fully armed prevailed in the wars; they prevailed, yet it was not the result of their arms but of God their leader. Do you see how under the guise of a prayer he reveals his strategy, exhorting them to place all their hope in God? Now, how does he call the matter an inheritance when their fathers, their grandfathers and greatgrandfathers did not occupy the land, and instead at one time and another were consumed? Because the promise was made to their fathers. "Forward," he said, remember, "to the land that I will show you;" and, "I will give the

land to you and your seed."[47] Now, since he employed rather concrete terms in saying right hand and arm, see how he elevates the discourse, proceeding further in the words *and the light of your countenance* – that is, support, providence. His willing and being present, you see, were quite sufficient for them. Then the reason as well: *Because you were pleased with them* – that is, because you loved them, because you were willing. And so the events were due to goodwill, not to righteous deeds, nor did their success arise from their own virtue but from God's lovingkindness.[48]

You yourself are my king and my God, you enjoin the salvation of Jacob (v.4). Another version, "Give orders for the salvation of Jacob." How does this follow on? It follows closely on what has been said. What he says, you see, is this: we are their offspring, and you are the same God who works wonders both then and now. So whence comes such a remarkable transformation? I mean, that God was certainly not different, but you are different, yet you are the same. On the other hand, you are not the same; it is I that choose another God as my patron; yet *you are my king and my God.* We have not departed from your control, we have not enrolled under another leader. *You enjoin the salvation of Jacob,* that is, the same God and the same providence. Whence, then, the change in circumstances? What is the meaning of *you enjoin*? You bid, you command Jacob to be saved. In this he further adduces the facility of the assistance and the great authority. Nor is it idly he mentions the offspring – instead, he proffers his virtue as a claim in his desire to win God over.

Through you we shall gore our foes (v.5). You are the same, he says, and your providence is the same; we enroll ourselves under you, and use the same weapons. This, in fact, is the meaning of *In you we shall gore our foes* (another says, "we shall gore those afflicting us"). *In your name we shall scorn those rising up against us* (another, "we shall trample under foot"). Why, he says, do I say *In you*? Merely calling on your name is sufficient, even to bring everything to a highly successful conclusion. He said, note, not "We shall prevail," or "We shall conquer," but *We shall scorn,* nor shall we consider them of any importance, he is saying, nor be afraid, but we shall pursue them as of no account. Another translator suggests as much in saying "We shall trample down," indicating the victory

was through might, the skirmish without contest, the battle without fear.

For not in my bow will I hope (another version says, "have I trusted"), *nor will my sword save me* (v.6). For what reason did you use these weapons? Why did you arm yourself, and take up bow and sword? Because God bade me do so; hence my reason for using them, though I cast all my hope in him. This is the way we are taught to wage war with visible enemies, protected with help from on high, this the way with spiritual enemies. Accordingly, when you wage war with the devil, say, "Not in weapons do I trust – that is, not in my strength, nor in my righteousness, but in the mercy of God." This what Daniel had to say, too: "Not on our righteousness do we base our appeal for clemency in your sight."[49]

You have in fact saved us from those afflicting us, and have put to shame those who hate us (v.7). Another version, "Because you saved us." Why is it necessary, he asks, to mention former things and those of our offspring? We in our turn have many pledges of your providence, and can list glorious trophies and successive victories remarkable and unexpected. Hence the reason, you see, for his saying *you have put to shame*, indicating that he did not simply liberate them, nor simply rescue them, but to the shame of those attacking them.

In God shall we offer praise all day long, and in your name shall we give thanks for ever (v.8). Another version says, "We shall sing praise to God all day." While the effects of victory have passed, he says, the fruits of thanksgiving remain. *All day long*, you see, means the whole of life. In fact, we do not cease praising and taking pleasure in the helps you give. This, after all, is our glory, this our boast, in this we take pride in the company of everyone, not for the fact that we have a great and wonderful city, nor that we were the first to overcome, nor that we prevail by bodily strength, but because we have a God who is true – in this we boast, not only when you help us but even when you abandon us. This, you see, is the meaning of *all day long*, as Paul too says, "Now, far be it from me to boast, except in the cross of Christ;"[50] there is not, in fact, there is not any other glory like it. Hence he also said in another place, "Not only that, however: we even boast in God."[51] In other words, nothing can parallel this boasting. Accordingly, let no one be conceited be-

cause of wealth, no one because of anything of this world; rather, because of one thing alone, having God as Master. This is greater than all freedom, more exalted than the heavens themselves. I mean, if to have a name for belonging to this person or that provides in many cases an occasion of boasting among human beings, think what glory it brings to have a name for belonging to God. Hence Paul too cited this as a great distinction in the words, "Now, those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh."[52]

Diapsalma. Another version, "Always." Now, the Hebrew has *Sel* for this.[53]

As it is, however, you have rejected and shamed us (another version says, "although you have rejected;" another, "in any case you have rejected;" another, "but you cast us off in addition to these"). *God will not accompany our forces* (another, "he will not advance in our expeditions").[54] Shame, note, follows immediately on rejection, and being exposed to the abuse of all-comers. Now, in this verse he calls armies forces, since the force of the king is in them; God makes proper provision that there be a bond between the leader and the led. In other words, the king has need of those who give heed to his commands, and equally they have need of a commander; they are in a condition of need for one another. Lest there be any arrogance in this, God provides that the important have need of the insignificant. He did so also in the case of inanimate things: for example, a pebble placed under a wobbling column stabilizes it, and a tiny rudder steers a vessel transporting countless people and makes it risk-free. What is the meaning of "although you have rejected us"? That even though we have suffered these terrible things, he is saying, we are not aloof from you, but confess and praise you and glory in you.

You have made us retreat from our foes. Those who hate us were taking plunder for themselves (v.10). Another version says, "You placed us in a worse position than any adversary." See how he raises the issue of the disasters and exaggerates their plight to show that even if they were exceedingly sinful, yet they had paid penalty enough. This is also what the children did in fulsome manner at that time when they were singing praise in the furnace and saying, "You have betrayed us into the hands of lawless enemies, hateful, rebellious, and to a king unjust and most wicked in the whole earth."

And again, "We have been brought lower than all the nations, and are humbled in all the earth."[55] That is what it indicates here too, as if to say, We have become less esteemed than anyone, deprived as we are of your providence; nor did the disasters stop at that point – instead, we have become a pasture for our enemies to feed off and divide up as they choose. This, you see, is the meaning of *they were taking plunder for themselves*, that is, with no one to stop them.

You have given us like sheep for eating, and scattered us among the nations (v.11). Another version says, "You have scattered us like chaff." What is the meaning of *like sheep for eating*? Making us vulnerable to attack, presenting us as insignificant. Some sheep, you see, those suited to breeding, are for purchase; others, on the other hand, whether from age or sterility, are useful only for eating. And what was actually worse, their being scattered even among the nations, which was hardest of all for them, their not being able to observe the Law in all precision there, and being divorced from their ancestral way of life. And not in one race, he is saying, but in all parts; one thing only are we on the verge of, being abused, whereas for taking vengeance or lifting a hand in resistance we have not the strength. This fate, you see, illustrates the likeness of sheep.

You have sold your people for nothing (another version says, "in no substance;" another, "of no substance"). *And what was exchanged for us was of no value* (another version says, "And you put no great price on them").[56] Now, what he means is something like this; I mean, the verse seems to be extremely unclear, yet pay attention so that your singing may be done with understanding.[57] So what is the meaning? He portrays their insignificance and lack of value. You allowed us to be as of no worth, cheap and despicable. He says this in terms of human practice; it is our custom, remember, to give away even without cost things that are worthless and insignificant, whereas what we put great store by we sell at a high price, should we sell at all, but make available even gratis what we put little store by. Unresponsive slaves, for example, we sell at half price in some cases, while others we sell for nothing in return. Now, if disposing of something below cost demonstrates its lack of value, much more so to take nothing for it, no charge. So this is what he is saying: just as if someone were to let their possessions go without

charge, so you too allowed us to be of no value, you spurned us completely. This at any rate is what he suggests also in what follows, *And what was exchanged for us was of no value*, that is, in exchanging us. Hence another translator also says, "in putting a price on us," that is, in selling us. The price, you see, is exchange: in many cases it is a slave we give and get silver or gold in return.

You have made us the taunt of our neighbors, object of scorn and laughingstock to those around us (another version says, "a procession to those around us"). *You have made an example of us to the nations* (vv.13-14). Harsh beyond telling this punishment, especially being made the taunt of the ungodly, suffering this at the hands of enemies, being encircled by those who trample on them, and being surrounded on all sides by those who taunt them. Now, what is *an example*? A byword, a reproach: some of those around them were brutal and insensitive, not only showing no mercy but also taunting them, something that particularly stung them. Now, it seems to me at this point he is referring to the Arabs, those dwelling in their neighbourhood. *A shaking of the head among the peoples*. Another version says, "shifting;" the Hebrew *Manoud*. He either means this, that you shifted us, or through the manner of the movement of the head he demonstrates the drunken display of exultation.

All day long my reproach is before me (another version says, "my shame"). *And the shame of my face has enveloped me, from the sound of the one taunting and babbling* (another version says, "and slandering"), *from the countenance of foe and pursuer* (vv.15-16). These things stung them more than punishments. You see, since they had always and without fail enjoyed good times, and they had prevailed over their enemies, the mouths of all fell open at that time when they tripped and fell; instead of being able to catch their breath, they were subjected to unceasing punishment.

All this has befallen us, and we have not forgotten you and have not breached your covenant (v.17). Another version, "Nor have we been false to your agreement." We have behaved, he is saying, in opposite fashion to the others: they were trampled on even before the disasters, he says, whereas even after the disasters we have been standing firm with our purpose unswayed. Now, they say this to give hope to those accompanying them. For this very reason, whereas Daniel and the three children said, "We sinned, we broke

the law,"[58] these men say, *We have not breached your covenant*, lifting the spirits of their fellow soldiers. If we have suffered extremes, he is saying, being offspring of those who received great favors and yet falling into these mishaps, there will be hope for us of complete salvation. So what I said from the beginning I repeat now, that in the shape of a prayer they lifts their spirits, as if saying to them, "Why despair of salvation?" We have God as our protector. Even if some sin has been committed by us, we have paid penalty enough; we have held fast nobly in our trials. As guide we have the one who is always protector even of sinners; hence on all accounts we should look for a favorable outcome. What is the meaning of *We have not breached your covenant*? It means we have not been false to what has been commited to us; instead, we have observed it scrupulously. The greatest wrong, after all, is when someone breaks the law which takes vengeance, which does not even allow wrong to be done by one's neighbors, and prevents evil, when there is ingratitude towards the one supplying such wonderful good things.

Our heart has not turned back (another version says, "has not retreated"), *and you have not diverted our paths from your way* (another version says, "nor have our supports been diverted;" another, "our heart has not been reversed, and our steps not lowered").[59] What I said previously I say here too, that despite such a flood of difficulties they had not budged an inch. Now, this was well put: as the law leads us forward, so lawlessness reverses our direction; and as the law bids us walk the straight and narrow, so lawlessness redirects the human being into the untrackable waste. So in this place he means by path the Law. *You have not diverted* means what the others say, "nor have our supports been diverted from your way;" the Hebrew says *Ouathet asourenou meni orach*. Now, if you wanted to take it according to the Septuagint and not the others, namely, *You have diverted our paths from your way*, it means, You have settled us far from your temple, and caused us to be in foreign parts, which does not permit us to perform our worship.

Because you have humbled us in the place of ill-usage (another version says, "uninhabited;" another, "in the Sirens' place"), *and the darkness of death has enveloped us* (another says, "you have overwhelmed us").[60] This seems to me to be retribution for what occurred before in the place where he outlined their troubles in the

words, *the shame of my face has enveloped me, from the sound of the one taunting and babbling. Because you have humbled us.* Of course, if anyone were to take it in reference to the verse *You have diverted our paths from your way,*[61] it would at this point be consistent with the sense we have given it. It indicates, in fact, how he had forced them from their paths – I mean, their way of life and customs – their being carried off into desert places and desposited amongst enemies. This, you see, is the sense of *the darkness of death has enveloped us*, meaning the dangers that lead to death and to which death is closely related, as Scripture also calls the pains of death the gates of hell. In this verse he presents the inescapable nature of the disasters through both the shadow and the enveloping, there being no possibility of finding any cessation or slightest relief.

If we had forgotten the name of our God, and had stretched out our hands to a foreign god, would not God require an account of this? After all, he knows the hidden things of the heart (vv.20-21). This is the mark of loyal servants, to persevere in serving their master despite their ill-treatment; these are the lessons philosophy teaches. In this verse, too, they teach the listeners not to pretend but to serve God with their whole heart. *He knows the unspoken thoughts of the mind*, it says, note.[62] Now, they say this fearing lest they entertain any thought unworthy of God. Notice also the great advance in virtue: he adds the words, *Because for your sake we are facing death all day long; we are accounted as sheep for slaughter* (v.22). In other words, while it is a great thing to persevere in serving God, and not to stray to another, it is a much greater thing to maintain such love under the constant threat of death and the onset of daily risk. Consider the quality of this sound thinking when, for example, Paul too has recourse to it, as in his letter to the Romans he recounts the succession of apostolic perils.[63] So how many crowns would these people be worthy of, when in the Old Testament they emerge as having encountered the same degree of contests as in the New? After all, what Paul says, "I die daily,"[64] these people also say, not from actual experience, nor from consummation, but from their attitude.

Why does he say *for your sake*? Because we had the opportunity, he is saying, to change allegiance, to abandon the ancestral way of life, and to be in safety; we chose instead to suffer ill-treatment and preserve our patrimony rather than enjoy peace after abandoning our patrimony. *We are accounted as sheep for slaughter.* Such

is the ease, he says, with which they destroy us. Now, in this verse he also demonstrates their meekness. Yet despite being so vulnerable, we persevere with unwavering purpose. Here too it is appropriate to be amazed at the power of God, that those as vulnerable as sheep for slaughter he preserved, and though dying daily he did not allow them to meet death.

Rouse yourself, why do you sleep, O Lord? (another version says, "why are you like a sleeper?"; another, "awake;" another, "wake up"). *Get up, and do not drive us to the brink. Why do you turn away your face?* (a different version, "hide") *Do you forget our neediness and our oppression?* (another, "our trouble").[65] Now, what he means is something like this: You can solve our problems; after all, they happen not from your weakness but with your acquiescence. Sleep here, in fact, means tranquillity, rising up means retribution, face means support, providence, solicitude, assistance. *Why do you forget our neediness?* Note once again their right attitude. He did not say, "Our good deeds;" he did not say, "Our unwavering purpose;" he did not say, "Our spirit tested in trials." Rather, when they give an account of themselves, they cite those things, whereas when they seek help, they ask to be saved from the things to which they are condemned. Since they have paid the penalty, he says, since they have suffered extreme punishment. Paul often does this, too, and others of the inspired writers. And that is what they said, without knowing anything at that stage about hell, or about the kingdom, or without being taught how to achieve such wisdom, yet they bore it all without difficulty.

Because our soul is brought down to the dust, our entrails cleave to the ground.(v.25). You see, since he had said *Do you forget our neediness?* – that is, our ill-treatment – he goes on to mention the ill-treatment. Now, what he means is this: We have perished, we have been buried, we are in no better condition than corpses.

Now, it would be appropriate for someone to say also that the soul of those clinging to earthly things is brought down to the dust, and the entrails of the gluttonous cleave to the ground.[66] The person bound to earthly love, you see, and hankering after earth, and imprisoning in ashes the incorporeal force residing within, could properly be said to be suffering that fate. What, after all, is beauty of the body other than dust and ashes – rather, it is more unsightly

than they. If you do not believe me, however, go to the trouble of looking into people's tombs, and you will see dust and ashes. I mean, when the face lays aside the present life, then it appears as it is – or, rather, even before the end. You see, when old age arrives, when disease takes over, then you will see what emerges: it is ashes.

As a wise creator, however, he caused a marvelous beauty to arise even from vile matter, not for you to commit impurity but so as to provide you with a demonstration of his own wisdom. Do not insult the maker, therefore, nor make his work of wisdom an occasion of licentiousness and impurity. Admire the bloom of youth up to the point of praising the maker, but proceed no further to excite passion. The work is beautiful: should therefore its maker not be adored rather than insulted? Tell me, if you were to take a golden statue of someone and an image of the emperor, and defile them with mud and other such things, would you not pay the ultimate penalty? But if the reckless person is liable to such awful punishment in human terms, what would befall the one applying such dishonor to God's work, especially when the man guilty of it proves to have a wife? I mean, do not cite to me the desire arising from nature. The reason marriage was allowed, after all, was in case you should exceed proper limits. See the extent of the punishment you would be liable to, in fact. God, you see, was mindful ahead of time of your relaxation and your glory with a view to your diminishing the impulse of nature, doing this without risk, and freeing yourself of any impropriety. You for your part, on the other hand, do you insult the one showing such care for you? Tell me, after all, had he not wished to provide in law for marriage, what violent pressure would you be subjected to? What awful punishment? Whereas you ought to give thanks and praise, therefore, that he has removed most of the difficulty by devising no idle consolation, do you by contrast ungratefully mock him and behave shamelessly, transgress the limits laid down, and besmirch your good name?

Do you not give heed to Paul's words even now, as he shouts out in public, "Shun immoral behavior"[67] – or rather to Christ, who moves his spirit to this? Why do you study too closely a beauty off-limits for you? Why are you too interested in a face not your own? Why rush headlong over the cliff? Why entangle yourself in the net? Set a wall around your eyes, fence in your sight, put a law

on your eyes. Listen to Christ as he threatens and judges unrestrained gazing as equivalent to adultery.[68] What good is the pleasure when it produces worms, fear unending, undying punishment for the culprit? Which is better: to hold in check for a while the impluse arising from our thoughts so as to be at peace at all times, or to give brief indulgence to improper desires and thus suffer undying punishment? "No, my sons, do not behave like this; it is not a good report that I hear of you."[69] I know the ones to whom my advice is addressed, not to everyone; but where it finds the wounds, there it applies the remedy. Why do you violate marriage? Why do you wrong the wedding couch? Why do you abuse your limbs?[70] Why do you besmirch your reputation? Excise the passion, have done with the indulgence. Indulgence and intoxication are the font of immorality. If you do not use free time appropriately, you bring trouble on yourself. Listen to what the Jews suffered for being immoral, for not sharing in the body of Christ, not enjoying the spiritual banquet: "Let us not commit impurity," Scripture says, "as some of them committed impurity, and in a single day twenty-three thousand fell."[71]

Rise up, Lord, help us, redeem us for your name's sake (v.26). Another version, "Stand to assist us, and deliver us for your mercy's sake." See how they concluded the discourse: despite their countless good deeds, on what grounds did they appeal to be saved? On the mercy, the lovingkindness, the name of God. What is the meaning of *for your name's sake*? So that it be not profaned, something he himself often says, "I do it for my name's sake." Do you see the humility and contrite heart? On what grounds do they appeal to be saved? Lovingkindness, mercy: as though bereft of good deeds, as though not having any claim on salvation, despite being in a position to take pride in so many troubles and dangers, they referred everything to God. Let us too, living in the age of grace, imitate them and offer up glory to God, to whom be the glory for ages of ages. Amen.

[1] As we remarked at the opening of our own commentary (note 1 on Psalm 4), the extant text of Chrysostom's series on the Psalms does not include all 150; Psalms 14-43 (and many others) are not included, whether or not they once were. There is a wonderful commentary on the opening verses

of Psalm 42 that is genuine (*PG* 55, 155-67), but evidently never part of this series, as is true of extant commentary on parts of other psalms. Being grateful for what we have, we resume his series at this point (adopting, remember, the numbering of modern versions).

[2] Artur Weiser in his commentary on the Psalms remarks: "The early church fathers of the Antioch school already held that the psalm was composed at the time of the Maccabean wars during the second century BC, and have been followed by Calvin and the great majority of recent commentators. Such a dating is possible, but not cogent." Chrysostom, as we might expect, though conceding a reference to the Maccabees, concurs with the latter, not the former, opinion, and holds to David's prophetic charism.

[3] Chrysostom proceeds to give a summary of the opening chapters of the first book of Maccabees. It is a further story of the righteous sufferer that we have seen appeals to him.

[4] 1 Jn 1.1. An Antiochene like Chrysostom could not let pass mention of an apparently superflous element in the text like the listeners' ears; he is on record for such views about the Scriptures as "even a chance word has a great treasure concealed in it" (Homily 10 on Genesis). Also characteristically he can justify the attention to detail from his congregation's experience of human behaviour. Other commentators might have ignored the detail, or given it allegorical significance – not Chrysostom, with his incarnational thinking.

[5] Chrysostom (as he has done before) is here berating for their lack of acquaintance with biblical narrative the congregation to whom he can nevertheless offer several alternative versions of a text – something of an inconsistency, surely. He sees value in these stories when read aloud to family or congregation; he does not envisage them so much reading the books which he describes as "the mouths of their forebears." His principle is Paul's, that "faith comes from what is heard" (Rom 10.17).

[6] Mt 15.26-27.

[7] 1 Cor 9.12.

[8] Philm 7-8.

[9] Phil 4.16.

[10] Cf Rom 10.12.

[11] 2 Cor 5.3. Chrysostom, with his insistence here on calling a spade a spade, is characteristically impatient with "political correctness."

[12] It has in fact been a lengthy and meandering digression from the precise thrust of the opening verse of a lengthy psalm – from the petition implied in the verse, to human precautions taken in responding to petitions compared with divine largesse, to generosity in almsgiving, to the true meaning of riches and poverty. A preacher could be guilty of such meandering, less likely a deskbound theologian. And Chrysostom is in no hurry yet: he proceeds to investigate a possible spiritual meaning of the verse before going off on yet another tangent.

[13] Cf Eph 2.14. The "new grace" of which Chrysostom speaks is, of course, God's covenant love revealed in a new way; our "new testament," in be-

ing a more legal term, is less suggestive of that love – and he has just reminded us to bring terminology as closely as possible in line with reality.

[14] Psalm 139.5 (LXX).

[15] Cf Nm 14.23; Heb 3.17.

[16] Cf Jos 6.

[17] In this throwaway remark about some lack of attention to preachers of the day (which Chrysostom develops in more celebrated fashion in other places) there is another principle of his ministry, deeply theological, also expanded in other places. He esteems his own ministry of scriptural commentator on the sacred text, but his congregation should realize that in that text God speaks. (See my "Chrysostom as Old Testament Commentator.")

[18] Cf Ez 20.10-13.

[19] Another important principle of Chrysostom's scriptural commentary, we have seen, is that of *synkatabasis*, divine considerateness for human limitations, which is evident not only in the language of the Scriptures but also in the events they describe.

[20] Chrysostom's editors debate the way Chrysostom is taking this story of Gideon, presumably the contest with the Midianites in Judges 7.

[21] The modern reader of Chrysostom is gratified to see this skillful preacher admitting the possibility in his audience of an impression of conjecture or rationalizing in the commentary they are receiving. While we often have this impression, he would rather appeal to his theological principle of *synkatabasis* or, as in this case, to confirmation from other scriptural texts. Simple admission of ignorance of the import of textual details came slow to an Antiochene.

[22] Cf 2 Kgs 5. Rare as was the above admission (cf note 21), rare too is Chrysostom's willingness to opt for brevity! Is he aware, for instance, that half the time allotted to this long psalm has expired and he is still commenting on v.2?

[23] 2 Kgs 5.11.

[24] Mt 8.10. The centurion is exceptional; the rule to which he is an exception and to which the Jews in Jericho and even Jesus' ministry itself conform is that of incarnation, acknowledging the psychosomatic constitution of human beings, as the Scriptures themselves acknowledge it. To Chrysostom, of course, this is but another way of speaking of synkatabasis, and underlies the Antiochene approach to the Bible and Christology.

[25] Cf 2 Kgs 20, where King Hezekiah is punished with illness for his infidelity and then given a reprieve; Chrysostom's editors debate whether any external sign was offered (like the lump of figs mentioned in v.7, for instance – though missing from the account in Is 38).

[26] Cf Nm 4.11-31 where provision is made for a jealous husband's treatment of his wife in terms of a very symbolic ritual. Is Chrysostom exemplifying both exception and rule in these two men?

[27] 1 Cor 10.11. Admittedly, more than once in commentary on this psalm

Chrysostom has allowed a brief excursus into a possible spiritual interpretation (after lengthy study of the historical narrative); but this Pauline remark hardly serves as an adequate summary of his approach to the Old Testament in the way Henri De Lubac would apply the phrase "omnia in figura" (*Exégèse médiévale* II-II, 62). It is rather that he is least uncomfortable in making such concessions if he has the support of the New Testament for doing so.

[28] Is 1.12. Thus Chrysostom begins another of those exhaustive series of scriptural texts, the effect of which on a congregation (as distinct from written footnotes on a reader) one has to wonder about. His purpose this time seems to be to demonstrate from the Joshua story the merely accidental basis for sabbath observance. (Commentary on his psalm text seems the furthest thing from his mind!)

[29] Jer 11.15.

[30] Amos 5.25.

[31] Jer 6.20.

[32] Psalm 40.6

[33] 1 Sam 15.22.

[34] Psalm 51.16 (LXX).

[35] 1 Sam 15.22.

[36] Amos 5.21,23.

[37] Cf Is 1.13-14, where the LXX departs somewhat from the Hebrew; the Greek phrase "great day" is documented also from a piece of early Christian literature (The Preaching of Peter) in reference to the feast of Atonement.

[38] Cf Is 58.5.

[38] Ez 20.25.

[39] Acts 10-11.

[40] Acts 8.27-39.

[41] 1 Cor 3.1,3.

[42] Is 58.2.

[43] Lk 11.9.

[44] Lk 11.5-8.

[45] Lk 11.8. It has been a very lengthy excursus into many fields, and the preacher is going to have to hurry if he is to deal with the rest of this long psalm.

[46] This is the third attempt at quoting the verb form in the psalm text in a brief space, moving from second person to third and back to second, with and without preposition – a lack of *akribeia* not remarkable in a preacher, perhaps.

[47] Gn 12.1; 13.15.

[48] This is a significant admission, made also above, by Chrysostom of the part played in salvation (at least of biblical characters, if not in reference to his own congregations) by God's grace and love by comparison with individual virtue and behavior. We have noted before more nuanced statements by him of the role of individual effort in this saving process, where the pastor seems reluctant to make such unqualified admission of the gra-

tuity of divine grace lest his congregation fall into that cardinal fault of *rhathymia*.

[49] Dn 9.18.

[50] Gal 6.14.

[51] Rom 5.11.

[52] Gal 5.24.

[53] For the probable meaning of this and similar musical directions and the Greek translators' difficulty with them, see note 42 on Psalm 9.

[54] V.9.

[55] Dn 3.32,37 (LXX).

[56] V.12. As usual, the paucity of scriptural cross-referencing in Chrysostom's commentary at this stage betrays the pressure of time he has put himself under by his earlier expansiveness and digression.

[57] This concessive remark is valuable for our insight, not only into Chrysostom's (rare) admission of his limits in dealing with sometimes obscure passages in the Scriptures, but also into his congregation's handling of material that came from the liturgy of one community to that of another, eminently in song. They are not meant simply to listen to psalms recited, or (rarely) to read them, but *psallein* – express in song. His commentary on Psalm 42, not of this series, suggests it was (solely?) the responsorial verse that was sung by the congregation, as in modern liturgies.

[58] Dn 3.29 (LXX).

[59] V.19.

[60] V.20.

[61] In his haste Chrysostom omits the negative in quoting v.19 again, and proceeds to interpret it that way – contrary to his previous interpretation! A resourceful – and hurried – preacher can find a way through any difficulty, no matter how deep his commitment to "precision."

[62] Is this Chrysostom's hurried misquotation of v.21, or citing of another scriptural locus, or just his own sentiment?

[63] Cf Rom 8.35-36, where Paul also quotes this verse of the psalm.

[64] 1 Cor 15.31.

[65] Vv.23-24.

[66] All of a sudden the Maccabees and their plight disappear from view, and this preacher, though suffering obvious pressure of time, begins a lengthy moral disquisition on the evils of materialism and sexual immorality. Even if not atypical of Chrysostom, it clearly does not fit with the rest of the material in the psalm, especially at this late stage, with one verse to go, which will be as peremptorily dispatched as have been the last dozen or so. De Montfaucon draws our attention to the close resemblance of the material in the "insert" to an extant letter by Chrysostom; and we would have to conclude that the text here has been tampered with.

[67] 1 Cor 6.18. We would have to concede that the theology of marriage in this moralistic insert does little credit to Chrysostom. His brief parenthesis here, however, on the divine inspiration of Paul's injunction is all of a

piece with his numerous other statements of scriptural inspiration, e.g., "the blessed Moses, inspired by the divine Spirit, teaches us" (Homily 7 on Genesis).

[68] Mt 5.28.

[69] 1 Sam 2.24, Eli's reproach to his miscreant sons.

[70] Cf 1 Cor 6.15-16.

[71] 1 Cor 10.8. The intrusive insert ceases as abruptly as it began, and we revert to the hurried despatch of verses, in this case the final verse, time not allowing even for the usual style of concluding doxology. We would also like to have heard this preacher develop his final point, made earlier with similarly uncharacteristic lack of qualification (cf note 48), of the relation of divine and human roles in salvation, something distinguishing this commentary.

Psalm 45

Triumphal for the flowers of the sons of Kore. Another version, To the author of victory on the lilies of the sons of Kore. Now, the Hebrew, for lilies, has *'Al sosaneim*. A song of understanding to the beloved. Another version, To those who are loved; whereas the Hebrew says *'Idothoth*. The Septuagint, on the other hand, has, For the direction, on those to be changed, to the sons of Kore, for understanding, a song for the beloved.[1]

My heart belched good news (v.1). Another version, "crept out;" another, "My heart was moved with good news." I would now like all Jews and pagans to be present, and taking in hand this book from the Jews I would like to read the psalm in this way. You would be well aware, of course, that both in the courts and everywhere else the testimony on events is most of all above suspicion in those circumstances when it is delivered by adversaries. For this to happen today, too, we supply testimony from the Old Testament to make both Jews and pagans ashamed – Jews for reading but not understanding it, pagans for seeing the books brought us by our foes. I mean, they will never be able to claim that the facts have been manufactured by us, since it is not ourselves but those who crucified Christ who supply us with the books that tell of his power. Whether they are present or not present, however, let us do our duty and commence the commentary.

This psalm, you see, was composed with Christ in mind;[2] hence it bears the title "for the beloved" and "those to be changed."[3] He worked a great change in us, remember, both transformation and alteration in circumstances. Paul, too, suggests this change in the words, "So that if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation."[4] Hence also in his opening words the psalmist did not say, "My

heart spoke." After all, since in what he had to say there was nothing human, and on the contrary he was about to describe heavenly and spiritual things, not as a result of his own discovery but from divine impulse, he presents it under the term *belch*.[5] I mean, we do not belch when we choose to: such and such a speech we utter when we want to, either speaking or holding it in; belching is not like that. The psalmist accordingly, to show that what he says is not the result of human effort but of divine inspiration moving him, called his inspired composition belching.[6] You see, as what happens in the case of belching is due to the quality of the food, so too in the case of spiritual teaching. Thus he belched the kinds of things he had already eaten.

Now, observe elsewhere as well another inspired author making a comparison of this influence with an image from the senses, namely, his eating the chapter of the book and eating it with pleasure: "In my body," he says, remember, "it proved to be as sweet as honey."[7] Since, then, they received spiritual grace, they also belched things of that kind. For proof, you see, that the discussion is not about this physical belching nor about food, listen to what is belched and who it is that belches. It is not the stomach that receives the food, but the heart: *My heart belched*, he says, remember. What does he belch? Not food or drink, but what is related to the meal, *good news*, to do with the Only-begotten; this sort of news, after all, is especially good. "I came not to judge the world," he says, remember, " but to save the world"[8] – quite kindly, quite without trace of punishment. Now, he belches this kind of thing when he has purified his heart. You see, just as the stomach, when it is full of foul juices, belches what resembles them, whereas when you happen to be in good health you produce a belch corresponding to that, so too the heart of the inspired author, when freed from sins, received the grace of the Spirit and belches good news.

We learn something else from this as well, that the inspired authors were not like the seers. In their case, after all, when the demon takes possession of their soul, it cripples their mind and clouds their reasoning, and so they utter everything without their mind understanding anything of what is said; rather, it is like a flute sounding without a musician to play a tune. This was said also by a philosopher of theirs in these words, "Just like the soothsayers

and seers saying many things without knowing anything of what they say."[9] The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, does not act like that; instead, he allows the heart to know what is said. I mean, if the psalmist did not know, how could he have said *good news*? The demon, you see, being enemy and foe, commits an assault on human nature; the Holy Spirit, by contrast, being caring and beneficent, renders those who receive him sharers in his purposes, and with them understanding him he reveals what he has to tell.

I tell my works to the king. Another version, "my deeds." What works does he refer to? Inspired composition. You see, as it is the work of a smith to make a tool, of a builder to build a house, of a shipwright to build a ship, so too is it an inspired composer's job to produce inspired composition. That this is in fact the work referred to, listen to Christ speaking of the apostles, "To the worker is due his wage."[10] Paul too: "Especially those toiling in preaching and teaching."[11] Now, if it were not work, how did it involve toil? After all, what is more estimable than this work? What more useful? It is superior to all crafts. So what is the work he tells to the king? This hymn, this inspired composition. He did not say to which king, suggesting that it was to the God of all. You see, just as when we refer to the king of the Persians, we do not simply call him "king" but add "of the Persians," and likewise of the Armenians, whereas when we refer to ours, there is no need of the addition but it suffices for us to say "king," so too for the inspired author, when he referred to the real king, it suffices to say *king*. In other words, just as in speaking of the Almighty we need no addition, there being no other almighty, so in referring to the king we need no other addition, no other king being God. Especially as the one speaking was a king. It is clear from this that he was speaking not about a human being but about the God of all; hence he did not say "a king" but "the king," stating his lordship by the addition of the article.

Then further, to show that what was said was not of human devising, or meditation, or composition, but of divine grace, and that he had simply lent his tongue, he added, *My tongue the pen of a fluent scribe.* Now, the pen writes whatever the hand of the one holding it commands. A different translator, on the contrary, says, "My tongue like the quill of a speedy writer." What is intended by

"speedy"? To bring out also by that the idea of grace. The one who speaks from his own resources, you see, hesistates and thinks twice about the efforts he makes, handicapped in his composition by ignorance, error and uncertainty, and there are many things that undermine the speed of his utterance. When on the contrary it is the Spirit who moves the mind, there is no obstacle; instead, just as a flood of water moves forward under the impulse of a mighty torrent, so too the grace of the Spirit moves forward with great speed, carrying everything in its path with utter force, with complete ease.

Then again to refine this very expression, and to show there is nothing human in the utterance, he added, *Comely to behold beyond all human beings* (v.2). Some say this refers to the tongue, that it is a pen comely to behold, but he seems to me to be now referring to Christ himself. Hence a different translator also says, "More beautifully adorned than all human beings." He is in fact giving him his attention with great ardor and with predilection for him, as Jacob also said, "From a shoot, my son, you have grown up; you reclined and slept like a lion."[12] Being inspired, you see, he now speaks to him, and directs his words to him. Now, he did not say this by way of comparison; his words were not, note, "more comely" but *comely to behold beyond all human beings*. The former beauty, he is saying, is different from the latter.

Consider how he develops his first remark about the Incarnation; the fact that it is about the Incarnation emerges from what follows. Having said, note, *More comely beyond all human beings*, he added, *grace streamed out on your lips*. Now, while God has no lips, yet the subject is the Incarnation.[13] This was clarified by another translator in saying, "Grace was poured forth on your lips." Now, what is the meaning of "poured forth" if not as if you were to say, What was inside gushed forth, sprang out? How, then, does another inspired author say, "We saw him: he had no form or beauty; instead, his form was dishonorable, of no importance beside human beings?"[14] He is not speaking about deformity – God forbid – but about an object of scorn. You see, once having deigned to become man, he went through every demeaning experience,[15] not choosing a queen for mother,[16] not placed in a bed of gold at the time of swaddling clothes but in a manger, not reared in an afflu-

ent home but in an artisan's humble dwelling. Again, when he picked disciples, he did not pick orators and philosophers and kings but fishermen and tax collectors. He shared this simple life, not owning a house, nor clad in rich clothing, nor enjoying similar fare, but nourished at others' expense, insulted, scorned, driven out, pursued. Now, he did this to trample underfoot human conceit in fine style. So since he did not fit himself out in any pomp or circumstance, nor attached to himself hangers on or bodyguards, but went about at times alone, like any ordinary person, hence that author said, "We saw him, and he had no form or beauty," whereas the psalmist says, *Comely to behold beyond all human beings*, suggesting grace, wisdom, teaching, miracles. Then to underline the comeliness he says, *Grace streamed out on your lips.*

Do you see that the reference is to the Incarnation? Now, what is this grace? The grace by which he taught, the grace by which he worked miracles. Here he refers to the grace which became flesh: "The one on whom you see the Spirit descending like a dove and remaining on him," Scripture says, "is the one who baptizes."[17] All grace, you see, streamed into that temple. After all, he does not give him the Spirit in limited measure: "Of his fullness we have all received,"[18] remember; that temple received the grace in its entirety. Isaiah, too, suggested as much in saying, "Upon him will rest a Spirit of wisdom and understanding, a Spirit of counsel and strength, a Spirit of knowledge and piety. A Spirit of fear of God will fill him."[19] There, however, grace in its entirety occurs, whereas in the case of human beings some little share, a drop from that grace. Hence he did not say, I give the Spirit, but "I will pour out some of my Spirit on all flesh."[20]

This in fact was what happened: the whole world received some of that Spirit. While the gift began in Palestine, it moved on to Egypt, Phoenicia, Syria, Cilicia, the Euphrates, Mesopotamia, Cappadocia, Galatia, Scythia, Thracia, Greece, Gaul, Italy, the whole of Libya, Europe, Asia, even to the Outward Sea itself. And what must be told at great length? As much of the earth as the sun looks down on, grace itself reached; the very trickle and drop of the Spirit filled the whole world with knowledge. Through means of it the signs happened, the sins of all were wiped away. Yet the grace given in all these regions was but some part and pledge of the gift. Scrip-

ture says, remember, "Giving the pledge of the Spirit in our hearts,"[21] referring to part of the process – after all, the Paraclete is hardly divided up. Now, see how extensive this font is: "To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith, to yet another gifts of healing, to yet another the working of miracles in the same Spirit, to yet another inspired utterances, to another discernment of spirits, to another kinds of tongues."[22] Grace in baptism spread such wonderful gifts in so many races in all the earth; a drop of the Spirit had all these wonderful effects. That it was a drop, you see, he made clear by saying, "I will pour out some of my Spirit," and by calling it the pledge. Hence it is clear, note, that some slight part of the whole was given. Hence John too suggested as much in saying, "From his fullness we have all received:"[23] from the overflow, so to say, from the abundance, from the excessive outpouring we have all received.

Consider, therefore, the grace of the Spirit, how it is all-sufficient, enough for such a wide world in so many ages: far from being circumscribed or used up, it fills all with wealth and grace while itself in no way being consumed. Then, since the word "spirit" is something with many meanings (it is called angel as well, remember, and soul, and breath, and many other names), he added "some of my Spirit." As, then, a human being's spirit is related to the human being, so too God's, but remaining in a distinct person. Paul, too, suggested this in saying, "I mean, what human being knows the depths of a human being if not the spirit of the human being that is within? Likewise, too, no one knows the depths of God if not the Spirit of God,"[24] not confusing the divine persons – perish the thought – but revealing the nobility of the Spirit. At any rate, as complete as the soul's harmony with itself, so complete is the relation of the Spirit to the Father. As, therefore, the Son also is spoken of as Word, not to suggest lack of subsistence but for us to learn his relation to the Father, so too the Spirit of God is spoken of as Spirit without suggesting he does not subsist. And as the Son is begotten of the Father, and hence bestows adoption on us, so too the Spirit is by nature of the being of God, and hence provides us with gifts. For the human being, too, since it is by nature human, is thus able to depict the image of a human being.

Hence God has blessed you forever. Another version says, "For this reason." Do you see how the address throughout is directed to him of set purpose? Hence also in other places the psalmist does not simply forecast the future but speaks in the style of an accusation, as when he says, "Why did the nations behave wantonly, and the peoples entertain idle concerns?" [25] Likewise here too he says, *Hence God has blessed you forever.* After having related nothing of his birth, note, nor of his uprbringing, nor of the other matters, at this point he inserts the remark about him. Why on earth? Because telling everything in order is characteristic of the evangelists, and accordingly he left that for them, the narrative belonging to them, after all. By contrast, the work of inspired composition is to select some parts and deal with them. For this reason the inspired authors regularly do this, intruding a few episodes into their account, treating them in outline and then withdrawing. Hence this author too says, *God has blessed you forever,* thus stating that his words were full of such great grace.

Consider, at any rate, the power of grace. He was once walking by the sea, and comes across James and John, and says to them, "'Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.' They left both father and nets, and followed him." [26] Then another time after he said to all the disciples, "Do you also want to go away?" Peter said to him "Lord, you have words of eternal life, and we have believed and have known that you are the Christ the son of the living God: to whom shall we go?" [27] Why mention the disciples? The Pharisees themselves sent underlings and heard them report, "Never has a human being spoken in the way this human being has." [28] And again others said, "Never has anything like this been seen in Israel. And they were astounded," Scripture says, "that he taught them as one having authority, and not like their scribes and the Pharisees." [29]

But if you for your part wish to come to know about the grace, hear how weighty are his commands, and you will see its power. "Unless you renounce everything, and furthermore hate your own soul," he says, "you are not worthy of me." [30] Yet the word had power to become reality: such was his grace. And what is more our own than our soul? Yet even it has been scorned on account of his command. When, however, you hear *God has blessed you,* do

not lose heart or entertain any depressing thoughts. As I said before, remember, the discourse is about the flesh, which has lips, about its receiving grace, about its receiving blessing. God, you know, has no need of blessing, nor of grace; after all, the deity is without needs. "As the Father raises up the dead," Scripture says, remember, "and gives them life, so too the Son gives life to whomever he wishes."[31] And again: "The works he does, these the Son likewise does."[32] And again: "Just as the Father knows me and I know the Father."[33] The words "so," "likewise" and "just as" are indicative of complete similarity. The theme at this point, however, is the Incarnation.

Now, we also hear him saying again, "For this reason my Father loves me, that I lay down my life for the sheep."[34] So does that mean he did not love him before this? How then did he say, "This is my beloved Son"?[35] But it was from his desire to demonstrate the greatness of the achievement that he cited that. As therefore in that case the etiology has some explanation, so too in this case the explanation is clear. I mean, he had a reason in beginning with the words *Comely to behold beyond all human beings* and *Grace streamed out on your lips* and *Hence God blessed you forever*, applying his words to the Incarnation; the reason was that whenever he is on the point of again saying something that falls short of his dignity, you may not be upset but see whom the discourse refers to. In like manner Jacob touched on the Incarnation in saying after making many remarks, "His eyes sparkle like wine, and his teeth are as white as milk,"[36] whereas the divinity has no teeth. And another inspired author says, "He will strike the earth with a word from his mouth, and with the breath of his lips destroy the godless,"[37] giving voice to the same sentiments as Paul, "Whom the Lord will consume with the breath of his mouth, and annihilate with the manifestation of his coming."[38]

Lest, therefore, on hearing this you scorn it, he shows you the power of divinity. He does not, note, separate humanity from divinity, nor divinity from humanity – not confusing the substances (perish the thought) but revealing the union. Hence he says, *God has blessed you forever*. Now, what is the manner of blessing? Angels, archangels have assembled, thrones, dominations, principalities, powers, all offering praise; all the earth from one end to the

other confesses and praises and lauds the God incarnate. While the first Adam was filled with countless curses, this person by contrast with him is filled with every blessing. The former heard the words, "You are cursed in your works,"[39] and the one after him again, "Cursed is the one who is careless in doing the works of the the Lord,"[40] and "Cursed is the one who does not adhere to what is written in this book,"[41] and "Cursed is the one hanged on a tree."[42] Do you see the number of curses? Christ in becoming a curse freed you from these.[43] As he humbled himself to exalt you, and died to render you immortal, so too he became a curse to fill you with blessing. What could match this blessing, when through a curse you are regaled with blessing? Not that he himself stood in need of blessing, of course, but rather that he gives it to you. You see, just as when I say that he was humbled I imply not change but the considerateness of the Incarnation, so to when I say he was blessed I do not imply that he needed blessing but again I demonstrate the considerateness of the Incarnation.[44] It was human nature, therefore, that was blessed. Christ, in fact, raised from the dead dies no more,[45] and is not subject to a curse; rather, even before this he was not subject, but took on the curse so as to free you from it.

Strap your sword to your thigh, O mighty one (another version, "Fasten your blade to your thigh;" another, "Gird yourself as with a blade on your thigh"), *in your comeliness and your beauty* (another version says, "your praise and your honor;" another, "in your glory and your distinction").[46] What is the change and what the shift in the expressions? Well, after speaking about the teacher (that, you see, is the sense of *grace streamed out on your lips*), he abruptly describes to us the king in his armor, not in the style of inspired composition but in the style of supplication. I mean, he did not say, "He will strap his sword;" rather, he makes a request in the words, *Strap your sword*. Then he also adds beauty to this armor, in one case presenting him as an armed warrior, in the next as an adorned one: *in your comeliness and your beauty*, the text says, note. Then as an archer: *Your arrows are sharp, O mighty one* (v.5), it says, note. And again as victorious and trimphant: *peoples will fall under you in the heart of the king's enemies*,[47] he says. And he next introduces this same person – warrior, king, archer, victor – as anointed with un-

guents: *myrrh and aloes and cassia arise from your garments* (v.8).

So what do arms and myrrh, unguents and sword, teaching and war, bows and beauty have in common? I mean, some are symbols of peace, others of warfare and maneuvers. Who, then, is peaceful and warlike together? Who dispenses myrhh and finds protection in armor, shoots from ivory towers, strikes countless enemies, and wreaks awful slaughter? How shall we solve this anomaly? If we recognize precisely that these things are said in reference to the Father. The inspired author also in another place presents him as armed when he says, "If you do not repent, he will wield his sword; he has strung his bow and prepared it. In it he has prepared instruments of death." [48] And again elsewhere: "He will don righteousness as a breastplate." [49] Now, notice as well his independence: as in the previous psalm he had said, "he will wield his sword," not bidden by anyone but of his own accord, so too in this psalm *the sharpened arrows of the mighty one, peoples will fall under you in the heart of the king's enemies.* Then to show that he does it all independently, he says, *Your right hand will guide you in marvelous fashion* (v.4). Your force you receive from no one else, he is saying; you are sufficient to yourself. Listen, however, to the God of peace himself speaking to the disciples: "I have come to bring not peace to the earth but a sword." [50] And again: "I came to cast fire on the earth, and what is my wish but that it be already enkindled?" [51] Now, in speaking of him the psalmist says how he will come: "He will come down like a shower on a fleece, and like a drop falling on the earth." [52]

I tell you this for you to remain on the alert, and by taking precise note of what is signified by the words to solve the difficulty by yourselves. These terms, you see, signify his operations. In this way, then, when you hear also at this place, *Strap your sword on your thigh, O mighty one*, think it is a description of his operation; also the bows and the arrows. I mean, just as Scripture says God gets angry, not to attribute passion to him, but to indicate through this expression his action of punishing, and thus make an impression on more materialistic people, so too by mentioning weapons it suggests this. After all, since we are punished not through ourselves but by other instruments, in his wish to demonstrate God's power to punish he indicates it in terms familiar to us, not for us to

think in terms of weapons where God is concerned, but for us to gain a more vivid impression of his punishing.

Many people, however, are misled by this, you say. But idly and to no purpose, and from their own folly. You see, particularly in listening to God, they need to understand that expressions are used rather metaphorically. In the present case Scripture has not neglected to teach them God's immunity from passion through different expressions. At any rate, listen to how in other places he shows the facility of the retribution, as in the words, "Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered."[53] No need of weapons? No need of a sword? His rising alone is required, it says. But even this in turn is materialistic; hence he says elsewhere, "He looks on the earth and makes it tremble."[54] And again, "The earth trembles at his presence."[55] But this too is materialistic. Listen to what is more elevated, "He did everything he wished:"[56] it was sufficient for him simply to wish. Now, notice how in these quite materialistic examples themselves he demonstrates God's freedom from need. I mean, he made no mention of weapons before he called him mighty; and again, after listing the weapons, he attributed the complete victory to his right hand – that is, to his nature and power. This is what another inspired author indicated in saying, "His rule is on his shoulder,"[57] not for you to think he has a shoulder – perish the thought – but to know that God has no need of assistance from others.

Strap your sword on your thigh, O mighty one, in your comeliness and your beauty. Why, then, does he say this here? In these rather materialistic terms he shows his operation, through which he set the world on its course, through which he brought the war to an end, and set up the trophy. It was a harsh war, after all, more bitter than all wars, not against savages in battle but against the demons exercising their wiles and destroying the whole world. For this very reason Isaiah also said, "He shall divide spoil with the strong;"[58] and again, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; for this reason he anointed me, to bring good news to the poor he sent me, to preach relief to captives."[59] Hence Paul too invariably begins his letters with the words, "Grace and peace to you from God our Father." And again, "He himself is our peace, you see, making both groups one."[60]

Lest, however, on hearing *Strap your sword* you think of a material sword, listen to what follows. After saying, you see, *Gird yourself with your sword*, he added *in your comeliness and your beauty* – that is, the sword is his comeliness and his beauty, glory, honor, majesty, magnificence. I mean, that substance is in need of nothing to achieve what is proposed; he is without need, after all. The inspired author, therefore, appeals to him, calling him to do battle for the world. Then he brings his language down from elevated things to the more materialistic: after mentioning sword and thigh he rises to comeliness, and in turn descends from that level to the more corporeal in saying, *String your bow, take the road to success, and reign* (v.4). Now, in saying *String your bow* he suggested to us bow and arrow. Then to show once more that he has no need of weapons he added, *Take the road to success, and reign.* A different translator, on the other hand, says, "Prosper." Now, the psalmist mentions kingdom here, because at his coming he conducted it in the end times, the kingdom in accordance with his belonging and knowledge.

These words are a particular indication of the inspired author's longing, seeing what has already been achieved and the world's being led towards truth. Hence he employs an exhortatory style in his manner of expression. It is customary with inferiors, remember, when moved with ardor for their betters, to employ these expressions. *In the cause of truth, gentleness and righteousness.* He uses the qualification of truth. Do you see how Scripture interprets itself, showing the victory to be intellectual and spiritual? How, that is, the one who made mention of weapons, sword and bows, here makes mention of gentleness? What, in fact, do gentleness and warfare, reasonableness and fighting have in common? A great deal, actually, if you examine it precisely.[61] For both David and Moses were gentle. Hence Scripture says about the former, "Remember, Lord, David and all his gentleness,"[62] and about Moses, "Moses was the gentlest of all people on earth."[63] Yet these men, who were the gentlest men of all, give the impression most of all of taking vengeance on everyone. If you do not mind, however, let us speak first of their gentleness.

The former, blessed man that he was, often had Saul in his power and was in a position to take his life, but did not lay a hand on him;

on the contrary, despite others egging him on, he spared his life and controlled his own fury.[64] And when Shimei was hurling such insults at him at a time when disaster was befalling him, and his generals besought him to cross over and cut down the man who was insulting him like that in such a frenzy,[65] what words he uttered, full of all wisdom! And that parricide, intemperate youth that he was, how he commends him to his own generals in the words, "Spare me the young man Absalom."[66] And when in the beginning he spoke to his brothers envying him and maligning him with the coming victory in mind, consider how gently he conversed with them in the words, "Is it not merely a remark?"[67]

Now, what of Moses? On behalf of those stoning him, on behalf of those taking his life (at least to the extent possible) listen to what he says: "If you forgive them their sin, forgive; if not, remove me too from the book you have written."[68] Again, when others urged him to retribution, and stirred him up to annoyance, he uttered those words of wisdom: "Who could grant that all the Lord's people be prophets?"[69] And again, on behalf of his sister who had berated him, what wonderful supplication he makes![70] And in many other places you would see his gentleness, when he is refused entry to the Land, and forbidden to enter Palestine, and yet speaks in all reasonableness to the Jews. And yet this gentle man thought it proper for Dathan, Korah and Abiram, when they rebelled against the priesthood, to be swallowed up by the earth and the others to be consumed by fire when they offered a fire from elsewhere.[71] The gentle David, too, laid Goliath low, put the army to flight, and carried the day.[72]

This, you see, is a particular mark of the gentle, forgiving what is done to them while avenging the wronged, as Christ too did. On mounting the cross he said, "Father, forgive them: they know not what they do."[73] Again he wept over Jerusalem in the words, "How many times have I wanted to gather together your children, and you refused."[74] When slapped in the face, he did not slap back, but speaks up in defense to his assailant;[75] when called a possessed person, he drove out demons;[76] when called a deceiver and impostor, he guided them towards the kingdom. He bade the disciples to be everywhere scourged, persecuted, driven out, and to accept the lower place: "Let whoever wishes to be first among you

be your servant."[77] And he added the example from homelife in the words, "As the Son of Man came not be served but to serve and give his life as ransom for many."[78] Now, if he drives out demons, fights against the devil and removes error, this is a particular mark of gentleness: destroying all evil, freeing those in its grip, repulsing the devils' wiles, and delivering from disaster those suffering abuse.

Now, what is the meaning of *in the cause of truth, gentleness and righteousness*? He had mentioned war, he had mentioned maneuvers, he had used the warrior as example; now he refers also to the achievements of God's kingdom, he refers to the form of the trophy, he refers to the nature of the victory. All other people, you see, exercise royal power by making war so as to gain cities or wealth, or because of enmities or vainglory. God, by contrast, acts not for any of these things but for the sake of truth, to plant it on earth; and for the sake of gentleness, to make those who are more savage than wild beasts become gentle; and for the sake of righteousness, to make those who are in thrall to lawlessness become righteous, firstly from grace, and secondly from good deeds.[79]

And your right hand will guide you in marvelous fashion. Another version, "And your right hand will shed light for you on fearful things;" another, "And your right hand will give you a glimpse of fearful things." Do you see how once again he opened up for our contemplation the dignity of the one achieving such things? I mean, as he had previously made mention of weapons and sword, had moved up to comeliness, and led the listener to incorporeal notions, so in turn he descended to more material things, bows and arrows, and in turn gradually leads the listener upwards by mentioning the motives for war, truth and gentleness and righteousness, and finally in order to the manner of victory as well.[80] Now, what is it? *And your right hand will guide you in marvelous fashion,* he says. What he means is something like this: Nature is sufficient of itself, power is sufficient of itself even for seeing what has to be done, and for bringing it to a conclusion. It was well put by a different translator, "Your fearful right hand." What was being achieved was in fact fearful and productive of terror: death was destroyed, hell was broken asunder, paradise was opened, heaven was thrown open, demons were shackled, the lower regions were

mingled with the upper, God became man, a human being is seated on the kingly throne, hope in resurrection dawned, expectation reached beyond death, ineffable good things were enjoyed, and all the other good things he achieved by his coming.

Hence he said, "Your right hand will guide you to these fearful things," indicating that nature is sufficient of itself, he is saying, and the power for both discovering and accomplishing what is proposed. The Septuagint, on the other hand, reads, *Your right hand will guide you in marvelous fashion*, that is to say,[81] we should marvel not only at what is achieved but at the fact that it is achieved in surprising fashion: through death is death destroyed, through a curse is a curse lifted and blessing bestowed, through eating were we lately expelled, through eating have we once again been admitted. A maiden expelled us from paradise, through a maiden we find eternal life. What was the means of our being condemned becomes the means of our being crowned. Accordingly, with this in mind the inspired author said, *Your right hand will guide you in marvelous fashion*. No need of weapons? No need of sword, of bows and arrows? Do you see how nature, how power is sufficient of itself?

Notice him once again, however, like some excellent dancer, moving down from lofty things to the more material: *Your arrows are sharp, O mighty one. People will fall under you in the heart of the king's enemies* (v.5). Another version says, "the king's enemies in heart." Note once again, when he mentioned arrows, he employed the word "mighty" as well, for you to learn that instead of needing arrows he was sufficient in himself. Now, the sequence is as follows: *Your arrows are sharp, O mighty one, in the heart of the king's enemies;* the phrase *People will fall under you* has been inserted in the middle, however.[82] So in this case the explanation seems to me to be twofold: either he is referring to the Jewish captivity, enslavement of the population and destruction of the city, or in a figurative way he is calling the power of his word arrows. You see, he moved around the whole world more quickly than arrows, and touched the hearts of those who previously were enemies to the king, not to annihilate them but to win them over. This happened also in Paul's case; you would not be wrong, in fact, to refer to that word as an arrow which was shot from heaven and touched the heart of the one previously hostile, making him a friend.

People will fall under you. Do you see the successful outcome of the war? The submission of those previously rebellious? The instruction? The catechesis? [83] Their very fall and submission to him, you see, are for everyone the basis and foundation of their exaltation. In fact, having delivered them from their folly and empty conceit and from the demons' error, he subjected them to himself. Thus another inspired author also shows him bloodied, speaking in these terms, "Who is this who comes from Edom, from Bozrah the crimson of his garments?" [84] No mention there of weapons, bows and arrows, but of garments. The expression is rather materialistic, though more refined than the previous one; yet even in its materialism it gradually leads the topic upwards to incorporeal things. You see, when the author asks whence came the blood-stained garments, he replies, "I have trodden the winepress alone," [85] suggesting the ease of the victory, and his having no one to collaborate with him, but that he was sufficient of himself. I mean, just as the psalmist said in that verse, *Your right hand will guide you in marvelous fashion,* so too here, "I have trodden the winepress alone." In other words, in the way the winepresser easily treads down the bunches of grapes, just so for God doing as he pleases – or rather, not just so, but much more so.

Your throne, O God, for ages of ages. A scepter of equity the scepter of your kingdom. You loved righteousness and hated lawlessness. Hence God, your God, anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions (vv.6-7). Another version, "Your throne, O God, is forever and beyond." Now, for *God, your God* the Hebrew has *Eloeim Eloach.* How does the Jew take this? I mean, about whom is this said? And how the heretic? You see, if they were to say that the words *Your throne, O God, for ages of ages* are about the Father, how will they reconcile it with what follows: *Hence God, your God, anointed you*? After all, the Father is by no means the Christ, nor has he been anointed. [86] Whence it is clear that the verse is about the Only-begotten, about whom also the previous remarks were made. Isaiah said this, too, that there will be no end to his kingdom. [87]

Perhaps, however, someone were to ask this question: why on earth at this point does he discuss the divinity after previously directing his attention to the Incarnation? Because Matthew also proceeds this way. He begins with the humanity, remember, sup-

plying an introduction in this form: "A book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ."[88] Likewise, too, Luke and Mark, whereas John alone in a different way: after first speaking of the divinity, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," and saying many other things about it, he then said, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us."[89] If, however, he approached the writing of the Gospel in a way different from the others, nevertheless he thus displayed also a great harmony with them. What basis could there be, you ask, for harmony where there are opposites? Are you not aware that eating is the opposite of not eating, drinking to not drinking, giving to not giving? Frequently, however, physicians also do many things like this, not in conflict with themselves but actually very much in harmony; their eye is on one thing, you see, their patient's health. Precisely this happened in the case of the evangelists, too. For while summer, too, is opposite to winter, they have one end in view, the ripening and maturing of the crops. The whole world is composed of opposites, while demonstrating great harmony in regard to our life. Christ came in a way opposite to John: one ate, the other did not eat. "John came," Scripture says, remember, "neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'See, the fellow is a glutton and a drunkard.'"[90]

Yet even if things happened in opposite ways, they still had one end in view, the welfare of those destined to be caught in the net. In just the same way, too, the very order of divinity and Incarnation, even if happening differently in John compared with the others, is nevertheless done in great harmony with them. How so, I shall explain. In the beginning when the word was not yet spread abroad, it made sense to begin with more material and concrete things in dwelling on the Incarnation and initiating instruction on the humanity. But with the growth of knowledge and the acceptance of the good news, it was then an appropriate time to begin with higher things. Hence the Old Testament authors too, if they ever treat of him, make their beginning and introduction with the Incarnation. Notice, for instance, how Micah begins at the lower level: "You, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are in no way least of the leaders of Judah. From you, after all, will come my leader, who

will feed my people Israel."[91] And yet it was not divinity that came from Bethlehem but humanity. But he does not remain at this level; instead, he also rises from there to divinity in the words, "His origin is from the beginning, from all eternity." And Isaiah in turn: "Behold, the virgin will conceive, and will bear a son, and they will give him the name Emmanuel, which means, God with us."[92] Do you see how he too moves up from humanity to divinity? Notice this very thing happening elsewhere as well: he says, "A child is born to us, a son is given to us, and the name given him is messenger of great counsel, wonderful counsellor, mighty God, authority figure, prince of peace, father of the world to come."[93] Do you see how once again he moves from a child, from the Incarnation, as it were by some steps upwards and reaches the point of the divinity? In like manner, too, his Father was known first from creation: "What is invisible about him," Paul says, "has from the creation of the world been observed and understood through what has been made."[94] Hence he even represents himself often for eye to see, little by little leading humankind up to incorporeal thoughts. Why be surprised if he thus employed the Incarnation in these teachings when he also does the same even in orders and commands? Hence the inspired author in this place, too, similarly employed this approach, moving from humanity upwards to divinity (*lips*, after all, are part of humanity),[95] and moving down in turn to humanity, exploiting the variety of expression to the advantage of the catechumens.

Your throne, O God, for ages of ages. By *throne* here he means not simply throne but kingship. He calls it eternal here, but elsewhere elevated: "I saw the Lord seated on an elevated throne,"[96] Scripture says. And again: "Because your throne is elevated."[97] Another author, on the other hand, contemplates him seated on a throne of glory,[98] whereas David presents also a throne of lovingkindness: "Mercy and judgement the foundation of his throne."[99] Now, all of these references are to his kingship, that it is everlasting (this is the meaning of *for ages of ages*), that it is in high esteem, that it is elevated, that it is powerful and mighty. Also that it has no beginning, when he says, "Your kingdom a kingdom of all ages."[100] So as the throne is a symbol of kingship, so too is the scepter a symbol of both kingship and judicial authority. Hence he says, *A scepter of*

equity the scepter of your kingdom. What is just there, you see, is clear, what is right there is clear, nothing is obscure there. Let those listen who are insane, those who are unbalanced, or rather those who are worse. Now, who are they? Those who bring a charge against God's providence in saying, "Why did this or that happen this way?" I ask you, how would it not be absurd for someone sitting alongside a carpenter, watching him splitting and sawing wood, and not to ask rhyme or reason; and when a surgeon is cutting and burning flesh, confining the patient to his room and starving him, for one of the bystanders or the patient not to be curious about the procedures; and when the steersman pulls on the rope, lowers the sail and raises it again, and sets the ship's side awash, for no one to busy himself and be curious about each of the craftsmen instead of remaining unconcerned and silent, even though they are frequently in error about their craft, yet on the contrary to be curious and meddlesome about this ineffable wisdom, this ineffable lovingkindness, this limitless providence? Of what awful madness is this not an example? Whereas they would not readily choose to help the wronged and the needy and give money for them, they generally put the question as to why so and so is needy, why so and so is poor, why so and so is rich.

Wicked and thoughtless slave, do you not hang your head in shame, condemn yourself, curb your tongue, keep your thoughts in control and not allow them to be inquisitive in these matters but direct your prying to your own life? Keep a close eye on your own affairs, on the ocean of your sins, and if you are meddlesome and inquisitive, seek from yourself an account of your sayings and doings, what wrongs you have uttered, what wrongs you have done. As it is, however, you allow yourself to go without scrutiny, even though this negligence is liable to punishment whereas busyness yields salvation; you sit in judgement on God and add to your sins. Do you not hear the inspired author saying to him, *A scepter of equity the scepter of your kingdom*? And another author as well, "His judgement will go forth like a light."[101] If, however, you do not have a precise knowledge of all the Lord's doings, glorify him also for this, worship him particularly for this, for the ineffable quality of his majesty, for the incomprehensibility of his providence, for the variety and wisdom of his solicitude.

You loved righteousness and hated lawlessnesss. He referred previously to achievements, victories, trophies, the salvation of the world, that he filled it with truth, with gentleness, with righteousness, showing there was nothing contrary to reason in these happenings. Now he speaks of the dignity of the achiever, that he is God, that he is king, that he is everlasting, that he is an incorruptible judge, that he is a lover of the righteous, that he is a hater of the wicked. Since he is like that, the psalmist is saying, things like that are performed by him. Let no one have any doubts, he is saying: the one who achieves all these things is willing and able to achieve them. At any rate, after speaking of the lofty attributes of his divinity, once more he brings the discourse down to the humanity: *Hence God your God anointed you.* Another version says, "For this reason he anointed you with oil:" for achieving what was mentioned, expelling lawlessness, planting righteousness, doing what you did. Now, for your part, do not be alarmed to hear that these things are attributed to the Father. You see, he says this, not to deprive him of the achievements, but to attribute to the Father what belongs to the Child, as he also says that what belongs to the Father are his: "All that is mine is yours, and all yours is mine." [102] For Paul in speaking also of the resurrection says that "God raised him from the dead," [103] while John says, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." [104]

Now, what is *oil of gladness*? Christ, to be sure, was nowhere anointed with oil, but with the Holy Spirit. For this reason he added, *beyond your companions*, to indicate this very fact, that no one was like him. That is, while many before him were anointed, not a single one like him; as there were many lambs but he was special, so there were many sons but he was the Only-begotten. Everything about him, in fact, was special, not only to do with the divinity but also to do with the Incarnation; no one, you see, was anointed with such a spirit. Now, if he calls it *oil*, do not be surprised: being inspired he speaks in rather enigmatic fashion. He expressed it well as *gladness*, to show that it was a mark of happiness. "The fruit of the Spirit," remember, is love, joy, peace." [105] Another version, however, said "oil of adornment," while the Hebrew is *Sason*, that is, ornamentation, glory, decoration. Now, if it is also a mark of happiness, this too is true. So just as on hearing "sword" you do not

think of sword, and "bows and arrows" not of bows and arrows but of his operation achieving these feats, as I said before, so too on hearing *oil* do not have in mind simply oil, but think of anointing. The oil, you see, was a symbol of the Spirit, and the underlying and essential element was the Spirit. Consequently, since this is the case, have no hesitation in calling him Christ, for Abraham too was called anointed, as were the prophets, but not all were anointed with oil, as when he says, "Lay no hand on my anointed ones, nor behave badly to my prophets." [106] Now, when was Christ anointed? When the Spirit as in the form of a dove came upon him. [107] Now, he calls companions here all spiritual persons, as John says, "We all have received of his fullness," [108] whereas of him, "God gives the Spirit without measure," [109] and again, "I will pour out some of my Spirit on all flesh." [110] In the previous passage, however, it was not some of the Spirit but the Spirit in its entirety that came; hence he said, "God gives the Spirit without measure."

Myrrh, aloes and cassia arise from your garments (v.8). Another version, "into your garment;" another, "all your garments." Some therefore claim the inspired author is hinting here at his burial, others that the different kinds of anointing are suggested. [111] You see, in olden times anointing was based not on these unguents but on other things. For you to learn that this is a different mode of anointing, he indicated the difference in the process from the difference in the materials. Now, that phrase *from your garments* shows that his garments also were full of grace. Thus, for example, the woman with the hemorrhage stopped the flow of blood by touching the hem of his garment. [112] Now, there is no reason against one or other interpretation being adopted: to me both are acceptable. Consequently (there is nothing to prevent my repeating the point), just as on hearing reference to bow and sword and all those similar things you do not take them in a material way, so on hearing mention of myrrh and cassia you would not think of them in a material way but at an intellectual level.

From ivory houses where in your honor kings' daughters delighted you (vv.8-9). Another version says, "From ivory temples whence in honoring you they delighted you;" another, "in your glories." After mentioning his achievements he speaks also of the honor acrruing to him from the achievements, namely, that he is due to

be adored in lavish temples. In olden times, you see, the materials themselves indicated the honor most of all, and ivory was particularly sought after. Hence another inspired author also said, "Woe to those who lie on beds of ivory." [113] He shows once more that the exhortation will not only bear on individuals but also cover kingdoms, which will erect lavish dwellings for him. He already sees this happening in practice. The inspired author, in fact, wishing to show the force of his exhortation, says how he took captives, how he subdued women, private citizens, the wealthy, even those wearing diadems, and their partners, so as everywhere to erect temples to God.

Then, when next he digressed on to this topic, he develops it more extensively, describing his worshippers and suppliants. After showing how people became subject, how he touched their hearts, how he prevailed over his foes, how his right hand made his ways prosper, how he planted truth, gentleness and righteousness, once more he uses language metaphorically, as though foreshadowing the Church in figure. What the apostles later said, in one case, "I betrothed you to one husband to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ," [114] and another, "He who has the bride is the bridegroom," [115] and another, "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who gave a wedding feast for his son," [116] these things this author also forecasts, introducing bride together with queen. Hence he says, *At your right hand stood the queen in attendance,* another version, "erected" – that is, she stood firmly, she stood immovably, as Christ says in another place that "the gates of hell will not prevail against her." [117] Do you see the high degree of honor? Do you see the extent of the dignity? To what height he raised the one trampled in the dust and dragged down to the depths so as to attend on him? Do you acknowledge to what lofty esteem she has ascended, the captive, the alien, the harlot, the accursed? She stands in attendance in the company of worshipping powers. While the Son, in so far as he is of equal honor, sits on his right, she stands. I mean, even if she is queen, she is of created substance. So how does Paul say, "He raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus?" [118] Pay close attention, however: he did not say simply, He raised up with him and seated with him, but "in Christ" – that is, through Christ. [119] In other words, since

our head is on high, he is saying, whereas we are body, yet because the head is seated on high we too share the honor, even if we are standing.

Clad in a golden garment, colorfully attired. Another version, "in a garment of gold from Ophir." As in the case of the king we do not think of bows and arrows, so do not think of garments in the case of the bride; rather, through these material things we form ideas appropriate to God. In fact, lest you come to any such impression, he added these words, *All the glory of the king's daughter is within* (v.13). Garments, admittedly, are of all things particularly external, and are there for the sake of the onlookers in the case of corporeal things; but when it is a question of spiritual things, direct your mind's eye inwards. This garment the king wove, and she wore it through her baptism: "As many of you as were baptized into Christ," Scripture says, remember, "have put on Christ."[120] Before this, you see, she was naked and disgraced, exposed to all passersby; but once she put on this garment, she was raised to that height and thought worthy of a position at his right hand. Now, his reference to her colorful attire was well put: the garment was not of one hue. I mean, it is not possible to be saved from grace alone; instead, there is need also of faith, and after faith virtue, too.[121] But now is not the time to discuss garments. There was not much trouble taken by the Spirit, note, to describe the woman's garments of gold. After all, if Isaiah criticized the women who adorned themselves,[122] and the marks of luxury were everywhere rejected, how could he in this case have commended a woman for adorning herself?

Listen, daughter, and see, and incline your ear: forget your people and your father's house, and the king will desire your beauty (another version says, "so that he may desire"). *Because he is your Lord* (another, "he is your Lord, after all"), *and they will adore him* (another, "and adore him"). *A daughter of Tyre in gifts* (another, "Now, the daughter in her might will bring gifts"). *The people's rich will bring petitions before you* (vv.10-13). Do you see how nothing is material, nothing corporeal, but everything at an intellecual level? I mean, how is his bride his daughter? How is his daughter his bride? With corporeal things this is impossible, one is one thing and the other another; but with God both are possible. He gave birth to her again

through baptism, you see, and he also betrothed her to himself. *Listen, daughter, and see.* He provided her with two things: teaching by means of words, and vision by means of miracles and by means of faith; some he gave, others he promised. So listen to my words, see my miracles and works, and bear with my exhortations. See which command he delivers first: *Forget your people and your father's house.* In other words, since he took you from the nations to betroth you to himself, he gave her this command first, to strip away that association, to forego that memory, to expel those things from her mind, exhorting her not only to shun them but not even remember them. *Forget your people and your father's house.* Now, when he mentions both people and house, he means everything done there by them, both life and teachings.

And the king will desire your beauty. Note that the reference is not to beauty of body: if you do this, he is saying, then you will be beautiful, then the king will desire your beauty. Beauty of body, of course, does not have this effect. Among unbelievers, after all, we see beauty of body, and pagan women who are handsome. For you to learn, however, that the reference is not to beauty of body, he says it arises from obedience to him; obedience, however, gives rise not to beauty of body but to beauty of soul. If you do this, he says, note, then you will be beautiful, then you will be desirable to the groom.

Because he is your Lord. Behold, the father and groom and master has appeared. Since, you see, he bade her leave her parents, forget her peoples, reject her association, he shows the justification for the bidding to be most adequate, the sense of the words to be compelling, and the need for this to be done. I mean, if he himself is father and bridegroom and lord, it would be proper for her to separate from all those things and attach herself to him. He did not say, "He is your father," but *He is your Lord*, so as to touch her particularly by this thought, that your lord and master and father chose also to become your bridegroom – or, rather, the very fact of his becoming her lord is a mark of great care and lovingkindness, choosing her for himself after she had been slave of the demons and ground under the heel of error. Yet it was not merely a slave he made her, but daughter and bride. *Forget your people and your father's house.* It is not in fact to some stranger that you come, but to the

one who made you, more closely related to you than all those, caring and concerned for you. He, in fact, is your lord and father, and personally gives everything to you.

They will adore him; and a daughter of Tyre in gifts. What is the sense of this? Really excellent: it is a capital form of exhortation. Come forward, he says: his power is great, and all will obey him. The inspired author, forebearing to mention the whole world, refers to the neighboring city, which at that time was in the grip of impiety, the devil's stronghold, with an awful reputation for extravagance, and he thus implies the whole from the part. Now, he seems to me in this way to be nominating all impiety and wastefulness; he is in the habit, you see, of classifying morals from the example of cities, as when he says, "Hear the word of the Lord, rulers of Sodom; hearken to the law of our God." [123] In fact he was addressing his words to the Jews; but since they were doing what had been done at Sodom, he called them by the name Sodom. Why are you surprised if he calls them by their fatherland in such a way when for example he attributes to them fathers of that kind in the words, "Your father was an Amorite, and your mother a Hittite." [124] Far from halting his accusation at this point, he extends the scope to include wild beasts in the New Testament passage that speaks as follows: "Snakes, brood of vipers;" [125] and again in the Old, "They hatch asps' eggs, and weave a spider's web;" [126] and elsewhere, "Are you not like the children of the Ethiopians to me?" [127] Just so in this passage, too, he called those living in impiety and licentiousness inhabitants of Tyre. But I shall prevail over them, he says, and rule them, and rule in such a way that they shall also adore me, and not simply adore but offer gifts and firstfruits, the highest form of worship and sign of an extraordinary degree of obedience.

The people's rich will bring petitions before you. What is the meaning of *bring petitions*? Those who are now great and lofty will honor and praise you. In the Church this happens, in fact: everyone, even if conscious of their wealth and position, honors and serves those living in virtue. Virtue, you see, is more influential than prosperity. Notice also the Church honored above all. It was well put, *before you*, that is to say, before your glory, your beauty, your charm. Then, since he had made mention of presence, garments and beauty, he added, in case any of the more materialistic listeners form an

idea at the level of the senses, the words, *All the glory of the king's daughter is from within* (v.13). Move to the level of the mind, he is saying, and discover the beauty of the soul; it is about that I am speaking to you, even if I talk in terms of clothing, even if I mention beauty, even if I mention gold, even if tassles, even if I mention gilt, even if anything else of this kind, the theme has to do with the mind, the teaching has to do with the soul, the discussion with virtue, with the glory within. For this same reason he is quite happy to bring the treatment down again to corporeal images, having set the materialistic listener on the right track by what he has said. *Clad in golden tassles, colorfully attired*; another version, "in colorful clothing with golden binding" – referring again to virtue through the term golden. Paul too speaks this way: "If anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw," [128] presenting virtue and vice to us through the names of these materials. You see, in case you should think this is what lies within, he does not permit you to imagine what is external but draws your mind inwards. After all, just as a body clad in these materials appears beautiful, so the soul clad in virtue is made beautiful.

Behind her, virgins will be conducted to the king (another version, "will follow;" another, "will be presented"). *Her neighbors will be presented to you. They will be presented in joy and gladness; they will be led into the temple of the king* (vv.14-15). Do you see the tassled garment? Do you see the golden robe, the flower of virginity? This is the Church's attire. Consider, I ask you, the precision of the inspired author. I mean, since it was not immediately at the foundation of the Church that the beauty of virginity flourished but later after some time, accordingly he too places it later, after she had forgotten her people and her father's house, had donned that garment and become conspicuous for her beauty. Hence he says, *Behind her, her neighbors will be conducted. Her neighbors*, not simply in terms of place but being close to her in manner and beliefs, as you would not call those women of heretics virgins, for example, since they are not close to the queen. *They will be presented in joy and gladness.* See in this statement the apostolic counsel shining out, and that celebrated denial demonstrated also in the inspired author. Which in fact is that? "The women who marry will have dis-

tress in the flesh." [129] Now, as these have distress, those others have gladness and joy. The married woman, you see, has to worry about children, husband, house, servants, relatives, in-laws, grandchildren, fertility and infertility (time does not allow, in fact, for a description of the troubles of married life), whereas the virgin on her cross is freed from present trouble, lifted above daily cares and the topsy-turvy of life, her eyes daily fixed on heaven she enjoys the grace of the Spirit and revels in happiness. The inspired author hints at not only the present but also the future, when they go to meet the bridegroom carrying bright and glowing lamps and welcome him. [130] Now, at this point he calls the royal palace a temple and the inner room a bridal chamber.

In the place of ancestors sons are born to you (v.16) Another version, "there will be your sons for you." Since he had made mention previously of people and parents in the words, *Forget your people and your father's house*, he added this to show that she will have complete joy in every way. The sterile woman, after all, is the mother of countless children. So even if you are torn from your parents, nevertheless the ranks of your children will as likely be numerous, as famous and illustrious as to fill the whole world. Now, he seems to me to be referring to the apostles, who became teachers in her. Then, by way of describing their power and force and their glory, he says, *You will appoint them rulers over all the earth.* Surely this does not require interpretation? I for one think it does not, as the sun does not, either, being brilliant; yet his words are even clearer. The apostles, you recall, traversed the whole world, and became rulers more masterful than all other rulers, more powerful than emperors. Emperors, after all, are in power while alive, but on their death are no more, whereas the apostles exercise power at their death. And while emperors' laws are in force within their own boundaries, the fishermen's commands extend to every part of the world. The Roman emperor cannot legislate for the Persians, nor the Persian for the Romans, whereas these Palestinians passed laws for Persians, Romans, Thracians, Scythians, Indians, Moors and the whole world. The laws remained in force not only while they were alive but also after their death; and those subject to them would prefer to lose their life rather than abjure those laws.

I shall remember your name in all generations. Hence peoples will

praise you for ages and for ages of ages (v.17). Another version, "I shall recall your name in every generation. Hence people will sing your praises continually;" another, "People will praise you for this." He spoke of the magnitude of the rule in terms of the extent of the earth, the breadth of the world and the mass of the nations under subjection. He speaks in other terms of its dignity, namely, that it reaches not only all parts of the world but also all points of history. Memory of you, he is saying, is immortal, you see, recorded in our books, recorded in our way of life, recorded in precept. See how he prophesies its perpetuity even in his inspired composition: in saying, *I shall remember your name in all generations,* he indicated this. Even if I pass on, he is saying, I shall sing praise to you even while passing: the body will dissolve, but the writings remain and the law is enduring.

Hence people will praise you. Where he began, there he concluded – in Christ.[131] *Hence*: why *hence*? Because you have achieved so much, you have appointed such rulers, you have driven out evil, you have planted virtue, you have plighted your troth to our nature, you have performed these wonderful good things. All the world will offer you hymns of praise, not for a short time, not for ten, not twenty, not a hundred years, nor in one part of the world, but earth and sea, both inhabited and uninhabited, will sing praise for all time, giving thanks for all the good things accomplished. For all these good things let us too give thanks to the loving Christ, through whom and with whom be the glory to the Father, together with the Holy Spirit, now and forever, for ages of ages. Amen.

[1] The title of this psalm Chrysostom has problems with once again (as does the Septuagint text for it that he prefers not to follow at this point). The problem arises for both partly because they fail to recognize in it a direction to musicians, such as here a guild like the sons of Korah, partly through a misreading of musical terms like the Hebrew *maskil,* probably a type of hymn (the term related to the idea of understanding). "Lilies" possibly refers here and in other psalm titles to a song of that name whose tune is appropriate. Ancient and modern commentators at least agree the psalm is a wedding song, addressed to groom and bride; Weiser adds that it is "the only example of a profane lyric in the Psalter." Chrysostom, incidentally, is also astray even in his transliteration of the Hebrew *yedidoth.*
[2] Though Chrysostom has been found to be relatively "superficial" in his

Christological interpretation of the Psalms by some commentators, like M.-J. Rondeau, we will see him insistent on this dimension of them.

[3] As we observed in note 1, Chrysostom unusually parts company with the Septuagint in offering a translation of the psalm's title; but it is perhaps his justifiable lack of confidence with the original that now leads him back to it, and true to form he rationalizes the LXX translation – to his misfortune. For the option for "change" seems only to arise from one of those frequent solecisms we have seen on the part of the LXX, this time confusing the form of the noun *shoshanim*, "lilies," with the verb *shanah*, "change" – an error repeated with other psalm titles. In reverting to the LXX Chrysostom seems unaware he is thus at odds with the Hebrew form he quotes for the title.

[4] 2 Cor 5.17.

[5] This psalm, and precisely its opening phrase, provided the Fathers with a classic text for enunciating their theology of scriptural inspiration. The Septuagint is to be given some credit for this in providing the verb ἐξερεύγομαι (*exereugomai*) to translate the hapax legomenon in the original, and allowing Chrysostom and other Fathers to describe by this figure the psalmist and other biblical authors composing under the influence of the Spirit. Chrysostom most fully of all develops the notion of inspired composition as "belching." See my "Psalm 45: a *locus classicus* for patristic thinking on biblical inspiration."

[6] As we noted at the very outset (note 3 on Psalm 4), David and all the Old Testament composers qualify for the title *prophetes*, and their composition *propheteia*, as a consequence of divine inspiration. Chrysostom's commentary on this psalm justifies this terminology. It is also interesting, as we shall see below, that Paul and the evangelists do not qualify for that title – because the Word has become flesh?

[7] Ez 3.3.

[8] Jn 12.47.

[9] Plato, *Apology* 22C; *Meno* 99D – a rare (and cool) acknowledgement in his exegetical works of Chrysostom's classical education. He had begun this commentary by calling pagan scholars to attend.

Chrysostom is anxious to distance his thinking on biblical inspiration from the mechanical process found in the pagan seers, and so he could not be used to document what Bruce Vawter describes in the Fathers as "the prevalence of a concept of divine authorship that could lead to a practical forgetting of the claims of human authorship" (*Biblical Inspiration*, 38).

[10] Lk 10.7.

[11] 1 Tim 5.17. Chrysostom at this point is heavily underlining the author's own contribution to biblical composition, after previously by his adoption of the figure of belching having insisted on the compulsion and lack of control of one under the Spirit's influence. It is a delicate balancing act by this Antiochene theologian, and he will continue accentuating the one and the other aspect – divine and human – of the process of inspired composition. We may debate the success of the balance he achieves.

[12] Gen 49.9. To support his claim that the psalm is Christological, Chrysostom pulls in a rather obscure Old Testment text. It is also interesting that, as elsewhere in this psalm, he shows an awareness of other commentators' views.
[13] Chrysostom uses the word *oikonomia* for the underlying subject of these verses, a word (literally implying "house management") occurring in the treatment of salvation history in the letter to the Ephesians, and in later theology developing a range of meanings, including the apex of that history, the Incarnation.
[14] Cf Is 53.2-3.
[15] We have noted that a deep-seated acceptance of the Incarnation underlies Chrysostom's Christology and in consequence his approach to the biblical Word. Even in the course of his commentaries on the Old Testament he is ready to rehearse the mysteries of Jesus' life, especially those demonstrating his humanity in all its limitations, as here. This litany closely resembles those occurring in Homilies 23, 27 and 58 on Genesis, all so detailed as to be clearly the fruit of frequent meditation. See my "St John Chrysostom and the Incarnation of the Word in Scripture."
[16] Among truths of the Christian faith on which Chrysostom does not expatiate in his Old Testament commentaries are the Church and the role of Mary.
[17] Jn 1.33.
[18] Jn 1.16.
[19] Is 11.2.
[20] Joel 2.28.
[21] 2 Cor 1.22.
[22] Cf 1 Cor 12.8-10.
[23] Jn 1.16.
[24] 1 Cor 2.11. As Chrysostom revealed above his familiarity with the humanity of Jesus, here he is careful that his congregation understand the workings of the Spirit and the Spirit's relation to the Father. The Council of Constantinople in 381 and its Trinitarian and Christological credal statement (that we call Nicene) would be fresh in his mind.
[25] Psalm 2.1.
[26] Cf Mt 4.18-22.
[27] Cf Jn 6.67-69.
[28] Jn 7.47.
[29] Cf Mt 9.33; 7.28-29.
[30] Cf Mt 10.37-38; Lk 14.33; Jn 12.25. Several of the Gospel texts Chrysostom is recalling at this point are imprecisely quoted, understandable in a preacher.
[31] Jn 5.21.
[32] Cf Jn 5.19.
[33] Jn 10.15. Chrysostom seems concerned his congregation may find the Christological bent he gives the psalm demeaning to the Son, and so insists the Incarnation does not undermine the equality of persons in the

Trinity.
[34] Cf Jn 10.17, imperfectly recalled.
[35] Mt 3.17.
[36] Gen 49.12.
[37] Is 11.4.
[38] 2 Thess 2.8.
[39] Cf Gen 3.17, which Chrysostom for his purposes seems to have amended to bring the curse upon Adam rather than the earth.
[40] Jer 48.10.
[41] Dt 27.26.
[42] Dt 21.23.
[43] Cf Gal 3.13.
[44] The Incarnation, of course, provides Chrysostom with the paradigm of that divine considerateness, *synkatabasis*, exemplified elsewhere in salvation history and (for him as commentator) in the biblical text. "Condescension," a translation (or, rather, mere calque) sometimes offered, even in those magisterial acknowledgements of his insight like Vatican II's *Dei Verbum* section 13, suggests something patronizing which is far from his thought. (See my "On looking again at *synkatabasis*".)
[45] Rom 6.9.
[46] V.3.
[47] Chrysostom is just picking phrases, with almost deliberate incongruity, from verse after verse; this v.5 in particular he quotes without respect for the movement of thought, and in a different form shortly after.
[48] Psalm 7.12-13.
[49] Wis 5.19.
[50] Mt 10.34.
[51] Lk 12.49.
[52] Psalm 72.6.
[53] Psalm 68.1.
[54] Psalm 104.32.
[55] Psalm 114.7.
[56] Psalm 135.6. Chrysostom never tires of warning his congregation of the danger of infringing divine transcendence by taking in a literalistic fashion scriptural expressions that exemplify instead divine considerateness, *synkatabasis*. The Psalms really put that awareness to the test.
[57] Is 9.6.
[58] Is 53.12.
[59] Cf Is 61.1.
[60] Eph 2.14.
[61] This is another of Chrysostom's hermeneutical axioms arising from his incarnational theology of the the Word: "Scripture interprets itself." Figurative though the language may be, especially in the lyrical books, it is not to be interpreted as lavish allegory, but yields to patient and "precise" exegesis, providing the key to its own explanation.
[62] Psalm 132.1 (LXX).

[63] Nm 12.3.
[64] Cf 1 Sam 24; 26.
[65] 2 Sam 16.5-13.
[66] 2 Sam 18.5.
[67] 1 Sam 17.29.
[68] Ex 32.32.
[69] Nm 11.29.
[70] Nm 12.13.
[71] Nm 16.
[72] 1 Sam 17. This has been a lengthy catalogue of texts to demonstrate David's and Moses' gentleness, or meekness, on account of the mention of one of three attributes in the psalm. Why should this virtue in particular receive such documentation? On Psalm 132, which in his version opens with "Remember David, O Lord, and all his gentleness," he launches into a lengthy encomium of these two men on the same score in reaction against Manichean scorn.
[73] Lk 23.34.
[74] Cf Mt 23.37.
[75] Jn 18.22-23.
[76] Cf Mt 9.32-34.
[77] Cf Mt 20.26-27.
[78] Mt 20.28.
[79] Again Chrysostom wants to preserve both elements, divine and human, in the attainment of righteousness.
[80] We note again that for congregations of the time access to the inspired Word was by listening to it being read – in church, but also (we learn from Chrysostom's other works) at home, probably in privileged instances.
[81] We have noted from the outset that it is a feature of the Commentary on the Psalms that Chrysostom frequently lists translations of the Hebrew text alternative to the version of the Septuagint he is following. Generally these are simply listed, without naming the translator or evaluating the version. In this instance, by contrast, he gets mileage from the alternatives, especially the inclusion of "fearful" as an alternative to "marvelous" – even if we cannot be sure if Chrysostom is quoting them correctly and consistently.
[82] Chrysostom, who has dutifully followed the Septuagint in respecting the order of the Hebrew in this verse (leading to a nonsense version not adopted by modern translations), now acknowledges the need for an adjustment if an adequate – if still ambivalent – explanation ἐξήγησις (*exegesis*) is to be achieved.
[83] The obscure reference here to the submission of rebellious people to the Lord is paraphrased by Chrysostom in terms of sacramental initiation, following the stages of instruction (*didaskalia*) and *catechesis*.
[84] Is 63.1.
[85] Is 63.3.
[86] Chrysostom's point is more emphatic in Greek, in denying the Father is

neither Χριστός (*Christos*) nor κέχρισται (*kechristai*).
[87] There may be a loose reference here to Is 9.7; or Chrysostom may rather have in mind Gabriel's words to Mary at Lk 1.33 in exactly this form.
[88] Mt 1.1.
[89] Jn 1.1,14.
[90] Lk 7.33-34.
[91] Cf Mic 5.2.
[92] Is 7.14.
[93] Cf Is 9.6.
[94] Rom 1.20.
[95] The reference, of course, is back to v.2 of the psalm. Again, as we remarked in note 83, the psalmist is being presented as instructing neophytes or catechumens, specifically in the intricacies of the Trinity and Christology.
[96] Is 6.1.
[97] The reference here, and Chrysostom's own text at this point, are uncertain.
[98] Cf Dan 7.9.
[99] Psalm 97.2.
[100] Psalm 145.13.
[101] Cf Hos 6.5.
[102] Jn 17.10. The term Child (or Servant), *pais*, for the Son is an unusual expression in trinitarian terminology.
[103] Cf Rom 8.11.
[104] Jn 2.19.
[105] Gal 5.22. For a moment it seems Chrysostom is uncharacteristically about to avoid a discussion of the figure in "oil" on a plea that inspired composers have recourse to riddles – an admission of defeat for an Antiochene; but he shortly returns to the task, and in place of dismissing it as riddle he explains it as symbol. After all, he had spoken at the opening of the psalm of the inspired author as performing a rather pedestrian task akin to smiths and builders.
[106] Psalm 105.15.
[107] Cf Mt 3.16.
[108] Jn 1.16.
[109] Jn 3.34.
[110] Joel 2.28.
[111] Once again in this psalm, as on v.2 (see note 12), Chrysostom shows an awareness of the views of other commentators. This time, however, his verdict is arrived at on more critical grounds than simply by citing an (obscure) scriptural text. He even feels secure enough in this process to allow that both interpretations have merit – though not yet (as occasionally in the Genesis homilies) to leave the congregation to make up their own minds.
[112] Cf Mt 9.20-22.
[113] Amos 6.4.
[114] 2 Cor 11.2.

[115] Jn 3.29.
[116] Mt 22.2.
[117] Mt 16.18.
[118] Eph 2.6.
[119] Chrysostom here briefly reminds his audience of what philologists, like Maximilian Zerwick, point out as a feature of the Greek used in the New Testament, that the preposition *en* can have an instrumental sense.
[120] Gal 3.27.
[121] Significant precision by Chrysostom about the relative roles in the process of salvation of grace and faith, on the one hand, and virtue, on the other.
[122] Cf Is 3.16.
[123] Is 1.10. Chrysostom speaks of a variety of composers here as though one.
[124] Ez 16.3.
[125] Mt 23.33.
[126] Is 59.5.
[127] Amos 9.7. Chrysostom is not respecting the (admittedly atypical) universalist character of this passage in Amos.
[128] 1 Cor 3.12.
[129] Cf 1 Cor 7.28. Paul's text, in fact, speaks in the masculine of those who marry, meaning married people in general. (It is not Paul's, and we have had cause to remark before that it is not Chrysostom's, most elevated theology of marriage.)
[130] Cf Mt 25.7.
[131] It has been a lengthy task of commentary, challenging the congregation by its length, and challenging the preacher from the need he has felt in this figurative material – not to mention the Christological interpretation – to remind them constantly not to settle for a literalist meaning. The pace began to show towards the end in the scarcity of references to other biblical texts.

Psalm 46

For the direction. For the sons of Kore, on the secrets. [1]
Another version, To the author of victory of the sons of Kore.
Another, A song for young people.

God is our refuge and strength, a help in tribulations which come upon us readily (another, "who finds us in tribulations"). *Hence we will not fear in the shaking of the earth and movement of mountains in the hearts of the seas* (vv.1-2). The inspired author employs his customary sound thinking, leading the listeners away from worldly concerns and guiding them to a hope on high. Make no mention to me, he says, note, of weapons, ramparts and trenches, nor of abundance of wealth, military science and supplies of horses, nor of bows, arrows and breastplates, nor of columns of allies and regiments of soldiers, nor of power of body and experience of fighting. All these have less power than spider web or shadow. If, on the other hand, you wish to see an invincible power, insuperable refuge, unassailable fort, impregnable tower, take refuge in God, enlist that great might. [2]

That was well put, *God is our refuge and strength*, showing that sometimes we conquer by flight, sometimes by standing and fighting. Both these tactics have to be employed, after all, closing with the enemy and giving ground. Paul did this, too, sometimes yielding, sometimes trampling on those who opposed the word of truth. Christ also did this to teach us; and we have to do it, both to recognize precisely the appropriate moment and to pray not to enter into temptation, according to that Gospel saying; should it come, however, not to show cowardice but to take a brave stand.

A help in tribulations which come upon us readily. As I have often said, and say now, he does not prevent tribulations coming, but he is at hand when they come, making us tried and tested. Now, *readily* goes with *help*: he comes to help not by chance but to an extraordi-

nary degree, providing greater encouragement from the asssistance than the pain from the tribulations. The assistance he provides us with, you see, is not simply as much as the nature of the troubles requires but much more. *Hence we will not fear,* he says, *in the shaking of the earth.* Do you see how he supplies greater help, even to excess? He did not say, note, only "We shall not be captured," nor even "We shall not fall," but "We shall not suffer what is part of human nature, fearing and dreading." Now, whence does this happen? From the availability of assistance in abundance. In this verse, however, by land and mountains and heart of the seas he does not mean the elements; instead, under their names he is suggesting unspeakable dangers. Even if we see everything in confusion, he is saying, even if intolerable disorder, even if things happen that have never happened before, even if creation is at odds with itself, so to say, the bounds of nature moving, everything pulled up from its foundations, the primal elements intermingled, and such awful disorder taking place, we shall not be overwhelmed or even lose heart. Now, the reason is that the Lord of all these things offers help, stretches out his hand and stands by us. If we are not at a loss with the onset of these events and do not go to water, this should all the more be the case when enemies attack and foes are arrayed against us.

Their waters roared and tumbled, by his might the mountains tumbled (v.3). Another version says, "The waters roaring and rushing, mountains shaking in his glorification." After saying that we shall not fear though everything be at odds, he next speaks about God's power, that his might is invincible. He rightly says that we are not afraid and, as he always does, he proclaims his might at one time from creation, at another from what befalls human beings, doing this here as well. Now, what he means is something like this: everything he shakes, he rocks, he moves when he wishes – so easy and trouble-free is everything for him. It seems to me there is reference here to the hordes of brave men, to the pick of the enemy, and to the limitless body of adversaries. So great is his power, you see, that he simply nods and all this happens. So how can we be afraid when we have such a Lord?

Diapsalma. Another version, "Always."

The impulses of the river (another version, "divisions;" the Hebrew is *Phalagau*). *They bring joy to the city of God. The Most High has*

sanctified his dwelling place (another version says, "the holy place of the dwelling of the Most High"). *God is in her midst, and she will not be shaken. God will help her as day dawns* (another, "at daybreak;" another, "at the approach of morning").[3] After speaking about his power and strength, and the fact that everything was easy for him, he shifts his attention to the question of his care for the Jews, in a few words outlining the good things given to the Jews. This person, he says, so strong and fearsome, conducting and supporting everything, responsible for making everything tremble and move, shift and change – he has filled our city with countless good things. Here in fact a river provides an abundance of supplies of gifts from on high, unstinted and overflowing, as if to say, "All good things flow to us as if from fountains." In other words, as a river divided into countless tributaries waters the surrounding land, so God's providence flows everywhere, spreading copiously, advancing in a rush, and covering everything.

It is not only security he provides us with, however, nor even uninterrupted help, but also spiritual joy; hence he says, *The Most High has sanctified his dwelling place*. Now, this is no small part of his beneficence, calling the place his dwelling. It was not idly he used the term *the Most High*. He who is in fact so exalted, uncircumscribed by place, the ineffable being, deigned to call our city his dwelling, and sustains it from every quarter. This, you see, is the meaning of *in her midst*, as elsewhere also he says, "Behold, I am with you."[4] He supports it on all sides; hence not only will she come to no harm, but she will not even be shaken. The reason is that she enjoys the most prompt assistance, which is ever ready and prepared; this, you see, is the meaning of *as day dawns*, not pending or delayed, but ever fresh and abounding, and at the appropriate time.

Nations were in uproar (another version, "Nations were assembled"). *Kingdoms tottered. The Most High gave voice, the earth was shaken* (v.6). Here he shows the power of his help: not only did she suffer no harm from kings, nations, let alone chance assailants, advancing in league to encircle and besiege one single city, but she even prevailed, overcame and put to rout the attackers. This, you see, is the meaning of *Kingdoms tottered, the Most High gave voice*, as if to say, "By a mere shout he took the cities." The expression is

materialistic, uttered in rather human fashion: God conquers not by voice and shouting, but by nod and will alone. Yet to raise him upwards from more materialistic things, he devised a sentiment more elevated than the others. I mean, since he consistently introduces him in full armor, he wished to show that all those expressions were metaphorical, rather figurative and considerate of our limitations (God, after all, being in need of none of those things). So he added, *He gave voice, and the earth was shaken*, indicating that he violently shakes not only cities, nations and regions but also the primal element itself. Now, he is accustomed also to call the masses earth, as when he says, "The whole earth was one tongue."[5]

The Lord of powers is with us, our support the God of Jacob (v.7). Now, for *powers* the Hebrew reads *Sabaoth*. See how he raises his treatment up from earth to heaven, to the limitless bands of angels, to the tribes of archangels, to the powers above. I mean, why quote me armies, he is saying, savages and human beings, who are mortal? Consider his might on the basis of the kingdom in the heavens, how many armies he has of invisible powers arrayed under his command. He was right to call them *powers*, thus demonstrating their might, as he also says elsewhere, "Powerful in might, doing his bidding."[6] After all, a single angel went out once and destroyed 185,000.[7] Why, then, if he is powerful, does he not wish to reach out his hand to us? In case you should be afraid, he is saying; hence he added, *our support*. So he is both willing and able; consequently, have no fear. What, then, if we are unworthy? But we have as a claim on him the lovingkindess shown to our ancestors. For this reason, too, he added the words *the God of Jacob*, as if to say, Always has this been his way, in former times and from the beginning.

Diapsalma. Another version, "Always."

Come and see the works of God, what marvels he has worked on the earth, bringing wars to an end within the confines of the earth. He will break the bow and smash the weapon (another version reads, "has dismantled"), *and will burn the shields in fire* (another, "and will consume the chariots in fire").[8] After making mention of the earth, of the sea, of the mountains, of the spiritual provision made for them, of the assistance, he directs the theme in turn to the onlookers, inviting them to consider his trophies with great pleasure and af-

fection for the Lord, and rehearsing the victories he won on their behalf. *Marvels* was well put, in place of saying victories and trophies: they did not happen in order, nor was the battle decided by weapons and force of numbers, but by God's will, the incidents revealing that he was the tactician. I mean, since the weak prevailed over the strong, the few over the many, the powerless over the powerful, and the outcome defied expectations, rightly does he call them *marvels* for happening to everyone's surprise and being spread everywhere on earth.

On the other hand, you would not be wrong to take this both in a spiritual sense and with reference to the present time. He won a vicious war against the demons, remember, and extended peace everywhere throughout the world; he even suppressed their physical conflicts, too. That is what Isaiah also suggests in saying, "They shall beat their swords into ploughs, and their spears into sickles; nation shall not take up sword against nation, nor may they any longer learn how to do battle."[9] Before the coming of Christ, you see, everybody took up arms, no one was free of this service, cities fought cities, and everywhere the skirmish of battle rang out. Now, on the contrary, most of the world is at peace, everyone pursuing their occupations unconcerned, tilling the soil, sailing the sea. Military force enlisted on behalf of all others is by contrast minimal. The need for it would have been abolished, however, had we done what was appropriate and not needed reminding of the tribulations. Now, he calls his anger *fire* here and mentions the development that occurred, that he burnt their weapons, conquering them by force, as well as their chariots, as Ezekiel says; anyone who is a scholar knows the story.[10]

Attend and see that I am God. I shall be exalted among the nations, exalted on the earth (v.10). Another version says, "Be cured and know;" another, "Allow yourselves to know." Now, the Hebrew says *Ouarphou ouadou*. Here he seems to me to be addressing the nations, as though to say this: Acknowledge his might and the power reaching all parts of the world; you need attention, you need a sound spirit. The word "allow" suggests the same thing: let go of error, rid yourselves of your former way of life, recover from the gloom of the wicked deeds shackling you, so that profiting from the lesson of the marvels and possessing an attentive spirit you

may recognize the God of all. You see, the marvels alone are not sufficient unless the soul too is well disposed. For marvels were done for the Jews, too, and nothing further occurred regarding their salvation. In other words, just as the rays of the sun do not suffice if the eye too is not clear, just so in this case do marvels not suffice. Hence in fact, speaking about the nations, he exhorts those of them likely to reap the benefit to recover from the evils shackling them to come to know the God of all. *Attend and know that I am God*, not idols or statues.

So *attend*, and I will provide you with many proofs. This in fact is the meaning of *I shall be exalted among the nations, I shall be exalted on the earth*, that is to say, "Through the works I shall be proven to you to be mighty and exalted." After all, that nature, undefiled and ineffable as it is, has its proper exaltation; but since you do not all see it, I shall demonstrate it to you through the works as well. Not only in Palestine, however, nor only in Jerusalem, but also in your midst among the nations. This is in fact the way he is exalted, dominating and prevailing over them, performing marvels in Babylon, marvels in Egypt, marvels in the desert, marvels everywhere in the world, so that everywhere they have a lesson in knowledge of him.

The Lord of powers is with us, the God of Jacob our support (v.12). This, then, is God, everywhere mighty, everywhere exalted, this is God who takes his place with us always. Have no fear, then, be not disturbed, having an invincible Master as we do, to whom all honor and glory is fitting, together with the peerless Father and his vivifying Spirit, now and forever, and for ages of ages. Amen.[11]

[1] Again Chrysostom's LXX text has misread the Hebrew noun *'alamoth*, "maidens" (suggesting perhaps a particular tune or key: cf 1 Chr 15.20), as the verb *'alam*, which in its various forms means to be hidden or to conceal.

[2] This opening litany – obviously part of the preacher's stock-in-trade – we have met before, e.g., at the opening of the commentary on Psalm 11. Chrysostom is also particularly direct and business-like in his approach to the text here, moving briskly through each verse, with hardly a scriptural reference in support. If a case can be made for seeing the present text as a preacher's notes to aid later delivery, or as a stenographer's precis, this could be cited in support.

[3] Vv.4-5. Chrysostom's relative brevity of treatment here does not extend to omission of those numerous textual variants. One would have thought they might be the first to go if the preacher felt the need of haste. He will even comment on the sense of a variant version of v.10.
[4] Mt 28.20.
[5] Gen 11.1. We noted above the uncharacteristic conciseness of commentary on this psalm; but Chrysostom's true character comes out in his prompt reaction to anthropomorphisms in the text and the customary warning against infringing divine transcendence. His advice to his congregation is also characteristic: recognize divine considerateness in the expression (which by now he is prepared to recognize also in the case of metaphor and figure), and look for further scriptural support.
[6] Psalm 102.20.
[7] Cf 2 Kgs 19.35.
[8] Vv.8-9.
[9] Is 2.4; Mic 4.3. Despite the briskness of pace, Chrysostom is prepared to investigate several senses of these verses; he is becoming accustomed to the figurative language of the Psalms.
[10] Is Chrysostom implying there were scholars, φιλομαθείς (*philomatheis*), in a congregation he can berate for their lack of knowledge of the Bible? We have seen him occasionally elsewhere deferring to the scholars, perhaps to avoid greater rigor in his own commentary. Here too one wonders if hs is not too sure of the precise "story" Ezekiel recounts; 39.9-10 comes closest to this verse of the psalm, but hardly qualifies as a story.
[11] It has been a brief commentary, in length a fraction of the previous one. An explanation may lie in the opening of the following psalm.

Psalm 47

For the direction. For the sons of Kore.
Another version, on the other hand, For the author of victory of the sons of Kore.

All the nations, clap your hands (another version, "hand"). *Shout to God in a voice of happiness* (a different version says, "Indicate in a voice of praise"). *Because the Lord most high is fearsome, great king over all the earth* (vv.1-2). This psalm, too, has to do with the same subject, speaking of victories and the trophies that result from fighting against enemies, and inviting the whole world to commendation of the achievements.[1] Some people, however, may find the opening of the divine Spirit's exhortation unworthy – such a bidding, applause, din, loud cries. These things perhaps do not become people assembling in this place dedicated to teaching, you will say, but rather those indulging in the theater and banquets, shaking rattles and applauding, whereas to men[2] under the guidance of the grace of the Spirit tranquillity and good order are appropriate. So what does the verse intend to suggest: what shouting, what clapping does it refer to? This, after all, is customary behaviour also for those in battle formation – I mean shouting and clapping for the purpose of unnerving the enemy – whereas it is foreign to the peaceful soul. The psalm, however, requires both, clapping and shouting.

So what on earth is it saying? Nothing other than giving an indication of satisfaction and a signal of victory. For the inspired author elsewhere, too, presents rivers as applauding: "Rivers, applaud this very thing,"[3] he says. Isaiah presents the trees also doing it,[4] while the psalmist again mountains leaping, and hills too,[5] not for us to get the idea that mountains leap, and hills too, nor that rivers applaud or have hands (the height of folly, of course),

but to learn the high degree of satisfaction. This is just what you can see in the case of human beings as well. Why did he not say "Rejoice" and "Leap," but *Clap* and *Shout*? To show our satisfaction of a high degree. You see, just as Christ, when he says, "You, on the contrary, when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face,"[6] is bidding not that anointing occur (none of us does this, after all) but that satisfaction be shown and there be joy in attitude (he bids the person be happy in fasting, you see, not sullen), so too here he did not give this direction for us to clap our hands but to be pleased and happy in our hymn singing.

Now, you would be right in taking the psalm more in a spiritual sense, rising above the literal sense. I mean, even if he bases the opening and introduction on material things, nevertheless he guides the listener to an intellectual level. In fact, what I said before I will say now, too: some things are to be taken at face value, others in a way different from their surface meaning, as is the case in that saying, "Wolves and sheep shall graze together."[7] We do not take this to mean wolves and sheep, nor chaff, nor ox, nor bull; instead, we depict the ways of human beings through the comparison with brute beasts. Some things have two levels of meaning: we both understand them at the material level and take them at an intellectual level, as in the case of the anagogy of Abraham's son:[8] we know the son was offered in sacrifice, and we gather something else contained in the thought by mention of the son, namely, the Cross. In the case of the lamb in Egypt,[9] too, we likewise bring out the comparison with the Passion. In this verse we must do exactly the same; the reference, you see, is not simply to the Arabs and their neighbors – rather, he is summoning all nations.

Because the Lord most high is fearsome, great king over all the earth. So from the outset he rouses the listeners, summoning them to such an amount of good news, to an assembly of the world, to some divine and spiritual festival, and to initiation into doctrines brought down from heaven. Hence *Clap*, he says – that is, rejoice, leap. The evangelical message, too, you see, urges this in the words, "Leap,"[10] not quite urging us to spring and bound (too servile an interpretation, after all), but suggesting the extent of the joy. After all, what happened merits deep satisfaction: the evangelical message sped across the earth as far as the sun reached, the whole world was

saved, and those previously shackled in error gave evidence of sounder values than Jewish worship.

All nations, clap your hands. With these hands previously defiled, accursed, daily stained with blood in the impure sacrifices in which you took the lives of your children, performed shameful rites and went beyond the limits of nature itself, with these hands now clap. *Shout to God in a voice of happiness.* With that tongue by which you tasted accursed things, by which you uttered blasphemous words, with that tongue shout a victory ode. It is customary with armies, you know, when forcing the adversaries' army back, no longer to engage in hand-to-hand fighting, but by shouting and bellowing in unison to shake their resolve already weakened – the clearest sign of clear victory and spoils when the battle is decided not by hands, but rather shouting suffices in place of hands and in place of weapons.

The whole achievement, therefore, belonged to Christ: he personally brought the war to a succesful conclusion, binding the strong man and seizing his goods. [11] Being loving, he causes those to enjoy the victory and the spoils who themselves had not worked for it, and has them offer the cry of victory, as though they had achieved it and had prevailed. Hence we too all shout, with a voice not hushed but strident, "Death, where is your sting? Hades, where is your victory?" [12] And again, *God has ascended with shouting* (v.5); this, in fact, is said in the psalm. And again in another place, "You ascended on high, taking captivity captive, you received gifts among people." [13] At one time, too, the Jews offered a victory ode, when the Egyptian army was drowned, in the words, "Let us sing praise to the Lord: he has been glorified gloriously." [14] Our victory is greater, however, the drowning not of Egyptians but of the demons, the conquest not of the Pharaoh but of the devil, not the capture of material weapons but the abolition of evil, not in the Red Sea but in the bath of regeneration, not of those entering the promised land but of those moving to a dwelling in heaven, not eating manna but feeding on the Lord's body, drinking not water from the rock but blood from his side. This is the reason he says, *Clap your hands*, that being rid of stones and wood you have mounted above heavens and the heavens of heavens and have taken your place at the royal throne itself. Accordingly, *Shout to*

God, that is, offer thanksgiving to him, the victory to him, the trophy to him. The conflict is not human nor the battle physical, nor is the contest over any earthly concern but over the heavens and those in the heavens. He personally conducted this war, and gave us a share in the victory.

Because the Lord most high is fearsome, great king over all the earth. Where now are those who diminish the glory of the Only-begotten? Lo, the Son is called *great king*, a title belonging to the Father. "Do not swear," Scripture says, remember, "either by heaven, because it is his throne, or by Jerusalem, because it is the city of the king." [15] And again elsewhere, "Mighty God, figure of authority," [16] which a king is. So when you hear that your Lord was impaled, that he was hanged on the Cross, that he was buried, that he descended to the lower parts of the earth, be not discouraged or troubled: he is most high, and by nature most high. What is most high by nature would never change its exaltation, nor would it become lowly; rather, even in his lowliness his exaltation remains and is revealed. For even in his dying he then most of all demonstrated his power over death. "The light shines in the darkness," Scripture says, "and the darkness did not overcome it:" [17] that was the way his elevation appeared in his lowliness. For example, see him while in Hades making all lofty things tremble: at that time the sun diverted its rays, rocks were split, the veil torn, the earth disturbed, Judas expired, Pilate and his wife scared, the judge himself on the defensive. So when you hear that he was bound and scourged, be not disturbed; rather, see him giving evidence of his might even in bondage. He said, "Whom do you seek?" [18] and hurled them on their back. Do you see how he is fearsome, working such marvels by voice and nod alone?

So when you see him as a corpse, call to mind the stone rolled away, the angels fearfully attending the tomb, the underworld laid open, death fading away, freedom for captives – and then you will see the fear he inspires. Now, if he demonstrated such power in the time of his dishonor, in heaven, on earth, in the underworld, what demonstration will he not give at the time of his future coming? Hearken to what the demons said in the time of his dishonor, foaming at the mouth, snapping their chains, making the way impassable: "What have you to do with us, Son of God? Have you

come here to torment us before the time?"[19] If, then, these things happen when he comes – the powers of heaven shaken, the sun turned into darkness, the moon not giving its light[20] – what will they then say?

Hence the psalmist says, *most high, fearsome.* Rather, on the contrary, what could anyone adequately say in describing that day,[21]

when he sends his angels everywhere throughout the world,
when all things tremble,
when the earth is confused to be surrendering the dead in its keeping,
when the myriad bodies rise,
when the sky shrinks like a shrunken veil,
when that fearful tribunal is established,
when the rivers of fire are made to flow,
when the books are opened,
when he makes public each one's deeds done in darkness,
when retribution and punishment are unbearable,
when powers are menacing,
when swords are drawn,
when the way leads down to hell,
when all rank counts for naught – kings, generals, supremos, viceroys,
when a host of angels appears,
when ranks of martyrs, prophets, apostles, priests, monks,
when rewards are past telling, trophies and wreaths,
when the good things surpass all understanding?

What language could do justice to that? I mean, had the inspired author set himself to address creation, he would have given up and withdrawn with an admission, "How your works are magnified, O Lord!"[22] And Paul, investigating one aspect of providence, loudly exclaimed, "O, the depth of the riches!"[23] So what could anyone say to describe that dread day? Foreseeing it all, the inspired author says, *The Lord most high is fearsome, great king over all the earth,* revealing the universal salvation. He had, in fact, been great king even before this, but was not acknowledged: "The world was made by him, and yet the world did not know him."[24] Now, on the contrary, he brought this also to pass, that he became great king in his close relationship with us as well. I mean, how could he

be otherwise than great for sending on mission to all parts of the world poor fishermen eleven in number, unlettered, unskilled, unknown, outlaws, dumber than fish, threadbare and unshod, not a stitch to their name, and for accepting them all as if under orders?

This is really a great king, one who rids the world of error, and in a short space of time installs truth and abolishes the devil's tyranny, who was a great king even before there were subjects, having the might of his rule not in slaves, nor in pomp and circumstance, but in nature itself. "For this I was born,"[25] he says, remember. This is a great king, the one whose dignity is not from without, who depends on no one for his kingship, who does all he wishes. "Go and make disciples of all nations,"[26] he said, remember, and his words became fact. "I want to: be made clean."[27] "I tell you, mute demon, go out from him."[28] "Quiet! Silence!"[29] "Off with you to the fire prepared for the devil... Come, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world."[30] Do you see his authority in all cases? Do you see his power? I mean, he chose his subjects in such a way as to persuade them to surrender their spirit rather than disregard what was commanded. Whereas the king enjoys the esteem of his subjects themselves, he by contrast provides the subjects with esteem; hence one is only a name, the other is reality. A great king is the one who made the whole world heaven, caused savages to have sound values and persuaded them to imitate angels.

He subjected peoples to us, and nations under our feet (v.3). What a marvel! He convinced those who crucified him to bow down in worship; those who mocked and blasphemed, those addicted to idol worship he taught to let their souls yield to his will. This transformation, you see, was not of the apostles' doing but done by him who led the way before them and moved their spirit. I mean, how could a fisherman or a builder have so changed the world had not the words of this person cleared all these obstacles? Sorcerers and tyrants and demagogues and philosophers and all their opponents they scared away like grains of dust and dissipated like smoke. In this way they spread the light of truth, employing not weapons or abundance of wealth but simple speech – or, rather, the speech was not simple but more potent than any action. So how? They

called on the name of the crucified, and death skulked away, demons were put to flight, diseases were cured, bodily disfigurement righted, wickedness dispelled, dangers dissipated, and the elements transformed.

When therefore they say to us, "Why was it that he enlisted no help for himself on the Cross?" let us say this, that it was the more marvelous way. These things are not on a par, you see: coming down from the Cross, and after being crucified raising so many dead in his name. I mean, the fact that it was by choice he stayed there he demonstrated from what followed. That is to say, he who expelled death from others after it had come was able in a much more marvelous fashion to evade it before it arrived; and he who provided life to others was able in a much more marvelous fashion to provide it for himself. This he did, rising after three days, thanks to his great superiority. He demonstrated it also through what happened afterwards: when it became evident his name had such power over the bodies of others that, once invoked, it put death to flight, no one could doubt that he had demonstrated great power over his own body and brought death under control.

He subjected peoples to us, and nations under our feet. See the wisdom of the inspired author, who speaks of everything with precision. I mean, what the apostles later said, "Why give us your attention, as though we had made him walk by our own power or piety?"[31] the inspired author says ahead of time. The phrase *under our feet* indicates the one subjected, or rather the complete subjection. If you want to learn the degree of subjection, listen to this: "All who were owners of lands or houses sold them," the text says, "and brought the proceeds of the sale and laid it at the apostles' feet."[32] Others, however, put their life on the line along with possessions: "Who risked their necks for my life,"[33] Scripture says, remember. About others he wrote in these words, "If possible, you would have dug out your eyes and given them to me."[34] And in his letter to the Corinthians Paul said, "Note, I ask you, what zeal this godly grief has worked in you, what self-justification, what longing, what dread, what desire, what zeal, what vengeance!"[35] – so filled were they with fear and trembling. Luke, too, in his turn wrote in these words, "None of the rest dared to join them, but the people made much of them."[36] And again, "What do you prefer?

Am I to come to you with a stick, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?"[37] Do you see the independence and authority?

Now, all these things were done by that word which he spoke in sending them, "I am with you."[38] He it was who removed the obstacles as he went before them; he himself smoothed out problems, and made difficult things easy. And yet everything was beset by conflicts, everything with snares and hazards, no foothold or places to stand firm, all havens obstructed, every house shut, the ears of all stopped. Nevertheless, as soon as they entered and spoke, all strongholds of the enemy fell, with the result that they even surrendered their souls and then withstood countless dangers for the sake of what they had been told.

He chose his own inheritance for us, the beauty of Jacob, which he loved (v.4). Another version, "the glorification of Jacob." Note the inspired author's precision. He had in fact said before, *He subjected peoples and nations to us;* the Jews were the first to make their approach, three thousand initially, then five thousand, and later the nations. He himself said elsewhere, remember, "I have other sheep as well, and I must bring them, and there will be one flock, one shepherd."[39] Then, in case on hearing, *He chose his inheritance for us*, someone may be bewildered and uncertain, and say, "So how is it that the Jews do not believe today?" he removed their uncertainty with a correction. In particular, you see, he for his part chose even them, and he left nothing undone that lay within him. If, however, you look for the outcome, listen to what follows: he added, *the beauty of Jacob, which he loved.* Here in fact he seems to me to be referring to the believers, as Paul himself indicated in saying, "It is not, however, as though the word of God had failed: not all of Israel belong to Israel; rather, 'through Isaac descendants will be named for you' – that is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise who are counted as descendants."[40] Now, the believers are rightly spoken of as the people's beauty; what could be more appealing, after all, than those who have come to faith?

Now, he calls the nation *his inheritance,* not as though disregarding the others, but to give evidence of the extent of his love, his affinity for them, and the added gift of his providence. For you to learn the inspired precision, see how he employs the expression of

common people, which they adopt in matters of commerce.[41] In buying something, you know, many people often claim it surpasses other things in beauty. So to show that not everyone will be saved, he says, *the beauty of Jacob*. This is also shown in the Gospels through countless parables.

God has gone up with shouting (v.5). He did not say, "He has been taken up," but *he has gone up*, showing that he did not go up with anyone else to guide him, but made his way by himself. Elijah, remember, who did not go in the same fashion as Christ, was drawn by a different power;[42] it was not for human nature, after all, to take the extraordinary path. The Only-begotten, by contrast, went up by his own will. Hence Luke too described it like this: "They were gazing up as he moved towards heaven."[43] He did not say, "As he was taken up," or, "As he was carried:" his going happened of his own accord. Now, if before the Cross he was borne upon the waters, clad in a body weighing him down and subject to suffering, what is surprising if also after assuming it now incorruptible he moves through the air?

How does *with shouting* fit in? Who shouted when he went up? Actually, it happened in silence, with only eleven disciples present. Do you see that you must not take the expressions superficially at face value but recognize the meaning conveyed by them? I mean, what I said at the beginning of the psalm, that the shouting suggests something else, the victory, the spoils, he accordingly says here, *with shouting*, that is to say, that he went up with victory, having conquered death, overthrown sin, subdued the demons, expelled error, changed everything for the better, leading our nature to its ancestral country – or rather to a much better one. At his coming, you see, no one resisted him – not sin's tyranny, not death's power, not the force of a curse or destruction, not the spread of evil, not anything else of this kind; instead, breaking through these things like a spider's web, and destroying ranks of demons and the devil's vigor and and all these sorts of things, he went up achieving what he wanted. Hence Paul too in describing his spoils said, "He despoiled the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in the process."[44] And again, "He erased the record that stood against us, with its legal demands, and set it aside, nailing it to the Cross."[45]

The Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Again he suggests the same thing, with a famous victory. Here, however, something further is to be understood, its being conspicuous, obvious, notorious. In actual fact, no one knew about it when it happened, but it was as obvious as if a trumpet had sounded, or rather much more so. That deed, you see, though happening in secret, hardly anyone of the world's inhabitants at the time was in ignorance of; instead, the nature of things disclosed it in the manner of a sounding trumpet, or rather much more so. In fact, a sounding trumpet would not have called everyone to notice that as much as the sound of the events later revealed his ascending, making the event more forcibly obvious than any clap of thunder. After all, a clap of thunder would not have won the world's attention as much as the demonstration of the event did both for those living at the time and for those coming later. You see, while a clap of thunder is obvious to those present, this demonstration occurred more noticeably than a trumpet for all generations, and gives evidence of the event more clearly than a clap of thunder.

Now, you would not be wide of the mark to speak of the mouths of the apostles as trumpets, not trumpets of beaten brass but more precious than gold and more costly than precious stones. Why, then, did he say not, "With a trumpet," but *with the sound of a trumpet*? To indicate their harmony of spirit, as Paul too says, "Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we proclaim."[46] And again, "The multitude of believers were of one heart and spirit."[47] They sounded a trumpet, however, not to summon to battle, but to give the good news of victory. You see, just as with armies going to war the trumpets go on ahead with the standards to stir up those present not by sight but also by sound, so too did it happen at that time: with the entry of the apostles into each city the trumpets sounded, and all came running to listen.

Sing praise to our God, sing praise; sing praise to our king, sing praise. Because God is king of all the earth, sing intelligently. God reigned over the nations (vv.6-8).[48] So having narrated the magnitude of the achievement, with much enthusiasm he invites the world to commendation – hence his use of repetition, and his invitation not simply to sing praise but to do so with deep understanding. What is the meaning of *sing intelligently*? By learning what had happened,

he is saying, by considering the magnitude of the achievements. In my view, however, he is touching on something else by saying *intelligently*: to sing not only in voice but also in deed, not only with the tongue but also with one's life. *God reigned over the nations*, he says, note; another version, "upon the nations." What sort of reign does he mention here? Not that which is based on creation, but that which comes from close affinity. Before this, you see, he ruled over everything on the basis of being their creator and maker, whereas now over willing and grateful subjects – something that calls for the highest praise and deep wonder for the reason that the one previously abused by the Jews caused such a transformation to occur that everywhere in the world his praises are sung. Those who had not read the biblical authors nor were trained in the Law, but in manners resembled brute beasts, were suddenly transformed, and abjuring all those forms of error they became subject to him, not one nation, or three, or four, or ten, but those living in all parts of the world.

God sits on his holy throne. What is the meaning of *sits on the throne*? Reigns, rules. *Holy* was well put: in fact, he not only reigns, but reigns in a holy manner. What does it mean to reign in a holy manner? Purely. I mean, when human beings succeed to this position, they exploit the power itself for the purposes of injustice. His rule, by contrast, was untouched by any such abuse, pure and holy: no deceit or anything of the like marred or disfigured his administration – instead, it was pure, unalloyed, brighter than the driven snow, gleaming with ineffable glory.

Rulers of peoples were gathered with the God of Abraham, because God's mighty ones of the earth were highly exalted (v.9). Here he shows the extent of the Gospel's influence, reaching not only simple people but even the very wearers of the crown and those seated on a royal throne. Then he shows him to be the one God of New and Old Testaments in the words, *with the God of Abraham*, that is, he himself is the God also of our forefathers, the giver also of the Law. Hence Jeremiah too said, "I will make a new covenent with them, not like the covenant I made with their fathers on the day when I took their hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt,"[49] showing that there is one and the same lawgiver of New and Old. Baruch in turn said: "This is our God: no other can be compared with him.

He found the whole way to knowledge, and gave her to his servant Jacob, and to Israel beloved by him. Afterwards she appeared on earth and lived with human beings,"[50] showing that the giver of the Law is the same one who became flesh, and the one who became flesh is the same one who gave the Law. This the inspired author also said: *They were gathered with the God of Abraham*, he says. Now, the Hebrew for *with the God* is *Em Eloi Abraham*.[51] How did this happen? *Because God's mighty ones of the earth were highly exalted*. Now, who were God's mighty ones if not the apostles, all faithful men? You see, since their power shone out to such an extent, he is saying, they prevailed over all; rightly did he style them mighty ones. After all, how were they not mighty when arrayed against the whole world, against the demons, against the devil, against peoples, against cities, against nations, against tyrants, against retribution, against punishments, against hot irons, against furnaces, against habit, against tyranny of nature, overcoming them all, being elevated above them all, and in thrall to none? How were they not mighty when even after their death they displayed such force? How were they not mighty when their words are firmer than steel, refuted by no one but daily growing in force, as the evangelical message travels by every means to every place to fill the whole world?

For all these very things let us give thanks to the loving God, because to him is the glory and the power, now and forever, for ages of ages. Amen.

[1] There is an implication here that Chrysostom's commentary on the Psalms is following a sequence, and that he has moved directly from Psalm 46 to Psalm 47 – a rare clue to the circumstances of their delivery (or at least preparation). This could explain the relative brevity of these two pieces of commentary, delivered perhaps on the one occasion (though the style of each is different). It does not follow, however, that the series included the whole Psalter.

[2] Another indication that Chrysostom's congregation is male. It is also interesting that he sees the place and occasion for this commentary on the Psalms as dedicated to teaching (*didaskaleion*); it is not a eucharistic liturgy – though he would doubtless see it as sacramental in the wider sense.

[3] Psalm 98.8.

[4] Is 55.12.

[5] Psalm 114.4.

[6] Mt 6.17.
[7] Cf Is 11.6-7, loosely recalled. It is true Chrysostom has had to spell out before this in commenting on the Psalms his hermeneutical principles, e.g., in the previous psalm and on Psalm 9.6 (see note 15 there). He crystallizes his thinking here again, distinguishing the literal/historical sense, taking the words at face value, from a "higher" sense, whether this is generally spiritual or the specifically anagogical sense distinguished by Fathers like John Cassian, or typological/Christological as in the two pentateuchal examples he cites.
[8] Cf Gen 22.
[9] Cf Ex 12.
[10] Lk 6.23. Antiochene that he is, Chrysostom esteems the literal sense of words, but not the literalistic, the servile.
[11] Cf Mt 12.29.
[12] Cf 1 Cor 15.55.
[13] Psalm 68.18; cf Eph 4.8.
[14] Cf Ex 15.1.
[15] Cf Mt 5.34-35.
[16] Cf Is 9.6.
[17] Jn 1.5.
[18] Jn 18.4.
[19] Mt 8.29.
[20] Mt 24.29; cf Is 13.10; Joel 2.10.
[21] Though treatment of this shorter psalm will not run to greater length than the previous one, the style is fulsome where the other was concise. Chrysostom has become increasingly rhetorical until at this point his delivery about "that day" is as repetitive and compelling as any biblical apocalyptist, slipping the limits of mere prose. He clearly has a responsive audience in mind.
[22] Psalm 92.5.
[23] Rom 11.33.
[24] Jn 1.10.
[25] Jn 18.37.
[26] Mt 28.19.
[27] Mt 8.3.
[28] Cf Mk 9.25.
[29] Mk 4.39.
[30] Cf Mt 25.41,34; Eph 1.4, concluding a miscellany of texts more or less accurately recalled.
[31] Acts 3.12.
[32] Acts 4.34.
[33] Rom 16.4.
[34] Gal 4.15.
[35] 2 Cor 7.11.
[36] Acts 5.13.
[37] 1 Cor 4.21.

[38] Mt 28.20.
[39] Cf Jn 10.16.
[40] Cf Rom 9.6-8; Gen 21.12.
[41] Frequently in this psalm Chrysostom has alerted us to the precision, *akribeia*, of the inspired author – something in the text that as an Antiochene he esteems and adverts to, and a virtue he himself demonstrates in his commentary. Here, too, he appreciates the considerateness, *synkatabasis*, of the divine author in accommodating the message to human ways of expression. Somewhat surprisingly, he does not make such an issue of the notion of inheritance here, where it might have been appropriate, as he did at the opening of Psalm 5, where instead it arose out of a misreading of the Hebrew title.
[42] Cf 2 Kgs 2.11.
[43] Acts 1.10.
[44] Col 2.15.
[45] Col 2.14.
[46] 1 Cor 15.11. Chrysostom's sense of need to take the psalms Christologically pressures him into giving a figurative interpretation to such items as ascending and trumpets here, where his tradition would have led him to prefer a literal reading – as do modern commentators who see this as an Enthronement psalm sung to brass accompaniment at the New Year festival. He is also thus led into a greater degree of rationalizing than usual.
[47] Acts 4.32.
[48] At this stage of a relatively short psalm Chrysostom is finally feeling the pressure of time, and omits alternative versions of these verses. Here he (and the LXX) replicates the failure of one such version to recognize in the Hebrew term *maskil* a type of psalm in the title to Psalm 45 (see note 1 there), seeing in it the roots of the verb "understand" – hence his "intelligently" here, though he proceeds to betray some uneasiness about it.
[49] Jer 31.31-32.
[50] Bar 3.35-37. So Baruch too is susceptible of a Christological interpretation.
[51] Even if the Hebrew did correspond to Chrysostom's Greek, what point does the erudite comment achieve – except to impress an impressionable audience – especially at this last gasp of the commentary, when he is about to shut down abruptly?

Psalm 48

Singing of a psalm for the sons of Kore.

Great is the Lord and highly to be praised, in the city of our God, on his holy mountain, rooting it firmly in the joy of all the earth (vv.1-2).[1] A different version says, "a beautiful offshoot, delight of all the earth;" another, "from the beginning an ornament appointed for all the earth." Here too he indicates relief from wars and freedom from fighting. You see, when they returned from Babylon, released from long captivity, they took possession of their ancestral land and reached the end of many wars; so to give thanks for everything to the author of these benefits, they sang these hymns in the words, *Great is the Lord and highly to be praised*. While they say *Great*, they do not go so far as to say how great; no one knows that, after all – hence he added as well, *and highly to be praised*. There is no limit, you see, to his greatness. What it means, however, is something like this: It is necessary to praise him, and sing to him alone, and this to an extraordinary degree; but the need is to sing his praises both for this infinite and incomprehensible greatness of his being and for the excess of his beneficence to us. It was his will, you see, and he had the power to do what he willed.

In the city of our God, on his holy mountain. What do you mean? Do you confine the glory of the great, the praiseworthy one, to that place, to the city and the mountain? I am not saying that, he replies; rather, that we have had experience of these ahead of other things. So it was either for that reason that he said *in the city of our God*, or from his wish to indicate that his greatness and glory were demonstrated through the marvels performed for it, namely, that those who were in captivity, who were exiled, humiliated, caught up in a foreign land as though in a tomb – these he caused all of a sudden to shine forth to such a degree as to prevail over their con-

querors, to return home and regain their former prosperity, and to restore the former condition of their country. The greatness of visible creation, he says, also reveals him; but since most people in ancient times were of a rather heedless mentality, he provides in addition the knowledge coming both from enemies and from victory, constantly arranging unexpected triumphs, effecting a change for the better, and working such wonders contrary to hope and expectations. Now, he calls this city his, not to deprive the others of his providence, but to indicate that these were at an advantage from the viewpoint of knowledge. That is to say, whereas the former could be called his only on the basis of creation, the latter could on the basis of affinity as well, and on account of the fact of all the marvels worked there. So at that time the city was called God's, whereas now we are all called God's. "Those who are Christ's," Scripture says, remember, "have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."[2] Do you see the degree of virtue? Hence the mountain, too, is called God's, since God was worshipped there.

Rooting it firmly in the joy of all the earth. The obscurity of the phrase is extreme – hence the need to pay close attention. I mean, it causes great bewilderment in the person who reads it casually, whereas the one approaching it with precision will see the sense and the precise sequence of the ideas.[3] You see, what it means is something like this: Great is the king in the city of our God, firmly rooting it in his holy mountain, that is, rooting it properly, fixing it properly, securing it properly in the delight and happiness of all the world. This is also what another version is suggesting in saying, "an ornament appointed for all the earth:" he made it the joy and happiness of all the world. From that source, in other words, came the fount of piety and the roots and beginnings of the knowledge of God. Such, then, being its nature, he rooted it and properly fixed it on the order of the world, on the joy, on the delight of all the earth. At that time, you see, Jerusalem was the earth's center of learning,[4] and those wishing to enjoy delight and to acquire beauty and order learned from it what was needed. Hence, to suggest this as well, he said not "rooting" but *rooting firmly*. If, however, you wish to take it also in a spiritual sense, you will see the truth of the matter: from here joy was experienced everywhere in the world, from here happiness and delight, from here the sources of sound

thinking, here Christ was crucified, from here the apostles took their departure. "Out of Sion, you see, will come forth the Law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem;"[5] and this delight has undying roots.

Mount Sion, the sides of the north. Another version says, "Mount Sion, the thighs of the north;" the Hebrew is *Ar Sion jerchthe saphoun.* For what reason, tell me, does he now mention the north and describe to us the location of the place? Because from that quarter war generally broke out with the invasion of savages, and generally the inspired authors mention it, calling it "from the north," and speak in terms of a cauldron boiling from that direction.[6] That is where the region of the Persians is situated, after all, with respect to Palestine. Marvelling at what happened, therefore, he added this to suggest, This city generally vulnerable from that quarter you made impregnable. In other words, just as if someone were to say about the body, "That weak part I made stronger," he too is suggesting the same in this verse in the words, "The quarters whence come wailing and weeping," whence the basis of disasters, these parts run over with satisfaction, with tranquillity; whence come threats and fears and dangers, thence delight and happiness. No one any longer fears that northern part of creation, no one is anguished, no one is suspicious – all enjoy happiness, for you root it in satisfaction.

The city of the great king. God is known in her palaces, when he comes to her aid (vv.3-4). Another version, "was known;" another, "God will be known in her royal palaces for a stronghold;" another, "God was known in her palaces for delivering her." He proclaims her dignity, her praise, her crown in the words, *The city of the great king.* Then, to show how she is the city of the great king, he adds, *He is known in her palaces,* demonstrating his great providence, that he saves her in every possible way, not only caring for her as a whole but displaying his providence in the case of each house. You see, while he is known to us also apart from this, to our enemies on the other hand he showed his might. In the time of Hezekiah, remember, a mass of savages attacked, and after surrounding it all as in a net they departed, leaving behind most of their number as corpses.[7] And many others on many occasions assaulted it but went off in shame. Now, all this was accomplished by God's providence, he is

saying, and made the city famous. It became great, however, not only by being famous but also by the way it became famous.

Because, lo, the kings of the earth assembled, they came together (another version says, "Lo, the kings were arrayed together"). *On seeing this, they marvelled, they were alarmed, they were moved, trembling came upon them, pains at this as of a woman giving birth; in a violent wind* (another says, "through a violent gale;" another, "burning") *you will smash the ships of Tarshish* (another, "you will shiver;" the Hebrew says *Tharseis*).[8] At this point he is describing a harsh war concerted from every direction and a famous victory. You see, after he said that God comes to her aid and gives evidence of great care, he then shows also how he came to her aid. When countless nations made an attack (this he suggests, note, in mentioning the great number of kings), and not simply an attack but concerted and combined, such extraordinary developments occurred that they departed, marvelling at the surprising turn of events. The war in fact was won in such a way that they took to their heels, filled with fright and horror; in the course of an intense struggle they made themselves scarce, the many in fear of the few, combined forces in fear of remnants, no better off than a woman in labor. Whence it is clear that instead of the war being conducted in terms of human logic, it was God whose tactics directed the fighting, who not only depressed the enemies' spirits but also shook their resolve by causing distress in their ranks and prompting an unspeakable fear in them. It was the same as if a great fleet had assembled and an unfavorable wind came upon them and smashed the ships, sank the triremes and instilled instant disorder.

Here, you see, in my view he is indicating through this comparison both the ease of the victory and the degree of the confusion. These people, note, had made use of a naval flotilla and had arrived from some distant foreign country, but all were destroyed by God's anger as though by some violent gale. Hence to suggest also the place they came from he added the word *Tarshish*. The Hebrew also indicated this through its term, which we also provided for your benefit for the reading of the verse.[9] Accordingly, either this is the meaning, or what I said before, that just as a strong wind frequently came upon the ships of *Tarshish* and smashed them, so God utterly confused those vast forces.

As we have heard, so also we have seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God (v.8). Do you see how he explains the term above *rooting firmly*? He did not say, note, "having rooted firmly" but *rooting firmly*, that is, constantly providing for, constantly caring, constantly fortifying. You see, having mentioned what had befallen at that time, he shifts his attention back to olden times, showing that they were connected to them. That is to say, what we saw in words, he is saying, we have seen in deeds, the victories, the triumphs of God, his care, his surprising marvels. After all, God did not ever cease performing them. And so it belongs to him both to free from dangers and to guide towards knowledge of God. The inspired author rightly made mention of what happened so long a time before. For it is possible, you see, to be instructed both from ancient narratives and from recent deeds so that the more materialistic people might come to faith in past events from present happenings, and thus gain a double benefit, and hearing might serve them in place of sight.

God established her forever. We received your mercy, O God, in the midst of your people (a different version, "We formed an impression of your mercy, O God, in the midst of your people;" the Hebrew is *Echalach demmenou*). *Like your name, O God, your praise reaches the limits of the earth* (vv.8-10).[10] Since he had said, "What we have heard we have also seen," he also says what he heard and what he saw. So what did he hear, and what did he see? That the grace of God renders the city stronger and intact. This, in fact, is her foundation, this her strength, this makes her impregnable – not human aid and help, nor the power of weapons, nor towers and ramparts. What instead? God rules her as his own. This most of all it was, in fact, that they should have been taught, and towards this the inspired author constantly urges them. *We received your mercy, O God, in the midst of your people.* What is the meaning of *we received*? We hoped for, we looked forward to, we experienced your lovingkindness. You see, since he had said, *he established*, he rooted, he fortified, to show that such great providence had occurred not in keeping with the worthiness of the recipients but in keeping with the goodness of the benefactor, and wishing at the same time to quell their conceit, he spoke in that way as if to say, "These achievements come from your mercy, your glory, your goodness."

Hence he added as well, *Like your name, O God, your praise reaches the limits of the earth. Your praise*, he says: he performs deeds so great and wonderful, so lofty and glorious. In other words, you give evidence of care not in keeping with the measure of the beneficiaries, nor in keeping with your dignity, but in keeping with your greatness. The praise, therefore – that is, the honor coming from the deeds – caused the achievements to be well received. They were performed in Palestine, you remember, but on account of their greatness and importance they had influence on the very ends of the earth, and those at a distance learned of them. Anyhow, what happened in Egypt the prostitute in Jericho knew of more precisely than those present.[11] Again, what occurred in Palestine those living in the land of the Persians also spread abroad; in turn, what happened in Persia those living towards the ends of the earth knew of. For this very reason the king also sent letters to all parts of the world announcing what had happened in the furnace.[12]

Hence this author, too, after saying, *your praise reaches the limits of the earth*, added, *your right hand is filled with righteousness*. What is his invariable custom, to proceed upwards from what is done for human beings to what is appropriate to God's nature, he does exactly so in the present case, not for us to think of things accruing to or being taken from him – perish the thought; but since human word and expression have their limitations, we must associate with the word an understanding in keeping with God.[13] So he mentions what is appropriate to God's nature, what is related to his being. Now, what is that? *Your right hand is filled with righteousness*, he says. He shows, you see, that what happened was due not to the dignity of the beneficiaries but to his being, since his being itself rejoices in righteousness, takes delight in lovingkindness. This is his role, this his habit, and on account of this they enjoyed beneficence. I mean, as it belongs to fire to heat, to the sun to give light, just so as well the role of benefactor belongs to him – not in the same manner, however, but even much more. Hence he spoke also this way, *Your right hand is filled with righteousness*, suggesting abundance, relation to his being.

Let Mount Sion be glad, and the daughters of Judah rejoice in your judgements, O Lord (another version says, "on account of your judgements"). *Walk around Sion, walk about her* (another, "encircle"), *tell the story of her towers* (a different version, "count her towers;" an-

other, "commend"). *Set your hearts on her power* (a different version, "on the enclosure;" a different one, "abundance"). *Divide up her palaces* (a different version, "distribute her royal palaces") *so as to tell the next generation* (another, "in a later generation") *that this is our God for ages of ages. He will shepherd us forever.*[14] Why on earth did he give these directions, to go around the city, count the towers, take a close look at the buildings, consider their decor, reckon up its enclosures and ramparts, measure the houses and palaces, without need of interpretation on our part: the words speak for themselves. After speaking this way, note, he immediately supplied the explanation. What in fact was it? *So as to tell the next generation*, he says. Now, what he means is something like this: Be filled with satisfaction, rejoice, jump for joy. Observe her might, however, not idly or by chance but with precision. You see, when she became a ruin, when she was pulled up by the roots and almost razed to the ground, when they despaired of her being changed for the better, as if to say, "Our bones are dried up, we are out of sorts, we are laid waste,"[15] they did not expect to get her back. But they did – not in the condition in which they had lost her but much better, more beautiful and remarkable, stronger and better resourced, more powerful and widespread in her buildings, her markets, her riches, in the abundance of her being. "The latter glory of this house," Scripture says, remember, "shall surpass the former."[16]

The psalmist exhorts the people, all but saying, "Behold this city, given up as lost, despaired of, become a ruin: how could it regain a more attractive prospect?" So understand something from this, from its structure, its beauty, its fame, so as to learn from this God's power, how he made the lost city more mighty, and recount to your progeny God's power and the enduring course of his providence; his care of us, his leadership and shepherding last forever. Stories of this to those who come after will, in fact, prove an occasion for great advance in wisdom, a basis for more precise knowledge of God, and a study of virtue. Hence the reason why he bids them go round the city, to become better informed teachers of their own offspring.

For this same reason let us, too, keep our gaze fixed on her constantly and forever, and have in mind our city of Jerusalem, keeping her beauties ever before us. This is the mother city of the King

of the ages, where dwell spirits of the righteous, choirs of patriarchs, apostles and all saints; where everything is undisturbed, nothing passing away; where beauties are incorruptible and are yet to be seen, the inheritance only of those who have utterly consigned to oblivion those corruptible and passing preoccupations of this life, namely, wealth and luxury and the devil's baleful pleasures. Let us increase day by day our love for our fellows and hospitality for the needy, love of our neighbor and heartfelt pardon of injury so that, living our life in this upright manner that is pleasing to God, we may become heirs to the kingdom of the heavens, in Christ our Lord himself. To him be the glory and the power, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever, for ages of ages. Amen.

[1] Chrysostom will admit in the course of his commentary on the final phrase here that its sense is far from clear, which accounts for the range of versions, and that it yields only to his key virtue of precision.
[2] Gal 5.24, one of the relatively few scriptural references in this commentary – like Psalm 46 but unlike Psalm 47. This conspicuous difference in style, and others, raise the question of the nature of the commentaries and the circumstances of composition, delivery and recording.
[3] A modern commentator like Dahood will concur with Chrysostom that the meaning of the phrase is "much contested." Whereas the modern might turn to other linguistic data (Ugaritic, of course, in Dahood's case) for light, Chrysostom adopts his usual stance of rationalizing, but not without his equally usual insistence on precision – in the text and in the commentator. And if that does not satisfy, he is prepared to allow recourse to a spiritual interpretation. Normally he would also look for Scripture to support him, as he does with the next difficult reference.
[4] A nice compliment to the Jerusalem of pre-Christian times; cf the closing words of this commentary. The term *didaskaleion* we saw Chrysostom on the previous psalm applying to the venue for these commentaries.
[5] Mic 4.2.
[6] Cf Jer 1.13-14. Chrysostom's approach to this equally contested epithet strikes us as more critical and less dependent on rationalizing. We need not cavil, as De Montfaucon does, at his sense of direction in locating the Persians to the north: they hardly represented a threat due east, across the desert!
[7] Cf 2 Kgs 19.
[8] Vv.4-7.
[9] Chrysostom is being convincingly tentative in his explanation of the description of enemy forces routed in these verses. He thinks the Hebrew

reading of the name of the ancient port city (possibly in Spain) is a relevant datum, though he and his LXX simply transliterate it, and so he has it read aloud for the congregation's benefit: is he sincere in thus flattering a congregation he can fault for their ignorance even of familiar biblical stories, or just indulging in a show of erudition?

[10] "Pride comes before a fall." After presuming to offer his congregation a reading from the original in the previous verse, Chrysostom is now hoist on his own petard. His form of the LXX evidently reads (probably through a copyist's error) "people," *laou*, for "temple," *naou*; but Chrysostom, all uncomprehending, cites the Hebrew *Hecal*, "temple," to support his faulty version! (The congregation probably did not blink an eyelid.)

[11] Cf Jos 2.

[12] Cf Dan 3.29-30.

[13] We are constantly edified by Chrysostom's theology of the Word. Though conscious of his own dignity as a minister of the Word, and appreciative of the gift of the Word in the Scriptures on which he comments, he nevertheless acknowledges the limitations, *astheneia*, of human language as a medium for expressing the divine. The paradigm of the Incarnation helps him remain so unerring in his theologizing, of course, as we have seen.

[14] Vv.12-14.

[15] Cf Ez 37.11.

[16] Hag 2.9.

Psalm 49

For the direction. For the sons of Kore.
Another version, Triumphal.

Hear these things, all nations (another, "Hear this"). *Hearken, all the inhabitants of the world* (another version says, "the East;" another, "the Occident." The Hebrew has *Old*), *both primitives and human beings alike* (another, "both the whole of humanity and each person's children as well"), *rich and poor together* (another, "in unison").[1] The inspired author is now on the point of telling us some great and ineffable truths. I mean, he would not have summoned those in all parts of the earth to listen, nor would he have set up the gallery of the world, were he not about to utter something great and famous and worthy of a gathering of such magnitude. After all, he is no longer speaking as a prophet to Jews inhabiting Palestine; instead, like an apostle and evangelist he extends his address to include all humankind. While the Law, in fact, instructed the nation in one corner of the world, the word of his proclamation resounded everywhere on earth and extended itself to reach as great an area as even the sun touches on. You see, the former was a kind of instruction and introduction, and a ministry of condemnation and death;[2] the latter, by contrast, of grace and peace.

So since he called together the whole race to a hearing, let us too assuredly attend, and see what the psalmist wishes to say, this champion of the whole human race. Even if some are savages, some sages, some undistinguished individuals, do you bid them all attend? Yes, he says. Hence, after opening with *all the nations*, he went on to extend the invitation in the words *both primitives and human beings alike*, inviting all of humanity. Goodness, what remarkable teaching![3] How agreeable and applicable to everyone it is! I mean,

it is surely for this reason that he does not simply invite everyone but bids them heed his words with great enthusiasm and precision. He did not merely say, note, *Hear these things, all nations*, but also *Hearken*. Now, hearkening is nothing other than listening with enthusiasm and a heightened interest. To "hearken" is properly used when someone addresses another directly from ear to ear, exerting oneself and bidding the other person attend to what is said. *Hearken, all the inhabitants of the world.* Even if some people are not included in nations, but are of mixed blood or are scattered as nomads, I summon them also to the hearing.

Note the orator's sagacity. First he awakened their attention, and made them anxious to listen by summoning everyone unexpectedly. Then, after summoning them, he represses their conceit in case they be moved to folly by their great number. There is, you see, particular need for listeners to be in this condition when someone is on the point of making remarks that are of serious import – contrite, restrained, free from conceit and arrogance. So how did he restrain their thinking? By calling their nature to mind. After saying *nations*, note, he added *both primitives and human beings alike.* He mentioned the substance from which came the beginning of our generation, he called to mind the mother common to us all. Why did he say *human beings*? In case anyone, on his mentioning *primitives*,[4] should under the influence of those heathen mythologies think that human beings originally grew out of the earth, according to the myths some concocted, which brought in as well the idea of people grown from seed, he consequently added *human beings*. Your fathers are human beings, whereas for you and them the beginning of your generation is the earth. "Why," then, "will dust and ashes be proud?"[5] Think of your mother, and restrain your conceit; trample on your arrogance, and keep in mind that "you are dust and unto dust you shall return,"[6] and rid yourself of all nonsense. It is a listener of this kind, I require, after all. So compose yourself, so that I may find you fit for acceptance of what is said.

Rich and poor together. Do you see the nobility of the Church? I mean, what else than nobility does it display in making no distinction between members of the congregation on the grounds of status? Rather, it pours out the whole of its teaching evenhandedly,

and spreads a common table for both rich and poor. He first mentioned, note, what unites everyone, their being earthborn and human beings, and demonstrated the commonality of their nature. Only then did he introduce apparent difference and inequality from daily living, and banished it from his speech, addressing everybody in common (our nature, after all, being in common). So I address everybody in common; the world, after all, is the city we have in common.[7] But you dwelt on some difference between rich and poor, and introduced inequality. This too in turn I reject, however, not admitting the rich and despising the poor, nor inviting the poor and rejecting the rich, but both the one and the other. And not simply the one and the other, one first and the other second, or one second and the other first, but both together. Let our assembly be in common, the sermon in common, the listening in common.[8] Even if you are rich, you are born of the same clay, you had the same entry as the poor person, the same birth. And you are a human being, like the poor.

Since, then, the main things and those that count with you are of equal value and esteem, why is it that on the basis of dreams and shadows you puff yourself up and see a difference? There is a commonality of nature, a commonality of birth, of relationship. So why do you introduce external circumstances as a basis of difference? I will not stand for it. Hence I invite you along with the poor person in the words *rich and poor together*. In other situations, admittedly, you may not see rich and poor together – not in the courts, not in palaces, not in shops, not at parties; instead, you see one given prominence, the other scorn, one acting with confidence, the other with shame. "The wisdom of the poor is belittled," remember, "and their words not heeded."[9] The rich spoke, and they were commended; the poor spoke, and no account was made of them.[10] But it is not like that here: in the case of the Church, far from tolerating any arrogance or absurdity, I propose the same teaching to everybody.

See the sagacity of a teacher, how even before he began the address he set the widest compass for his teaching merely from the invitation: by inviting everyone alike, he allowed neither the one to be puffed up nor the other to be scorned. Instead, he let it be seen that, far from riches being good and poverty bad, they are

among factors that are irrelevant and external. And so it makes no difference to me whether you are one or other: I do not see the rich person having more and the poor less. Perhaps, however, someone may ask, "Why on earth is it that, as a human being, sharing the same nature, you think yourself of such importance as to judge yourself to be suitable to become teacher of the world, and to summon them from the ends of the earth? What do you have to say that deserves an audience of that magnitude?" I have something, he says. Listen, in fact, to what he says, after summoning the world, to ensure his message was credible: *My mouth will speak wisdom, and my heart's meditation good sense* (v.3). Another version, "and my heart will hum good sense," and the Hebrew *Ouagith* means this. Do you see how he added his message immediately? I am not speaking about possessions, he is saying, nor about honors, nor about power, nor about bodily health, nor about any other perishable thing. I am about to speak wisdom with precision, a wisdom that has not come to me idly on the spot.

I shall incline my ear to a parable (the Hebrew says *Lamasal*); *I shall solve my riddle to the music of a harp* (another version, "obscure saying;" the Hebrew *Idathi* means this).[11] What is the connection with the previous verses? I mean, now I see a listener in place of a teacher. That is to say, you called them together as though on the point of hearing something useful; but after everyone came and assembled, and you promised to say something wise, you still delivered yourself of nothing, abandoning the role of teacher and taking the place of a listener instead. *I shall incline my ear to a parable*, he says, note. Why does he do this? Very sensibly, and in line with the previous verses. You see, after saying, *I shall speak wisdom*, lest you get the idea of any human statement, and *heart's meditation*, lest you suspect it to be an invention of his, he shows through the following remarks that the words are divine and that, far from uttering anything personal, what he says is what he heard. I inclined my ear to God, he is saying, you see, I heard from him, and what came down from above into my mind I now repeat. Hence Isaiah too said, "The Lord gives me a tongue of instruction for knowing when there is need to speak the word, he supplied me with an ear for hearing."[12] Paul likewise: "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of God."[13] Do you notice that he too was first a listener,

and then a teacher? Hence a different translator said, "my heart will hum." What is the meaning of "will hum"? Will sing praise, will utter some spiritual hymn. If, on the contrary, he says *meditation*, do not be troubled: what he received from the Spirit he meditated on constantly and turned over within him, and after turning it over he then delivered it to the others.

Now, what is the meaning of *to a parable*? The term has many meanings. A parable is a saying, an example, a reproach, as when he says, "You have made us a parable among the nations, a shaking of the head among the peoples."[14] A parable is also a riddle, which many call a question, suggesting something not immediately clear from the words but containing a meaning hidden within, like that spoken by Samson, "From the eater came forth food, and from the strong something sweet,"[15] and Solomon, "You will understand both a parable and an obscure saying."[16] A parable also means a comparison: "He proposed another parable to them, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is like a man sowing good seed'."[17] A parable also means a figure of speech: "Son of man, tell them this proverb: The great eagle, the one with big wings,"[18] meaning by eagle the king. A parable also means a type, or likeness, as Paul also shows in the words, "By faith he sacrificed Isaac when put to the test, the one in receipt of the promises offered up his only-begotten; whence also in figure he received him back"[19] – that is, in type and in likeness.

What, then, does the parable mean to him here? It seems to me to refer to the narration. Now, if he makes his speech obscure and full of difficulty, do not be troubled by this: he does it to stir up the listener, especially since ease leads many into indifference[20] – hence he speaks in proverbs. For Christ also made much use of parables, though explaining them privately to the disciples. The parable, you see, sorts out the worthy listener from the unworthy: whereas the worthy takes steps to find the meaning, the unworthy bypasses it, as happened also in that case. The Jews, remember, were not moved by the difficulty even to the extent of being drawn to ask a question – such was their complete lack of attention to what was said. A sufficient reason to prompt questioning, however, is when something is not clear. Hence Christ did this at that time, and spoke in parables, rousing and stirring them to enthusiasm in listening when

they lost heart and were drowsy. Even this was not sufficient for them to attend, however, whereas the disciples applied themselves, and in their ignorance they persevered for that very reason most of all, that they were ignorant. Hence he also explained the parables to them in private.

For this reason the psalmist too says, *I shall incline my ear to a parable, I shall solve my riddle to the music of a harp.* Now, a riddle is an obscure and puzzling expression; hence he also says elsewhere, "I shall utter riddles from the foundation of the world."[21] For this reason he presumed also to call it wisdom, encouraged by divine revelation; hence he says also *to the music of a harp*, implying the spiritual character of the teaching, the inspiration coming to him from above,[22] and he gives advice in the form of a song, sweetening his message. Do you see the introduction he fashioned? He summoned the world, he abrogated inequality in lifestyle, called their attention to their nature, repressed their arrogance, promised to say something great and noble, denied he was saying anything of his own but what he had heard from Him, hinted there was deep obscurity in the message, thus making them more attentive. He promised to teach us spiritual wisdom, on which he had meditated unceasingly. So let us pay attention, and not pass it by. If in fact the message is wise, a parable, a riddle, there is need of a mind on the alert.

What, then, is the advice, what the riddle, what the parable, what the wisdom he heard from on high? *Why should I fear in the evil day?* he says (v.5). Another version, "in days of evil;" another, "wicked;" the Syriac is *Rha. The lawlessness of the heel will surround me.* Another version, "of my footsteps;" the Hebrew has *Aon akoubbaei isoubbounei.*[23] Do you see how it is a riddle, a puzzle and a dark saying, deep the obscurity? If you do not mind, however, let us first learn which evil day he refers to. Which day, then, is Scripture accustomed to call evil? The day of disasters, of punishments, of crises. As he also says elsewhere, "Blessed is the person who understands the poor and needy; on the evil day the Lord will deliver him."[24] Such, however, is the day ahead for sinners, that fearful, unbearable day. Do you see the basic demarcation of the values that come from on high, and how the verse distinguishes for us which are deserving of fear and which of condemnation?

After all, unless you were to make the most accurate distinction, you would be at a loss, as though immersed in utter darkness and the confusion of your affairs. Unless we distinguish which is to be feared and which abhorred, serious error and serious danger will be present all lifelong. It is, of course, a mark of the highest folly to fear what does not deserve fearing, and to laugh at what it is right to fear. In this, men differ from children, that the latter, insofar as they have a mind not fully developed, are afraid of masks and of people in disguise, yet think it nothing to insult their father or mother; they jump on fire and blazing lamps, yet are afraid of certain noises that betoken no danger. Men, on the other hand, give no importance to these things.[25]

So since many people are sillier than children, he supplies this distinction, and says what should be feared – not what strikes many as fearsome, like poverty, ignominy and disease (these things for many people, after all, are not only fearsome but troublesome and irritating as well), but sin alone. This, you see, is the meaning of *The lawlessness of my heel will surround me.* This, then, is the meaning of the puzzling statement, a strange and intriguing expression. It strikes many people, in fact, as extremely strange and intriguing to say there is nothing to fear in the troubles of life. What, therefore, should I fear, he asks, in the evil day? One thing only, the risk of the lawlessness of my way and my life surrounding me. Now, Scripture is in the habit of calling deceit "heel:" "He who ate bread with me lifted up his heel against me,"[26] it says, remember. Again, Esau said in reference to Jacob, "This is the second time he has supplanted me."[27] This is the kind of thing sin is, you see, deceitful, capable of snatching away. This, he says, is what I am afraid of – sin which deceives me, surrounds me. Hence Paul, too, calls it "enveloping,"[28] implying it is constantly, readily, easily encircling us. In courts herebelow, then, people are afraid of many things – affluence, power, abuse, deceit – but nothing like that there: sin alone is fearsome, surrounding the prisoners on all sides, more dangerous than armies. We must therefore do everything to avoid being surrounded by it and instead, when we see it wanting to encircle us, flee its occasions, as the bravest of soldiers do. If we are ensnared by it, we must quickly burst clear of it, as David also did, cutting through its power by means of repentance; he was surrounded by it, but quickly escaped it.

Those who fear it will never fear anything else; instead, they will mock the goods of this life and scorn its troubles, that fear alone making their mind tremble. Nothing, you see, nothing else is fearsome for the person possessed of this fear, not even death, the very acme of fearsome things apart from this alone. How so? Because it is a passport to hell, because it conveys one to undying punishments. Likewise, once corrected this leads on to the whole of virtue. I mean, consider what an advantage it is not to be puffed up by prosperity, not to be depressed by troubles, not to make any account of present realities, to look towards future realities, to await that day, to live with a fear of that kind. The person afraid only of that, and of nothing else, will be like an angel; there is, in fact, nothing else to be afraid of, if one fears that, as one should fear it – just as the one not fearing it is exposed to many fearsome things.

Those who trust in their power, and boast of the abundance of their wealth (another version, "flatter themselves"). *A brother is not ransomed, will anyone be ransomed? He will not give God a bribe on his own account and the price of the redemption of his soul* (vv.6-8). "How much sense does this make?" someone may ask. A great deal, in fact, logical and closely related to what precedes. You see, his theme had to do with courts and those fearsome trials and the incorruptible verdict; but many people in courts here pervert the course of justice, bribe the judges and escape punishment. So to proclaim the incorruptible character of that verdict and heighten the fear he had spoken of previously, he added this to show that he was right in mentioning one fear to be entertained, the fear of sin, and no other. The course of justice there cannot be perverted by bribery, you see, nor can those offering inducements snatch themselves from hell; patronage and smooth talking do not save you, nor anything else of that kind. I mean, even if you are wealthy, even if you are influential, even if you have contacts, all these things are idle and to no purpose: there each person is either punished or rewarded on their merits.[29] There too, though the man in the story of Lazarus was very rich, his wealth was no good to him;[30] and though the virgins were known to the other virgins, the relationship did them no good:[31] only one thing is looked for there. You, therefore, he says, who trust in your wealth and are clad in your finery, are puffed up idly and to no purpose; into that court, you see, abundance of

wealth will not accompany you, nor the power of influence. Instead, neither relationship nor kinship nor anything else of that kind will have you acquitted. There it is not possible for the one passing inducements or bribes or a man's price to be ever saved.

What, then, is the force of Scripture's saying, "Make friends for yourself from dishonest wealth so that they may welcome you into the eternal dwellings?"[32] Whatever is the meaning of the saying? Nothing contradictory, nor in conflict with the preceding; rather, quite consistent. I mean, here in the present life one ought to make friends by paying out money and expending one's possessions for the needy. He is therefore referring to nothing else than generous almsgiving. So if you arrive there without having done any of this, no one will support you. The friendship of those things, you see, does not support you – only the making of friends from wealth; hence he added, "friends from wealth," for you to learn that your very works will spare you: almsgiving, philanthropy, generosity to the needy. Because, for proof that neither kinship nor relationship is of any benefit apart from works, listen to what the inspired author says: "If Noah or Job or Daniel were to arise, they would not save their sons and daughters."[33] And what can I say of the future, when even in the present life friendship has no purchase power? So how much weeping and lamenting did Samuel do without having Saul acquitted?[34] How much praying did Jeremiah do without redeeming the Jews? Rather, he was chided for praying.[35] And why are you surprised that Jeremiah was of no assistance when it says that even Moses, had he been there just at that time, could not have saved the Jews,[36] since the practice of evil had prevailed and they had nothing of themselves to contribute? How much lamentation did Paul do for the Jews in the words, "Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God is for their salvation?"[37] What, in fact, did his prayer achieve? Nothing. And why do I say prayer, when he even asked to be anathema for their sake?[38] What, then: are the prayers of the saints useless? By no means; rather, they even have great force when you lend your help, too. Thus Peter raised Tabitha to life, not by prayer alone but also by her almsgiving;[39] this is the way the saints came to support of others through their prayers. This is the case here, the place for contests and struggles; there, on the contrary, instead of these things there is only the salvation that comes from works.

Now, in this place he seems to me to be ridiculing the wealthy and the conceited. He did not say, note, "Those having possessions," nor "Those employing influence," but *Those who trust in the abundance of their wealth and boast in their power,*[40] mocking and upbraiding them for trusting in shadows and priding themselves on smoke. *He will not give the price of the redemption of his soul* was well put, too: the whole world would not make the price of a soul. Hence Scripture also said, "What good will it be for a person if they gain the whole world but lose their soul?"[41] Now, for you to learn that not even the whole world is the price of a soul, listen also to what Paul says about other saints: "They went about in skins of sheep and goats, suffering need, tribulation and abuse, the world not worthy of them."[42] The world, in other words, is for the sake of the soul. So just as a father would not choose a house in preference to his son, just so God would not choose the world in preference to the soul; works are needed, and virtuous deeds. Do you want to learn how great the price for our souls? The Only-begotten, intending to redeem us, gave not the world, not a human being, not land, not sea, but his precious blood. Hence Paul too said, "A price has been paid for you; do not become people's slaves."[43] Do you see the greatness of the price? So when you lose what cost so much, how would you be able to acquire it later? "Christ, raised from the dead," remember, "will never die again."[44] Do you see how high the price? Do you see how elevated the soul's dignity? Consequently, never despise the soul, nor make it captive.

He toiled forever, and will live to the end (v.9). A different translator says, "He rested forever;" another, "resting in this age, he will continue living forever." Since, you see, he had spoken of the rich, since he had spoken of the powerful, and had shown that no value came from those sources, he next speaks about those living a life of virtue, about those living a life of difficulty and hardship, to enthuse those practicing sound values. Do not tell me, he says, that he had toil and trouble; consider rather its fruit, that human beings become immortal, immortal life is there for the taking, life without end. So how much better is it to suffer hardship here for a short space and gain everlasting rest than after indulging yourself briefly here to be in pain forever?

Then, to show that the award of prizes and crowns occurs not only there, but even here the beginning of trophies, he added the

words, *He will not see destruction when he sees the wise dying* (v.10). In other words, do not tell me, You mention only future things; here I give you the pledge of future crowns – or, rather, even what is pledged, the prize. How, and in what fashion? Those of sound values, guided by hope of the future, will not even consider death to be death; instead, with the dead lying before their very eyes, people like this will not feel as do most people in reckoning up the crowns, the rewards, the ineffable good things, which eye has not seen nor ear heard,[45] that life lived in company with the angels. So just as a farmer on seeing the grain break up does not collapse and become downcast, but at that time most of all rejoices and exults in the knowledge that the break up is the beginning of a better birth and the basis of a richer crop, so too righteous people, taking pride in virtuous deeds, and looking forward daily to the kingdom, when they see death lying before them, do not become distraught, as many do, are not troubled or upset. They know, you see, that to those who lived a good life death is a change for the better, a journey to a better home, a sprint to the tape.

Now, which wise people does he refer to? Not those really wise, but those thought wise. In my view he refers to those people wise in external matters, ridiculing them also for the reason that though seeming to be wise they were shown to be foolish for having no sound views about the resurrection. When, therefore, he sees those wisdom-seekers perishing, wailing and weeping, and giving vent to lamentations, he will not have the same response but will prove superior to such shafts, guided by sound hope and aware that corruption itself is not the disappearance of being but the loss of mortality and the end of corruption. This death, in fact, does not destroy the body: it wastes corruption, since being remains at any rate, rising with greater glory, but not in all cases. Though resurrection will be common to all, I mean, resurrection in glory belongs to those who have lived an observant life.

The brainless and the foolish will perish alike, and leave their wealth behind to strangers. Their tombs are their homes for ever, their dwellings for age upon age. They gave their names to their lands (vv.10-11). Another version says, "the contents of their houses for ever;" another, "their habitations forever, though they gave their names to lands," which is what the Hebrew *Aleadamoth* says. Do you see how not from future things but also from the things happening here he leads

away from evil and avarice and guides towards virtue, dismissing the mad desire for possessions and calling those hankering after present things mindless, and demonstrating this from real life? I mean, what could be more mindless, tell me, than a person undergoing toil and trouble to amass such things with the result that others indulge themselves in his labors? What could be worse than this vain effort when he passes on a victim of his own sweat and tears while leaving others to enjoy it – not even some relatives and acquaintances, but frequently enemies and foes? Hence the psalmist did not say "To others," but *To strangers he left his wealth behind.* Now, what is the meaning of *The brainless and the foolish will perish alike*? In line with the previous words, he says. Here, in my view, he directs his attention to the ungodly, those hankering after things of the present life and directing none of their thinking to future realities, calling them mindless here too. That is to say, if you believe there is nothing after this, why on earth give yourself such trouble and distress amassing countless possessions from every quarter, putting yourself to such hardship yet not participating in their enjoyment?

Their tombs are their homes forever. He says this in accordance with their supposition. *Their dwellings for age upon age. They gave their names to their lands.* What could be worse than this folly, to regard tombs as an everlasting home, to take pride in them? Many people, at any rate, have constructed tombs in many cases more splendid than houses. I mean, they go to toil and trouble either for enemies or for worms and ashes, outlaying the expense required for this to no purpose. Such, you see, is the attitude of those with no hope in future realities. At this point, however, it occurs to me to deplore the fact that even many of those with hope in the future imitate in this matter those without any hope in the future, building tombs, making splendid monuments and bequeathing their possessions to others, being worse in this regard than those others. I mean, those expecting nothing after this, even though in fact absurd, are nonetheless active about present realities on account of their lack of further expectations, whereas you who are aware of the life to come, human being that you are, and of those good things beyond words, according to that Gospel saying, "Then the righteous will shine like the sun,"[46] what excuse would you have? What defense?

Rather, what punishment would you not rightly incur for squandering everything here on dust, on ashes, on monuments, for the benefit of your enemies, your foes?

They gave their names to their lands. Lo and behold, a type of further folly still, giving their names to buildings, properties and baths, thinking they gain the greatest consolation from the practice, chasing after shadows in place of truth. After all, if you pine after everlasting remembrance, do not put your name on buildings, human being that you are; instead, erect monuments of virtuous deeds, which will preserve your name for you even in the present life and prepare eternal rest for you in the life to come. If you desire and pine after remembrance, I shall teach you the true and clearest way: make virtue your object. Nothing in fact so makes a name immortal as the nature of virtue. This the martyrs prove, the relics of the apostles prove, the memory of those of virtuous life prove. How many kings founded cities, constructed harbors and passed on giving their names to them without their doing them any good other than consigning them to silence and oblivion? Peter the fisherman, on the contrary, did none of these things: after practicing virtue and occupying the most royal of cities he shines more brightly than the sun even after his death. What you do, on the other hand, is ridiculous and shameful. These monuments, in fact, will not only fail to render you famous but will even make you ridiculous, and make everyone gape. Buildings, you see, stand as pillars and trophies of your avarice everywhere, not allowing it in the course of time to be consigned to oblivion.

Human beings, though held in honor, did not understand; they are comparable with mindless cattle, and became like them (v.12). In this verse the inspired author seems to me to be making a bitter lament that the rational being, entrusted also with the kingdom on earth, has slipped to the level of the brute beasts, wasting effort, working in opposition to salvation, chasing after vainglory, practicing avarice, laboring to no good end. The human being's honor, after all, is virtue, pondering future realities, taking every step towards that life, and neglecting the concerns of the present. The life of brute beasts, you see, is confined to the present world; ours, on the contrary, is proceeding towards another and better one, which is also endless. Those people, however, unaware of anything of future

realities, are worse than the beasts. Not those only, however, but as well the ones living a life of corruption, turned into snakes and scorpions and wolves through their wickedness, into oxen through their folly, and into dogs through their shamelessness.

I mean, what could be more stupid, tell me, than those exercised about tombs and monuments, and agape at the assigning of other names? Nothing conduces to remembrance, after all, other than virtue alone – not house, not statue, not family, not anything else of that kind. One of these, after all, is the product of the skill of a builder, one of a sculptor, one the product of nature; your remembrance, on the contrary, comes from no such source. This is the very reason the inspired author calls him irrational: having submitted himself to the yoke of folly, he becomes worse than brute beasts. While one creature is useful and suited to farming, the other subjected himself to ignorance and in that respect became worse than the beast. You see, he had previously mentioned their materialism, earthiness, absurd striving for possessions; and wanting to extend the accusation against such people, he also adduces the favors from God, as the inspired authors are in many places elsewhere accustomed to do. For Isaiah, too, when on the point of accusing them, first mentions the honor done to the Jews by God, writing thus: "I bore children, and brought them up; but they denied me."[47]

So in this verse, to show through one expression the services rendered to the human race by God, the psalmist says, *Human beings, though held in honor, did not understand.* What honor does he refer to? Listen to what he says in another psalm, "You have placed him a little below angels, you have crowned him with glory and honor." Then in explanation of this honor he adds, "You put everything under his feet, sheep and all oxen, even the flocks of the field, the birds of heaven and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the sea."[48] This, after all, is the highest dignity, conferring on them control of all visible things, even though they had never done anything right. Without having yet made them, remember, he said, "Let us make the human being in our image and likeness."[49] Then by way of explaining "in our image," he added, "Let them have control over the fish of the sea and the wild beasts of the earth and the birds of heaven." This puny, three-cubit

creature, so much inferior to the brute beasts in bodily strength, he made superior to them in affinity of intellect, granting them a rational soul, which is a preeminent mark of honor. Through God, in fact, they built cities, navigated the sea, cultivated the land, developed countless skills, subdued savage beasts and, what was principal and greatest of all, came to know God their maker, were guided to the paths of virtue and recognized what is good and what is not. They alone of visible creatures pray to God. They enjoyed revelations, again being unique in that; they came to know many of the secrets beyond words, were instructed in the ways of heaven.

For their sake exists earth, for their sake heaven, for their sake sun and stars; for their sake are the phases of the moon, and the different times and seasons; for their sake the appearance of fruits and crops and such wonderful species of animals; for their sake night and day; for their sake were sent apostles and prophets, for their sake angels were often dispatched on mission.[50] Why must I make mention of so many privileges? It is in fact not possible to reach on all. For their sake the Only-begotten Son of God became man, was crucified and buried, and those awesome marvels occurred after his resurrection. For their sake the Law, for their sake paradise, for their sake the deluge. This, too, in fact, is a great form of honor, their being corrected by kindnesses and punishments both. For their sake the countless dispositions in all previous history. And the judgement to come happens for the sake of the dignity accorded them. Hence Job also says, "What is the human being that you bring him to judgement?"[51] as elsewhere this psalmist himself says, "What is the human being that you are mindful of him?"[52] For their sake, further, the Only-begotten will come to bestow countless goods. Some goods he has already bestowed in baptism, in the mysteries, and in the other stages of initiation, and has filled the earth with other marvels; others, by contrast, he promised to give, the kingdom of heaven and eternal life, to make them his heirs and have them reign with him – hence Paul too said, "If we endure, we shall reign with him."[53]

With all this in mind, then, the inspired author rightly compares to brute beasts those who betray such nobility to wickedness and surrender to their passions. Now, other inspired authors also do

the same thing, intending to make the shameless listener feel some shame from the comparison. One says, "They became lusty stallions,"[54] and another, "The ox knew its owner, and the donkey its master's manger,"[55] speaking more harshly than David. David in fact says, *They are comparable with mindless cattle, and became like them*, whereas the former says that they became more irrational than the beasts, who after all knew their owner: "But Israel did not know me," it says. Elsewhere another wise man, to show that worse than ants are slothful and listless people ruined by laziness, directs them to where they may learn to acquire a taste for work: "Go to the ant, lazybones, and imitate its ways. Without any crops under cultivation, note, nor subject to necessity or overlord, it prepares its nourishment in the summer, and makes generous stores at harvest time."[56] Again, he bids him go to the bee: "Take yourself off to the bee, and learn how industrious it is; its produce is the chief of sweet things, by its labors princes and peasants are brought to good health."[57] Another says, "Your rulers are like wolves of Arabia."[58] Another, "You have sat in the desert like a crow."[59] Zechariah's son says: "Serpents, brood of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"[60] And, again, another: "They hatched adders' eggs, and weave a spider's web."[61] Elsewhere this inspired author himself says, "The venom of asps under their tongue;"[62] and again, "Their anger has the likeness of a serpent."[63] Vice is like this, you see: it brings the person of such nobility and status, even the wearer of a crown, down to the low level of the brutes. Hence also in the present psalm[64] he chose two forms of vice and, leaving the others to the listeners, he stings the victims of them by making a comparison.

After all, what could be more absurd than the people who travel the world idly and to no purpose, bringing mischief on their own head, with the aim of amassing unlimited wealth, not for themselves but for unknown other people, often even enemies and opponents? *They will leave their wealth behind to strangers* was well put. I mean, what could be more stupid, when these people undergo the hardships and the sins involved in amassing it, but leave the enjoyment of it to others? Then, to draw attention to the vainglory accompanying this love of possessions, he stings them with great severity in the words, *They gave their names to their lands.* What again

could could be more irrational than those who entrust their remembrance to precious stones and wood and inanimate material, and depend on them for their reputation? I mean, they dismantled whole fortunes, despoiled widows, fleeced orphans so as to erect a splendid dwelling for the worm and to build splendid trappings for the moth and the mold, thinking their remembrance would be immortal through these things, which are incapable even of controlling their bodies for a moment of time.

This path of theirs is a stumbling block to them (v.13). Which path is this, tell me? Concern about such things, vain effort, intense hunger for possessions, insatiable craving for reputation; ahead of the punishment to come, he is saying, it proves to be here and now a stumbling block and obstacle. No slight stumbling block, therefore, no slight obstacle, no slight impediment to the performance of virtue is this way. He was right to say the way was a stumbling block to them; they shackle themselves, they impede themselves. *And after this they will express satisfaction with themselves.* This is the worst aspect, and the cause of the other evils, as he said. I mean, the ones who are guilty of such sins and mistakes and show such folly congratulate themselves, express admiration, declare themselves worthy of imitation, and are pleased with the results. Yet consider how great the increase in evil desire caused by vice being commended even by those guilty of it. You see, if despite being abused, despite being insulted, despite being disgraced, despite being chastised by the conscience of those sober to the extent possible, being thrashed and hated, it still shamelessly flourishes and is daily on the increase; when there is not only nothing to prohibit it, like accusation, the rebuke of conscience, review of events, repentance for misdemeanors, the sense of shame, embarrassment, grief and lament, but just the opposite – self-praise by the guilty parties, self-congratulation, a judgement of superiority to others on this very score, and praise of the outcome after perpetrating it (this is the meaning, after all, of *And after this they will express satisfaction with themselves*) – how could they not lose their way? I mean, they are in such a frenzy, they are so carried away that, despite the satiety of desire, when they should most of all be ashamed to witness the lawlessness, they pride themselves on it, they glory in it, they delight in their achievement.

Sin is like that, you see: before it is committed, it conceals its appearance, cloaking its loathsome nature under the drunken cloud of pleasure; but after it is committed, and the satisfaction from desire yields somewhat, while the accusation of conscience makes its presence felt by flaying the unmasked thoughts, then most of all its harmful nature comes out into the open. These people, on the contrary, even after having their fill and seeing their wealth amassed, their tombs erected, their useless dwellings built, when they should be contrite and tearful, instead even after that, after their exploits, after completion, their condition is then still worse. Consequently, since the time for action on their part is gone, it then falls to God's intervention. In other words, just as those condemning themselves for the sins they have committed keep at arm's length God's sentence by anticipating it, as Paul too says, "If we judged ourselves, we should not be judged,"[65] in like manner those who are ailing from crimes not repented of, and who though sinning fail to condemn what they have committed earn punishment for themselves from God with great severity.

Since, then, those also who have either stolen others' property or dissipated their own idly and to no purpose instead of spending it on the poor as they should, lavishing it on tombs and worms and moths, not repenting of their crimes but persisting in their incurable ailments, listen to what happens next. So what in fact does happen? They are given over to punishment by God; hence he added, *Like sheep they were sent to hell; death will shepherd them* (v.14). Here under the term sheep he is not suggesting mildness: what could be more savage than those who ignore the naked bodies of the needy and their stomachs wasting through hunger, while decking out their homes for destruction and worm and moth? Rather, he suggests the ease of their destruction, the utter ruin of their downfall, their vulnerability to schemers. After all, nothing could be weaker than the person who lives a life of vice. That will be their fate, too: the manner in which they will be cut down, in which they will perish suddenly, and betake themselves to hell with ease, with facility, unexpectedly, effortlessly, is the manner in which sheep are cut down. This is death – or, rather, their fate is much worse than death: after such an end undying death will take possession of them, and hence it will not be into Abraham's bo-

som they will be seen to repair nor to any place other than hell, the name for retribution, for punishment, for utter destruction. Their end here is vile and despicable, and their sojourn there nothing but punishment. This is the way we, too, customarily speak of those easily lost: Led like sheep to the slaughter. After all, since they lived like brutes, they also die like brutes, with no optimism for the future – and not only that, but that they have come to a bad end.

Death will shepherd them. In these words, in my view, he is referring to death, to the ruin experienced there, to retribution, as it also says elsewhere, "The sinful soul shall perish,"[66] intimating not extinction but retribution. He continues the metaphorical expression: after mentioning sheep, he touched on their shepherd as well. Now, who is this? The poisonous worm, the unending darkness, the inescapable bond, the gnashing of teeth. So see them punished on every side. In life, because they thwarted virtue, because they became slaves and captives of vice, and expended idle and ridiculous effort; in death, because they went to their ruin idly and to no purpose; in the time after death, because they were completely under the control of ruin.

The upright will have dominion over them in the morning. Since many of the more materialistic people and those who surpass stones in lack of sense have no clear or definite hope of future realities, but are agape at present and visible things, he startles such people by means of a riddle. Then after briefly hinting at the future, he next switches his attention to the ignominy and retribution happening to them in the present life, highlighting their vulnerable, vile and despicable condition, and the fact that, were they to become wealthy countless times, to be invested with influence, they would have the role of slaves and attendants of those living a life of virtue. Hence he says, *The upright will have dominion over them in the morning,* that is, promptly and unceasingly, with no need of time or effort or any delay. This, you see, is the way things are: vice is the servant of virtue, is in fear and trembling at it; even if it wears countless cosmetics and adornments, it is nonetheless naked, at war with itself. Of course, we witness the opposite, the vicious dominating the virtuous.

But let us pay no attention to the error of the judgement of the masses: it is a verdict arising from false assumptions. Let us in-

stead discern the very judgement of reality, a right judgement, and you will see it determining the issue. For example, take the case of a wicked master and an honest servant – or rather, if you prefer, let us conduct the discussion by means of another, better example. Take the case of a wicked king and an honest citizen: let us see who is the master of whom, and where the essence of being a master shines through – who controls, and who is controlled. So how will we know? Suppose the king gives the citizen some command that is wicked and full of faults: what in that case should the honest and obedient citizen do? Far from consenting and obeying, he will even try to dissuade the commander from his proposal, even if under pain of death. So who is free: the one who does what he resolves to do, without fear of the king or the one despised by his subject? To avoid having the debate rest on a generalized example, consider the Egyptian woman, wife of Potiphar: was she not queen?[67] Was she not in control of the whole of Egypt? Did she not have the king as partner? Was she not invested with great influence? What of Joseph, on the other hand: was he not a slave, a captive, an acquired chattel? Did she not take up arms against the young man in complete battle array, not entrusting the conflict to another but moving herself to the fray? So who on that occasion was in slavery, who by contrast enjoyed freedom? The one who begged and besought and implored, in thrall not to a human being but to a dastardly passion, or the one who scorned crown, scepter and purple, and all that pomp and circumstance, resisting her machinations? On her rejection did she not go off and fall subject to yet another passion, irrational anger and bloodguilt, whereas he left the field wearing countless wreaths on his head, and in the very condition of slavery demonstrating a far more conspicuous freedom?

You see, nothing is as free as virtue, nothing as enslaved as vice. Hence elsewhere, too, someone says, "A slave who is smart will have power over masters who are foolish."[68] In other words, just as someone who is not free, even though possessing untold wealth, is for that very reason particularly vulnerable to everyone, so too the one in thrall to passions is of more lowly estate than a spider. What about time of war: do we not see such people prevailing? What about business and discussion: do not their proposals hold

up, even if there is no one to obey them? What about the things hereafter: did not the rich man, like a beggar, plead for a drop of water, whereas the poor man, being virtuous and diligent, enjoyed well-being, being accorded the same lot as Abraham?[69] What of the apostles: though bound and scourged and suffering countless hardships, did they not prevail over those treating them this way? Consider, for example, the deep quandary the latter fell into, such that they said, "What shall we do with these people?"[70] They had them in fetters and dragged them before the courts, and took the role of judges and rulers. The apostles, on the other hand, stood in the position of the accused, yet they mastered the others. And everywhere, if you were to study the matter precisely, you would see the virtuous person mastering the wicked, a proper mastery, not the false kind exercised by most people, misconceived and easily challenged, but that other kind, firm and stable.

Their help will be depleted in hell, that is, weakened. Now, what he means is this: not only herebelow will they be easily overcome, with no one to lend assistance, no one to extend a hand, exposed to everyone, but what is even worse, not even there will they have someone to protect them, help them, offer them a hand and console them in their sufferings. For this reason, at any rate, neither were the wise virgins able to help the foolish ones,[71] nor Abraham the rich man,[72] nor Noah, Job and Daniel their sons and daughters.[73] The term *will be depleted*, you see, means will be weak, will be hidden from sight: "What is depleted and grown old," remember, "is nigh to disappearing."[74]

From their glory they were thrust out.[75] What they most of all desired, what motivated them in all their actions and schemes, namely, to enjoy great glory after death, through wealth, through buildings, through tombs, through inscriptions on tombs – from all this, he is saying, they will be expelled, which particularly grieves them to learn of while alive. Buildings like this, in fact, are an accusation of the departed. I mean, even if the body is covered up in the ground, yet the stones give voice, daily accusing their ferocity and shamelessness, proclaiming them as everyone's enemy, forever inviting the passersby to give vent to oaths and accusations and calumnies. So what glory is this, to leave behind an accuser who, far from being silenced, opens everyone's mouth by the mere sight

of it and raises a complaint against its builders before all witnesses and passersby? What could match this folly when they do deeds for which they are punished, of which they are ashamed, of which they are accused, for which even after death they are dug up by many, and for which they are the object of oaths and calumnies and accusations on the part of many, both those with a grievance and those without one?

Yet God will ransom my soul from the hand of hell when he receives me (v.15). After mentioning the wages of the wicked, the dues of sin,[76] he refers also to the rewards of the good. It is customary for both him and the other inspired authors to do this so as to convey a balanced message to the listener from both angles, the punishment for sins and the rewards of virtue. For the consequences of the former, he says, are of this kind: dishonor, futility, folly, ridicule, shame, ruin, death, retribution, unending punishment, insolence, loss of glory and security in both life and death, mockery, accusation, finding no comfort in vice. Our desserts, on the contrary, are quite the opposite: freedom from punishment, liberty of spirit, security, glory, honor. All these, in fact, he refers to in the words, *Yet God will ransom my soul from the hand of hell when he receives me*, by hell here meaning punishment, those unbearable pains. Now, consider how great are the implications of honor, not only in this verse but also in what follows. *When he receives me*, he says, note, then I will see him more clearly than now. I mean, now we walk through faith, not through sight, but then face to face.[77] With the soul ransomed, the body too will share the good things.

Do not be afraid when people become rich or when the glory of their house is increased (v.16). Since this is the case, he says, why do you fear the present? Why does indigence appall you? Why do you fear the affluent? Were you listening to the statement on resurrection, on the inheritance for the good, on the punishment for the wicked? The former, remember, are fixed and unwavering, whereas the latter are like blooms that wither. Hence he bypassed all other things and leapt to the very citadel of vices, lust for wealth; with that demolished, after all, the others will be destroyed as well.

How am I not to fear people of such influence, you ask? Their influence is passing, their strength transient, their prosperity on the wane, their affluence resembles shadows and dreams, like their

money and all their pomp. Hence he added, *Because at their dying they will not take it all with them, nor will their glory go into the grave with them* (v.17), supplying the reason for not fearing what is transient. Death intervened, he says, cut their roots, and the whole tree with its foliage was felled, and their house was vulnerable to all. So like sheep and goats setting upon a fallen tree after its cutting, so too in the case of people with wealth like this: many of their enemies, many of their friends, many recipients of their beneficence are found looting their goods. The one who had it all – cupbearers, chefs, silver and gold beakers, acre upon acre of ground, houses, servants, horses, mules, camels, troops of slaves – passes on alone, with no one for company on the journey, not even taking his clothes with him. The greater the splendor that enveloped him, so much the more lavish the banquet he is providing for the worms, the keener the envy of the gravediggers, and the more frenzied the scheming over the wretched corpse. I mean, the measures he takes to deck himself out the more finely are the means of exposing him to greater outrage at the hands of grave robbers, whom he is thus preparing and inviting.

So what, you ask? He nonetheless puts on a great show herebelow, he prospers to the end. To tell the truth, many do not prosper to the end: they incur great trouble from people plotting and from countless judgements given against them, bereft of their wealth, covered in dishonor, incarcerated. In other words, one day in a chariot, the next in chains; yesterday fawned upon by flatterers, today beset by bailiffs; from smelling of perfume to streaming with blood; from lying on soft bedding to being cast upon the hard ground; everyone's hero turned everyone's fool.[78] But even at the end pomp and circumstance marked his funeral. What good was that to a man who felt nothing of it? Worse the stench, greater the nausea, keener the envy; everlasting the resentment, you see, of his children for the deceased from that vulgar display.

Note the precision of the expression and the intensity of the sentiment: he not only confronts him with his being bereft of companionship on his journey, but even strips him of all his pomp and circumstance herebelow, revealing him not to have riches even when as their owner he was enjoying them. He did not say, note, "when their glory is increased," but *the glory of their house*. All these

things that I enumerated, after all – fountains, walkways and baths, gold and silver, horses and mules, carpets and clothes – are the glory of the house, not of the person living in the house. A person's glory, in fact, is virtue, which takes the journey from here with its possessor. A house's glory, by contrast, itself remains here – or rather, far even from remaining, it disappears along with the house, doing no good to the one who lived in it. It did not belong to him, after all.

Because their soul will be blessed in their lifetime (v.18). After speaking of the rich person and his glory, he moves to treatment of his praise. Since, you see, this is a particular object of interest for the rich – flattery in the market place, attention from the populace, public commendation, tributes teeming with hypocrisy, cutting a fine figure at spectacles, applauded at banquets and in the courts, being on everybody's lips, thought to be conscientious – note how this in turn he prunes away in time. *In their lifetime*, he says, note; that is, this publicity and being spoken well of lasts for this life, but it disappears along with everything else, being impermanent and perishable. Even when it comes from a display put on by the flatterers, after his death it is reversed when the mask of fear is stripped away.

They will be grateful to you when you promote their interests. See how he finds fault even with their benefactions. You flatter and fawn, simulating an attention that is momentary and full of hypocrisy; he for his part, on the contrary, is grateful to you, hiring you to do him favors and paying a high price for it, and then he thanks you. That is what it means, *They will be grateful when you promote their interests.* He did not say, "When you do something useful, when you do a kindness," but "When it suits him, meets his preferences and serves his choices," showing that there is fault on both sides, both from the feigned attentiveness and from the harmful service.

They will pass on to the generation of their fathers, they will not see light forever. Despite their dignity human beings did not understand; they are comparable to mindless cattle, and became like them (vv.19-20). *They will pass on*, or at any rate imitate the jealousy of their fathers, and being from evil stock they will succeed to evil ways. Or alternatively, Unless he does something good, he will be found to have

gained nothing from his wealth; he will leave those before him in the dust until judgement time, and not succeed in seeing the light in keeping with the law of nature. Then he resumes his previous theme in the words, *Despite their dignity human beings did not understand; they are comparable to mindless cattle, and became like them.* The person of this kind, he is saying, the one who dies in this way, who dispenses his possessions improperly, is no different from a brute beast for failing to recognize the dignity he received from God, and resembles the cattle for whom the end of life means only death.[79] May we who have learned these truths and also teach them be delivered from this fate, in Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be the glory and the power, for ages of ages. Amen.

[1] Vv.1-2.

[2] This harsh comment on the Law, after more gracious remarks about Jerusalem in commenting on the previous psalm, Chrysostom finds in his mentor Paul, of course (2 Cor 3.7-9).

[3] One would get an impression of spontaneity in the preacher from such exclamations. The degree to which such impressions are well founded we have discussed in "Chrysostom's Commentary on the Psalms: homilies or tracts?"

[4] Literally, "earthborn."

[5] Sir 10.9.

[6] Gen 3.19.

[7] Cf Acts 17.26.

[8] Chrysostom seems to move from the psalmist's listeners to universal Church practice and then to his own practice as a pastor. In so doing he gives us a brief insight – rare in this commentary compared with some others of his works – into the composition of his congregation. This remark also confirms the impression that the occasion was not a eucharistic liturgy, as the koinonia of poor and rich he is emphasising could have been reinforced with reference to the shared banquet.

[9] Eccl 9.16.

[10] Cf Sir 13.23.

[11] V.4. In this and the previous verse Chrysostom is feeling comfortable enough with the Hebrew to essay some evaluation of the merits of the alternative versions – though he has burnt his fingers before in such an exercise, we have seen.

[12] Is 50.4.

[13] Rom 10.17.

[14] Psalm 44.14. As Chrysostom sees the psalmist changing roles from teacher to listener, he himself moves in the other direction, delivering

unusually systematic instruction on the various meanings παραβολή *(parabole)* can take – proverb, example, riddle, comparison, figure of speech, type – each supported appositely with biblical illustrations. This clarity and conciseness of instruction we can offset against those rambling digressions to be met with occasionally in the commentary.

[15] Jgs 14.14.

[16] Prv 1.6.

[17] Mt 13.24.

[18] Cf Ez 17.1-3.

[19] Heb 11.17,19.

[20] For Chrysostom it is a clinching argument for the utility of parables that they rouse people from that capital sin of indifference, *rhathymia*, towards enthusiasm, *prothymia*. The Jews and the disciples, respectively, are adduced as examples of each. Modern commentators on the parables, of course, also emphasise this element of challenge to the listener.

[21] Cf Psalm 78.2. For the biblical and extrabiblical Wisdom literature, of course, the proverb in various forms was the basic genre.

[22] From time to time in the overall commentary, Chrysostom reminds us of his deep conviction of the inspiration of the biblical authors by the Spirit, which he restates here. He adverts to it at this point from the mention of harp playing, an image employed widely in antiquity, but susceptible of misinterpretation of the author's role as completely passive, like the plectrum of the harp player. In commenting on the opening verse of Psalm 45, Chrysostom abjured such a mechanical notion of inspiration, and surely would not like it implied here (see notes there).

[23] The latter half of the verse is indeed cryptic, as Chrysostom immediately admits, having cited it all in Hebrew; the former not so, and yet he gives us uniquely the Syriac for "evil" (a language possibly as unfamiliar to him as Hebrew – and in fact the form is identical in both languages!), a word which occurs a score of times in the Psalms. So is this linguistic datum just another flourish?

[24] Psalm 41.1.

[25] We are left to wonder whether Chrysostom thinks women resemble men or children in this respect!

[26] Psalm 41.9; cf Jn 13.18.

[27] Gen 27.36. As the etymology of the Greek verb "supplant" (*pternizo* from *pterne*, "heel") is lost on us, so Chrysostom likewise seems unaware of the Hebrew roots of Jacob's name ("he takes by the heel, he supplants") assigned him in the earlier incident at birth, Gen 25.26.

[28] Heb 12.1.

[29] It has emerged before in this work that Chrysostom is well acquainted with the legal and commercial practice of his time.

[30] Cf Lk 16.19-31.

[31] Cf Mt 25.1-13.

[32] Cf Lk 16.9. Chrysostom almost needlessly has got himself into a *crux interpretum* here with his quotation of this difficult verse about the pru-

dent use of ill-gotten gains. A modern commentator on the Gospel like Joseph Fitzmyer would concede he is probably right in selecting almsgiving – a frequent theme of his, and Luke's – as one such prudent use. Chrysostom, however, covers his tracks by promptly suppressing "dishonest."

[33] Cf Ez 14.14,18.

[34] Cf 1 Sam 15.

[35] Cf Jer 14.7-12.

[36] Cf Jer 15.1.

[37] Rom 10.1.

[38] Rom 9.3.

[39] Acts 9.36-41. With his insistence here on the role of "works" in achieving salvation, Chrysostom would seem to be conducting a debate redolent of a later age. The argument reminds us also of his wider discussion of the respective roles of divine and human in this saving process.

[40] A metathesis, predictable in a preacher, of the phrases in the verse as quoted originally.

[41] Mt 16.26.

[42] Heb 11.37-38.

[43] 1 Cor 7.23.

[44] Rom 6.9.

[45] Cf 1 Cor 2.9; Is 64.4. Chrysostom can concede that the people of Old Testament times had only a limited eschatology; but at times, swept away by New Testament thinking, he presumes the psalmist has escaped those limits, as in this psalm.

[46] Mt 13.43. This aberration of his time, the rich squandering their wealth on vain display in place of alleviating the poverty in society, clearly angers Chrysostom and evokes in him a keen observation of current abuses.

[47] Is 1.2.

[48] Psalm 8.5-8.

[49] Gen 1.26.

[50] From being leisurely in conduct of commentary on this psalm, Chrysostom once again becomes rhetorical in his enthusiasm for the dignity of humankind.

[51] Chrysostom, possibly a little swept away with his own rhetoric, may be confusing some part of Job (perhaps 14.3) with the following verse from the Psalms.

[52] Psalm 8.4. Is it characteristic of eastern theology that, in all this litany of the marks of the dignity of the human being, no reference is made to the Fall?

[53] 2 Tim 2.12.

[54] Jer 5.8.

[55] Is 1.3.

[56] Cf Prv 6.6-8.

[57] Cf Sir 11.3, much elaborated.

[58] Cf Zeph 3.3.

[59] Jer 3.2.
[60] The Baptist's words to the Pharisees and Sadducees at Mt 3.7 confused somewhat with Jesus' words to the Scribes and Pharisees at 23.33.
[61] Is 59.5.
[62] Psalm 140.3.
[63] Psalm 58.4 LXX, concluding another of those lengthy and, in this case, wide-ranging miscellanies of texts (some loosely quoted and embroidered) that must have had a scattergun effect on the congregation. One feels Chrysostom gets carried away and loses his precise focus, as preachers can.
[64] Another of the oblique hints that this commentary occurs within a wider series?
[65] 1 Cor 11.31.
[66] Ez 18.20.
[67] It is not often we see Chrysostom conducting such a well balanced and cogent example from real life to make his point, as distinct from immediate recourse to scriptural examples, as he then proceeds to. We certainly get a picture of naked power and stark social divisions.
De Montfaucon notes in connection with the story from Gen 39 that it was customary to apply the titles "king" and "queen" to anyone with power and authority.
[68] Prv 17.2.
[69] Cf Lk 16.19-31.
[70] Acts 4.16.
[71] Cf Mt 25.9.
[72] Cf Lk 16.25-31.
[73] Cf Ez 14.20.
[74] Heb 8.13.
[75] In a case where the text tradition seems particularly uncertain, Chrysostom (possibly feeling the need for haste) is silent on adequacy of translation and variants; or perhaps discretion is the better part of valor. This does not, however, prevent his returning to his theme of lavish and wasteful expenditure by the vain and grasping rich.
[76] Cf Rom 6.23.
[77] An echo of 1 Cor 13.12. As the need becomes pressing for a rapid closure after a lengthy commentary, scriptural reference, from being a staple, becomes a luxury.
[78] Chrysostom may be in a hurry to close; but he is relishing this wonderfully ironic picture of the inglorious fate awaiting the rich fool.
[79] Chrysostom's unseemly haste at this late stage means he has not the time even to rationalize his way through these obscure verses; and he closes with an abbreviated doxology. (Admittedly, v.20 duplicates v.12 – though the preacher fails to mention this.) The congregation must have gone off with their minds in something of a daze, though appreciative like us of the striking presentation of the fate of that person who dispensed possessions improperly, whom the psalm does in fact have in its sights.

Psalm 50

The Lord, God of gods, spoke and summoned the earth, from the rising of the sun to its setting (v.1).[1] The same author also says elsewhere, "God took his place in the assembly of gods;" and again, "I said, You are gods."[2] Paul too: "After all, even if there are many so-called gods and lords."[3] Moses too: "You shall not revile gods;"[4] and elsewhere, "When the sons of God saw the daughters of men."[5] And again the same author: "Whoever curses God will be guilty of sin; whoever blasphemes the name of the Lord will be stoned."[6] And again: "Gods who did not make heaven and earth will perish from under heaven."[7]

Whom, then, does he signify though this term in these testimonies, and whom does he call gods in this verse? The rulers. Hence he also adds, "You shall not revile gods, nor speak evil of the ruler of your people."[8] He also refers to those born of some virtuous forebear: since Enosh, having given evidence of great virtue, was given the name of God, and all his children and the offspring of his brother intermingled, he calls the sons of the virtuous man sons of God. The text says, remember, "They began to be called by the name of God."[9] He refers also to the people of the Jews being honored by this name when he says, "I said, You are gods, and children of Israel."[10] He gives their people that name, you see, out of his own lovingkindness. This is the way that statement also is explained, "Whoever curses God will be guilty of sin" – that is, whoever speaks evil of the ruler commits sin. "Whoever blasphemes the name of the Lord will be stoned" – that is, whoever applies the name of the one who is really God to those who are not. Since, you see, the sin is unforgivable, the punishment on that person is also the harshest. The gods of the Greeks are also referred to here, not in terms of their dignity, nor on account of the name itself, but because of the error of those who were deceived and thus gave

them that name. Hence Paul also says, "After all, even if there are so-called gods," suggesting they are not really gods and do not deserve even the name as far as dignity is concerned.

So, in this verse, whom is he referring to by *God of gods*? Those of the Greeks, it seems to me, not as real gods but as thought to be so by the people in error. Since the Jews were rather materialistic, remember, and not completely rid of idolatry, but hankering after idols and having many remnants of lawlessness, he checks their aberrations by showing that he is Lord also of them. After all, he is Lord even of the demons (I refer to their very being: their attitudes and all their wickedness spring from themselves). Now, it seems to me that this is related to the previous psalm:[11] in this psalm there is a record of reproach and accusation of those in error, whereas there he summons the whole world to listen and here the very elements extending throughout the whole world. The theater and the audience are different here: there the nations, primitives, rich and poor; here heaven and earth, and he introduces the very God of judgement, and delivers the kind of speech given by him to plead his cause against the people of the Jews. Hence there is also need of greater attention on our part. Now, another inspired author also does this, introducing God in the act of judgement, and casting the ravines and the foundations of the earth in the role of judges: "Give a hearing, ravines and foundations of the earth," he says, remember, "because there is a dispute between God and his people, and he will have the issue with the people settled."[12] And again, "I will have my dispute with you settled, and with your fathers."[13] In many cases in the Scriptures you would see this figure, which is particularly striking, and befitting God's loving-kindness: he reveals his ineffable goodness by displaying such wonderful considerateness in being willing to enter into judgement with human beings.

Out of Sion the charm of his maturity (v.2). The phrase has both a prophetic and a literal reference.[14] His charm, in fact, was evident from there even in the Old Testament. I mean, the Temple, the Holy of Holies, all the worship and the living of the old legislation, the multitude of priests, sacrifices, holocausts, sacred hymns and psalmody and everything stemming from it – the type of things to come from this was sketched out ahead of time. But when the real-

ity arrived, it took its beginning from there as well. From there shone out the cross; from there the countless achievements. For this very reason, too, Isaiah referred to the law of the New Testament in writing, "For from Sion shall emerge law, and word of the Lord from Jerusalem, and he shall judge between the nations."[15] Sion, you see, here means the whole region, and the city asociated with it, the mother city of the Jews. From there, in fact, like fleetfooted horses from the barrier, the apostles were dispatched to the whole world; from there they began to perform the signs; there occurred the resurrection, there the ascension, there the prelude and commencement of our salvation, there the ineffable teachings began to be proclaimed. There the Father was first revealed, the Only-begotten known, and the wonderful grace of the Spirit given. And there the apostles took the first steps of preaching about spiritual matters, about the gifts, the powers, the promise of good things to come. Considering all this, the inspired author calls it his maturity. God's beautiful maturity, you see, is his goodness and lovingkindness, and his beneficence to all people.

God will come openly, our God, and he will not keep silence. Do you see how with this prelude he lays bare his message, unveils the treasure, and emits the sparkling beam in the words, "God will come openly." I mean, when did he not come openly? When? At his first coming: he came without a sound, concealing his coming from many people, and escaping notice for a long period. Why do I say many people when, for example, even the pregnant Virgin did not know the ineffable truth of the divine plan,[16] his brethren did not believe in him, and the man who passed for his father imagined nothing particular about him. And why mention human beings? He escaped notice of the devil himself; I mean, had he been aware, he would not have asked that question so long afterwards on the mountain, "If you are the Son of God," and did so once, twice and a third time.[17] Hence too he said to John, who was on the point of disclosing his identity, "For the time being, let it be,"[18] that is, "Keep silent just now; the right time for disclosing the ineffable truth of the Incarnation has not yet arrived, I still want to escape the devil's notice. So keep silent," he said, "this is what is required of us, you see." And when he came down from the mountain, he gave instructions that they should not tell anyone that he was the Christ.[19]

You see, he came that time as a shepherd looking for the sheep gone astray and wanting to hunt down the unruly prey; hence he kept himself out of the limelight. In other words, just as a physician does not prove to be fearsome to a patient all at once, in exactly the same way he did not wish to reveal his identity from the outset, but slowly and gradually. Hence, to indicate this coming of his occurring without fanfare, this inspired author himself says ahead of time, "He will come down like a shower on the fleece, and like a drop falling on the ground." [20] In fact, when he came, he created no din or confusion, he was not shaking the earth, not hurling thunderbolts or moving the heavens, not accompanied by flights of angels, nor dividing the firmament in two and descending from the clouds in that fashion. Instead, it was without fanfare, through a maiden's womb, carried for nine months and born in a manger as an artisan's son, the object of scheming while still in tawdry swaddling clothes, forced to flee with his mother into Egypt. Then, after the death of the perpetrator of such awful crimes, he returned and spent his life moving from place to place, like one of the crowd, clad in humble attire and enjoying even humbler fare, constantly on the move to such an extent as to be weary from the moving. [21]

It will not be in this manner, however, that he will come at that time; rather, it will be so conspicuous that he will need no herald of his coming. Hence in his own words he emphasized his conspicuous presence when he said, "If you hear it said, Lo, he is inside, do not go in; he is in the desert, do not go out. After all, as the lightning comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be," [22] revealing and proclaiming itself. I mean, this happens in the case of lightning, and we need no one to announce it: once it appears, it is obvious to everyone and at the same time. This is what Paul says, too: "Because the Lord will come down in person from heaven with a word of command, with an archangel's call, with a final blast of the trumpet." [23] Now, this was the way the inspired author saw him borne on the clouds, a river sweeping before him, the fearsome tribunal, and the accounts which had to be rendered without fail. Then, you see, then was the time for holding court and giving judgement; hence he appears no longer as physician but as judge. Daniel, for example,

catches sight of his throne, and the river rushing in front of the tribunal, and from the fire everything is shown to him, the chariot, the wheels.[24] When he came in the beginning and at his first coming, however, he did not give evidence of anything like that, no fire, no river, nothing else of that kind; instead, crib and inn, cabin and indigent mother. Here by contrast he gives particular evidence of his unchanging and immutable nature. I mean, he had mentioned him seated on the throne with hair white as wool; so in case you should think in terms of hair and clothing instead of pure and clear fire everywhere, he says, "Fire burned before him, and a storm raged around him."[25] Thus through these figures this author also shows him to be immutable, unchangeable, resplendent, unapproachable. Not stopping at fire, he wishes to present as well the severity of the punishment, and says in addition, "a storm raged." Now, by storm is meant either an unbearable drift of snow overwhelming and overturning everything it falls upon, or a wild blast of winds with the same effect, intolerable to those affected by it.[26]

He will call on heaven above and the earth to judge his people (v.4). Once more he makes mention of the elements, through which countless goods come to the human race, not only for the life and formation of the body but also as a basis for the very knowledge of God. Both beauty and grandeur, after all, the diversity of location, the substances from which these elements take their being and the things that come from them, both those that occur all the time and those that in many cases have their own time – all these bodies he nourishes and shapes, and guides towards the knowledge of the maker. Hence Paul too said, "After all, from the creation of the world his eternal power and divinity, though invisible, have been understood and discerned through the things he has made."[27] And again, "Since, after all, in the wisdom of God the world did not know God through wisdom,"[28] that is, through the wisdom apparent in created things, constituting as they do no little instruction but even the very greatest and clearest. As well, what each day is done by them, even if seeming to happen as a consequence of nature, nevertheless in itself proclaims the Creator. The Creator is the Lord of nature, you see. Now, do not be surprised if he directs his discourse to the Jews in speaking of the whole of creation. This is the way, remember, Paul too speaks: "Anger and rage, tribu-

lation and hardship for every human being doing evil, Jew first and also Greek."[29] And again, "All who sinned apart from the Law, you see, will also perish apart from the Law, and all who sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law."[30]

Assemble for him his holy ones, those who have made a covenant with him on sacrifices (v.5). Why on earth does he here call holy those whom he is about to accuse and about to condemn? To heighten the accusation and to give the punishment deeper significance by lending it importance. This is the way we behave, too: when we see people offending, we want to touch them more profoundly, so we summon them using titles so as to lend our accusation a more serious note, saying, "Call the deacon or the priest." So since these people, too, bore the appellation royal priesthood and people set apart,[31] and set great store by it, on that basis he also teases out the vast extent of the accusations. *Those who have made a covenant with him on sacrifices.* Although they had perpetrated countless evils and had participated in such awful forms of wickedness – thieving, giving free rein to greed, killing, committing adultery, mixing blood with blood – they thought they were achieving wonders, fulfilling the Law and the covenant, as long as they sacrificed sheep and calves. So to reproach them on that score and to satirize them, he says, *Those who have made a covenant with him on sacrifices*, that is, those who consider that it suffices for their salvation to sacrifice the bodies of brute beasts.

The heavens will report his righteousness (v.6). Again at this point he wishes to show his righteousness to be famous, resplendent, clear, beyond dispute, openly confessed; so he introduces the invisible elements proclaiming it, employing the same figure he had used before. *Because God is judge*: According to each his due, he is saying. It was not idly, you see, that he cited his judging at this point, but to indicate both that he is righteous and that he makes this attribute available to others. I mean, in the case of God the word *judge* stands for "righteous," as Paul also applied it in saying, "For how will God judge the world?"[32] This in particular is the function of judgement, you see, this in particular the function of a judge, not simply to give a verdict but to give it justly. Now, Jews will be judged, both those of that time and those who later broke the law in the New Testament: the former have both nature and Law to accuse them, whereas the latter have along with these

things what has been done for them by Christ as well. I mean, what could they say, or what explanation could they offer, for not coming to faith? Pay attention to what is said, however, I beseech you, so as to be able to put paid to those who speak in opposition. After all, it is better for them to be overcome by us and put right here and now than for them to pass on in the belief they have prevailed, only to have sentence passed on them by the whole world's judge. [33]

What, then, could the Jews say to explain why they killed Christ? What charge small or great could they bring? That he made himself God, they say. In fact, these were not their words at the time of the crucifixion, but some others: they did not say, "He who makes himself God," but "He who makes himself a king is no friend of the emperor." [34] In fact, frequently they wanted to have him installed as king, but he fled. But, they say, before this they accused him of making himself God. What of it? I mean, had he done so falsely and wrongly because not being so, the accusation would have had force; but if rightly, they should have adored him, not crucified him. Accordingly, let us see whether, while not being really God, he made himself God, that is, demonstrated and proved it. So from where are you prepared to learn this: from events of that time? From events of this time? From events at the time of his birth? Who, then, was ever born of a virgin? Who gave evidence of such a bright star? Who brought Magi on such a journey, not from necessity and force, but from conviction and revelation? Do you see the whole of creation acknowledging its Lord? Nature is the first to concede, offering no opposition or resistance by saying, "I give no exemption from birth pangs, I have no knowledge of the way to bring forth a child from a virgin's womb, I do not know how to make someone a mother without intercourse." Instead, it changed its character and surpassed its limits; it recognized its Lord, you see. Again at his birth angels were in attendance, revealing that the one who is in heaven was on earth; earth became heaven for the reason that the king was here. The Magi arriving from such a distance bent the knee; though the child lay in a manger in Palestine, those from an alien land paid the degree of honor and respect appropriately offered to God.

Perhaps, however, they will not accept these, and look for other signs, those affecting the present generation. Yet we are not short of these, either. Truth is like that, you see: it is lavishly provided

with reasons to support it. I mean, in this regard, too, they have not a semblance of opposition to offer. If, for example, you were not present when he was born of a virgin, you ought to have believed the words of the inspired author, "Behold, the virgin is pregnant, and will bear a son, and they will give him the name Emmanuel."[35] If you were not present when he travelled the earth clad in a body, and the Master lived with his servants, get in touch with Jeremiah, and he will talk to you in these terms: "This is our God: no other will be compared to him. He found the whole way to knowledge, and gave her to his servant Jacob and Israel his beloved. Afterwards she appeared on earth and lived with human beings."[36] On all other matters as well, you will see the inspired authors, whose books to this day you turn up and scrutinise, clearly proclaiming everything as a basis for this.

The polemic against them, however, has frequently been mounted by us and will be in the future; but for the time being let us keep to our theme. *The heavens will report his righteousness, because God is judge.* In this verse he seems to me to refer to his righteousness, his generous providence, his lovingkindness towards even them, his multifaceted and manifold plan for all human beings[37] – through creation, through the Law, through grace, through things seen, through things unseen, through the inspired authors, through the angels, through the apostles, through punishments, through blessings, through threats, through promises, through the pattern of history.

Listen, my people, and I shall speak to you, Israel, and bear witness against you (v.7). Note once again the fairness and gentleness right from the outset: like someone saying to another person fearful and upset, If you listen, I shall speak, if you attend, I shall talk, so too the Lord to his slaves, If you listen to me, he is saying, I shall speak. They were lazy and recalcitrant, after all, and gave not even the slightest attention in a calm manner to the reading of the laws. To indicate this an inspired author living in Persia said, "I shall be like music from a sweet-sounding harp to them."[38] They constantly forbade the prophets to prophesy[39] – in fact, they even kept rejecting them because they seemed a nuisance. A king is seen to deliver this threat to a prophet, forbidding him assemble the people.[40] *I am God, your God.* The repetition is not without point: since he was

speaking to those deprived of sense, hearing and understanding, he develops the theme of his lordship, with this point making an excellent beginning to his later treatment, and showing that they owe their freedom to him and would be right to discharge their debt like slaves to their master, like created things to their creator, like beneficiaries of the greatest kindness and recipients of the highest honor.

Not for your sacrifices do I censure you; your burnt offerings are constantly before me (v.8). On this score the other inspired authors levelled their accusations, remember, that they had bypassed the more important element of virtue and were resting their hope of salvation in these things. They were on the point, you see, of alleging in their defense this very claim: We offer sacrifices; we sacrifice burnt offerings. I have not come to pass judgment on these matters, however, he says, nor to charge you with neglecting the other things. Isaiah by contrast touches their hearts in an even more vigorous manner in the words, "What does the vast number of your sacrifices mean to me? I have had enough. Burnt offering of rams, fat of lambs, blood of bulls and goats I have no wish for. I mean, who looked for this from your hands?" [41] Yet many are the words spoken about sacrifices, whereas the law about them was passed not because his wish was preeminently for such things but because he was showing considerateness for their limitations. Jeremiah also says, "What good to me is incense you bring from Sheba, or cinnamon from afar?" [42] And all the inspired authors, you might say, claim this is of no value. Hence the psalmist himself also makes his beginning by saying, *I am God, your God*, suggesting by this as well that this style of worship was unworthy of him. God should be worshipped, after all, not with fumes and smells but with an impeccable lifestyle, not bodily but of the mind. The demons of the foreigners were not inclined this way, however; rather, they even looked for these things. A poet of the Greeks even seems to be suggesting as much in saying, "It is by the will of the gods, you see, we obtain this portion." [43] But our God is not like that: whereas those gods thirsted for human blood and in their desire to lead them into this bloodguiltiness constantly made such demands, our God by contrast wanted to remove them gradually even from the slaughter of brute beasts and so employed this considerateness in allowing sacrifices so as to abolish sacrifices.

I will not accept young bulls from your house, nor goats from your flocks. Because to me belong all the beasts of the forest, cattle in the hills and oxen. I know all the birds of heaven, and the beauty of the meadow is from me (vv.9-11). See how little by little he raises the minds of earthlings upwards, opening up their narrow viewpoint and showing that in giving this command he had no need of anything and in legislating for it he did not approve of it. After all, had I wished to be worshipped in this fashion, he is saying, possessing everything under the sun as I do and being myself creator of all things, I would have arranged for plentiful sacrifices to be made in my honor. Then in mockery and ridicule of them so as to make the accusation more piercing, he added, *If I were hungry, I would not tell you: to me belong the world and its fullness* (v.12). You see, since he allowed these things so as gradually to draw them away, whereas they persisted in their vile behavior, gaining no great profit from this considerateness,[44] he accordingly addresses them in even more materialistic and human fashion in the words, *If I were hungry, I would not tell you*, that is, Not that I am hungry (God, after all, does not feel hunger or weariness), and if I wanted to be worshipped with these things, I would not be wanting for countless sacrifices and burnt offerings. I mean, everything is at my disposal in great abundance, and though Lord and Master of everything I am ready to accept from you what is mine so as to win you over to love of me by this path and separate you from association with profane rituals.

Then once more to lead them up to more elevated thinking, he says, *Surely I do not eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats?* (v.13). I do not require even human beings to do these things, he is saying; rather, I prescribed the severest penalty for those who consume blood.[45] How, then, would I be likely to be in need of blood after discouraging my servants from such consumption? So having rejected all such practices and shown them to be unbecoming to him, and after combining accusation with ridicule, he did not stop at that point. Instead, he shows another manner of sacrifice, which is the best form of worship in leading them away from what was of no benefit to what had the capacity to apply correction to their wounds. After completing that advice, you see, he says, *Sacrifice to God* (v.14). What form of sacrifice, he asks? Bloodless. This, in fact, is the sacrifice particularly fitting to God. Hence after saying, *Sacrifice to God*, he added *a sacrifice of praise*, that is, of thanks-

giving, sacred hymns, giving glory to God in action. Now, what he means is something like this: So live as to render glory to your Master. This is what Christ also taught us in saying, "Let your light shine in people's sight so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."[46] Praise, in fact, is nothing other than commendation, glory and blessing. So let your life be of such a kind as to bless your Master, and you have performed the perfect sacrifice. Paul, too, looked for this sacrifice in saying, "Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God."[47] And again this same inspired author says elsewhere, "I shall praise the name of God with a song, I shall extol him in praise; it will please God more than a young bull with horns and hoofs."[48]

This was the way that Job, too, offered sacrifice despite those dreadful afflictions beyond the capacity of nature, uttering these words, "The Lord has given, the Lord has taken away; as seemed good to the Lord, so has it happened. Blessed be the name of the Lord forever. Discharge your vows to the Most High."[49] Here he is referring to supplications, urging us to persevere in prayer and to discharge promptly what we promise. "Discharge" was well said: after a promise the thing becomes a debt. Thus Hannah discharged the very great debt her son represented.[50] So if you in your turn promise alms, a temperate life, something of the kind, hasten to discharge the promise. Now, if you were to be precise about this and had promised nothing, a life of virtue would still be a debt you owe. Christ also indicated this in saying, "We have done what we ought to have done." And yet he was telling the parable of the slave who was given the very light task, not to go to rest but to come in and wait at table.[51] And some other composer says, "Do not delay in discharging your vow."[52] Did you make a promise? Discharge it in case death comes upon you and forestalls you. How does that affect me, you ask? I am not in control of my life. For that reason you should not delay, you see, when you consider the uncertainty of your passing, and the fact that you are not in control of your life and your leaving here. So what you thought to be an excuse is an accusation: your failure to discharge your debt was due not to your death but to your procrastination and delay.

Call on me in the day of your tribulation, and I will deliver you, and you will glorify me (v.15). Do you see the recompense of great generosity? So what could equal such lovingkindness when he gives us

rewards even for virtue, rewards much greater than the effort, given too at the very right moment? Why, you ask, did he say, *Call on me*? Why does he wait to be called by us? Because he wishes to achieve a closer relationship with us and a more ardent love for him by giving and calling and receiving. Virtue, you see, brings us into relationship with God, and the recompense has the same effect; prayer likewise promotes this relationship. Hence he says, "Give to me, and I shall give to you." Now, in the giving you also receive: he for his part has no need of your gift. And so even if you prove to be gentle, temperate and chaste, far from adding anything to God you made yourself conspicuous and more virtuous; nevertheless, he apportions you great rewards and laurels for this as though you were of help to him. And even before those laurels you enjoy no little satisfaction in being the possessor of a clear conscience, buoyed up with sound hope. Now, he mentions here the day of tribulation, not days of disasters nor of mishaps but the fact that even if sin mounts an attack, even if the devil besets you, bringing on evil desires, you will enjoy much assistance. *And I shall deliver you, and you will glorify me.* Again in these words he is not speaking out of any need of glory from us (how could he, after all, being the God of glory?), but so that the recollection of his kindness may arise through the hymn of thanksgiving, and our attitude to him become more fervent, and that first and foremost we may receive great happiness.

You would not exceed the bounds of propriety, on the other hand, if you were to say that in this verse he is calling a day of tribulation the day to come, it being unending tribulation, after all. In this life, you see, death comes to solve our problems, we have friends to console us, an end to look forward to, and in many cases as well an expected change in circumstances develops, the passage of time soothes the suffering of the spirit, and our near ones have their troubles. I mean, having sufferings in common and seeing many similar cases seems to be a great consolation to many people. In the next life, by contrast, it is nothing like this: there is no one to console us, everyone is bereft of friends. Passage of time does not soothe the pangs (how could it, the flames constantly besetting us?); there is no hope of release, the punishment being eternal; there is no prospect of death, the punishment being undying and the

bodies undergoing punishment being undying. Instead, there is not even what seems to bring comfort to many, the sight of others in punishment. I mean, for one thing, it is impossible to see those who are punishing, darkness throwing a pall over the eyes like any veil; again, the extremity of the pain does not allow us to gain any sense of consolation. At any rate, the rich man found no grounds for consolation from that, nor did those gnashing their teeth.[53]

But to the wicked God said, Why do you tell of my righteous deeds? (v.16). Do you see the well-fashioned lyre, the harmonious harp, yielding perfect harmony from different sounds? This, you see, is the thought which it is possible to find contained in the apostles and in the other inspired composers of the Old Testament;[54] Paul too speaks this way, showing even on his own account that there is nothing to be gained by teaching others when you do not put yourself in first place to be taught. You see, since they were self-satisfied on the score of their sacrifices as also for having the Law and styling themselves teachers of others, Paul showed that they reaped no great benefit while themselves remaining untaught, and upbraided such people severely in the words, "You, then, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? While abhorring idols, do you rob temples? While boasting of the Law, do you dishonor God by transgression of the Law?"[55] Hence he said also about himself, "I am afraid lest somehow while teaching to others I myself may become a reprobate,"[56] dispelling the conceit of those who were self-satisfied on the grounds of the teaching of the word, whereas they were bereft of virtue. Now, this theme he treats of differently in directing himself to Jews when he says, "I mean, when the nations, though not having the Law, perform the works of the Law instinctively, they are a law to themselves, despite not having the Law;" and again, "It is not the hearers of the Law, you see, who are righteous in God's sight – rather, the doers of the Law will be justified."[57] And the inspired author in the Old Testament: "Those who have the Law in their keeping had no knowledge of me;" and again, "To no purpose have they become a false reed for scribes." Why on earth? "Because turtledove, swallow and field sparrow knew seasons for their coming, whereas my people did not know my judgements."[58]

Now, this author is saying not only that those who fail to practice virtue gain nothing from teaching others but disqualify themselves for their position. I mean, if the guilty party in civil courts is punished with the ignominy of silence, how could anyone guilty of sin have a voice in public teaching? The classroom is more important than the court.[59] In the latter, after all, those for punishment pay the penalty, whereas in the former everything is calculated not to punish the guilty but to correct the guilt through repentance. And in the royal halls no one would be appointed an interpreter of the king's decree if convicted of a corrupt life. In other words, why do you tell of righteous deeds and teach others while actually doing the opposite, your life at variance with your words, and turning off some people prepared to pay heed? In fact, your teaching in word is not so influential as your discouragement in deed. Hence Christ also commended that teacher who gave evidence of well-rounded teaching by means both of actions and of words: "Whoever keeps my commandments and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven."[60]

Consequently, let your life produce a faultless sound reinforcing your teaching; even if your speech gets in the way, you will sound clearer than a trumpet both to those present and to those at a distance. This is the way heaven tells of the glory of God,[61] not with open mouth, not with moving tongue, not with breath proceeding from below, but with beauty of appearance referring the observer to admiration of the creator. What beauty of appearance is, then, in that former case in reference to heaven, let virtue be here in the case of your soul. If, on the other hand, you are not above reproach and have countless critics, your conscience above all, and you are anxious to take possession of your teaching chair, it will be your own vices rather than others' that will accuse you when you make accusations about vices. *And recall my covenant on your lips?* That was well put, *on your lips*: the heart is bereft of fruits from that source, the lips move idly, to the condemnation of the speaker. Yet if you were to scrutinize the mind, you would find great turmoil there.

On the contrary, you hated learning, and thrust my words behind you (v.17). By *learning* here he means the teaching of the Law, which educates the soul, expels evil, and sows the seed of virtue. How, then, do you put it into practice and sow the seed amongst others

when you yourself do not have it in fact? *You thrust my words behind you*, he says, note: not only do you not show any benefit from the teaching of the Law, but even what you have by nature you have mutilated. The reasoning for what should be done and should not be done is set within us by nature; but you rejected it and had no recollection of it.

If you set eyes on a thief, you associated with him, and you threw in your lot with an adulterer (v.18). Since, you see, it is impossible to find a person completely sinless – hence someone also said, "Who will boast of having a pure heart? Or who will be confident of being free from sin?" [62] And Paul, after saying, "I am not aware of anything on my conscience," added, "but I am not deemed righteous for that;" [63] and, "Now, on opening their own mouth the righteous become their own accusers" [64] (of their own sins, clearly). So in case anyone should be in a position to say, "If all are in a state of sin, and yet he bade no sinner tell of his righteous deeds, who is there to tell of them?" So in case anyone should say this, he lists the types of sin type by type. "There is sin that is mortal," [65] remember, as Eli also remarked, "If you a sinner commit sin, the priest will pray for you; but if you sin against the Lord, who will pray for you?" [66] In the Law some sins have no remedy, so that they are even punished by death, whereas for others there is rapid relief, as Christ also said in the New Testament, "If your brother sins," (the text says) "have it out between the two of you in private. But if he does not listen, take as many as two along with you. If, however, he does not listen even to them, let him be like the heathen and tax collector to you." [67] Yet in another place when Peter asked, "If my brother sins against me, how many times should I forgive him?" he got the response, "As many as seventy times seven times," [68] whereas in the previous case he betrays the greatness of the offence after two exhortations, and imposes no obligation to show further patience. So? Is one case in conflict with the other? Far from it: he means "seventy times seven times" provided there is repentance. I mean, how would you forgive the person who neither admits the offense nor repents of it? By seeking remedies from the doctor, after all, people also admit their wound.

Who, then, is the sinner of whom Scripture speaks here? Let us listen with precision: [69] he describes him in the words that follow: *If you set your eyes on a thief, you associated with him, and threw in your*

lot with adulterers. Your mouth gave free rein to evil, and your tongue wrapped itself around trickery. You sat down to malign your brother, and put obstacles in the path of your mother's son (vv.18-20). Do you see the shades of wickedness as though in a painting, and the way evil people turned into wild beasts through their wickedness, betraying the nobility of nature? Far from approaching the painting idly, therefore, let us examine it precisely in detail. *If you set your eyes on a thief*, it says, *you associated with him*. This is the cause of every vice; this it is in particular that overturns virtue, that enfeebles many people's zeal for what is noble in cases where, instead of censuring sinners, some rejoice with them. This is no less harmful than sinning. Listen at any rate to what Paul says: "They not only practice that but are also in sympathy with others who do so."[70] Now, this is no slight sin, rejoicing with the wicked, even if not actually practicing wickedness. I mean, whereas people may quote necessity in causing poverty, even if the pretexts are unconvincing, what excuse do you have for commending what has happened while not even gaining any satisfaction from it?[71] Perhaps those people will even repent; you for your part, however, slam the door in their face, remove the remedy, and undermine such important change of heart, on every side blocking the refuge of their journey to repentance. When, then, they see you, free from sin as you are but obliged to reprove them, not only failing to reprove them but even concealing their sin, and not simply concealing it but even becoming an accomplice, what view will they take of themselves, what view of their exploits?

Most people, after all, do not simply give a verdict on their behavior from their own judgement, but are also corrupted by the support of others. If sinners see everyone opposed, they believe they have committed some great crime; but if they see them not only showing no anger or irritation but exhibiting tolerance and joining forces with them, the tribunal of their conscience is then corrupted because the verdict of the majority supports their corrupt attitude. So what crime will they not attempt? When, on the contrary, will they condemn themselves and give up sinning unscrupulously? Hence it is essential that, in the case of people committing sin, they condemn themselves (this, you see, being the path to refraining from wickedness), and even if not practicing good,

commend the good. The path to performance, after all, is willingness. Yet in this case, since there have been accomplices in crime, it is appropriate to apply the goad with great severity. After all, if evil flourishes to this extent even when reproved, and virtue, even when commended, has difficulty summoning its practitioners to the effort required, what would happen if these conditions did not apply?

You could frequently see this realized even in the ranks of priests; but if it is shocking in the case of disciples, much more so in the case of teachers. What behavior is this, human being that you are? Law is transgressed, discretion despised, so many faults committed by one of those in holy orders, heavenly things made earthly – and are you not horrified? The inspired author, on the other hand, even summons the invisible elements themselves to a vast lament in common for evils committed in common, saying, "Heaven was appalled and earth horrified beyond measure."[72] And again, "Carmel will lament, wine will lament, vineyard will lament."[73] Even inanimate things lament and grieve and are vexed with their Master – and you, the rational being, are you unmoved? Do you not reprove, do you not become a harsh avenger of God's laws, but even turn accomplice? What excuse would you have? Surely God has no need of an avenger? Surely he does not require assistants? He does, however, wish you to be his minister in this to prevent your falling into the same faults by proving more restrained in face of another's irritation so as to demonstrate thereby your loyalty to God. You see, when someone else sins but you overlook it, and do not take issue with it and show your hostility, you render your own soul more indifferent and prone to falling, and in particular you often cause it to fall into the same sins. To that person, on the other hand, you cause no little harm with your uncalled for leniency, making their chastisement harsher in future and encouraging them to be more indifferent about the present.

Now, this is true, not only of theft, but also of every sin; he cited this as the last of sins, however, for you to know that the person who has no excuse in this matter will be far less likely to enjoy this relief in another. Listen, at any rate, to what he goes on to say: *and you threw in your lot with adulterers*, moving on to what is worse. The other sin was far less serious than this, you see. Someone made

a comparison of these sins in speaking this way: "It is not surprising if a thief is caught in the act: he steals to assuage his hunger."[74] Consequently, if this is unpardonable, much more so adultery. In this verse, however, he speaks of fornication as adultery. So if you see someone in your company who is a fornicator approaching the sacraments, say to the person serving in the administering of them, "So-and-so is unworthy of the sacraments, put a stop to his unhallowed hands."[75] After all, if they are not worthy even to tell of God's righteous deeds, consider the extent to which punishment will reach, not only for him but also for the person masking his guilt, when he even puts his hands on the holy table. The psalmist did not say, note, "You committed adultery," but *you threw in your lot with adulterers.*

Good heavens! What terrrible evil comes from veiling the rottenness of others, for instance where he says that person is a sharer in the punishment for sin, and is no less guilty than the other. That person may, for example, claim the excuse of passion, even if it is not a valid excuse, like hunger in the thief's case, whereas this is not true of you. So why on earth do you, who enjoy none of the satisfaction, become a sharer in the punishment and an accomplice? This is precisely the reason why judges in other places punish not only the culprits but also some of their slaves if they see them aware of the crime; in betraying them their masters willingly drink their blood and taste their flesh, and reckon their responsibility for the affair no less than that of a partner in adultery. Those who fail to lift the veil, you see, have personally given greater credence to what is concealed; they have abused the wronged husband along with the adulteress and adulterer.[76] I mean, had they spoken out in advance, had they revealed it, they would have scared off the catch. As with those who set snares and spread snares and sit about waiting for their intended prey, keeping every lure concealed from every side and not allowing any noise to be made or anything else likely to scare off the prey, just so in this case too, if you are idly placed near a trap set by the devil and are aware of an adulterer on the point of falling into it, and yet cause no alarm or excitement, then you most of all are the cause of his ruin. In other words, do not give me that plea betraying indifference, "What concern is it of mine?" It is a "concern of mine;" after all, it is a concern of yours at

the time when you find your interests involved in what happens to your neighbor. Hence Paul too said, "Let no one seek their own advantage but the advantage of the other."[77] For you to find your advantage, he is saying, seek the advantage of the other.

Your mouth gave free rein to evil, and your tongue wrapped itself around trickery. You sat down to malign your brother, and put obstacles in the path of your mother's son. In other words, do not say, I am doing this out of love of my fellows: what sort of love is that, failing to prevent those about to fall into the pit and not holding them back? Indulging in unlawful pleasure? Ignoring the person drinking a poisonous draught? Not even this could you claim, however. I mean, to prove that this proceeds not from love but from lethargy and sluggishnes and indifference, answer me this: how is it you make allowance for the wrongdoer yet speak evil of your brother when wronged? How is it you plot against the one who has given no offence and committed no fault? See evil reaching to the sky on both fronts. The one who is drunk with desire you take no action to stop drinking and gain sobriety, whereas the one who has done no wrong you punish. *You sat down to malign your brother, and put obstacles in the path of your mother's son*, remember. Do you see how in the course of the narrative he heightens the accusation. The man who was delivered by the same mother, he is saying, who shared the same womb, who partook of the same house and table and victuals, who had the same beginning to his existence, who grew up to maturity like you – is this the man you speak evil of, and not simply speak evil of but practice your wiles on? This, in fact, is the meaning of *you put obstacles in his path.* If, however, you ought not speak evil of the one who shared your natural birth-pangs, much more is this true of the spiritual. So do not allow the one on the point of sinning to fall, nor slander and abuse the one who has not wronged you. I mean, envy is one thing, indifference another: to trip up the one about to fall is indifference; to topple the one standing securely is envy.

See how he refers not simply to the accuser, but to the one who discharges this role with deceit and relish. *You sat down to malign your brother*, he says, remember. Cain, in doing away with his brother, removed only one from the present life; these people, on the other hand, bring down countless numbers in speaking evil of

them, and themselves the first. They harm not only the one they accuse, you see, but others as well – or rather only those admitting it. I mean, the one who is falsely accused not only is not injured but even receives the highest reward. That is to say, it is not the one who suffers evil but the one who perpetrates it who deserves punishment; so too with the one who delivers the abuse, not the one who is the object of it, provided the latter does not provide the occasion for the accusation. So let it not be our concern to avoid being spoken ill of (this, in fact, is beyond our control; Christ's verdict also says, "Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you")[78] but to avoid providing the occasion. Those anxious to be spoken well of by all, you see, in many cases lose their soul, loving human glory, devoted to those they should not be, appeasing those they ought not, so as to buy their favor. Likewise those who are scornful of being spoken ill of by all lose their soul as well. I mean, as it is beyond one's control for the virtuous person to be spoken well of by all, so not to be spoken ill of by all is beyond the control of those who frequently provide many occasions of being spoken ill of. If, on the contrary, there are those who accuse you when you inadvertently provide an occasion, the reward will then be greater for you, as happened also with the apostles and with those noble men.

But this too should be acknowledged, that even if someone accuses you on a matter on which your conscience is clear, you should not on that account scorn the accuser for the harm done, but take every step with due caution to remove even the unreasonable complaint. For this reason Paul too, where money was concerned, sent many people to convey nourishment to the needy, and gave the reason in the words, "in case anyone should find fault with us for the generous gift we are administering in your regard."[79] Noticing, you see, that they were likely to take serious offense, he did not ignore or scorn them; instead, since it was in his power to remove the offense, he even took into account ahead of time the position of those taking offense. Again in another place he says, "If food is a problem for my brother, I shall never eat meat in case I prove a problem to my brother."[80] Admittedly, this was a matter of no moment; all the same, if it causes a problem, he is saying, even if it is a cause of no harm to me, I will not ignore the salvation of

those for whom it is a problem. In other words, if the harm is more important than their salvation, ignore the one finding a problem; if not, do not do it. Let this, you see, be a general yardstick and principle in teaching when to ignore the one with a problem, when not. For example, the Jews had a problem in Paul's not observing the Law, and hence countless numbers turned away and became lax in the faith. So what did he do? In his anxiety to minimize the problem (the salvation of so many countless people was more important, after all) and to correct their laxity, he stopped letting on for a while that he did not observe the Law, this being more important. Again they had a problem in his preaching the crucified one; in this case he ignored their problem, the gain from his preaching being more important, you see. Christ acted this way, too: when he was talking about foods with them, and they had a problem with what he was saying, namely, "It is not what goes into a person that causes defilment, but what comes out," he replied, "Ignore them: every plant my Father has not planted will be rooted up."[81] And when they asked him about tribute, though knowing they did not have to pay it, he answered them, since the moment did not require that his status be revealed, "In case we cause them a problem, go and throw a line in the sea, take the fish that strikes, and you will find a coin in it; give it to them for you and me."[82] When he had imposed a law marked with utter good sense, and they were incorrigible, he properly took no notice of them, and abolished the law; and when they were still incapable of accepting the explanation of his status, he properly showed further considerateness and by the paying of the tribute kept the explanation of his divinity obscure.

You sat down to malign your brother. But it is for his correction, you claim. You ought, therefore, not revile him behind his back but, as Christ commanded, take him aside and corrrect him.[83] Accusations made in public, you know, often make people more shameless; the majority of sinners, as long as they see it is possible for them to remain anonymous, choose to mend their ways, whereas when they lose their reputation with most people, some then become desperate, and slip into shamelessness. But you suffered wrong at his hands: why, then, do wrong to yourself? Those who take revenge, after all, strike themselves with a sword. I mean,

if you want to do yourself a favor and have revenge on him, speak well of the wrongdoer; in this way you will turn many people into accusers in your place, and earn yourself a great reward, whereas if you speak ill of him, you will not be believed, being suspected of bias. And so the results of your exertion go in the opposite direction: whereas you are anxious to undermine his reputation, the opposite happens; it is by commendation, not accusation, that this happens, you see. You bring yourself into disrepute, while your shafts in his direction are wide of the mark. Bias in fact is the impression on the mind of the listeners, not allowing your words to gain entry to their ears. The same thing happens as in judicial objections: when someone raises an objection to evidence in court, the whole process is put on hold. Exactly so, in this instance, suspicion of bias prevents the case becoming admissible.

Do not speak ill, accordingly, in case the black mark attaches to you, and instead of preparing mud with clay and bricks,[84] you weave for him wreaths from roses, violets and other flowers. And do not bear dung in your mouth, like beetles (this is what slanderers do, you know: they are the first to be affected by the stench), but bear flowers, like the bees, and make honeycombs like them, and be gentle to everybody. Everyone feels revulsion for slanderers like a bad smell, as if they were some bloodsucker, fed on others' problems like a beetle on dung; with the person bearing a word of commendation, on the other hand, everyone associates like a member of their own body, their own brother, their son, their father. And why mention the present and people's good opinion? Keep in mind, I ask you, that fearsome day, that incorruptible tribunal, the fact that, if you speak falsely, you will add to your already numerous sins. "I tell you," remember, " that every idle word people speak they will give an account of to God on the day of judgement."[85] Even if it is true, the text is saying, you will not escape condemnation for flaunting your neighbor's bad luck and disgrace. Remember the Pharisee, for example: he was no tax collector, but he proved a bigger sinner than the tax collector since he slandered the tax collector. The tax collector was no Pharisee, but he proved more righteous than the Pharisee because he belittled himself.[86]

This you did, and I kept silent. You had lawlessness in mind in the belief I would be like you. I shall accuse you, and parade your sins before

you (v.21). Do you see the unspeakable lovingkindness? Do you see the boundless wealth of long-suffering? By silence here, you see, he means longsuffering. You committed such awful crimes, he is saying, and I did not take vengeance; instead, I held my peace and bore it, giving you space for repentance. Far from benefiting from this in any way, however, you ran headlong into worse evil. In fact, not only did you not change, or feel any shame, or admit your guilt for these actions: my long-suffering, my forebearance, my silence, my tolerance of such awful deeds you put down not to my long-suffering and lovingkindess but to an unwillingness to corrrect this behavior and a lack of resentment of these doings.

Understand this properly, you who are forgetful of God (v.22). Understand what? What has been said, he is saying. What is the meaning of *understand*? Think about it. I mean, what is obscure in what was said? What demands deep investigation? The thing this very form of teaching itself implies most of all is a change in our way of life. Since he places no great importance in sacrifices, you see, he substitutes the legislation of the Gospels; especially since they were swept up in the rubbish of their sins, he wishes to extricate them from evil as though from some mire, and to clear away the former path of their habitual wickedness like some cataract in their eye. So he prompts the recollection of their actions lest by consigning them to oblivion they go off with no benefit. The habit of sin, you see, causes complete blindness of soul, renders us heedless, and dulls the sharp vision of the mind.

Lest he snatch you away, and there be no one to rescue you. O lovingkindness beyond words! These are the words of a loving mother, or rather of a goodness surpassing that love in boundless measure. The one who makes no secret of such accusation, who gives evidence of such dreadful rage provides security ahead of time. The one who says, *I shall accuse you and parade your sins before you*, and delivers a sentence of condemnation, cancels the sentence in turn, not as though handing the condemned over to punishment, but as though entrusting to exhortation and advice those in need of correction, chastening them with fear, and saying, *lest he snatch you away like a lion, and there be no one to rescue you. Sacrifice of praise will glorify me, and the way I shall show you will be there, the salvation of God* (vv.22-23).[87] After showing his kindly manner by exhorting, advising, threatening, frightening, proposing unmiti-

gated punishment and offering counsel, he mentions also the manner in which it is possible for their conduct to be corrected, saying, *Sacrifice of praise will glorify me.* Now, what he means is this: Not only will it bring my anger to an end, and even annul the condemnation, but also glorify me. See also the extent of the marvel, God being glorified through himself. *The way I shall show you will be there, the salvation of God.* Do you see the ineffable reward? Do you see the excess of lovingkindness? He promises to show God's way, note, and the real salvation of God for those who live virtuously.

Accordingly, let us trust in his promise, and glorify him through an upright life and sacrifice of praise. This, after all, is the way that leads to salvation, through this sacrifice. May it be the good fortune of us all to attain this, thanks to the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, because to him is the glory and the power, now and forever, for ages of ages. Amen.[88]

[1] Chrysostom begins this psalm differently: he ignores the title "A psalm for Asaph" that he would have found in his LXX text, and he indicates he is not interested in regaling his congregation with readings from alternative versions and from the Hebrew original as he has done in all the "previous" psalms. Do these differences suggest this psalm is not part of the series? The same title occurs on Psalms 73-83, none of which occurs in the extant series: could we surmise that Chrysostom, who has not recognized the psalm titles as musical directions and may not have adverted to the role of Asaph in temple music (1 Chr 25.1; Ez 2.41), prefers to avoid this problem? This surmise of ours seems undermined by his later reference to "the previous psalm" (cf note 11).

[2] Psalm 82.1,6. A particularly abrupt opening, assailing his congregation with a batch of proof texts from the very outset.

[3] 1 Cor 8.5.

[4] Ex 22.28. Modern versions prefer to understand the Hebrew *elohim* here as singular "God," unlike Chrysostom's LXX.

[5] Gn 6.2.

[6] Lv 24.15-16. One wonders why Chrysostom chooses this text to support his thesis that the word "god" is loosely used in the Old Testament; he is in some difficulty explaining it satisfactorily later on.

[7] Jer 10.11.

[8] Ex 22.28.

[9] Chrysostom is citing this as the text of Gn 4.26, a verse mentioning also the birth and naming of Seth's son Enosh, to support his argument that the word "god" was loosely used in the Bible. That is not the form in

which that verse occurs in the LXX, however, and in his Homily 20 on that book Chrysostom used the regular form, "He it was who hoped to invoke the name of the Lord God" – a sense not supportive of his argument here. It would seem Chrysostom has found himself another version of the Hebrew, and is able also to exploit the ambivalence of the Greek verb form to mean both "invoke" and "be called by;" he is also rather "creative" in his version of the Genesis story at this point.

[10] De Montfaucon's Latin version of Chrysostom's text proceeds as though at this point "children of the the Most High" (Psalm 82.6) has been telescoped into Ex 4.22, "my firstborn Israel."

[11] Despite the great difference in style of commentary we note in Chrysostom's moving to Psalm 50 from "the previous psalm," we have to concede he clearly presumes here that his audience are in a position to make a comparison of the two based on exposure to the content of both.

[12] Mic 6.2.

[13] Cf Jer 2.9. Chrysostom shows his perspicacity as a literary critic in recognising this device of the *rib*, or lawsuit, frequently adopted by Old Testament prophetic and sapiential composers, and his theological depth in seeing it as a further example of *synkatabasis*.

[14] By this stage in the commentary Chrysostom is becoming both comfortable and adept at acknowledging levels of meaning in psalm texts.

[15] Is 2.3-4.

[16] We have remarked before that among those questions that do not occur frequently in Chrysostom's commentaries (Old Testament, at any rate) is the role of Mary. De Montfaucon takes umbrage at this negative mention: "It is remarkable here that Chrysostom says that not even the Virgin who carried Christ in her womb was aware of the mystery. For she knew it after the angel revealed it to her." The μυστήριον *(mysterion)* of which Chrysostom speaks, of course, is no mere secret but the whole divine plan.

[17] Mt 4.3,6.

[18] Mt 3.15.

[19] Mt 17.9.

[20] Psalm 72.6.

[21] We have seen before the detail of Jesus' life this Antiochene theologian loves to give in teasing out the implications of incarnation (see note 15 to Psalm 45).

[22] Cf Mt 24.26-27.

[23] 1 Thess 4.16.

[24] Cf Dn 7.9-10.

[25] Cf Dn 7.9.

[26] By now Chrysostom is feeling comfortable, adept and even responsible for elucidating the figurative expressions of biblical authors, even apocalyptists.

[27] Rom 1.20.

[28] 1 Cor 1.21.

[29] Rom 2.8-9.

[30] Rom 2.12.
[31] Cf Ex 19.5-6. The example of calling deacon and priest to order seems to sit better with their superior – Chrysostom as bishop?
[32] Rom 3.6.
[33] Though this particular verse does not demand it, Chrysostom launches into another statement of Jewish perversity in crucifying Jesus, the theological basis for his recurring polemic. He further justifies such polemic on the basis of charity: better not to let the Jews go to their graves in any doubt. And he admits in conclusion that this is not the first time he has engaged in it, and it will not be the last.
[34] Jn 19.12.
[35] Is 7.14.
[36] Bar 3.35-37. Chrysostom concedes the Jews of his time are devoted to the Scriptures – though the rabbis earlier had not included this book of Baruch in the Hebrew Bible, so his reference to it could be thought otiose were not the polemic conducted in-house for the benefit of his Christian congregation.
[37] This beautiful litany of the highlights of the divine plan is very much the thinking of the Ephesians, where the author speaks a richly varied (*polypoikilos*, lit. "multicolored") design on God's part, for which words like *mysterion*, *sophia* and (as here) *oikonomia* are employed (Eph 3.9-10).
[38] Cf Ez 33.32.
[39] Cf 1 Kgs 19.10.
[40] Cf Amos 7.13.
[41] Is 1.11-12.
[42] Jer 6.20.
[43] Chrysostom quotes the *Iliad* of Homer here – in pejorative fashion, as he had quoted Plato in commenting on Psalm 45. He had been well-educated in the pagan classics by the rhetorician Libanius in Antioch, with such credit that (Chrysostom's biographer Sozomen tells us) on his deathbed Libanius nominated him as his successor – "had not the Christians stolen him from us." Chrysostom, however, moved to a position different from that of Augustine's mother Monica, who believed an education in the pagan classics would make him a better Christian. Pastors tend to be less universalist in their thinking.
[44] For Chrysostom, divine *synkatabasis* is demonstrated not just in the language of the Scriptures but also in the developments of sacred history, including Jewish institutions and rituals (like the Sabbath and Temple worship), which he sees as inadequate and passing.
[45] Cf Lev 7.16-17.
[46] Mt 5.16.
[47] Rom 12.1.
[48] Psalm 69.30-31.
[49] Cf Job 1.21 LXX. We have noted before Chrysostom's distinctive text of Job.
[50] Cf 1 Sam 1.28.

[51] Cf Lk 17.7-11.
[52] Sir 5.3 LXX.
[53] Cf Lk 16.22-24; 13.28.
[54] This is a consistent thought (and image) in all Chrysostom's works on the Old Testament at least, that there is "a consensus of Old Testament προφητικά (*prophetika*) and New Testament ἀποστολικά (*apostolika*) statements," as he says in commenting on Psalm 110. In Sermon 1 on Genesis he speaks as here of "the harmony in their teaching," and is author of two books "On the obscurity of Old Testament inspired compositions" which dwell on the same theme (*PG* 56,163-92). The theological reason for this harmony is that "the New Testament and the Old come from the same Spirit," as he says on Psalm 116.
And what is this message that he is thrilled to find echoed in both testaments? The Jews' hypocrisy in failing to practice what they preach.
[55] Cf Rom 2.21-23.
[56] Cf 1 Cor 9.27.
[57] Rom 2.14,13.
[58] Jer 2.8; 8.8,7. The word for "reed" in 8.8 is used for a pen (the sense given here by the NRSV) in Psalm 45.2 by one translator identified as Aquila (not cited there by Chrysostom).
[59] We recall that the *didaskaleion* mentioned here is the context in which Chrysostom is conducting his own ministry, and so implicitly he is setting standards and goals for himself (and other preachers) – and dignifying his ministry of the Word. See Introduction section 4.
[60] Mt 5.19.
[61] Cf Psalm 19.1.
[62] Prv 20.9.
[63] 1 Cor 4.4.
[64] Cf Prv 18.17. Does Chrysostom mistakenly think this is a Pauline tenet?
[65] 1 Jn 5.16.
[66] 1 Sam 2.25.
[67] Cf Mt 18.15-17.
[68] Cf Mt 18.21-22.
[69] Once again Chrysostom urges fidelity to his principle "Scripture interprets itself." No need to indulge in flights of fancy – simply examine the text precisely; *akribeia* has its reward.
[70] Rom 1.32.
[71] We have seen Chrysostom lamenting before the extent of poverty in his society without being able to offer concrete proposals to offset what we would call structural poverty; instead, he simply denounces the rich and recommends the practice of almsgiving. Here, merely as an example of sin uncorrected, he cites the case of people's willing involvement in others' poverty – but again offers no social panacea.
[72] Jer 2.12.
[73] Cf Is 24.7. We are probably not to deduce from this reproof to lax clergy that they necessarily formed part of Chrysostom's congregation. At least

it provides us with a statement of his sense of responsibility for outspokenness in regard to his flock's observance, as Photius noted of this Commentary in the ninth century.

[74] Prv 6.30.

[75] Can we find here support for thinking that the eucharistic liturgy spoken of here is not occurring in the *didaskaleion*, but on another occasion, in the church?

[76] Could we reasonably have expected Chrysostom – and the psalmist – to think also of a wronged wife? At least the villain is a male!

[77] 1 Cor 10.24.

[78] Lk 6.26. Chrysostom is spending an disproportionately long time on these verses of the psalm, which have served him for treatment of an array of loosely related topics, some perhaps arising out of personal experience (like unjust criticism), some grist to his mill (like the Jews' failure to acknowledge Christ). As often, he will have to close the commentary with undue haste – but not yet.

[79] 2 Cor 8.20.

[80] 1 Cor 8.13.

[81] Cf Mt 15.11-14.

[82] Mt 17.27. The incident in Matthew's Gospel is rather puzzling as to the purpose of the tax (as distinct from the imperial tax in ch.22). It was a "temple tax," possibly of Matthew's own time for the upkeep of the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus in Rome – hence perhaps here the comment, "they did not have to pay it." Chrysostom puts his own different slant on the incident.

[83] Cf Mt 18.15.

[84] Though time is running out, Chrysostom launches into a series of striking images here for the unanticipated results of slander, including this possible reference to the labor of the Hebrew people in captivity (cf Ex 1.14).

[85] Mt 12.36.

[86] Cf Lk 18.10-14.

[87] The lion of (the similar) verse Psalm 7.2 has crept in – a not surprising slip for a preacher, especially with the pace on at this late stage, where the final verses hardly receive any comment.

[88] Thus concludes the second block of extant commentaries on psalms, totalling seventeen. The next extant commentary is on Psalm 109, though in the course of commenting on Psalm 141 Chrysostom adverts to his commentary on Psalm 63, now lost.

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St. John Chrysostom

COMMENTARY ON THE PSALMS

Translated with an Introduction by

Robert Charles Hill

While St. John Chrysostom may have commented on all 150 psalms in the Psalter, commentary has survived on only fifty-eight. In these volumes, Robert Charles Hill has prepared an excellent translation of the commentary – in Volume One Psalms 4–13, 44–50, and in Volume Two Psalms 109–150 (with the exception of the long Ps 119) – all appearing for the first time in English. In this work, probably composed while he was still in Antioch, Chrysostom's brilliance as an exegete of the "literal school" of Antioch shines forth, even as he works with the metaphorical language and imagery of the psalms. As Hill writes, "it is fascinating to watch Chrysostom ... coming to grips with this lyrical material, achieving some sense of comfort, and eventually devising – for the first time? – his own hermeneutical principles for coping with such texts." The extensive Introduction in Volume One covers basic issues on the commentary, including its origins, its relationship to Chrysostom's other exegetical work, his attitude to Scripture, and the theology, spirituality and other moral accents of the commentary. Comment on Chrysostom's text is also given in endnotes, and indexes are provided in each volume.

Robert Charles Hill, of the University of Sydney, is well known for his studies on St. John Chrysostom that have appeared in numerous journals. In addition to his other books on theology and the Bible, his translation of Chrysostom's homilies on Genesis is part of the Fathers of the Church series.

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