

## ON SOLACE IN TRIBULATION — TRANSLATION

1. Just as when a ship, billow-tossed in stormy weather, is swiftly dashed to pieces by the swells unless steered by a widely experienced helmsman, so also a human being: when set in the midst of misfortunes, their spirit is quickly broken, and they sustain damage to their salvation unless they possess a mind trained in the Scriptures. Accordingly, I ask you, who are set in the midst of hardships, whoever you are, do lend an attentive ear to my words for a minute that I may offer you solace from scriptural sources insofar as I am able to. Now then, if by being hampered in poverty, you are crushed under the burden of scarcity; if you harbour sorrow over fading into obscurity by loss of rank in the present age; if infirmity has set in, impairing the strength and vitality of your limbs; if grief of this world over bereavement of children and loved ones has thrown your mind and spirit into confusion; or if you have been cut off from the crowd and its hubbub for being infected all over your body and limbs with leprosy patches—stay unbroken, with your mind composed, even as you are confronted with these things. Instead, take refuge in God’s precepts rather to draw comfort from them that you may steer your ship, to wit, the course of your life, in a tranquil harbour, edified by the words of the Lord. Do not presume, however, dearest brother, that God inflicts punishment on us, spurred by hatred; Far from it! It is his genuine affection for us that is thus abundantly demonstrated. In fact, this is how the Lord himself reminds you through Salomon in the Proverbs, saying: “My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; nor faint...for whom the Lord loves, he rebukes”<sup>1</sup>

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I Regarding the Latin biblical quotations of the Latin text and their rendition in English, I have opted to use the Douay-Rheims Bible and Brenton’s Septuagint translation for the Old Testament and the Douay-Rheims Bible for the New Testament. Occasionally, in case a Latin quotation in *Cons.* does precisely correspond to a reading of either of these versions, I may combine versions of these two sources to reflect as accurately as possibly the quotation in *Cons.*; or I may slightly adjust them for the same purpose. If I use a source other the two that I have just cited, I will indicate that in a footnote.

For however dearly loved,<sup>2</sup> a son caught in mischief is punished by his father, and a teacher often strikes a student to ensure that the latter makes better progress.

2. Now then, the reason for which people are visited with chastisement from heaven is twofold. The righteous are occasionally afflicted so as to prove even more worthy and shine still more before all. The sinners are likewise afflicted with a view to improve for the better and change their former way of life. And I will prove from holy Scripture that this is so. First, however, it should be explained that the righteous are afflicted on this account, namely, to be put to the test through many a trial. “My brethren, count it all joy, when ye fall into diverse temptations, knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience,” says James in his universal letter. Likewise in the following verses, he asserts and says: “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for, when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life which hath promised to them that love him.” This is why, then, you must rejoice when this cherished body<sup>3</sup> of ours is afflicted or tested with severe hardships by God’s decision. For a Christian must not so much take pride in prosperity as in misfortune. Listen, for instance, to what Paul boasts of: “We glory,” says he, “in the hope of the love of God; and not only so; but we glory also in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience trial; and trial hope; and hope confoundeth not, because the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost who is given to us.” Observe how many virtues righteous people accrue from tribulations. And just as the earth, albeit

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2 This is how I translate *Cons.* 1.20 *carissimum filium*. I take *carissimum* here, as well as in *Cons.* 3.64 to be an instance of Vulgar Latin use of the superlative for the positive; see also in *Cons.* 3.92 *maximas tribulationes*; *Cons.* 5.229–30 *plurima multitudine*. See Rönsch, *Itala und Vulgata*, 415: “1. Superlativ für Positiv. *carissimus* = ἀγαπητός. Mt. 17, 5: *hic est filius meus carissimus*, Corb. — Mc. 9, 7 *hic est filius meus carissimus* — 12, 6: *unum habens filium carissimum* — Act. 15, 25: *cum carissimis nostris Barnaba...et Paulo*, etc.”; for *maximus* and *plurimus*, see Rönsch, *Itala und Vulgata*, 415, 417. Cf. Grandgent, *Vulgar Latin*, 33: “Little by little the old comparative and superlative lost their precise sense from being employed frequently with merely an intensive force.... [T]he superlative was really a positive in meaning, as in St. Augustine’s *sancta atque dulcissima*...and in *hic est filius meus carissimus*, etc.” As regards the term *carissimus filius*, there could have been a gendered element in choosing the Latin superlative for the Greek positive ἀγαπητός to begin with; or the term had already weakened by the time it was used to render υἱὸς ἀγαπητός; or it weakened gradually by growing hackneyed overtime, in which case, this enfeeblement would reflect on the gendered element as well—at least in Vulgar Latin. For a different take on the cases discussed here, see *Epistula consolatoria*, 200.

3 See “*De consolatione in adversis*—Latin Text” above, 64n7.

rich and fertile, not only yields no crops for people but on the contrary even brings forth thorns unless it is frequently and continually tilled with diligence by the farmer; likewise, unless a righteous person has been exhausted by trials unremittingly, not only are they actually stymied in their progress, but several times they take a tumble. And in fact, we learn that this is so from the example of the above-stated authority. Although he was well aware of his many excellencies and had earned such great merits in the eyes of God that he was caught up to the third heaven, led into paradise, and heard ineffable words, yet divine providence handed him over to be slapped in the face so that he might not be inflated with conceit for his virtues and lose his just deserts. Rejoicing exceedingly in this, he wrote to the Corinthians in this manner: "And lest the greatness of the revelations should exalt me," said he, "there was given me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan, to buffet me that I may not be exalted. For which thing, thrice I besought the Lord that it might depart from me. And he said to me: My grace is sufficient for thee: for power is made perfect in infirmity"; and again: "For which cause I please myself in my infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ. For when I am weak, then am I powerful."

3. Accordingly, we must accept all of the world's misfortunes which assail us with gratitude and resignation, being fully convinced that we are at that moment remembered by God. For much coddled is the person who both wants to enjoy thoroughly every delight to the full while living in this world and to attain to the gifts of heavens in the life to come. Who among the saints was actually ever able to be free and exempt from the perils of this world? If you search into their lives diligently, you will find that none of them departed this world without trials; on the contrary, they all attained to true and incorruptible glory by enduring the various sufferings of the present age with a great deal of patience. Patriarch Abraham, for instance, was so full of the grace of faith and loved the Lord so much that for his sake he nearly slew his beloved son with a sword. For he chose to be termed his son's murderer rather than to disregard God's injunction. Moreover, he had foreknowledge of the Saviour's utterance, who states, "He that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." Therefore, in order to be counted worthy of God, in consonance with his order, he offered his one and only son as victim and was not sorry that he whom he reckoned his heir was about to perish at his own hands. Why then was he not sorry? Because divine love had kindled his heart, and the fervour of his faith had extinguished all pain. Although Patriarch Abraham, then, was so great and distinguished, so dear to God and beloved of God that even the Lord himself bears witness to him,

saying,<sup>4</sup> “now I know that thou fearest God, and for my sake thou hast not spared thy beloved son,” yet he was unable to be exempt from penalty so as to spend his life in tranquility, free from trials and tribulations. On the contrary, he endured all sorts of hardships and merited to be styled the father of all saints. To give an illustration, when at a certain time he perceived that famine spread across the land, and had descended to Egypt with his wife Sarah and was in addition seized with fear that he might be murdered on account of his wife’s beauty, he said to her: “Say not that I am thy husband, but rather declare me thy brother, lest perchance I be slain, and they take possession of thee.” No one, I think, entertains any doubt as to someone’s state of mind who suspects that their murder is close at hand, when they fancy that someone is about to inflict death on them. No food or drink is sweet for them but bitter. And even when overpowered by sleep, even then, in slumber, they imagine themselves butchered at the hands of the executioner. Even though Abraham managed to remain entirely unharmed and secure thanks to God’s assistance, nonetheless a great fear took hold of him, consumed as he was with suspicion. He endured another like affliction too in the land of Gerara under King Abimelech,<sup>5</sup> and yet at God’s prompting he was honoured with high distinctions by those whom he dreaded as foes and whom he suspected of threatening him with death. His son Isaac likewise withstood a similar misfortune himself in the land of Gerara. For he, too, fearing that he would be slain, declared that his wife Sarah was his sister. Notwithstanding, he endured great hardships as well. For instance, Jacob, for fear of death, fled to the land of Mesopotamia when pursued by Esau on account of the blessing. Moreover, also when Joseph’s brothers sold Joseph, Jacob’s son, in Egypt and brought back word to the father, saying that he had been devoured by a wild beast, they inflicted such pain on him that he rent his clothes and covered himself with a foul sackcloth, bewailing the

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**4** The *cui*-clause in the Latin text is a relative clause of result. I have promoted the first part of the sentence to a subordinate clause on account of *talis* and *tantus* being predicative adjectives and as such being able to function as adverbs or as the clause’s predicate. They contain an adversative idea.

**5** I have opted to retain Tours, BM, MS 281’s reading *retributionem* against Caen, BM, MS 34 (373)’s emendation, *tribulationem*. *Restitutio* stands for θλιψις (affliction, oppression) in early Latin translations of Paul’s second letter to the Thessalonians (2 Thessalonians 1.6) in [ps-]Vigilius Thapsensis *Contra Varimadum* and in Irenaeus; in both, however, *tribulationem* also occurs elsewhere in their texts. See Sabatier, ed., *Bibliorum Sacrorum latinae versiones*, vol. 3, p. 858 (2 Thessalonians 1:6) under “Notae ad Versionem Antiquam.” Anianus of Celeda likewise uses *retributionem* for θλιψις in his Latin translation of Chrysostom’s *De laud*.

loss of his dearest son. Joseph himself was likewise counted worthy after being subjected to a great deal of trials. To give an example, he was reduced to slavery in Egypt by his brothers for envy. His master observed his good conduct and accordingly made him a steward over his household. His master's wife, however, found herself shamefully shackled in love on account of the young man's lovely comeliness; and, seized as she was with foul lust, she made repeated attempts to lay hold of the servant of Christ. Now, as she frequently endeavoured to allure him into this foul business, being set on fire by her burning desire, and as he kept refusing to commit so harshly insensitive an act, one day finding him working alone, she accosted him, grabbed him shamelessly by his garment, and said to him—her mouth teeming with venom: "Lie with me." O baleful exhortation! You utterly shameless woman! You are laying this earthly trap for me to cheat me of eternal bliss! Why are you trying to inject this pestilence, this incurable disease into me with this viper's mouth of yours? Why are you offering honeyed words which abound in guile and bitterness to deceive me? Your lips seem indeed to be dripping with honey, but I must shun this sort of sweetness that ultimately turns into venom. For it was because of you that the devil drove Adam the protoplast out of paradise in the beginning. I have been sold to show my obedience to you as slave, not to join in your foul adultery; I have been sold to show you submission, not to lose my chastity. Albeit on account of my brothers' envy I was made another man's slave, I will not be made a slave to sin. I am following in my fathers' steps; I will not be your partner in crime. Then leaving his clothes in her hands, he went out nude, stripped of his body clothes, yet clad in the glory of chastity. In fact, he abandoned a garment that wears out and is eaten by moths, but he departed clothed in purity that forever blooms; he did not allow himself to be aroused by a very foul pleasure. When, however, that impudent woman realized that she had been put to shame, that she had been conquered by an entirely chaste fellow, she turned her lecherous love into rage, uttering words of complaint as her husband approached: "The Hebrew servant, whom thou broughtest in to us, came in to me to mock me." So, then her husband, trusting this deceitful talk, cast him into prison on the spot. God, however, was with him. And although he was confined, outraged, and shackled, the purity of his heart kept him free; and if his limbs looked hideous in the filth of the prison, the chastity of his soul shone bright. For God, who is always ready to help the innocent and steadily raises the humble, snatched him away from all misfortunes and made him lord over all the land of Egypt. And he whom his siblings sold into slavery was not long after supplying them with provisions, unmindful of all his suffering; and inasmuch as he typified our Lord and Saviour, he requited evil with good.

4. Now then, let Job be ushered in as model before us all to steady and invigorate inconstant and weak minds like some universal drug. In fact, if anyone hard pressed by any sort of misery at all, if anyone hit with countless disasters carefully focuses their mind's eye on this man,<sup>6</sup> they will derive great solace from him in their grief. Truly, that man harnessed himself so slavishly to divine worship and worshipped the Lord so blamelessly that he deserved to be praised by God's solemn proclamation. For here is what the Scripture declares: "And the Lord," it states, "said to the devil: Hast thou diligently considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a man blameless, true, godly, abstaining from everything evil?" Now he was so worried about his sons, too, that he offered daily sacrifices for them. And although in fact the Scripture mentions no offenses of the sons, yet he, who loved his sons truly and piously, nonetheless feared that as human beings they might conceive of evil thoughts against God in their hearts; and panicking at the mere thought, he kept purifying the hearts of his sons with sacrificial offerings to God. How many fathers today clearly see that their sons fail to attend to a great deal of things or that they sin, and not only do they not offer sacrifices for them, but they do not even say a word to reprimand them that they might turn from their wicked ways! And while they are reluctant to cause them sadness for a short while, they cause them everlasting grief. But fathers of this kind demonstrate that theirs is false, not genuine love; for if they loved their sons—at any rate according to the Scripture—they would discipline them. It may be, however, that they show no concern over their sons' transgressions, inasmuch as they hardly ever cared about their own redemption. Blessed Job, however, was offering atonement for his sons with offerings and gifts just

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6 See *Cons.* 4.137–38, "si quis...hunc virum virum...mentis obtutu obtexerit": a challenging, compound imagery. *Obtutus* is classical only when *oculorum* is expressed or implied. The Late Latin trope *mentis obtutu* is bold but fairly well attested. The predicate *obtexerit*, from *obtego*, "to cover over," is more involved. In this connection, it appears to allude to "the cone of gaze," viz., the area or "the sector of space covered by the gaze." Imagery and language in this metaphor seem to rest upon the presuppositions of ancient optics. Classical theory in this domain generally regarded the human eye as a source of light emitting ocular beams—which made sight possible—in like manner as the sun radiates sunbeams. Ocular beams were consequently light beams. Inasmuch as a filtered sunbeam spotlights the object onto which it is concentrated, it can be conceived in Latin as *covering* or *encompassing* that object. There is confusion among the MSS between *obtego* and *obtexo*, and in at least one instance *obtexivit* has been used for *obtexuit*. If this were the case in *Cons.* 4.137–38, the metaphor would involve *weaving a mental image*, viz., mental imagery that is more likely to derive primarily from a medieval woman's experience.

as he was himself blamelessly serving the Lord for his own part. Now, as to how compassionate he was towards the widows and the faithful, listen to the very man stating: "The mouth," says he, "of the widow has blessed me. Also, I put on righteousness and clothed myself with judgment like a mantle. I was the eye of the blind, and the foot of the lame. I was the father of the helpless." But the Scripture also bears witness to the fact that he possessed infinite wealth: "And he had seven sons and three daughters," it says, "and his cattle consisted of seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred she-asses belonging to the herd, and a very great household." When, therefore, that well-known rival of good people heard the voice of the Lord singing his praises, he flared up with spite and envy and asked from the Lord to surrender to him all his resources. And behold, all of a sudden, he began to lay waste of his wealth in manifold ways, announcing at one moment the plunder of the draught-cattle, at another the scorching of the sheep, following this, the slaying of the servants. In fact, the very devil, who caused all this havoc, was actually delivering the message as well. And yet, though inflicting such destruction by surprise, he was unable to break the tenacity of his faith or cause his mind to veer off onto the path of blasphemy. For Job knew that he had "brought nothing into this world" and that he "certainly" could "carry nothing out." At long last, however, when the news about the death of his sons and his daughters was conveyed to him, his innards quivered, and so he "rent his garments, and shaved the hair of his head, and fell on the earth, and sprinkled earth dust upon his head." And yet, while he was performing these acts, his mind remained unswerved, and he did not lapse into blasphemy, but bursting outright into praises of the Lord he "fell on the earth, and worshipped, and said, I myself came forth naked from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither; the Lord gave, the Lord has taken away: as it seemed good to the Lord, so has it come to pass; blessed be the name of the Lord." Most holy Job sets an example of how our mind may remain unshaken in the face of all stormy waves of the present life and how we may not burst into blasphemy when we are harassed by tribulations; instead, we must use the same words as he did himself, saying: "Blessed be the name of the Lord" unto the ages. Now, inasmuch as the insatiable enemy had been utterly unable to agitate him, although he had afflicted him with so many calamities, and because he had heard the Divine Authority praising him once more, he said to the Lord: "Skin for skin; and all that a man hath, he will give for his life; but put forth thy hand, and touch his bone and his flesh, and then thou shalt see that he will bless thee to thy face." Then the Lord, foreknowing all future events, surrendered to

him his body alone but enjoined him to preserve his life. The Lord surrendered him not to comply with the devil's will but in order to make his own servant all the more deserving of praise, and so that his endurance might shine forth in the entire world. Then he "smote Job with sore boils from *his* feet to *his* head. And he took a potsherd to scrape away the discharge and sat upon a dung-heap outside the city," he who was sitting on a royal throne just a while ago; and all men looked down upon him whom they originally feared when they were under his sway. That man, therefore, so excellent and great, who stood out in such distinguished pre-eminence—his wife now provided food for him with income earned from her own work; yet she also tried to inflict everlasting torture on him, saying: "say some word against the Lord, and die." But that man imbued with wisdom, that man fully endowed with the mastery of all endurance spurned and rebuffed such advice, saying: "Thou hast spoken like one of the foolish women. If we have received good things of the hand of the Lord, shall we not endure evil things?" Behold the massiveness of his temptations to appreciate the greatness of his endurance. He was exalted in his power, abounding in wealth, a father of many sons; and yet, stripped bare of all these blessings, he appeared suddenly naked. In fact, there is a custom among athletes to proceed naked to the contest. With good reason, therefore, poised to engage the devil, was this blessed man likewise stripped bare of all his possessions as of some garment. But once he entered in so extreme a contest, he addressed, I think, the devil with words such as these: "O devil," said he, "the reason for raging so viciously against me was that I might proclaim the inanity of your might. Why do you seek to engulf all humanity like a whirlpool? Why do you desire to gulp down those who did not injure you in the least? Why are you making haste to harm the innocent? Do you not blush seeing that you have been so often knocked down flat by the servants of God? Did you not have your fill when you reduced me from such magnificence to this indigence? Did you not have your fill when you killed my sons and daughters in one single moment? Moreover, you tormented my poor body with excruciating pain so that throngs of maggots wriggled out of my festering flesh. You have, in fact, set about to wage war against fragile limbs, but you will be unable to shake a steadfast soul. Relying upon your depraved and envenomed weapons, you have endeavoured to shake my faith; whereas I, relying upon my God, will trample under foot your unbridled ways. And since you are crafty, you tried to enmesh me in your snares, but God pulled me out of these nets. You may plague me with torments which last but for a time, but you will yourself be racked by everlasting torture; and if in fact worms, which are

bound to die, emerge from my poor body, you will be consumed by eternal worms in hell. Although you may multiply the trials and harass me, I will not compromise my integrity; and although I am cast out from town, I will not desist from blessing my God.”

5. But also, if you muse deeply on the example of that well-known righteous Tobit, you will find great comfort in it. For that man was highly celebrated for his compassion for the destitute; and if any persons of his race had been deceased, in keeping with the situation he was wont to inter them as the rite of our faith requires. That is to say, if the Assyrians do in fact, as it is commonly believed, traditionally deny the dead burial in the ground but rather roll the corpses up inside hides and lay them out on the ground—obviously to be eaten by beasts or birds. Well then, while this man was living in captivity with throngs of other Jews among the Assyrians and was busying himself about burying the dead, as I said, he was at length debarred from such a devout and holy work by the Assyrian king. Nonetheless, however, he kept trying to accomplish, unobserved, his wonted task as best he could. When once, for instance, on the most solemn day of Pentecost dishes tastier than usual had been cooked for him due, as expected, to the day’s solemnity, he could hardly bring himself to take his meal alone. “He, therefore, said to his son: Go, son,” said he, “and bring what poor man soever thou shalt find out of our brethren, yet him that is mindful of the Lord, to feast with us; and lo, I tarry for thee, son, till thou come.” While the son was on his way, however, he chanced upon a strangled Jew cast out in the street and forthwith returning told his father what he had seen. On hearing this, Tobit rose instantly and headed outside. Neither the day’s solemnity, nor dressed dishes, nor threats by the tyrant at all events could force him away from his blessed work. As was his custom, he covered the body all over with earth, and coming back in tears he ate his lunch, which he had left behind. Well then, this man, so holy, so adorned in good works, was at length deprived of his eyesight, and he who originally offered solace to the wretched was subsequently in need of assistance from others. Still, it was God who wished him to be tried in this way to bear witness to the endurance of his faith. And he, being aware that hardships work more to his advantage than prosperity, maintained his patience calmly to the end. For this reason, Raphael the Archangel extols him highly saying: “It is honourable to show forth and confess the works of God. For when thou didst pray, and Sara thy daughter-in-law, I did offer the remembrance of your prayer in the presence of the glory of God. And when thou didst bury the dead in singleness of heart, and because thou didst not delay to rise up and leave your dinner, and wentest, I was sent to make proof

of thee. And God again hath sent me to heal thee and Sara thy daughter-in-law.”<sup>7</sup> I, in fact, have summarily unfolded the story as best I could. If anyone, however, should deeply consider of all of the saints’ lives, they would ascertain that saints attained renown in no other way except in hardships and adversities.

6. This then, the fact that blows are beneficial, as I have stated already further back, must be acknowledged and that at such time divine love towards us is declared when we are wasted with sundry torments and trials. For this is how Salomon instructs us in Proverbs: “He that spares the rod hates his son: but he that loves, carefully chastens him.” Thus, since we are disciplined by hardships with God’s assent, it is not God’s hatred but his compassion that is manifested towards us. He chastens therefore in that he “desires not the death of the ungodly, as that the ungodly should turn from his way and live.” He does not scourge and inflict suffering on us to ruin us but to make us turn to him and enable us to attain his mercy. Listen, for instance, to the Lord himself speaking through his prophet; he says: “If they forsake my law and kept not my commandments, I will visit their iniquities with a rod and their sins with stripes. But my mercy I will not take away from them, nor suffer them to be deceived in my faithfulness.” Often, in fact, prosperous circumstances give rise to arrogance, and forbearance causes the heart to swell with pride. God, therefore, that well-known true physician of the soul, hurries to heal our hearts with certain medicines, as it were, of bodily chastisement when he perceives that our minds are suffering from various maladies; to wit, when we are bloated with tumid conceit, or have been goaded on by infectious greed to plunder the property of another, or envy has prevailed upon us to ensnare our brothers, or when our minds, overwhelmed by idleness, have been remiss in their devotion to God. For when he allows us either to waste away in captivity or to suffer property damage, or when he allows our limbs to be stricken with overbearing diseases or no matter what kind of trials to be inflicted upon us, he intends to be an agent of health, not corruption. He himself testifies to this effect through the prophet Isaiah as follows: “And on account of his sin,” says he, “for a little while I grieved him, and smote him, and turned away my face from him; and he was grieved, and he went on sorrowful in his ways, and I comforted him,

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**7** This translation derives from Robert Ernest Wallis’s rendition of Tob. 12.14–15 in Cyprian, “On the Mortality,” 1074–75. The *Vetus Latina Tobit* quotation in *Cons.* 5.249–53 is nearly identical with the same quotation cited in Cyprian, “De mortalitate,” 303.

and healed him.” That famous King Manasseh is a case in point. When he delighted in his plenty and pleasures and considered that he was sovereign over the Jewish people, he turned insolent besides and abandoned the Lord. He also filled up the Temple with idols and shed the blood of many a saint. And he likewise sawed asunder prophet Isaiah with a wooden saw and perpetrated many enormities. When, however, he was made a prisoner by the Assyrians and was taken to Babylon, fettered in shackles and weighed down with iron, he clearly saw that he was labouring under heavy burdens, and in the bitterness of his soul he changed and cried out to the Lord, who longs for the salvation, not the destruction of our souls; and the Lord snatched him away from the hands of the enemy and restored him to his former kingdom. Do you see how affliction reformed him and made him see the error of his ways? Do you see that bondage, like some sort of drug, brought healing to his soul and that subsequent visitation of affliction caused him to recover his health, which he had previously lost by reason of conceit? This is how much profit humankind earns from carnal damage. Again, as I have said, the soul often sustains damage from prosperous security.

7. And what am I to say about transgressors? Seeing that he enjoyed massive affluence, security, and wealth and that had subdued manifold nations assisted by the Lord, that well-known righteous David—who was chosen according to the Lord’s heart, about whom the Lord himself states: “I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, who fulfils all my wills,” and whom he had invested with kingly authority and the gift of prophecy—assumed that his condition was immutable because affliction had been temporarily removed from him. David himself, for instance, states: “In my abundance, I shall never be moved.” Then, bewitched by a woman, he committed two crimes in a single offense: he killed Uriah the Hittite, an innocent man, with whose wife he fornicated. But should he have suffered tribulations at that time, he would have hardly fallen into such grave sin from which the loss of the Holy Ghost ensued. Accordingly, after he recognized his crime and clearly realized that he had been deprived of the Holy Ghost, he implored to obtain again God’s grace as before, calling out to the Lord: “Renew a right spirit within my bowels,” and “Cast me not away from thy face; and take not thy holy spirit from me.” Now when he was nearly exhausted in every way by troubles and was hard pressed by throngs of enemies on every side, he, who denied himself a respite in his mutual, relentless engagement with his foes, shouted aloud with all his heart to God, from whom he obtained assistance forthwith, as he says in the psalm: “In my trouble I cried to the Lord: and he heard me”; and again, “In the days of my trouble I sought God, with my

hands lifted up to him in the night, and I was not deceived.” However, founding himself in dire straits, not only did he hold back from serious offences but also viewed an instance of trivial lack of self-restraint as the greatest crime. For when the Philistines besieged Bethlehem on one occasion and David was at the stronghold, seized with a desire he said: “Who will give me water to drink out of the well that is in Bethlehem by the gate?” And when three mighty men had brought water back to him from that very well breaking through the Philistine camp, he blamed himself and refused to drink but offered it to the Lord and said: “O Lord be merciful to me that I should not do this, that I should drink the blood of these men who went at the risk of their lives; and he would not drink.” Consider, therefore, brother, carefully and observe the sort of ruin he suffered previously in his plenty, and the kind of wisdom which misfortune subsequently produced. When he spent a life free of trouble and killed an innocent man, he did not realize this was a sin. In his downcast state, however, he felt that it was a crime to drink water brought to him with danger. Accordingly, when blessed David observed that he derived profit from the abasement of his soul, he said to the Lord: “I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are equity, and that in thy truth thou hast humbled me.” Likewise in the same psalm, sunk in abjectness, he consents gladly: “It is good for me that thou hast humbled me, that I may learn thy justifications”; and again, “The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart, and he will save the humble of spirit.” For when a person is confronted with hardships, they are always mindful of God, and God will be hard by their side, yes indeed, and will repose in them. The Lord himself actually declares this as follows: “But in whom shall I find rest, but in him that is humble and meek, and that trembleth at my words?” In fact, hardly will anyone be able to attain humility and tranquility if they have not been previously entirely broken by hardships.

**8.** Let not afflictions of the body grieve you, then, beloved, but whatever God has sent firmly and joyously endure. If you are stricken with maladies of various kinds, I beseech you, let not your heart be confounded, your mind be broken, your voice be raised in blasphemy but rather set his—blessed Job’s—example before your eyes. Say what in fact you heard him saying: “As it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done; blessed be the name of the Lord.” For I know that some—clearly those who are dear to me, tainted as they are with their taint of leprosy—have fallen into such despair on account of this misfortune that they think they are completely forsaken by the Lord. But this occurs with those who are lacking scriptural instruction. For if they were musing upon God’s law day and night, if they were aware that “the judgments of the

Lord are true and justified in themselves, and more to be desired than gold and many precious stones, and sweeter than honey and the honeycomb," they would look upon the sores of the disease as means of healing. They, too, in fact would likewise say: "I remembered thy judgments of old, O Lord; and I was comforted." Though calamitous and cruel for a short while, this blow eventually generates great healing for the soul. Believe me, brother, never is filth washed off the body in baths in like manner as the squalor of soul is washed clean off with such maladies. When providing wound care to a patient, does not the surgeon, too, gash limbs with his incising blade, or if the need arises, apply fire to sear them and inflict pain to drive out the pain through which death would occur? For, surely, you are not charging that spite motivated the surgeon's acts, on whom you have already heaped presents and gifts to do this? Much more does that well-known heavenly physician, God, desire in his fatherly affection to heal those whom he has created and whom in person he redeemed from death. And for this reason he inflicts upon our bodies blows which are not eternal to set our souls free from blows that give rise to everlasting death.

9. Consequently, be not unsettled, brother, but cheerfully submit to whatever God has put in your way. Do not be depressed for having left the townsfolk behind. For how does it help you to dwell among throngs of people, or how does it harm you if you are cut off from them? The truth is we must strive as hard as we can not to be dispossessed of the city of God in the next life. For both those who live within the cities and those who are compelled to leave the walls are stripped of their membership in that renowned heavenly city, the mother of all saints, if rotten with the disease of wickedness they are careless with their lives. And you, because you live in sorrow and affliction and are shut out from this clay city, if you wisely endure these blows and humbly serve your God, you will become inhabitant of paradise, a dweller of his own city. In fact, you have not been marginalized from society because folks loath your soul but on account of the nature of your disease; inasmuch as certain people contend that the infection of this sort of sickness usually spreads rapidly by contact. Not only does it not even pollute your soul, however, but rather cleanses it if it has been unclean. I beg you, then, beloved, not to be unsettled; let not your heart be troubled; let not the harshness of the sores cause you to lose all hope for the life to come. Do not endorse that foolish view of some who think that on the day of the resurrection they will rise unchanged. And truly, what an empty worthless notion, this! Now tell me, you, whoever you are, who assert this view: are you speaking from your own mind's point of view or have you found this written somewhere on the

holy pages? But it appears to me that you have never read the words of the holy Scripture. For if you had had any zeal for such things, the disease of misinformation would never have laid hold upon you. O what a heavy damage for the soul ensues from ignorance! O what a truly brutal wound does the illiterate mind sustain! But I now ask you to dismiss these treacherous thoughts, brother, and since you err a great deal as long as you are unfamiliar with the Scripture, ask from the Lord to grant you understanding. Call upon the Lord and say: "Give me understanding, and I will learn thy commandments," and "teach me thy justifications," because "blessed is the man whom thou shalt instruct, O Lord, and shall teach him out of thy law. That thou mayst give him rest from the evil days." For if the Lord instructs you in his law, a storm of lies will in no way confound you.

**10.** If you wish the Lord to teach you, therefore, meticulously delve into his God-breathed Scripture, or lend an ear to one that does, at any rate. In it, you will find great comfort which will offer you relief from suffering. No mean means of healing are stored, beloved brother, in the holy Bible. For instance, if your mind is suffering, heavily burdened by many sins, read the Book of Psalms, and there you will find a remedy for your wounds. Say to the Lord: "I said, O Lord, have mercy upon me; heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee." If, however, your mind is hesitant about repenting owing to the disease of despair, the Lord himself invites you with his prophet to go to him: "Turn ye to me, and I will turn to you"; and again: "Is there no balm in Galaad? Or is there no physician there? Why has not the healing of the daughter of my people taken place?" Likewise, the Lord actually says in the gospel: "Come to me all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you." But if your mind is bloated with pride, you will find this written in the Proverbs: "The Lord resists the proud, but he gives grace to the humble," so that by means of this drug also we may shun the vice of arrogance and assume humility. Again, if you are burning with greed's flames, listen to the apostle how he expounds the nature of this disease, saying: "For the desire of money is the root of all evil; which some coveting have erred from the faith and have entangled themselves in many sorrows." Accordingly, acknowledging the wickedness of this most foul wound, and cry out to the Lord: "Incline my heart into thy testimonies and not to covetousness." Nor is there in fact any soul malady for which you will not find cures in the holy Bible; of which cures, time does not allow us to make detailed reference now, however. For assuredly, if you as well focus attention on investigating the matter on your own, without doubt search will return results by the grace of God.

11. But since I now perceive that your mind is ailing in this respect, namely, in claiming that a person who has departed this world with the plague of leprosy will rise again in like condition posthumously, listen well so that you may remove this fatal misgiving from your mind. Well then, if it is as you say, just as a person must rise again in the state in which they perished, so also must rise again a person who died missing an eye, for instance, or a hand, or a foot, or with some other limb permanently impaired. Do not, brother, do not foster such irreverent beliefs, but consider the state in which the Lord predicted that we are going to be after the resurrection: For when a person has merited resurrection, “they neither marry nor shall be married, but shall be as the angels of God in heaven.” If they do not marry but are as the angels of God in heaven, assuredly neither is the flesh, which shed mortality and put on immortality, subject to any weakness any longer. Likewise, listen to what the Lord says concerning the latter remark: “Then,” says he, “shall the just shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” For it is obvious to me that very many among the righteous were deprived of the present life after they had been exhausted by countless blows; especially since the blessed martyrs obtained the crowns of life after having their hands and feet cut off and their bodies entirely butchered, others with their ears and noses maimed, others with their eyes gouged out. Who could be so ungodly, so impious as to assert that they will rise in the same condition in which they died? Behold that famous beggar Lazarus as well, whose entire body was full of sores and who lay outside the door of the rich man, wishing to satisfy his hunger with crumbs from that man’s table; and that rich man wore linen and purple and delighted in sumptuous dishes, having a stout and solid body. And in this life indeed they fared thus. But watch what an unexpected turn things took in their case a short while after. Upon departure from this life, that man of yours who indulged magnificently in sumptuous dishes was tormented in flames; but he who was consumed by hunger and was full of sores was comforted in Abraham’s bosom. Observe what huge repose Lazarus merited for his body’s torments and to what burning flames the rich man was relegated for short-term pleasure. Of what use was that fattened flesh to him? How did affluence serve him? Look! Lying in such blazing heat and yet unable to procure a single drop of water! For he had actually observed Lazarus taking delight in Abraham’s bosom, and lifting up his voice he said: “Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.” Behold, he whom he looked down upon a little earlier, being on his high horse, for fear of whose sores and at whose festered flesh he used to shudder—now he requests assistance for relief from him, crushed, as he was, under torture.

But what did Abraham say to him in reply? “Son,” said he, “thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and thou art tormented.” You need to be convinced about this one thing, dear brother, that you are momentarily enduring wicked things so that you may rejoice for eternity in Abraham’s bosom and not think that you will live in the same condition again after death.

12. Now listen to what blessed Job hoped for while he was facing such great ordeals. For he endured the tortures of the body very patiently rather because of this, that he was confident that on the day of the resurrection he was going to be moulded for the better into that same body. Listen, for instance, to what he says while in the midst of his very woes: “For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise, and I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my Lord; whom I myself shall see, and not another. This my hope is laid up in my bosom.” You, brother, as well, maintain this kind of hope and this kind of confidence—that after death, immortal, you will be clothed in splendour—and you will be able to bear with ease and equanimity all your body’s torments. Moreover, not only will this redemptive suffering not afflict you in the least, but it will afford rejoicing besides. But if what I have said about the body’s transformation is insufficient, listen to what Paul quite clearly is likewise teaching about such matters, how he reproves the unbelieving and those vacillating in mind. Even at that time some were saying: “How do the dead rise again? Or with what manner of body do they come?” To these he replies as follows: “Senseless man,” says he, “that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die first. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be: but bare grain, as of wheat, or of some of the rest. But God giveth it a body as he will.” In other words, it is the same as when you sow a bare corn-kernel in the ground having no vesture of green and after it has rotten away in the soil it multiplies a second time and springs up in ears of corn once more; and it does not do so actually in the form of bare grains but as if clad in a garment of some fair cluster of husks—for this is the meaning of what he says: “but God giveth it a body as he will.” Similarly in fact, this perishable body is not actually enlivened when presently buried in the bosom of the earth: it is sown like a corn-kernel. But when the time of the resurrection comes by God’s command, it will not rise perishable as it was sown, but imperishable and immortal. For he continues in the following verses, saying: “It is sown,” says he, “in corruption; it shall rise in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour; it shall rise in glory. It is sown in weakness; it shall rise in power. It is sown a natural body; it shall rise a spiritual body.” That is, this body, which we are

now wearing, decays quickly after death and turns into the putrefaction of worms. Occasionally, it is loosened asunder even before death, and the limb joints come apart through festering rot before it breathes its last. It is visited with many an injury, suffers from many maladies; it hungers, it thirsts, it tires, it is worried, it experiences the harshness of the cold. But this body is an animal body, that is to say, animated by the breath through which we enter this life; that, however, which rises anew is spiritual because it is born again through the Holy Spirit. For so it is written in the psalm: "Thou shalt send forth thy spirit, and they shall be created; and thou shalt renew the face of the earth." Just now, we carry around an earthly body, but at that time we will be clothed in a celestial one—because there are "bodies celestial and bodies terrestrial; but one is the glory of the celestial, and another of the terrestrial." The splendour of earthly bodies is in fact transitory and lasts but for a time. The splendour of heavenly bodies, however, is everlasting, in that it will become clearly manifested when "this corruptible will put on incorruption, and this mortal will put on immortality." Do not doubt, therefore, beloved, that you can be clad in a heavenly body. Reject the thought that the taint of leprosy or of any bodily affliction of whatever kind severs us from celestial splendour. On the contrary, it is rather by way of these things that the kingdom of heaven is earned as we learn from the example of blessed Job and Lazarus that we mentioned. For sure, we are shut out of the kingdom if blemishes of sin remain in us; we are shut out of the kingdom if we believe that the omnipotent God lacks power. For he calls God weak who reckons that he cannot be changed for the better by God. Is the mighty Lord able to quicken and revive desiccated bones and withered flesh that has been reduced to nothing but unable to transform them into the splendor of heavenly bodies? Do not, brother, I beg you, entertain such beliefs so that you do not deny the omnipotence of God, that you do not declare him feeble in this respect.

**13.** But perhaps your mind despairs of life from this, that you claim you have committed many sins and have been covered with these lesions on account of your transgressions. And yet, you must rather discern God's compassion for you in this, not hatred, seeing that he wanted to free you from flaws in this life as a son so as to receive you in the next faultless and purified in mind. For so it is written: "whom the Lord loves, he rebukes and scourges every son whom he receives." Therefore, if you see a sinner sustaining no loss, labouring under no bodily affliction, overcome with no distress—know well that the Lord rejects this person because they have sinned a great deal and that they are not scourged because they do not deserve to be received.

You, however, he chastises for this reason, so as not to deliver you to eternal death. For so does blessed David say: “The Lord chastising hath chastised me; but he hath not delivered me over to death.” Now, when Jerusalem sinned against the Lord, killing the prophets who had been sent to reform it, he handed it over to Babylon’s ransacking and bondage for this reason: to turn his sons to him through the yoke of captivity—not with a view to punishing but to restoring them to a better state. Finally, seventy years later, he called them back to their native land. For here is how the Lord comforts Jerusalem with his priests in Jeremiah: “Speak, ye priests, to the heart of Jerusalem and comfort her; for she has drunk from the cup of the Lord’s fury, and she has received of the Lord double *the amount of her sins*.” If you are a righteous person, therefore, it is fit for you to rejoice in misfortunes, seeing that you are counted still more worthy. But if you are a sinner, likewise rejoice for being afflicted. For the reason you are afflicted is that you may wash your sins’ squalor away in this world and so find comfort in the next. Both righteous and sinners will gain from their hearts’ distress because “a sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit; a broken and humbled heart God will not despise.” Now, should a transgressor not wish to amend their former conduct but bring their life to a point of despair in being punished by the Lord; should they say, “there is no longer mercy for me, the Lord has now forsaken me; my entire life is now in ruins; I entertain no hope of peace after death; if the Lord had not despised me because of human failings, he would not be exhausting me with such torments”—that person with that manner of attitude becomes in fact the cause of their own death. They slay themselves of their own accord with the sword of despair and show that they are of the number of those whom the prophet denounces, saying: “Thou hast scourged them, but they have not grieved; thou hast flogged them, and they have refused to receive correction.” But I beg you, brother, shun such company in every way possible and accept the divine verdict joyfully and gladly. Declare yourself too: “The judgments of the Lord are sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.” For even if the punishment appears bitter for the moment, it bears sweet fruit in the future. This punishment sets you on the way out of error and goads you on to virtue; through it, death is driven out and life is obtained; it is without the sorrow of future suffering, and it secures perpetual delight. This punishment curbs arrogance and generates humility, in which the Lord finds rest. You, too, declare, “It is good for me that thou hast humbled me, that I may learn thy justifications”—for if you heed my advice cheerfully, if you do not desist from offering thanksgiving and praises to God, and if you bless the Lord every hour, you will feel that you are in spirit with the Lord. Indeed, he is always with God who is mindful

of God. The Lord will actually soothe your body's suffering as well; he will actually strengthen your spirit to build up endurance. And although you will appear to be filled to the brim with sores in the body, you will have a sound and unimpaired mind within; by the aid of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns unto the ages of ages. AMEN.

