

—who is their donor—more and more inspired thoughts in addition to the present, so as to treat the subject again and do better justice to its grandeur and sublimity, and with greater clarity. But for now do read this with your kindly indulgence.

EXHORTATION TO MARTYRDOM

(Εἰς μαρτύριον προτρεπτικός)¹

PART I: INTRODUCTION—EXHORTATION TO MARTYRDOM

*Weaned from milk, drawn away from the breast—accept tribulation upon tribulation, accept hope upon hope—after a little, after a little—through contempt of lips, through another tongue.*²

You, too, my most pious friends in God, Ambrose and Protoctetus,³ according to Isaias are no longer *carnal*, nor *infants in Christ*, but rather have *advanced in the age of intelligence*.⁴ You no longer have need of milk, but of *solid food*.⁵ Hear then how, since you have been weaned from milk and drawn away from the breast, not a simple tribulation, but tribulation upon tribulation is prophesied for you as for athletes⁶ that have indeed been weaned. He who does not refuse *tribulation upon tribulation*, but promptly *accepts* it as a valiant athlete would, *accepts* also *hope upon hope* which he will enjoy shortly after the *tribulation upon tribulation*. This is the meaning of: *after a little, after a little*.

2. Even if men who are ignorant of the language of Sacred Scripture condemn, despise, and treat us as mad or impious, we should remind ourselves that the *hope upon hope* which will be given us *after a little* will be given us *through contempt of lips, through another tongue*. Who would not *accept tribulation upon tribulation* in order

forthwith to *accept hope upon hope?* With Paul he thinks that *the sufferings of this time*, by means of which we, so to speak, purchase a blessed life hereafter, *are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us* by God;⁷ and that especially as *this light and momentary affliction*—called light, and in fact light for such as are not overwhelmed by circumstances—the more it exceeds all bounds, the greater and richer *the weight of eternal glory it works for us*.⁸ This will be so if to the discomfiture of those who would afflict and, as it were, stifle our souls, we refuse to let our minds dwell upon our troubles and consider not these present evils, but rather the good which will accrue to us from endurance of them and is reserved for them that by the grace of God have *struggled lawfully* in Christ.⁹ For God multiplies His benefits and grants favours which outweigh what is merited by the toils of combat. And these are such as could not be given by a parsimonious God, but a generous giver who in His wisdom multiplies His graces towards those who through their contempt of this *earthen vessel* show with all their might that they love Him with their *whole soul*.¹⁰

3. I believe that they love God with their *whole* soul who, because of their great desire to be united with Him, separate and cut off their soul not only from the earthly body but from every kind of body. Without distraction or disturbance they undergo separation from *the body of their lowliness*¹¹ when through death, as it is held to be, the opportunity offers of putting away *the body of this death*,¹² and of being heard when praying with the Apostle: *Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Is there any of them that *groan in this tabernacle*¹³ because they are *burdened with*

a corruptible body,¹⁴ who would not give thanks to God? First he says: *Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Then, seeing that he has been *delivered from the body of this death* through communion with Him, he will cry out in all piety: Thanks be to *God through Christ Jesus, Our Lord!*¹⁵ If this seems hard to anyone, then he has not *thirsted after the strong living God*; nor has he panted after God *as the hart panteth after the fountains of water*; nor has he said, *When shall I come and appear before the face of God?* Nor has he reflected within himself as did the prophet *whilst it was said to him daily, Where is thy God?* He poured out his soul within him, and reproached it for still being disquieted and troubled because of his weakness, saying: *I shall go over into the place of the wonderful tabernacle, even to the house of God, with the voice of exultation and praise resounding as of one feasting*.¹⁶

4. I would wish you, then, during the whole of the present trial¹⁷ to remember the great reward prepared in heaven for those who are persecuted and mocked *for justice's sake* and the Son of man.¹⁸ Be *glad and rejoice* and exult, as did the Apostles when they were *accounted worthy to suffer reproach for His name!*¹⁹ And if it happens that your soul feels some sadness, let the Spirit of Christ in us²⁰ say to that soul that wishes, in so far as it can, to trouble Him also: *Why art thou sad, O soul? And why dost thou trouble me? Hope in God, for I will give praise to Him.*²¹ O that our soul might not be troubled, but that even before the judgment seats, before the swords ready to behead us, our soul be preserved by the peace of God which *surpasseth all understanding*,²² and be tranquil in the thought that they that leave the body live with the Lord of all things!²³

But if we are not such that we can always preserve tranquillity, at least we should not allow our anxiety of soul to show itself and become obvious to unbelievers. In this way we can still justify ourselves before God, saying to Him: *My God, my soul is troubled within myself.*²⁴ Reason, too, invites us to remember the word spoken in Isaias: *Fear ye not the reproach of men and be not overcome by their blasphemies.*²⁵ God manifestly watches over the movement of the heavens and the stars and over all the animals and plants of all kinds that on the earth and in the sea through His divine art are brought to perfection in birth, development, nourishment, and increase. So it would clearly be absurd for us to close our eyes to this²⁶ and not to look to God, and to have regard rather for men and to fear them—men who will soon die and be delivered up to the punishment which they deserve.

5. God once said to Abraham, *Go forth out of thy country.*²⁷ Soon perhaps we may hear it said to us, "Go forth out of every country." It will be well for us to obey, so that soon we may see the heavens in which is to be had what is called "the kingdom of the heavens."

You will observe that life is filled with contests and contestants for many virtues. Thus it will appear that many even of those who are not on God's side²⁸ have fought for *temperance*; that others have died with *fortitude* in remaining faithful to their convictions for a common master. Men who are versed in the investigation of the sciences have been concerned about *prudence*, and men who proposed to live justly have given themselves to *justice*. And against every virtue is ranged either *the wisdom of the flesh* or most of the forces from outside. But on the side of piety there fights only *the chosen generation, the kingly priesthood, the holy nation, the purchased people.*²⁹

When piety meets with opposition, all other men do not even pretend to show that they are ready to die for piety, and that they prefer death and piety to life and impiety. But whoever wishes to belong to *the chosen generation* obediently listens to God saying at all times to him—even when the atheists (although they may claim to be polytheists³⁰) conspire against him: *Thou shalt not have strange Gods before me;*³¹ and, *The name of strange gods you shall not remember in your hearts, neither shall it be heard out of your mouth.*³² Therefore such men *believe with the heart unto justice, but with the mouth make confession unto salvation.*³³ They realize that they cannot be justified except they believe in God in this way and their heart be so disposed, and that they will not be saved unless their speech correspond to such disposition. They who think that to attain this final goal in Christ it is enough to *believe with the heart unto justice*, without *with the mouth making confession unto salvation*, deceive themselves. One might say that it is better to honour God with our lips and have our heart far from Him, than to honour Him in our heart,³⁴ and not confess Him with our mouth unto salvation.

PART II: WARNING AGAINST IDOLATRY AND APOSTASY

IDOLATRY

6. In the same way when God says: *Thou shalt not make to thyself idols nor the likeness of any thing,*³⁵ etc., apparently drawing a distinction between *Thou shalt not bow before them* and *Thou shalt not worship them,*³⁶ He warns a man inclined to idolatry not to practise it. But when a man who is not so inclined, but yet through cowardice, which he calls "accommodation," pretends to worship idols as the masses do, he does not, it is true, *worship* idols, but he does bow *before them*. And I would say that they who abjure Christianity in the courtroom or even before they are brought there, do not *worship* idols, but they do *bow down before them*; for they apply to inanimate and unheeding matter the name of the Lord God, namely "God." In like manner *the people that committed fornication with the daughters of Moab*³⁷ bowed down before idols, but did not worship them. At least, this is stated clearly: *They called them to the sacrifices to their idols, and the people ate of their sacrifices, and they bowed down to their idols and they were initiated to Beelphegor.*³⁸ Note that it is not said, "they worshipped their idols." Indeed, it was impossible that after so many signs and prodigies they should have allowed themselves to be persuaded in an instant by the women, with whom they committed fornication, that the idols were gods. It may be also that

they bowed down before the calf, of which there is mention made in Exodus,³⁹ without *worshipping* an object that they gazed at when it was in the process of construction.

We must believe then that the present trial is a test and scrutiny of our love for God: *For the Lord trieth you, as is written in Deuteronomy, that He may know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul.*⁴⁰ But in the trial, follow the Lord your God, and fear Him, and keep His commandments (and especially this one: *Thou shalt not have strange Gods before me*⁴¹) and hear His voice. And to Him you shall cleave.⁴² He does indeed take you from these regions, but for that He draws you to what the Apostle calls *the increase of God*⁴³ in Him.

APOSTASY

7. If every evil word is an abomination to the Lord thy God,⁴⁴ how great an abomination must be the evil word of denial, the evil word of public recognition of another god, and the evil oath taken by the fortune⁴⁵ of men, a thing that does not endure! When this oath is proposed to us, we should remember Him who said: *But I say to you not to swear at all.*⁴⁶ If he that swears by heaven insults the throne of God; if he that swears by the earth blasphemes in making divine the footstool of God;⁴⁷ if he that swears by Jerusalem sins because it is the city of the great king;⁴⁸ and he that swears by his head⁴⁹ is blameworthy—then what kind of crime must be the oath taken by the fortune of a man? In such circumstances we should recall the words: *Every idle word that you shall speak, you shall render an account for it on the day of judgment.*⁵⁰

And what word could be more idle than a denial reinforced by an oath?

It is quite likely that the Enemy will want to induce us by every possible trick to bow down to *the sun and the moon and all the host of heaven*.⁵¹ But we shall reply that the Word of God did not command us to do so. For in no way may we bow down to the creature in the presence of the Creator⁵² who sustains all and anticipates their prayer. Not even the sun himself would wish that any friend of God⁵³ or anyone else, it would seem, should bow down to him. He imitates Him who says, *Why callest thou me good? None is good but one, that is God the Father*.⁵⁴ He says, as it were, to him that would bow down to him: "Why do you call me God? There is only one true God: why do you bow down before me? *Thou shalt bow down to the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou worship*."⁵⁵ I too am created. Why do you wish to bow down to him who himself bows down? I too bow down to God the Father and I worship Him; and obedient to His commands, I am *made subject to vanity . . . by reason of Him that made me subject in hope. . . . I shall be delivered from the servitude of corruption, (I who am also clothed in a corruptible body) into the liberty of the glory of the children of God*."⁵⁶

8. We can be prepared to find some prophet even of impiety—and perhaps not just one, but several—who will tell us of a word of the Lord, which the Lord has not at all commanded,⁵⁷ or of a *word of wisdom*,⁵⁸ which has nothing whatever to do with wisdom. His purpose is to slay us by the word of his mouth. But as for ourselves, when the sinner comes before us, let us say: *But I, as a deaf man, heard not, and as a dumb man not opening his mouth.*

And I became as a man that heareth not.⁵⁹ It is indeed virtuous to be deaf to impious words, when we despair of correcting them that speak evil.

9. When men try to seduce us to apostasy, it is useful to reflect upon what God wishes to teach us when He says: *I am the Lord thy God, jealous*.⁶⁰ In my view, just as the bridegroom who wishes to make his bride live chastely so as to give herself entirely to him and beware of any relationship whatever with any man other than her husband, pretends, though he be wise, to be jealous—he uses this pretence as a kind of antidote for his bride—so the Lawgiver, especially when He reveals Himself as *the first-born of every creature*,⁶¹ says to His bride, the soul, that He is a jealous God. In this way He keeps His followers from any fornication with demons and pretended gods. And it is as God jealous in this sense that He says of them that have fornicated in any way with strange gods: *They have made me jealous of that which was not God; they have angered me with their idols. And I shall make them jealous of that which is not a people; I shall anger them with a foolish people. For a fire is kindled in my wrath; it shall burn even to the lowest hell*.⁶²

10. If it is not in his own interest that the bridegroom, acting wisely and temperately, keeps his bride away from all defilement—at any rate, it will be for her sake. He sees the defilement and abomination that come on her, and employs every means to heal and win her back. He sees in her a being endowed with free will, and addresses himself to her with arguments that may have the effect of turning her from fornication. Does anyone believe that a soul could suffer greater corruption than to call upon a strange god and to refuse to bear witness to Him who is truly the

one and only God? In my opinion, just as he *who is joined to a harlot is one body*,⁶³ so he who bears witness to someone, especially in a time of persecution and trial of faith, unites and joins himself to him to whom he bears witness. And he who denies is by the denial, just as by a sharp sword, separated from him whom he denies. He experiences the separation in being cut off from him whom he has denied.

Know, then, that naturally and necessarily he who bears witness will have witness borne to him, and he that denies will be denied, as it is said: *Every one that shall bear witness to me before men, I will also bear witness to him before my Father who is in heaven.*⁶⁴ And He who is the Word itself and Truth itself may well say to him who bore witness to Him and to him who denied Him: "*With the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.*"⁶⁵ You, then, who have measured with the measure of bearing witness and have filled up that measure, you will receive of me the measure of my bearing witness to you, *pressed down and shaken together and running over*, which will be *given into your bosom*.⁶⁶ But you who have measured with the measure of denial and have denied me, you likewise will receive, according to the measure of your denial, the measure of my denial of you."

PART III: ADMONITION TO PERSEVERE

BEARING WITNESS TO GOD

11. As to how the measure of bearing witness is filled up, or is not filled up but falls short, the following reflections may show. If during all the time of trial and test we *give no place to the devil*⁶⁷ in our hearts, when he would defile us with evil thoughts of denial, as indecision or some inducement draws us away from martyrdom and perfection; if in addition we do not defile ourselves with any word that is incompatible with bearing witness; if we endure all the taunts of our adversaries, their insults, mockery, obloquy, and their pretended pity when they treat us as fools and madmen and say that we are mere dupes; and if besides we do not permit ourselves to be seduced either by love for our children or their mother or any one of those regarded as dearest to us in life, nor to be lured away to their possession and this kind of life; but if turning from all of these we give ourselves entirely to God and to life with Him and near Him with a view to sharing union with His Only-Begotten Son and those who have a share in Him:⁶⁸ then we can say that we have filled up the measure of bearing witness. But if we are wanting in as little as one of these points, we have not filled up, but rather defiled, the measure of bearing witness, and have mixed with it some foreign element; and we shall therefore be in need of the same as they who have built on a foundation of wood or hay or stubble.⁶⁹

THE FOLLOWING OF CHRIST

12. This we must know also that we have received the so-called covenants from God in virtue of agreements we made when we accepted the Christian way of life. Amongst these agreements which we made with God was the observance of the entire pattern of living set out in the Gospel, which says: *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For he that will save his life shall lose it: and he that shall lose his life for my sake shall save it.* And often we have been filled with enthusiasm when we heard these words: *For what doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul? Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels: and then will He render to every man according to his works.*⁷⁰

But not only Matthew, whose words we have quoted, but also Luke and Mark tell us that we must deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Jesus. Listen, for example, to what Luke says: *And He said to all: If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and he that shall lose his life for my sake shall save it. For what is a man advantaged if he gain the whole world and lose himself and cast away himself?*⁷¹ And Mark: *And calling the multitude together with His disciples, He said to them: If any man will follow me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for the sake of the gospel shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world,*

*and suffer the loss of his soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*⁷²

It is a long time, then, since we contracted the obligation to deny ourselves and say, *I live, now not I;*⁷³ and now let it appear whether we have taken up our cross and follow Jesus,—which is the case if *Christ liveth in us.*⁷⁴ If we wish to save our soul so as to receive it back better than a soul, let us lose it in martyrdom. For if we lose it for Christ's sake, laying it before Him in dying for Him, we shall achieve for it its true salvation. If we do the opposite, we shall be told that it profits nothing to gain the whole material universe at the price of our own destruction or loss. Once a man has lost his soul or forfeited it, even if he gain the whole world, he cannot give that world *in exchange for his soul* that is lost. For that soul, *created to the image of God,*⁷⁵ is more precious than all material things. One alone can redeem our soul if it is lost—He who purchased us with His precious blood.⁷⁶

13. Isaias has some profound words on this when he says: *I have given Egypt for thy ransom and Ethiopia and Syene for thee. Since then thou becamest precious in my eyes.*⁷⁷ If you are eager to study in Christ the exact meaning of this and the other texts; if, in wishing to pass beyond that knowledge which we have *through a glass and in a dark manner*, you hasten after Him who summons you—you will understand all as never before, *face to face,*⁷⁸ as being friends of the heavenly Father and Teacher. For His friends see things as they are, and not *in a dark manner* or through mere book knowledge of words and expressions, symbols and types. They discover the nature of intelligibles and the beauty of truth.

If you believe that Paul *was caught up to the third*

heaven and that he *was caught up into paradise and heard secret words which it is not granted to man to utter*,⁷⁹ you must logically conclude that you yourselves will as a matter of course know secrets both more and greater than the ineffable words then revealed to Paul. For he descended from *the third heaven*, when he had heard them; but you, having heard them, will not descend. You will have *taken up your cross and followed Jesus*⁸⁰ in whom we have a great high priest that hath passed into the heavens.⁸¹

If you remain united with His followers, you, too, will pass into the heavens, passing beyond not only the earth and its mysteries but the heavens and all that concerns them. For in God as in a treasury are stored up wonders much greater than those mentioned, which cannot be grasped by a nature joined to a body until it has put off all that is of the body. I am convinced that God keeps stored in reserve in Himself far sublimer things than those that have been seen by sun, moon, and the chorus of stars and even the holy angels whom God has made *spirits and burning fire*.⁸² He will reveal these wonders when every *creature . . . shall be delivered from the servitude of the Enemy into the liberty of the glory of the children of God*.⁸³

THE MARTYR'S REWARD

14. And to these sublime things some outstanding martyr in the future, one of those who have a greater zeal for learning in Christ than many other martyrs, will ascend more quickly. You can see for yourself, my pious friend Ambrose, in contemplating closely a text in the Gospels, that probably no one of those who ever lived, or, at any rate, only a very few will receive that certain special and

greater fulness of beatitude. You, too, will be of this number if you come through the combat without faltering. The text is as follows: *Peter once said to the Saviour: Behold, we have left all things and have followed Thee: what therefore shall we have?* And Jesus said to them (clearly, to the apostles): *Amen, I say to you that you, who have followed me, in the regeneration when God shall sit on the seat of His majesty, you also shall sit on twelve seats judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath left . . . brethren or sisters or parents or children or lands or houses for my name's sake, shall receive many times more and shall possess life everlasting*.⁸⁴ In view of these words I myself would like to possess all the earthly goods that you possess or even more, and be a martyr to God in Christ so as to receive *many times more*, or, as Mark says,⁸⁵ *a hundredfold more*, which indeed is much more than the little—even if it were multiplied by a hundred—that we shall give up if we are called to martyrdom.

For this reward I would, if I were a martyr, wish to leave behind children and lands and houses that I might, in the presence of God the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, of *whom all paternity in heaven and earth is named*,⁸⁶ be called father of many more and more holy children, or, to be precise, of a hundred times more children. If they are fathers of whom it was said to Abraham: *And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace, living to a ripe old age*,⁸⁷ perhaps one might say (I do not know if it be true): Perhaps these fathers are such in having once upon a time borne witness and left their children behind them. In exchange for these, they have become fathers of the fathers of the patriarch Abraham and other patriarchs. For it is obvious that martyrs who leave their children be-

hind them and bear witness, become fathers, not of children, but of fathers.

15. Someone, *zealous*, as it were, *for the better gifts*⁸⁸ and considering fortunate the rich martyrs and the martyrs who are fathers and are rich in that they beget a hundred times more children and receive a hundred times more lands and houses, may not be able to understand how it can be fair that these should possess in the spiritual world much greater riches than martyrs who were poor in the goods of this life. We should answer him that as they who have endured tortures and pain gave more illustrious evidence of virtue in martyrdom than those who have not endured such trials, so they that have cut and torn not only the bonds of love for life and body, but also these other great worldly bonds, have shown a great love for God and have truly taken up *the word of God that is living and effectual and more piercing than any two-edged sword*.⁸⁹ Having cut so great bonds, they have *made for themselves wings like those of an eagle*, and can *fly up to the house of him who is their Lord*.⁹⁰ Just as they who have not gone through the trial of tortures and pain give pride of place to those who have proved their constancy on the rack, through diverse tortures and fire, so we too who are poor, even if we be martyrs, are urged by reason to yield first prize to you, if for the love of God in Christ⁹¹ you trod underfoot reputation, deceitful and sought for by the masses, your great possessions, and the affection of a father for his children.

16. Here note also an illustration of the sublime character of Scripture in promising a return many times over or a hundredfold—of brothers and children and parents and lands and houses: but with these no mention is made

of a wife. It is not said: "Every one that hath left brethren or sisters or parents or children or lands or houses *or a wife* for my name's sake, shall receive them many times over." *For in the resurrection of the dead they shall neither marry nor be married, but shall be as the angels of God in heaven*.⁹²

OUR PROMISES TO GOD

17. What Josue said to the people when he was settling them in the holy land could equally well be said to us now by Scripture: *Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve Him with a perfect and most sincere heart*.⁹³ And when they would seduce us to idolatry, it will tell us what to do, as follows: *Put away the strange gods which your fathers served on the other side of the river and in Egypt, and serve the Lord*.⁹⁴

At the beginning when you were about to be instructed,⁹⁵ you might well have been told: *But if it does not please you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you would serve, whether the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the river, or the gods of the Amorrites, in whose land you dwell*.⁹⁶ And the instructor told you: *But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord, for He is holy*.⁹⁷ Now, however, it is out of place to speak to you in that way. For you have declared: *God forbid we should leave the Lord and serve strange gods. The Lord our God is the God who brought us and our fathers out of Egypt and preserved us in all the way by which we journeyed*.⁹⁸ In the promises you once made concerning the worship of God, you gave this reply to those who instructed you: *We too will serve the Lord, for He is our God*.⁹⁹ If, then, the man who breaks his

agreements with men receives no further credit and is denied security, what are we to say of those who by their denial break the promises they have made to God, and return to Satan whom they renounced at their baptism? ¹⁰⁰ Of such an act we must say what Heli said to his sons: *If a man sinning shall sin against another, men will intercede for him. But if a man shall sin against God, who shall intercede for him?* ¹⁰¹

A SPECTACLE BEFORE ALL

18. A great multitude is assembled to watch you when you combat and are called to martyrdom. It is as if we said that thousands upon thousands gather to watch a contest in which contestants of outstanding reputation are engaged. When you will be engaged in the conflict you can say with Paul: *We are made a spectacle to the world and to angels and to men.* ¹⁰² The whole world, therefore, all the angels on the right and on the left, all men, both those on the side of God ¹⁰³ and the others—all will hear us fighting the fight for Christianity. Either the angels in heaven will rejoice over us, and *the rivers shall clap their hands, the mountains shall rejoice together, and all the trees of the plain shall clap their branches* ¹⁰⁴—or—and God forbid that it should happen—the powers of the lower world will gloat over our crime and will be glad.

It will certainly not be out of place for us to see what according to the written word of Isaias will be said by the denizens of hell to them that are overcome and fall from a martyrdom rewarded with heaven. We shall then tremble even <more> at the impiousness of denial. What will be said to one who has denied his faith is, I think,

something like this: *Hell below was in an uproar to meet thee at thy coming. All the giants who rule the earth were stirred up for thee. They roused from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All shall answer and say to thee.* . . . ¹⁰⁵ And what will the powers that were overcome say to them that are overcome? They that are already taken by the devil to them that are taken in their denial? What indeed will they say? *Thou also art taken as we are. Thou art become one of us.* ¹⁰⁶ And if a man who has a great and glorious hope in God, permits himself in God to be overcome by fear or sufferings with which he is threatened in court, he will hear this: *Thy pride, thy great confidence, is brought down to hell. Under thee shall they strew corruption, and worms shall be thy covering.* ¹⁰⁷ And if a man has shone in the churches, resplendent often as the morning star in the glory of his good works before men, ¹⁰⁸ and if afterwards, fighting the great fight, he has lost the crown of such high estate, he shall have to hear: *How Lucifer has fallen from heaven, Lucifer who did rise in the morning! How he has been dashed to the earth!* ¹⁰⁹ And because through his denial he has become like the devil, this will also be said to him: *Thou wilt be cast out in the mountains as a rotten carcass with many dead that have been pierced by the sword and that go down to hell. As a garment soaked with blood will be impure, so shall thou be impure.* ¹¹⁰ How could he be pure if he has sullied himself with bloody murder, the abominable crime of apostasy, and immersed himself in so great an evil?

Let us now show that we have heeded the words, *He that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.* ¹¹¹ Let us take care that we never show hesitation about denial or bearing witness, that the words of Elias

may not be addressed to us: *How long do you halt between two sides? If the Lord be God, follow Him.*¹¹²

19. It is probable that we shall be insulted by our neighbours, and certain people we associate with will turn up their noses and shake their heads at us as though we were mad.¹¹³ When this happens, let us say to God: *Thou hast made us a reproach to our neighbours, a scoff and derision to them that are around us. Thou hast made us a byword among the Gentiles, a shaking of the head among the people. All the day long my shame is before me, and the confusion of my face hath covered me, at the voice of him that reproacheth and detracteth me, at the face of the enemy and persecutor.*¹¹⁴ But in the face of all this befalling us there is also bliss in addressing to God the confident words of the Prophet: *All these things have come upon us, yet we have not forgotten Thee, and we have not done wickedly in Thy covenant. And our heart hath not turned back.*¹¹⁵

20. Let us remember while we are in this life and reflecting on the ways that are not of this life, to say to God, *Thou hast turned aside our footsteps from Thy way.*¹¹⁶ Now is the time to recall that this place of our humiliation is a place of affliction for the soul; and so we can pray, saying: *Thou hast humbled us in the place of affliction, and the shadow of death hath covered us.*¹¹⁷ And we shall take courage and say: *If we have forgotten the name of our God, and if we have spread forth our hands to a strange god: shall not God search out these things?*¹¹⁸

21. Let us fight so as to bear our witness perfectly not only in public, but also in secret, so as to be able to declare with the Apostle: *For our glory is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and sincerity of God . . .*

*we have conversed in this world.*¹¹⁹ Let us add the words of the Prophet to those of the Apostle, *He knoweth the secrets of our hearts*¹²⁰—and especially is this true when we are driven to death, and say to God what martyrs alone say to Him: *For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.*¹²¹ And if ever the wisdom of the flesh¹²² should make us fear the judges that threaten us with death, then let us say to them these words from Proverbs: *My son, honour the Lord and thou shalt be strong. Fear no man apart from Him.*¹²³

suffer an honourable death for the venerable and holy laws.¹²⁷

When you are at the gates of death, or rather, of liberty, I beg of you, especially if you are subjected to torture—and certainly the designs of the opposition do not permit us to expect that you will not suffer—to say words such as these: *To the Lord who hath the holy knowledge, it is manifest that, whereas I might be delivered from death, I suffer grievous pains in my body because I am scourged; but in my soul I am well content to suffer these things because I fear Thee.*¹²⁸ Thus did Eleazar die, and it can be said of him that *he left not only to the young men, but also to most of his nation, his death for an example of noble character and a memorial of fortitude.*¹²⁹

THE SEVEN BROTHERS

23. The seven brothers, whose story is told in the books of the Machabees,¹³⁰ who were *tortured with whips and scourges*¹³¹ by Antiochus, and who remained constant in their religion, can also serve as an admirable example of heroic martyrdom to all who ask themselves if they can allow themselves to be outstripped by mere children. They not only endured tortures in their own persons, but showed also a virile tenacity of faith when they had to look on at the sufferings of their brothers. One of them who, as the Scriptures term him, was their spokesman, said to the tyrant: *What wouldst thou ask or learn of us? We are ready to die rather than transgress the laws of our fathers.*¹³²

Need we describe all their sufferings—the *frying pans and brazen cauldrons made hot*¹³³ in which they were to be tortured after they had each been subjected to various

PART IV: EXAMPLES OF MARTYRDOM

ELEAZAR

22. The following also serves our purpose. Solomon says in Ecclesiastes: *I praised all the dead rather than the living, as many as are living up to now.*¹²⁴ What dead person could be more deserving of praise than he who of his own choice elected to die for his religion? Such a one was Eleazar,¹²⁵ who, *choosing rather a most glorious death than a hateful life, went forward voluntarily to the torment.*¹²⁶ Reasoning in a noble-minded manner worthy of his ninety years and the dignity of his old age and the distinction that had come to him in his grey hair, and his excellent upbringing from childhood, but more so of the ordinances of the holy law made by God, he said: *It doth not become our age to dissemble: whereby many young persons might think that Eleazar, at the age of fourscore and ten years, was gone over to the life of the heathens; and so they, through my dissimulation and for a little respite of a brief life, should be deceived, and hereby I should bring a stain and a shame upon my old age. For though for the present time I should be delivered from the punishments of men, yet should I not escape the hand of the Almighty, neither alive nor dead. Wherefore by departing manfully out of this life, I shall show myself worthy of my old age; and I shall leave an example of fortitude to young men—with a ready mind and constancy to*

torments? The one, for example, who is called their spokesman, first had his tongue cut out, and then was scalped in the Scythian fashion. This he endured as others endure the circumcision ordained by the divine law, for he believed that in enduring this he was also carrying out the word of God.¹⁸⁴ Antiochus, not satisfied with all this, gave orders *to chop off the extremities of his hands and feet, the rest of his brethren and his mother looking on.*¹⁸⁵ In this way he meant to punish his brothers and mother by what they were witnessing, and thought he could shake their determination by something presumably so horrible. Antiochus, not satisfied, *commanded him* whose entire body had been maimed by the tortures he had already inflicted upon him, but who was still breathing, *to be brought to the fire of the frying pans and cauldrons and to fry him.*¹⁸⁶ And when because of the savagery of the tyrant, vapour was given forth by the flesh of the most noble champion¹⁸⁷ of faith as he was being roasted, *the rest, together with the mother, exhorted one another to die manfully,*¹⁸⁸ consoling themselves with the thought that God saw all these things. The conviction that the eye of God¹⁸⁹ was watching over their sufferings was sufficient assurance for their constancy. And the Judge of the champions of faith comforted them, comforted Himself and, so to say, rejoiced with them for struggling against such great sufferings. If we find ourselves in like pains, it would be well for us to say what they said to one another: *The Lord God looks upon us and takes pleasure in the truth in us.*¹⁴⁰

24. The first having been proved in this way as gold is proved in the furnace,¹⁴¹ the second was brought to be made a mockingstock.¹⁴² The servants of the tyrant's

cruelty, *having pulled off the skin of his head with the hair,*¹⁴³ called upon the sufferer to change his mind and asked him if he would eat of the meats offered to idols *before he were punished throughout the whole body in every limb.*¹⁴⁴ When he refused to change his purpose, he was made to endure the whole series of tortures, but he maintained his constancy to his last breath. Without breaking down in the least or giving in to his sufferings, he said to the impious man: *Thou indeed, O most wicked man, destroyest us out of this present life; but the King of the world will raise us up, who die for His laws, in the resurrection of eternal life.*¹⁴⁵

25. The third, too, counting the tortures as nothing and as it were treading them under his feet in his love of God, *when he was required, quickly put forth his tongue and courageously stretched out his hands, and said: For the laws of God I abandon these. I hope to receive them again*¹⁴⁶ from God in such condition as God certainly will return them to His loyal athletes.

In the same way the fourth was tortured and bore his sufferings, saying: *When we are made to die at human hands, it is better to look for hope from God, and to be raised up again by Him*¹⁴⁷ in a resurrection where the tyrant will not be found. For he will rise not to life but to mockery and everlasting shame.

And then Antiochus had the fifth tortured, who rebuked him, telling him to his face that he was only a mortal man, but without making any impression on his arrogance and his notion that a tyranny of a few days was great power. In the midst of his sufferings he also declared that *his people was not abandoned by God, who would presently torment Antiochus and his seed.*¹⁴⁸

And after him the sixth, *being close to death*, said: *Be not deceived: we willingly suffer these things and give satisfaction for our sins so as to be cleansed in our pains.* Then he told the king that *he should not think that he would escape unpunished for having attempted to fight against God;*¹⁴⁹ for he indeed fights against God who fights them that are made divine by the Word.¹⁵⁰

26. Finally Antiochus took the youngest aside, and seeing that he was the brother of them that had made nothing of their terrible sufferings and that he shared their resolution, he resorted to other methods. He thought that he could be won *by persuasion and promises on oath to make him a rich and a happy man, if he would turn from the laws of his fathers, <and> to take him for a friend and put him in charge of the king's affairs.* When in his first effort he made no impression on the young man who paid no attention to words which were incompatible with his resolution, he *summoned the mother and counselled her to give the boy advice for his safety.* But she, acting as though she would try to win over her son to his wishes, *mocked the tyrant* and gave her son an earnest exhortation to perseverance—so much so that he did not wait for the torture to be inflicted upon him: he anticipated it and challenged the executioners, saying: “Why do you hesitate and delay? We obey the law given by God. We may not obey a commandment that is contrary to the words of God.” Like a king handing down a decision on subjects to be judged, he also gave judgment on the tyrant, condemning him rather than being condemned by him. And he told him that *for raising his hand against the children of heaven, he would not escape from the judgment of the almighty God who beholdeth all things.*¹⁵¹

27. Then one could see the mother of so many sons *bearing courageously* the sufferings and death of her sons, *for the hopes she had in God.*¹⁵² For the dew of piety and breath of holiness did not allow the fire of a mother's feelings, which inflames many mothers in the presence of most grievous ills, to be kindled within her heart.

I think that in view of our present purpose it was most useful to give here this story from the Scriptures. Thus we can see what piety and the love of God, which is stronger than all other loves, can achieve against the most cruel sufferings and the severest tortures. This love of God does not tolerate the co-existence of human weakness, but drives it away as an enemy alien from the whole soul. And this weakness has become powerless in the case of one who can say, *The Lord is my strength and my praise,*¹⁵³ and *I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me, Christ Jesus, Our Lord.*¹⁵⁴

PART V: THE NECESSITY, ESSENCE, AND KINDS OF MARTYRDOM

THE CHALICE OF SALVATION

28. From this episode we can learn also what martyrdom is and the special confidence¹⁵⁵ before God which is conferred by it. The saint has a special sense of honour and wishes to give a recompense for the benefits conferred on him by God; and so he looks around to see if he can do anything for the Lord in return for all that he has received. He finds that for a man of good intentions there is nothing to counterbalance, as it were, these benefits of God—except a martyr's death. In Psalm 115 there is written this rhetorical question: *What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me?* And then follows the reply to him who asks what he can render to the Lord for all he has received: *I will take the chalice of salvation, and I will call upon the name of the Lord.*¹⁵⁶ The "chalice of salvation" is the usual term used for martyrdom, as we see from the Gospel. There the Lord answers them that wish for a higher honour in sitting on the right and on the left of Jesus in His kingdom, saying: *Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink?*¹⁵⁷ He calls martyrdom a chalice, as is evident again from the words: *Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless not as I will but as Thou wilt.*¹⁵⁸ And again we learn that he who drinks the chalice that Jesus drank will sit, reign, and judge beside the King of Kings.¹⁵⁹ Such, then, is the chalice of salvation: he who takes it will call upon the

*name of the Lord, and whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*¹⁶⁰

LET THIS CHALICE PASS FROM ME

29. But perhaps because of the words: *Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me,*¹⁶¹ someone who does not understand the meaning of Scripture thoroughly, may think that the Saviour was in a way even afraid at the time of His passion. And if Jesus was afraid, a man may argue, how can a man remain steadfast forever?

Let us first ask those who make such an assumption regarding the Saviour whether He was inferior to him who said: *The Lord is my light and my saviour: whom shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life: of whom shall I be afraid? Whilst the wicked draw near against me to eat my flesh, they that trouble me and my enemies have themselves been weakened and have fallen. If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear. If war should rise up against me, in this will I be confident.*¹⁶² Most likely these words spoken by the prophet apply to no one else but the Saviour, who because of the light and salvation which have come to Him from the Father fears nobody and who because of the powerful protection given Him by God is afraid of no man. The heart of the Saviour never feared in any way when the whole camp of Satan was drawn up against Him. His heart, filled with holy knowledge, was confident in God when war rose up against Him. It is therefore impossible that the same man should say in fear: *Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me;*¹⁶³ and with fortitude: *If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear.*¹⁶⁴

In order that we may not overlook anything in this text, I would direct your attention to the demonstrative used with the word "chalice" in each of the three Gospels. Matthew wrote that the Lord said: *Father, if it be possible, let "this" chalice pass from me;*¹⁶⁵ Luke: *Father, if Thou wilt, remove "this" chalice from me;*¹⁶⁶ and Mark: *Abba, Father, all things are possible to Thee: remove "this" chalice from me.*¹⁶⁷ Now since every martyrdom that results in death, whatever be the cause of the death involved, is called a chalice, note whether it can be asserted that He did not ask for exemption from martyrdom as such when He said, *Let "this" chalice pass from me*—otherwise He would have said: "Let *the* chalice pass from me"; but that probably He meant *this* kind of chalice. One should remember the possibility that the Saviour considered the different kinds, so to speak, of chalice and what is achieved through each one of them; understood in His most profound wisdom their differences; asked to be excused from martyrdom with this particular issue; asked in silence, on the other hand, for a form of martyrdom much severer, so that through this other chalice might be wrought a benefit more universal, one reaching to a greater number of men. But such was not the will of the Father, which, as compared with the will of the Son and with the judgment of the Saviour, orders and disposes all things with superior wisdom.¹⁶⁸

Clearly *the chalice of salvation* mentioned in the Psalms is the death of martyrs. And that is why the sentence, *I will take the chalice of salvation, and will call upon the name of the Lord,*¹⁶⁹ is followed by, *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.*¹⁷⁰ Death, then, comes precious for us, if we are saints of God, and if we

are not unworthy to die—not the ordinary, so to speak, and fruitless death in religion, but that very special death, death for the sake of Christianity, piety, and holiness.

THE BAPTISM OF BLOOD

30. Let us remember also the sins that we have committed, and that except by baptism it is not possible to obtain remission of sins.¹⁷¹ But according to the laws of the Gospel one cannot be baptized twice in water and the spirit for the remission of sins.¹⁷² We are given, however, the baptism of martyrdom.¹⁷³ Obviously it bears this name from the fact that to the text: *Can you drink of the chalice that I drink?*¹⁷⁴ there is subjoined, *or be baptized with the baptism wherewith I am baptized?*¹⁷⁵ Elsewhere it is said: *And I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized. And how am I straitened until it be accomplished?*¹⁷⁶ Note also that the baptism of martyrdom, as received by our Saviour, atones for the world; so, too, when we receive it, it serves to atone for many. Just as they who assisted at the altar according to the law of Moses seemed to procure for the Jews remission for sins by the blood of goats and oxen,¹⁷⁷ so the souls of believers that *are beheaded for the testimony of Jesus,*¹⁷⁸ do not assist in vain at the altar of heaven,¹⁷⁹ but procure for them that pray the remission of sins. And likewise we learn that as the High Priest Jesus Christ offered Himself in sacrifice, so the priests, whose leader He is, also offer themselves in sacrifice;¹⁸⁰ for this reason one sees them at the altar as their proper place. But while some of the priests were without blemish and offered victims without blemish and so performed the divine service, others had blemishes such as are listed by Moses in Leviticus,¹⁸¹ and were kept away from the altar.

Who then is the priest without blemish who can offer a victim¹⁸² without blemish, if not he who bears witness to the last and fulfills every requirement of the concept of martyrdom? We have already spoken of him above.¹⁸³

31. We must not be surprised if this blessed state of the martyrs which will consist in profound peace and tranquillity and calm, has to be preceded by weather that seems menacing and, so to speak, wintry. It is in traversing the difficult and narrow course¹⁸⁴ in the winter's storm that all the blessed must first show how they have mastered their pilotage. Then will be realized the words of the Cantic of Canticles addressed to the bride who has come through the winter's blasts: *My beloved answereth, it is said, and speaks to me: Arise, come, my neighbour, my beautiful one, my dove. For, look, winter is now past, the rain is over and gone.*¹⁸⁵ And remember that you will hear the words, *the winter is now past*, only if you will struggle bravely and valiantly through the present winter's storm. It is only when *the winter is past and the rain is over and gone* that the flowers appear: *Planted in the house of the Lord, they shall flourish in the courts of the house of our God.*¹⁸⁶

THE CHOICE: MARTYRDOM OR IDOLATRY

32. Again, we know that, since we have been persuaded by Jesus to abandon idols and polytheism which is really atheism, the Enemy cannot persuade us to accept idolatry; but he tries to force it upon us. And so with this in view he sets upon those who come within his power and makes either martyrs or idolaters of them who are brought to trial. Even now he keeps on repeating: *All this will I give thee, if falling down thou wilt adore me.*¹⁸⁷ Let us

take care, therefore, never to adore idols or obey demons: for the idols of the Gentiles are demons.¹⁸⁸ How monstrous is it to give up the *sweet yoke* of Christ and *His light burden*¹⁸⁹ to submit oneself once more to the yoke of demons and to carry the burden of the gravest sins! And that, too, after we had learned that *the heart* of them that adore idols *is ashes*, and that *their life is more base than clay*;¹⁹⁰ and after we had said: *How deceitful are the idols which our fathers acquired; and there is none among them that can send rain!*¹⁹¹

33. It was not only Nabuchodonosor of long ago who *set up a statue of gold*, nor were Ananias, Azarias and Misael of his day the only persons whom he then threatened to *cast into the furnace of burning fire*¹⁹² if they did not adore it. No, now too, Nabuchodonosor speaks the same words to us—the true Hebrews, the Hebrews of the world to come.¹⁹³ But we, that we may experience the heavenly dew that will quench all the fire about us and refresh the higher part of our souls, shall imitate those holy youths. Aman may want you, as he did Mardochai, to bend the knee to him.¹⁹⁴ But you must say: *I will not place the glory of men above the glory of the God of Israel.* Let us destroy Bel by the word of God, and with Daniel let us slay the dragon,¹⁹⁵ that as we are brought before the jaws of the lions, we may suffer nothing from them, while they alone who have stirred up the present combat against us, will be consumed by the very lions that could not devour us. Let us take to heart that in the recital of the great deeds of Job it is also written: *If I placed my hand upon my mouth and kissed it: let this also be counted against me as a very great iniquity.*¹⁹⁶ It is likely indeed that we shall be commanded to place our hand upon our mouth and kiss it.

34. And this too let us note that the Saviour foretells martyrdom not in His discourses delivered to the multitude, but in those reserved for the Apostles. Thus, following the words, *These twelve Jesus sent, commanding them, saying: Go ye not into the way of the Gentiles etc.*, there is added: *Beware of men. For they will deliver you up in councils and they will scourge you in their synagogues. And you shall be brought before governors and before kings for my sake, for a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they shall deliver you up, take no thought how or what to speak; <for it shall be given you in that hour what to speak.> For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you. The brother also shall deliver up the brother to death and the father the son, and the children shall rise up against their parents and shall put them to death. And you shall be hated by all men for my name's sake. But he that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved. And when they shall persecute you in this city, flee into another; and if they drive you out of that, flee into still another. Amen I say unto you, you shall not finish all the cities of Israel till the Son of man come.*¹⁹⁷

And Luke writes similarly: *And when they shall bring you into the synagogues and to magistrates and powers, be not solicitous how you shall answer or what you shall say. For the Holy Spirit shall teach you in the same hour what you must say.*¹⁹⁸ And further on: *Lay it up therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before how you shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to resist and gainsay. And you shall be betrayed by your parents and brethren and kinsmen and friends, and some of you they will put to*

*death. And you shall be hated by all men for my name's sake. But a hair of your head shall not perish. In your endurance you shall possess your souls.*¹⁹⁹ Mark, too, has something similar: *When they shall lead you and deliver you up, be not thoughtful nor rehearse beforehand <what you shall speak>; but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye. For it is not you that speak, but the Holy Spirit. And the brother shall betray his brother unto death, and the father his son; and children shall rise up against the parents and shall work their death. And you shall be hated by all men for my name's sake. But he that shall endure to the end, he shall be saved.*²⁰⁰

Again, the following words referring to martyrdom in Matthew are addressed exclusively to the Twelve. We, too, must heed them, and in heeding them we shall be brothers to the Apostles that heard them, and shall be counted among the Apostles. The words are as follows: *Fear ye not them that kill the body and are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him that can destroy <both> soul and body in hell.*²⁰¹ In what follows the Lord teaches us that no one comes to the combat of martyrdom without Divine Providence. The text is: *Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father who is in heaven. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: better are you than many sparrows. Everyone therefore that shall confess me before men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven. But he that shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven.*²⁰² The same is conveyed in Luke: *This I say to you, my friends: Be not afraid of them who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do.*

But I will show you whom you shall fear. Fear ye Him who, after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell. Yea, I say to you, fear Him. Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? Yea, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: you are of more value than many sparrows. And I say to you: Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God. But he that shall deny me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.²⁰³ And elsewhere: For he that shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him the Son of man shall be ashamed, when He shall come in His majesty and that of His Father and of the holy angels.²⁰⁴ And Mark writes in a similar vein, as follows: For he that shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation: the Son of man also will be ashamed of him, when He shall come in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.²⁰⁵

They that kill us, therefore, kill only the life of the body, as is clearly signified by the words, *fear ye not them that kill the body*—expressed in the same terms by Matthew and Luke.²⁰⁶ When they have slain the body, they cannot, even if they wished it, slay the soul: *they have no more that they can do.*²⁰⁷ For how can the soul be slain when it has been given life by the very fact of martyrdom? The soul it is to which He who in Isaiah encourages us to martyrdom, in His turn bears witness with His Son where it is written in *Isaias: Be ye witnesses to me and I also shall be a witness to you and my Son whom I have chosen, saith the Lord God.*²⁰⁸

Notice also that it is not to slaves but to His friends that Jesus gives the following precept: *Be not afraid of them*

*who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do.*²⁰⁹ Accordingly one has to fear Him that can destroy both soul and body in hell.²¹⁰ For He only, after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell.²¹¹ He casts into hell them that fear the slayers of the body, but do not fear Him that can destroy both the soul and body in hell;²¹² who, after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell.²¹³ And if in the case of another the very hairs of his head are numbered,²¹⁴ and that certainly in the case of those who are beheaded for the sake of Jesus, then let us confess the Son of God before men and the gods that are not gods. He who will have had witness borne to Him, will in return bear witness to us before God and His Father; and He Himself will bear witness in heaven to him who has borne witness to Him on earth.

APOSTATES WILL BE DENIED BY THE SON

35. Is there any man that will not quote, when he reflects upon all this, the words of the Apostle: *The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us.*²¹⁵ Is not the bearing of testimony before the Father a far greater thing than bearing testimony before men? And in comparison with the testimony borne on earth by the martyrs to the Son of God, is not the testimony borne to them in heaven by Him of transcending significance? If a man thinks of denying before men, let him remember Him who said without any lie, *I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven!*²¹⁶

In view of what Matthew says, *I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven,*²¹⁷ and Luke, *him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God,*²¹⁸ I

suggest that the *first-born of every creature, the image of the invisible God*,²¹⁹ will bear testimony before the Father who is in heaven to him who bore testimony to Him; and that He who *was made of the seed of David according to the flesh*,²²⁰ and who is therefore the *Son of man*;²²¹ who is born of woman, herself of the race of man, and is therefore again the *Son of man*, a term we apply to the humanity of Jesus—He will bear testimony before the angels of God to them that have borne testimony to Him. And, corresponding to this, witness is to be given regarding those who deny Him.

We should also remember that he who bears witness to the Son before men recommends so far as he can Christianity and the Father of this Christianity to those in whose presence he bears witness. And he to whom witness is borne by *the first-born of every creature*²²² and by *the Son of man*, is recommended by the testimony of *the Son of God* and *the Son of man* to the Father who is in heaven, and the angels of God. And if it is *not he who commendeth himself that is approved, but he whom the Lord commendeth*,²²³ must we not believe that he is indeed approved who is judged worthy of recommendation before the Father who is in heaven, and before the angels of God? If he is approved—he and others like him—whom the Lord *has tried as gold in the furnace* by tortures and questionings, and whom He *has received as a victim of a holocaust*,²²⁴ what are we to say of them who, tested in the furnace of temptation,²²⁵ have denied Him? Them will He who denies him that deserves to be denied, deny and refuse to approve before the Father who is in heaven, and *before the angels of God*.

36. Nor must one's combat be concerned with merely

not denying: we must also sense no shame whatever at suffering what God's enemies consider to be shameful. This is particularly your duty, Ambrose, consecrated to God as you are. You have been honoured and well-received by numerous cities, but now you appear, as it were, in triumphal procession, *taking up the cross* of Jesus and *following Him*²²⁶ as He goes before you to appear before magistrates and kings, that by making the journey with you He may *give you a mouth of wisdom*.²²⁷ And He will do the same for you, Protocletus, his companion in the conflict, and for you who are their fellow witnesses, who *fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ*.²²⁸ May He be with you, on your way to God's Paradise, to show you how to walk through the midst of *the Cherubim and the flaming sword turning every way and keeping the way of the tree of life*.²²⁹ If these two guard the way to the tree of life, they do so that no one unworthy may pass by it and come to the tree of life. The flaming sword will, for example, keep back them that on the *foundation which is laid, which is Christ Jesus, have built wood or hay or stubble*,²³⁰ and that wood which is most flammable and burns most fiercely, namely apostasy. The Cherubim will receive them that could not be overcome by the sword of fire, because they have built nothing which it could touch, and will bring them to *the tree of life* and to all that which God *had planted . . . from the beginning and brought forth of the ground*.²³¹ And since Jesus travels with you to Paradise, condemn the serpent that is overcome and trodden under the feet of Jesus and, through Him, under your feet also. For He *has given you power to tread upon serpents and scorpions and upon all the power of the Enemy, and nothing shall hurt you*.²³²

37. We must not, then, deny the Son of God or blush because of Him, His followers, or His words. Rather we should heed this: *He that shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven;*²³³ and again: *He that shall be ashamed of me and mine, of him the Son of man shall be ashamed, when He shall come in His majesty and that of His Father and of the holy angels;*²³⁴ and again: *For he that shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation: the Son of man also will be ashamed of him, when He shall come in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.*²³⁵

Jesus having once endured the cross, despising the shame,²³⁶ sits on that account on the right hand of God.²³⁷ So, too, those who imitate Him, *despising the shame, will sit and reign in heaven with Him*²³⁸ who came to send peace—not indeed upon earth, but in the souls of His disciples—and to send the sword upon earth.²³⁹ Since the Word of God is living and effectual and more piercing than any two-edged sword and reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit, of the joints also and the marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart,²⁴⁰ He brings in recompense to our hearts especially now the prize of peace which surpasseth all understanding,²⁴¹ that which He left to His apostles.²⁴² But He has sent the sword between the image of the earthly and that of the heavenly,²⁴³ so that, taking possession now of what is of heaven, He may later, when we no longer deserve to be divided in two, make us entirely of heaven.

He has come to bring not only the sword upon earth, but also fire. *And what will I, He says, but that it be kindled?*²⁴⁴ May this fire therefore be kindled in you also. May it consume your every calculation that is

earthly and of the body. May you now with heart and soul submit to that baptism wherewith Jesus *was straitened until it was accomplished.*²⁴⁵ And you, who have a wife and children, brothers and sisters, remember the words: *If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, he cannot be my disciple.*²⁴⁶ And both of you should remember these words: *If any man come to me, and hate not—in addition—his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.*²⁴⁷ Hate your life, and in hating it you will keep it unto life eternal: *He that hateth, says Scripture, his life in this world keepeth it unto life eternal.*²⁴⁸ Hate your life, then, for the sake of life eternal, convinced that Jesus is teaching us a hatred that is for our good and welfare. And in the same manner as we should hate our own life in order to keep it for life eternal, so too in regard to wife, children, brothers, and sisters. You who possess them must hate them so as to do good to them that are hated. It is precisely through this hate that you will become a friend of God and so become free to become their benefactors.

38. Remember at the same time Him who prayed in spirit for the children of martyrs left behind for the sake of the love of God, and said: *Take possession of the children of them that have been put to death.*²⁴⁹ Know only that *not they that are children of the flesh, are the children of God;*²⁵⁰ and that just as it was said to them of the seed of Abraham, *I know that you are the seed of Abraham,*²⁵¹ and, *If you were the children of Abraham, you did the works of Abraham,*²⁵² in the same way will it be said to your children, “I know that you are the seed of Ambrose,” and, “If you are the children of Ambrose, do the works of Ambrose.” They will, doubtless, do them; but you will

help them more by thus meeting your death than if you remained with them. In this way you will love them more wisely and pray for them with greater understanding, if you learn that they are not merely your *seed* but also your *children*. Now keep this on your lips: *He that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me;*²⁵³ and, *He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that shall lose his life for me shall find it.*²⁵⁴

39. By your readiness to undergo martyrdom give expression to the spirit of your Father that speaketh to them that are delivered up for the sake of religion.²⁵⁵ If you see that you are hated and abhorred and that you are regarded as impious, remember the words: *Therefore the world hateth you, because you are not of this world. If you had been of this world, the world would love its own.*²⁵⁶ You have already endured for the sake of Christ many outrages and many dangers since the time when you began to believe. Persevere to the end and advance in perseverance; for *he that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved.*²⁵⁷ Know that, according to Peter, *you shall greatly rejoice, if now you must be for a little time made sorrowful in divers temptations: that the trial of your faith—much more precious than gold which is perishable and tried by the fire—may be found unto praise and glory and honour at the appearing of Jesus Christ.*²⁵⁸ Notice the use of the words “be made sorrowful” in the sense of “labour,” as is seen in the passage, *In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children.*²⁵⁹ A woman does not really bring forth children in sorrow, but in labour.

If the following words are helpful to the disciples of Christ, namely: *Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity*

*of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh and the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life, which is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passeth away and the concupiscence thereof,*²⁶⁰—do not love, then, that which passes away, but do the will of God and become worthy to become one with the Son, the Father, and the Holy Spirit, according to the prayer of the Saviour: . . . *as I and Thou are one, that they also may be one in us.*²⁶¹ How many days can he gain who loves the world or the things which are in the world,²⁶² but who destroys and loses his soul,²⁶³ and carries about with him a conscience burdened with the greatest possible burden,²⁶⁴ the calamity of denial? Let each of us remember how many times he has been in danger of the ordinary death, and let us ask ourselves if we were not perhaps preserved from it in order that we might baptize ourselves in our own blood and wash ourselves from every sin, and so take our place at the heavenly altar²⁶⁵ along with our companions in the fight.

40. But if a man because he is too tenacious of life or too weak in the face of suffering, or because of the apparently convincing arguments of such as seek to induce us to accept the evil choice, has denied the one only God and His Christ, and borne testimony to demons²⁶⁶ or goddesses of fortune,²⁶⁷ then this man must realize that in doing this he is *setting*, as it were, *a table for the demon and offering libations* to Fortune, *forsaking the Lord and forgetting His holy mount*. He will incur the reproaches written in Isaiah in these words: *You that have forsaken me, that forget my holy mount, that set a table for the demon and offer a libation to fortune, I will hand you over to the sword, you shall all fall by slaughter: because I called you and you did*

not answer, I spoke and you did not hear. And you did evil before my eyes and you have chosen the things that displease me. Therefore thus saith the Lord Lord: Behold, my servants shall eat, but you shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but you shall be thirsty. Behold, my servants shall rejoice, and you shall be confounded. Behold, my servants shall praise for joyfulness of heart, but you shall cry for sorrow of heart and shall howl for grief of spirit. For you shall leave my name for the satisfaction of my elect. And the Lord shall slay you.²⁶⁸ But if, because we know what the table of the Lord is, we wish to partake of it, let us attend to the words, *You cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord and of the table of demons.*²⁶⁹ And if we wish, understanding the words, I will not drink from henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I shall drink it with you new in the kingdom of heaven,²⁷⁰ to be found among them that drink with Jesus, let us weigh well these words also, *You cannot drink the chalice of the Lord and the chalice of demons.*²⁷¹

John, the son of thunder,²⁷² says: *Who denieth the Father and the Son: whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father. He that confesseth the Son hath the Father also.*²⁷³ When a man hears this, will he not have to fear that if he says he is not a Christian, he is denying the Son, and that in denying Him he will not have the Father? And is there anyone who will not eagerly confess himself a Christian in word and deed, that he may have the Father as well? For they who bear testimony have the Father.

41. If we have passed from death to life²⁷⁴ in passing from unbelief to Faith, let us not be surprised if the world hates us.²⁷⁵ No one who has not passed from death to life, but still remains in death, can love them that have passed

from the gloomy dwelling of death, so to speak, to the dwellings built up of living stones²⁷⁶ and flooded with the light of life. Jesus hath laid down His life for us, and let us, therefore, lay down ours:²⁷⁷ I shall not say for Him, but for ourselves, and I should think for all them that will be edified by our martyrdom. The time has come for us Christians to glory in ourselves, for it is written: *Not only so; but we glory also in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience trial, and trial hope; and hope confoundeth not.*²⁷⁸ Only let the charity of God be poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.²⁷⁹ Let Paul say, *If—according to man—I fought with beasts at Ephesus;*²⁸⁰ and let us, “*If—according to man—we were slain in Germany.*”²⁸¹

42. *As the sufferings of Christ abound, so also by Christ doth comfort abound.*²⁸² Let us then welcome eagerly the sufferings incurred for Christ; and let them abound in us, if we truly strive for the abundant consolation with which all they who weep²⁸³ shall be consoled, though perhaps in unequal measure. For if consolation were given in equal measure to all, it would not be written: *As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so also by Christ doth our comfort abound.* They who are partakers of the sufferings, will be partakers of the consolation also,²⁸⁴ according to the measure of the sufferings which they share with Christ. This you learn also from him who says with entire confidence: *For we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you be also of the consolation.*

God, moreover, says by the Prophet: *In an acceptable time I have heard thee, and in the day of salvation I have helped thee.*²⁸⁵ What time could be more acceptable than when, because of our piety towards God in Christ, we

make our solemn entry in this world surrounded by a guard and when we are led out, more like triumphant conquerors than conquered? For martyrs in Christ *despoil* with Him *the principalities and powers*²⁸⁶ and triumph with Him, by partaking in His sufferings and the great deeds accomplished in His sufferings—among which is His triumphing over principalities and powers, which you will soon see conquered and overcome with shame. What other day could be for us such a day of salvation as the day of so glorious a departure from here below? I exhort you: *Give no offence in anything, that the priesthood and diaconate be not blamed because of you; but in all things exhibit yourselves as the ministers of God in much patience*,²⁸⁷ saying: *And now what is my hope? Is it not the Lord?*²⁸⁸ In *tribulation*²⁸⁹ be persuaded that *many are the tribulations of the just*.²⁹⁰ In our *necessities*,²⁹¹ let us ask for what is necessary—happiness. In *distresses*,²⁹² let us walk without halting upon the strait and narrow way, so as to arrive at life.²⁹³ And if it be required, let us show our mettle *in stripes, in prisons, in seditions, in labours, in watchings, in fastings*.²⁹⁴ For behold, the Lord is present, and *His reward is in His hand, to be given to each one according to his works*.²⁹⁵

43. Let us show now that we have wished for *knowledge*²⁹⁶ by doing the works which are in agreement with knowledge. Let all *chastity*, which comes from the avoidance of any possible defilement from sin, be manifested in us. We are the sons of a patient God; the brothers of a patient Christ: let us show ourselves patient in all that befalls us. *He that is patient has great wisdom; but he that is impatient is greatly foolish*.²⁹⁷ If it is necessary to exhibit ourselves . . . by the *armour of justice on the right hand*

and on the left, let us now, having exhibited ourselves by *honour* without becoming vain, also endure *dishonour*. If we have lived so as to deserve *good report* and have received it, let us now endure also *evil report* from the impious. And again, if we have been admired by lovers of truth as truthful, let us now laugh when it is said that we are *deceivers*. Because of the many dangers from which we have been delivered, many have said that we are *known* of God. Now let anyone say that we are *unknown* to Him, when perhaps we are *known* more. Hence, if we endure whatever happens, we are chastised but not killed; apparently we are *sorrowful*, but in reality we *rejoice*.

44. Paul says somewhere to them that have endured the first sufferings, exhorting them to maintain their initial perseverance in the dangers next to come on account of the Word: *Call to mind the former days, wherein, being illuminated, you endured a great fight of afflictions. And on the one hand indeed, by reproaches and tribulations, were made a gazingstock; and on the other, became companions of them that were used in such sort. For you both had compassion on me that was in bands and took with joy the being stripped of your own goods, knowing that you have a better and a lasting substance. Do not therefore lose your confidence which hath a great reward. For you have need of perseverance*.²⁹⁸ So let us too *endure a great fight of afflictions, by reproaches and tribulations made a gazingstock, yet taking with joy the being stripped of our goods*. For we are convinced that we have a *better substance*, not earthly, nor even corporeal, but in some way invisible and incorporeal. For *we look not at the things which are seen, knowing that these are temporal, while those others are eternal*.²⁹⁹

PART VI: THE CRIMINAL CHARACTER OF IDOLATRY

THE CULT OF DEMONS

45. Some people give no thought to the question of demons: ³⁰⁰ that is to say, to the fact that these demons, in order to be able to exist in the heavy atmosphere that encircles the earth, must have the nourishment of exhalations and, consequently, are always on the lookout for the savour of burnt sacrifices, blood, and incense. Since they attach no importance to the matter of sacrifice, we would express ourselves also on this subject. If men who give sustenance to robbers, murderers, and barbarian enemies of the Great King ³⁰¹ are punished as criminals against the state, how much more will they be punished justly who through offering sacrifice proffer sustenance to the minions of evil and thus hold them in the atmosphere of the earth! And this holds true especially if knowing the text, *He that sacrificeth to gods other than the Lord alone will be destroyed utterly*, ³⁰² they nevertheless sacrifice to these authors of evil on earth. In my opinion, when there is question of crimes committed by these demons operating against men, they who sustain them by sacrificing to them will be held no less responsible than the demons themselves that do the crimes. For the demons and they that have kept them on earth, where they could not exist without the exhalations and nourishment considered vital to their bodies, work as one in doing evil to mankind.

THE IMPORTANCE OF NAMES

46. Others again assume that the names of things are entirely arbitrary and have no natural relation to the objects of which they are the names. ³⁰³ They think that it does not matter which you say: "I worship the first God, or Zeus, or Zên"; ³⁰⁴ and whether you assert: "I pay honour and veneration to the sun or Apollo, and the moon or Artemis, and the spirit of the earth or Demeter"—and so on according to what has been said by the wise men of the Greeks. We reply that on the question of names there is a special science which is both very profound and very subtle. A man versed in it will see that if these names were a matter of convention merely, the demons or whatever powers there are invisible to us, would not respond when addressed by such as mean to address them, but do so on the understanding that the names are but arbitrarily given. But in fact certain sounds, syllables, and names pronounced with a rough or smooth breathing, or with lengthening or shortening, bring to us them that are summoned—in virtue, doubtless, of some natural factor which we cannot discern. If this is so and names are not purely conventional, then we must call the first God by no other name but that which His Servant ³⁰⁵ and the Prophets and Our Lord and Saviour Himself used—for example, *Sabaoth*, *Adonai*, *Saddai*; or, again, the *God of Abraham*, *God of Isaac*, *God of Jacob*. *This is a name for ever*, says Scripture, *and this is a memorial unto all generations*. ³⁰⁶ It should not surprise us that the demons should apply their own nomenclature to the first God, so as to be adored as the first God; but with our Servant, the Prophets, and Christ who fulfilled the Law, ³⁰⁷ and His Apostles this is not customary.

It was necessary to add all this lest someone deceive us

by sophistry or in any way vitiate our judgment. We must give careful consideration to these matters so as not to offer our adversaries any opportunity of foisting their views on us.

PART VII: FINAL EXHORTATION

47. A man continues to love this life, even though he is persuaded that the rational substance of the soul has some affinity to God. Both substances are intelligible, invisible and, as the prevailing opinion demonstrates, incorporeal. Why, in effect, should He who created us have placed in us a desire to reverence Him and to be united with Him—a desire which continues to show some traces of the divine will even in those who are in error—if it were not possible, and indeed quite possible, for rational beings to satisfy this natural desire?

It is clear that as each of our members maintains a relationship towards its proper object, the eyes for things visible, the ears for things audible, in the same way the intelligence maintains a relationship towards things intelligible, and towards God who is above things intelligible. Why then do we hesitate and waver about putting off the impediment of the *corruptible body that is a load upon the soul, the earthly habitation pressing down the mind that museth upon many things?*³⁰⁸ Why not be delivered from our bonds and free ourselves from the storms that are born of flesh and blood? We would then repose with Christ Jesus in the repose that comes with eternal bliss alone;³⁰⁹ we would contemplate the all-pervading living Word in His entire essence, nourished by Him, and understanding the *manifold wisdom*³¹⁰ that is in Him; we would be marked with the seal of Him who is Truth itself; and our spirit would be illumined in the true and unfailing light³¹¹ of knowledge for the contemplation of things which can

be seen as they are, thanks to this light, by eyes that have been *enlightened by the commandment of the Lord*.³¹²

48. We have for a long time now heard the words of Jesus. For a long time too we have been instructed in the Gospel and we have all built a house for ourselves. On what have we built it? *Upon a rock, digging and laying deep the foundations? Upon the sand, without a foundation?*³¹³ The answer will appear in the present trial. For a storm has arisen, bringing with it rain, floods, and winds or, as Luke has it, *a deluge*. When all this beats upon our house, it will either not be able to shake it or make it fall, *because it is founded upon a rock* which is Christ; or it will expose the weakness of the building which is bound to collapse on this ominous occasion.

May what we have built not share this fate! Woefully great is the fall that comes with apostasy, or, as Luke says of a house built without a foundation: *the ruin is great*. Let us pray, then, to be like *the wise man who built his house upon a rock*. Let the rain caused by *the spirits of wickedness in high places* come upon such a house; or the floods of *principalities and powers* inimical to us; or the fierce winds let loose by *the rulers of the world of this darkness*;³¹⁴ or the deluge of the infernal spirits. Let them hurl themselves against our house built upon the rock. Not only will our house not fall, but it will not even begin to be shaken. And so the evil spirits³¹⁵ will be made to suffer by us rather than achieve anything with us. And let each one of us say, as he strikes the enemy, *I so fight, not as one beating the air*.³¹⁶

49. *The sower went forth to sow his seed*.³¹⁷ Let us show that our soul has received His seed, not as that by

the wayside, nor that *upon stony ground*, nor that *among thorns*, but as that *upon good ground*. We shall glory³¹⁸ as well as we can in the Lord, that the word of Jesus has not fallen *by the wayside*, nor *among thorns*. For *we have understood* what was said, and therefore *the Wicked One has not taken away that which was sown in our hearts*. Many will testify for us that the seed has not been sown *among thorns*, when they see that neither *the cares of this world*, nor *the deceitfulness of riches*, nor *the pleasures of life* have been able to choke up the word of God in our souls.

Finally, there remains that men should ask themselves if the word of God has fallen, so far as depends on us, *on stony ground* or *on good ground*. *Tribulation and persecution* have come to us *because of the word*. *A time of great trial* is upon us when he that has sown upon *stony ground* will be revealed, and they too that have not dug deeply and have not received Jesus in the depth of their souls. But he that *has understood the word bears fruit and keeps the word* until the end, *yielding a hundredfold in patience*.

We know how the Scriptures speak of them that *are scandalized* in the time of *tribulation and persecution*, after having apparently *received the sacred teaching with joy*.³¹⁹ They are scandalized, because they have no root, and believe only for a time. Matthew says: *He that received the seed upon stony ground is he that heareth the word and immediately receiveth it with joy. Yet hath he not root in himself, but is only for a time; and when there ariseth tribulation and persecution because of the word, he is presently scandalized*.³²⁰ And Mark: *These are they that are*

sown on the stony ground: they who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with joy. And they have no root in themselves, but are only for a time; and then when tribulation and persecution ariseth for the word they are presently scandalized.³²¹ And Luke: They upon the rock are they who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no roots, for they believe for a while and in time of temptation they fall away.³²² Concerning them that bear fruit well, the Scripture teaches us: *But he that received the seed upon good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth, and beareth fruit, and yieldeth the one an hundredfold, and another sixty, and another thirty;*³²³ or: *And these are they who are sown upon the good ground, who hear the word, and receive it, and yield fruit: the one thirty, another sixty, and another a hundred;*³²⁴ or again, *But that on the good ground are they who in a good and perfect heart, hearing the word, keep it and bring forth fruit in patience.*³²⁵

Since, then, to quote the Apostle, *you are God's husbandry, God's building*³²⁶—"husbandry" upon good ground, and "building" upon a rock—let us as *God's building* stand unshaken by the storm; and as *God's husbandry*, let us pay no heed to evil, *nor the tribulation and persecution* that arises because of the word, *nor the care of this world, nor the deceitfulness of riches, nor the pleasures of this life.*³²⁷ But let us despise all these things and receive *the spirit of wisdom*³²⁸ without care. Let us hasten to the riches that have no deceit whatever. Let us speed on to what we may call the pleasures of *the paradise of delight*,³²⁹ reflecting in all our sufferings that *that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation worketh for us*

*above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.*³³⁰

50. Let us realize, too, that the story of Abel who was slain by the criminal and murderer Cain is applicable to all them whose blood has been unjustly shed. Let us remember that the words, *The voice of thy brother's blood crieth to me from the earth*,³³¹ are also said of each one of the martyrs, the voice of whose blood cries to God from the earth.

It may be that as we have been purchased by *the precious blood* of Jesus³³² who has received *a name above all names*,³³³ so some will be ransomed by the precious blood of martyrs; for the martyrs themselves are exalted higher than they would have been if they had been *justified* only and not also become *martyrs*. And indeed with good reason has the death of martyrdom been given a name all of its own—"exaltation"—as is clear from the words, *If I be "exalted" from the earth, I will draw all things to myself.*³³⁴ Let us, too, glorify God, exalting Him by our death; for the martyr does glorify God by his death, as we again know from John when he says: *And this He said, signifying by what death He should glorify God.*³³⁵

EPILOGUE

51. These are my suggestions to you, made as best I could under the circumstances. I hope they may prove useful to you in the present combat. If, however, because now especially you are worthy to see more of the mysteries of God, you have a more profound and richer understanding, one more helpful to your present purpose, and so will disregard these my observations as being childish and trivial, I myself would wish for you that such be the

case. For you the point is that your goal should be accomplished, not that it should be accomplished through me. My wish is that it be accomplished through the greater sublimity and fuller understanding, transcending all human nature, of God's words and wisdom.³³⁶

NOTES