

Church history timeline

The Annunciation

Saints Peter, Andrew, Paul, and Luke the Evangelist

110 - Saint Ignatius of Antioch

110 - Saint Clement of Rome

2nd Century

166 - Saint Justin Martyr

Saint Nereus and Achilleus

3rd Century

220's - Saint Cecilia

250's - Saint Agatha

215 - Clement of Alexandria

4th Century

Capitol of Roman Empire moved to Byzantium by Constantine 1

Saints Constantine and Helen

325 - First Ecumenical Council

343 - Saint Nicholas

348 - Saint Spyridon

368 - Saint Hilary of Poitiers

373 - St. Athanasius

379 - St. Basil the Great

381 - Second Ecumenical Council

390 - Saint Gregory the Theologian

395 - Saint Gregory of Nyssa

397 - Saint Ambrose of Milan

5th Century

407 - Saint John Chrysostom

430 - Saint Augustine

431 - Third Ecumenical Council

435 - Saint John Cassian

444 - Saint Cyril of Alexandria

451 - Fourth Ecumenical Council

6th Century

553 - Fifth Ecumenical Council

7th Century

638 - Saint Sophronios of Jerusalem

662 - Saint Maximos the Confessor

680 - Sixth Ecumenical Council

8th Century

720 - Saint Andrew of Crete

760 - Saint John of Damascus

787 - Seventh Ecumenical Council

9th Century

10th Century

1022 - Saint Symeon the New Theologian

13th Century

14th Century

1359 - Saint Gregory Palamas

15th Century

1453 - Fall of Constantinople

1821 - Greek Independence from Ottoman Empire

Emphasizes class material



Iconography: Konstantinos Fanelis, Athens

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Ecclesia: A Place for Rebirth

1. *Bride and Mother*

The Ecclesia, the Church, is not primarily or fundamentally the concern of sociology. The institution is merely the visible aspect of the 'mystery'. Above all, the Church is the power of resurrection, the sacrament of the Risen One who imparts his resurrection to us; the new Eve, born from Christ's open side as Eve was born from Adam's rib. From Christ's pierced side indeed there flowed water and blood (John 19.34), the water of baptism and the blood of the Eucharist.

Christ has flooded the universe with divine and sanctifying waves. For the thirsty he sends a spring of living water from the wound which the spear opened in his side.

From the wound in Christ's side has come forth the Church, and he has made her his Bride.

ORIGEN *Commentary on Psalm*, 77,31 (PG 17,141), *Commentary on Proverbs*, 31,16 (PG 17,252)

In its deepest understanding the Church is nothing other than the world in the course of transfiguration, the world that in Christ reflects the light of paradise. The paradise of his presence is in truth Christ himself, who could say to the thief full of faith who was crucified beside him, 'Today you will be with me in paradise' (Luke 23.43). The world-in-Christ, the new heaven and the new earth, means the heaven and the earth renewed, brought to us in the Church's sacraments and in the Scriptures which are also a sacrament. The different sacraments (or 'mysteries') are in any case only aspects of the sacramental character of the Church as a

whole, whose heart and brightest light is the 'mystery of mysteries', the Eucharist.

We need to take refuge with the Church; to drink milk at her breast, to be fed with the Scriptures of the Lord. For the Church has been planted in the world as a paradise.

IRENÆUS OF LYONS *Against Heresies*, V,20,2 (SC 153 p 258)

In the Spirit the Church is the mystery of the Risen One, his sacramental presence. It might be called the Pneumatosphere, in which the preaching of the Apostles, the Good News, is always alive and present, continuing the 'witness of the prophets, the apostles and all the disciples'. Faithful and creative Tradition therefore is the life of the Holy Spirit in the Body of Christ; not passing things down, but 'newness of the Spirit', the newness that is constantly being renewed in persons. The Spirit abounds most plentifully in the sacramental body of Christ, but wherever the Spirit is at work in history and in the universe, the Church is secretly present. There is not a blade of grass that does not grow within the Church, not a constellation that does not gravitate towards her, every quest for truth, for justice, for beauty is made within her (even if the prophets and great creative spirits have sometimes been persecuted by the ecclesiastical institution), every scrap of meditation, of wisdom, of celebration is gathered in by her (even though Christianity has at certain times formed itself into a religious association that ignored or fought against other people).

The Church's preaching is the same everywhere and remains true to itself, supported by the witness of the prophets, the apostles and all the disciples, from the beginning, through the middle, to the end, in a word, throughout the history of God's constant activity of saving humanity and making himself present to us in faith. This faith never ceases. We receive it from the Church and guard it under the action of the Spirit like a precious liquid that rejuvenates itself and the vessel containing it. The Church has been entrusted with this gift of God, just as God gave his breath to the flesh that he fashioned in order that all the members might receive its life. And this gift conveys the fullness of union with Christ, that is, the Holy Spirit, pledge of incorruptibility, confirmation of our faith, ladder of our ascent to God . . . For where the Church is, there the Spirit of

God is also; and where the Spirit of God is, there the Church is, and all grace. And the Spirit is truth.

IRENÆUS OF LYONS *Against Heresies*, III,24,15 (SC 211, p. 470-1)

The Bride of Christ, the Church, in its human, all too human aspect, can be unfaithful to him. But he never ceases to give himself to her who is his body. He makes her mother of living truth for us, a place of rebirth.

2. Scripture, the First Sacrament

Already in Scripture there is an aspect of incarnation. Scripture embodies the Word, and the incarnation of the Word completes the transformation into Eucharist of the hearing or reading of the Word.

For true Christian thought is Eucharistic. The Eucharist of the mind – God must be loved with all one's mind – prepares us for the nuptial encounter of the sacrament. And the sacrament in its turn enlightens the mind.

We are said to drink the blood of Christ not only when we receive it according to the rite of the mysteries, but also when we receive his words, in which life dwells, as he said himself: 'The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life' (John 6.63).

ORIGEN *Homilies on Numbers*, 16,9 (PG 12,701)

In truth, before Jesus, Scripture was like water, but since Jesus it has become for us the wine into which Jesus changed the water.

ORIGEN *Commentary on St John's Gospel*, 13,60 (GCS 4,294-5)

In this way Scripture forms the body of the Word. The ultimate meaning of the Old Testament is revealed in Christ by symbol and 'typology' that discern in the persons and events of the Bible 'types', in the sense of figures of the incarnate Word and his work of salvation. The context of Christian symbolism is the incarnation, the union of the divine and the human in the person of the Word. Now the whole of the Bible is one moment of the incarnation.

This is how you are to understand the Scriptures – as the one perfect body of the Word.

ORIGEN *Fragment of a Homily on Jeremiah* (PG 17,289)

In the two angels [who appeared in Christ's tomb] we can recognize the two Testaments . . . They have come together where the Lord's body is, because, by announcing in convergent fashion that the Lord took flesh, died, and rose again, the two Testaments are as it were seated, the Old at his head and the New at his feet. That is why the two cherubim who protect the mercy seat face each other . . . Cherub indeed means fullness of knowledge. And what do the two cherubim signify but the two Testaments? And what does the mercy seat represent but the incarnate Lord, of whom John says that he was made the propitiation for our sins? When the Old Testament foretells what the New Testament declares accomplished in the Lord, they face each other like the two cherubim, their gaze fixed on the mercy seat, because they are looking at the Lord between them and they . . . are recounting in harmony the mystery of his loving purpose.

GREGORY THE GREAT *Homilies on the Gospels*, 2,53,3 (PL 76,1191)

There are circles of initiation into the Word, and the narrower they become, the more intensely its presence felt. The Bible is an 'evangelical preparation' and is concentrated in the Gospels. They in their turn find their completion in the Gospel of full initiation, that of St John. To enter into the Johannine message is to identify oneself with the Beloved Disciple. In it is made known the invocation of the Name, to the rhythm of the very beating of Christ's heart, John's head resting on his breast.

Jesus crucified, Mary and John on either side of the cross: that is actually the first Church (not yet Peter's but already John's) and Jesus commits to it his Spirit (Luke 23.46) and the sacraments (John 19.34).

No one has dared to give so pure a revelation of the divinity [of the Lord] as John. We must make bold to say the Gospels are the fulfilment of the whole Bible and John's Gospel is the fulfilment of the Gospels. No one can grasp their meaning unless he has rested on Christ's breast, unless he has received Mary from Jesus so that she has become his mother too.

ORIGEN *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 1,6 (GCS 4,8-9)

The divine meaning of the Scriptures has to be gleaned from the letter of it and beyond the letter, through contemplation guided by the Spirit. In the Fathers we do not find any fundamentalism, but Scripture opened by the Spirit to its very heart, namely the mystery of the Trinity, the source of love, and Christ's victory over death and hell, the triumph of love.

If you try to reduce the divine meaning to the purely external signification of the words, the Word will have no reason to come down to you. It will return to its secret dwelling, which is contemplation that is worthy of it. For it has wings, this divine meaning, given to it by the Holy Spirit who is its guide . . . But to be unwilling ever to rise above the letter, never to give up feeding on the literal sense, is the mark of a life of falsehood.

ORIGEN *Commentary on Proverbs*, 23 (PG 17,221-4)

Origen, whose brilliant thought fertilized all Christian spirituality, especially, but not only, in the East, compares Scripture to an almond. He himself is an inspired interpreter of Scripture, and if his thought has had to be corrected on other points, it remains fully and directly nourishing in this field.

The bitter rind is the letter that kills and that has to be rejected.

The protecting shell is the ethical teaching, that, as a necessary part of the process of going into greater depth, requires a course of careful purification.

Then the spiritual kernel is reached, which is all that matters, which feeds the soul on the mysteries of divine wisdom.

The first aspect [of Scripture], that of the letter, is bitter enough. It prescribes circumcision of the flesh, regulates sacrifices and all that is meant by the 'letter that kills'. Reject all that as the bitter rind of the almond. In the second stage you will reach the defences of the shell, the moral teaching, the obligation of self-control. These things are needed to protect what is kept inside. But they have to be broken, and assuredly there will be found enclosed and hidden beneath these wrappings the mysteries of God's wisdom and knowledge that restore and nourish the souls of the saints. This threefold mystery is to be seen throughout all Scripture.

ORIGEN *Homilies on Numbers*, 9,7 (GCS 7,63-4)

Thus, from Origen to Cassian and Gregory the Great, the doctrine of the four meanings of Scripture was to be worked out more exactly. Four meanings, because the moral meaning is doubled, even as early as Origen, and made to apply not only to the ascetic teaching of the Bible but also to the life of the Word of God in the soul. Accordingly, as Henri de Lubac has admirably shown in his *Exégèse médiévale: les quatre sens de l'Écriture* (3 vols, Paris 1959), it would be possible to distinguish the historical or literal meaning, the allegorical or typological meaning, the tropological or moral meaning and the anagogical or mystical meaning. This contemplative reading of the Bible would foster in the West over a long period a 'spiritual theology' which would counter scholasticism.

It happens that while listening to the Word the heart is touched by a particular saying and set on fire. Then one must stop and let the fire spread quietly.

When a saying of the Lord's kindles the imagination of a hearer of the Word and makes him enamoured of the Wisdom that bursts into flames at the sight of any beauty, then 'the fire of the Lord is come down upon him'.

ORIGEN *Commentary on Psalm 104*, 19 (Pitra, *Analecta sacra* 3,207)

Certainly one must 'knock and seek' to understand Scripture, to make out its historical context, and translate it from an archaic mentality into our own. That justifies the whole scientific apparatus of hermeneutics and exegesis. But science cannot give a meaning. If it tries to do that, it conveys a 'contraband type of philosophy'. The meaning is revealed only to prayer, and certainly to prayer with tears.

For your part then apply all your zeal to the reading of Scripture, with faith and the good will that are pleasing to God. It is not enough for you to knock and seek. What is needed above all in order to obtain the understanding of divine matters is prayer.

ORIGEN *Letter to Gregory Thaumaturgus*, 3 (PG 11,92)

To penetrate to the very heart and marrow of the heavenly words, and to contemplate their hidden and deep mysteries with the heart's gaze purified, can be acquired neither through human

science nor through profane culture, but only by purity of soul, through the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

JOHN CASSIAN *Conferences*, XIV,9 (SC 54, p. 195)

If you wish to attain to true knowledge of the Scriptures, hasten to acquire first an unshakeable humility of heart. That alone will lead you, not to the knowledge that puffs up, but to that which enlightens, by the perfecting of love.

JOHN CASSIAN *Conferences*, XIV,10 (SC 54, p. 194)

Never approach the words of the mysteries that are in the Scriptures without praying and asking for God's help. Say, 'Lord, grant me to feel the power that is in them'. Reckon prayer to be the key that opens the true meaning of the Scriptures.

ISAAC OF NINEVEH *Ascetic Treatises*, 73 (Spanos, p. 288)

Scripture is an ocean that will never finish being explored. The encounter with the Word is always new. You know you are going the right way when your reading brings peace to your soul and fills it with sweetness. Sometimes you must leave a difficulty aside, and pray. The meaning will come through your being rooted in the Tradition, through being open to that river of life which is the communion of saints. Indeed, even if you are alone, all reading of Scripture is done with the Church; there is always a liturgical and eucharistic flavour to it. The Eucharist, where the encounter takes place, sheds light on it. The betrothal of Scripture achieves its full meaning and marriage in the Eucharist, where the Word is heard in the silence of love.

The soul marvels at the novelties it meets on the ocean of the mysteries of Scripture.

Even if the understanding that swims on the surface of the waters – the ocean of the Scriptures – is able to dive into the full depth of the meanings hidden in them, . . . study, provided it so desires, suffices for it to become firmly attached to the unique thought of the mystery.

ISAAC OF NINEVEH *Ascetic Treatises*, 1 (p. 4)

When you approach Scripture, examine the intention of each word, in order to measure and understand with great discernment

the depth and holiness of meaning that it holds. Those who throughout their life have been led towards enlightenment by grace feel all the time a kind of spiritual ray shining through the verses, and in the spirit they identify the words and their deep meaning . . .

When a person reads the verses with a spirit of penetration, the heart also is refined and satisfied. With a wonderful understanding the divine power gives the soul a taste of abundant sweetness . . .

ISAAC OF NINEVEH *Ascetic Treatises*, 1 (p. 5)

Reading one and the same word of Scripture, one person is nourished by history only, another looks for the typical [from *typos*, the 'figure' of Christ] meaning, another by means of this same meaning reaches towards the contemplative meaning. Most often, these three dimensions are found there at the same time . . . In this way the words of God advance at the pace of the reader.

GREGORY THE GREAT *Homilies on Ezekiel*, 1,7,8 (PL 76,843)

But for a Christian, Scripture is not a matter for esoteric study. It is a Word of life for everyone; its concrete, direct language can touch the simplest souls, sometimes the simplest especially. And the mystery of it all will always be beyond the most erudite.

There is a diversity of approaches to suit all conditions. Equally there are different stages on one and the same route. That is why we need to know how to carry along with us, without trying too hurriedly to explain them, the words that so far remain closed to us. Life, the partial deaths that life brings, the better reception of grace, all these may one day make us capable of understanding them.

Sacred Scripture . . . tests the strong with its more obscure sayings and gives satisfaction to the simple by its concrete language, . . . it is intelligible to readers who have little culture, and educated people continually find new meanings in it. However, it also transcends all knowledge and all teaching by the very way in which it expresses itself. For it unveils the mystery in one and the same language throughout all its writings.

GREGORY THE GREAT *Commentary on the Book of Job*, 20,1 (PL 76,135)

Those who are truly humble and really instructed are able, when they approach the heavenly secrets, both to understand certain of them that they have studied and to venerate others

that they have not understood in order to protect what they have not yet understood.

GREGORY THE GREAT *Commentary on the Book of Job*, 20,8,19 (PL 76,148)

3. Baptism: Entry into New Life

To be baptized is to die and rise again with Christ, in him. To die to the death that is so deeply entwined with our life. To cry out *de profundis* and to meet even in hell the crucified God who does not judge but welcomes us and who, in return for the least good will on our part (which is why faith is indispensable to baptism, or to its taking actual effect) raises us to life with himself.

Sanctify this water, that those who are baptized in it may be crucified with Christ, die with him, be buried with him, and rise again through adoption.

Apostolic Constitutions, 7,43 (F.X. Funk, I, p. 450)

Baptism is total immersion in the choking water of death, from which we emerge in the joy of breathing once again, of 'breathing the Spirit'. For the water, changed from lethal into life-giving, embodies the resurrectional power of the Spirit, of which it is a natural symbol.

Paul, the imitator of Christ, says, 'Be conformed to his death in order to attain to the resurrection of the dead' (cf. Romans 6.5). How then do we enter into the likeness of his death? By being buried with him in baptism. There is only one death and only one resurrection, of which baptism is the figure. That is why the Lord established the covenant of baptism, which contains the figure of death and life, the water being the likeness of death and the Spirit imparting life. The great mystery of baptism is performed with three immersions and as many invocations, so that the figure of death may be reproduced and that those who are baptized may be enlightened by the transmission of the knowledge of God.

BASIL OF CAESAREA *On the Holy Spirit*, 15 (PG 32,128-9)

You were asked, 'Do you believe in God the Father almighty?'

nation hated and had in abomination among all men; and they were bidden to worship the Crucified, Who was brought up in Judea. And with the doctrine the teachers proclaimed also an austere life to men who were practised in softness, and were agitated about things present. And they that proclaimed it were poor and common men, of no family, and born of men of no family. But none of these things hindered the course of the word. So great was the power of the Crucified as to carry the word round everywhere. "For it is spoken of," he says, "in all the world." He says not, it is manifested, but, is spoken of, as if all men had them in their mouths. And indeed when he bears witness of this in the Thessalonians, he adds another thing also. For after saying, "from you sounded out the word of God," he adds, "so that we need not to speak anything." (1 Thess. i. 8.) For the disciples had come into the place of teachers, by their boldness of speech instructing all, and drawing them to themselves. For the preaching came not anywhere to a stand, but went over the whole world more rapidly than fire. But here there is only thus much—"it is spoken of." He well says that "it is spoken of," showing that there was no need to add aught to what was said, or to take away. For a messenger's business is this, to convey from one to another only what is told him. For which cause also the priest is called a "messenger" (Mal. ii. 7), because he speaks not his own words, but those of Him that sent him. And yet Peter had preached there. But he reckons what was his, to be his own as well. In such degree, as I said before, was he beyond measure clear of all grudging!

Ver. 9. "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the Gospel of His Son."

Words these of an Apostle's bowels of affection, the showing forth this of fatherly concernment!¹¹⁹⁹ And what is it which he says, and why does he call God to witness? He had to declare his feeling toward them. Since then he had not as yet ever seen them, he therefore called no man to witness, but Him Who entereth in the hearts. For since he was saying, "I love you," and as a token thereof alleged his praying continually for them, and wishing to come to them, and neither was this self-evident, he betakes himself to the trustworthy testimony. Will then any one of you be able to boast that he remembers, when praying at his house (ἐπὶ τῆς οἰκίας) the entire body of the Church? I think not. But Paul drew near to God in behalf not of one city only, but of the whole world, and this not once, or twice, or thrice, but continually. But if the continually bearing any one about in one's memory would not happen without much love; to have any in one's prayers, and to have them there continually, think what great affection and friendship that implies. But when he says, "Whom I serve with my spirit in the Gospel of His Son," he shows us at once the grace of God, and also his own humble-mindedness; the grace of God because He entrusted to him so great a matter; but his own humility, because he imputes it all not to his own zeal, but to the assistance of the Spirit. But the addition of "the Gospel," shows the kind of ministry. For there



1199 Four mss. διδασκαλίας, a father's mode of Teaching. S. κηδεμονίας.

are many and diverse modes of service. And as under kings all are ranged under one that beareth kingly power, and all have not to minister (διακονοῦνται) about the same thing, but to one belongeth the ministry of ruling armies and to another that of ordering cities and to another again that of keeping treasures in the storehouses, thus also in spiritual things, one serveth God and laboreth (λατρεύει καὶ δουλεύει) in believing and ordering his own life well, and another in undertaking the care of strangers, and another in taking in hand the patronship of them that be in need. As even during the Apostle's own time, they of Stephen's company served God in the guardianship of the widows, others (ἄλλοι 2 mss., all ὧν) in the teaching of the word, of whom also Paul was serving in the preaching of the Gospel. And this was the fashion of his service: for it was to this that he was appointed. On this account, he not only calls God to witness, but also says what he was entrusted with, to show that having so great things put into his hands, he would not have called Him Who trusted them to him to witness what was false. And therewith he wished to make another point out also, viz. that he could not but have this love and care for them. For that they might not say "who art thou? and, from whence? that thou sayest that thou art anxious over a city so great, and most imperial," he shows that he must needs have this care,¹²⁰⁰ if at least the sort of service that was committed to him, was to declare the Gospel: for he that hath this put into his hands, must needs have continually upon his mind them that are to receive the word. And he shows another thing besides this by saying, "in my spirit;" that this service is much higher than either the Gentile or the Jewish. For the Gentile is both fleshly and in error, and the Jewish is true indeed, yet even this is fleshly. But that of the Church is the opposite of the Gentile, but more lofty than the Jewish by a great deal. For the mode of our service is not with sheep and oxen and smoke and fat, but by a spiritual soul, which Christ also shows in saying that "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." ([John iv. 24.](#))

"In the Gospel of His Son." Having said above that it was the Father's Gospel, here he says it is the Son's. So indifferent is it to say the Father's or the Son's! For he had learnt from that blessed voice that the things of the Father are the Son's, and the things of the Son are the Father's. For "all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine." ([John xvii. 10.](#))

"That without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers." This is the part of genuine love, and he seems indeed to be saying some one thing, yet states four things even here. Both that he remembers, and that he does so continually, and that it is in his prayers, and that it is to ask great things for them.

[Ver. 10, 11.](#) "Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you."



¹²⁰⁰ One ms. adds, if Christ hath given him this care, and

You see him painfully desiring to see them, and yet not enduring to see them contrary to what seemed good unto God, but having his longing mingled with the fear of God. For he loved them, and was eager to come to them. Yet he did not, because he loved them, desire to see them, contrary to what seemed good unto God. This is true love, not as we love who err on both sides from the laws of love: for either we love no one, or if we ever do love, we love contrary to what seemeth good unto God, acting in both against the Divine law. And if these things be grievous (φορτικά) when spoken of, they are more grievous when done. And how do we love contrary to what seems good to God? (you will say.) When we neglect Christ pining with hunger, and provide our children and friends and relations above their needs. Or rather what need to carry the subject further. For if any one will examine his own conscience, he will find that this takes place in many things. But such was not that blessed person, but he knew both how to love and to love as he ought (3 mss. omit "as he ought"), and as was fitting, and though exceeding all men in loving, he transgressed not the measures of love. See then two things thrive extremely in him, fear of God, and also longing towards the Romans. For to be praying continually, and not to desist when he obtained not, shows exceeding love. But while loving, thus to continue yielding to the will of God, shows intense reverence. In another place, however, having "thrice besought the Lord" (2 Cor. xii. 8), he not only did not receive, but on the contrary, when he did not receive, he was very thankful for not having been heard. So, in all things did he look to God. But here he received, though not when he asked, but after delay, and neither hereat was he discontented. And these things I mention that we may not repine at not being heard, or at being heard slowly. For we are not better than Paul, who confesses his thankfulness for both, and with good ground. For when he had once given himself up to the all-governing Hand, and put himself with as much subjection under it, as clay under the potter, he followed wheresoever God led. Having then said that he desired to see them, he mentioned also the cause of his desire; and what is it?

Ver. 11. "That I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established."

For it was not merely as many now go travelling in a needless and profitless way that he also went, but for necessary and very urgent ends. And he does not tell them his meaning openly, but by way of hints, for he does not say that I may teach you, that I may instruct you, that I may fill up that which is wanting; but, "that I may impart;" showing, that it is not his own things which he is giving them, but that he was imparting to them what he had received. And here again he is unassuming, in saying "some," he means, a small one, and suited to my powers. And what may this small one be which thou art now going to impart? This it is, he says, "to the end that ye may be established." This then also cometh of grace, namely, the being unwavering and standing fast. But when you hear of grace, think not that the reward of resolve on our part is thereby cast aside; for he speaks of grace, not to disparage the labor of resolve on our part, but to undermine (ὕποτεμνόμενος, as piercing a thing in-

flated) the haughtiness of an insolent spirit (ἀπνοΐας). Do not thou then, because that Paul hath called this a gift of grace, grow supine. For he knows how, in his great candor, to call even well doings, graces; because even in these we need much influence from above. But in saying, “to the end that ye may be established,” he covertly shows that they needed much correction: for what he would say is this: Of a “long time I have both desired” and prayed to see you, for no other reason than that I may “stablish, strengthen, fix” you thoroughly in the word of God, so that ye be not continually wavering. But he does not express himself so (for he would have shocked them), but in another way he hints to them the same thing, though in a subdued tone. For when he says, “to the end that ye may be established,” he makes this plain. Then since this also was very irksome, see how he softens it by the sequel. For that they may not say, are we wavering, and carried about? and need we speech of yours in order to stand fast? he anticipates and does away any gainsaying of the kind, by saying as follows.

Ver. 12. “That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.”

As if he said, Do not suspect that I spoke to accuse you. It was not with this feeling that I said what I did. But what may it be that I wished to say? Ye are undergoing many tribulations, being drenched on every side (by those who persecute you *περιαντλούμενοι*. 3 mss. *παρενοχλούμενοι*, harassed). I desired then to see you, that I might comfort you, or rather, not that I might comfort you only, but that I might myself receive comfort. See the wisdom of the teacher. He said, to the end that “ye may be strengthened;” he knew that what he had said would be heavy and irksome to the disciples. He says, “to the end that ye may be comforted.” But this again is heavy, not indeed to such a degree as the former, still it is heavy. He then pares down what is galling in this also, smoothing his speech on every side, and rendering it easy of acceptance. For he does not say barely, “to be comforted,” but, “to be comforted together with you;” nor was he content with this but he puts in a further lenitive, when he says, “by the mutual faith both of you and me.”¹²⁰¹ Oh how great was his humble-mindedness! He showed himself also to be in need of them, and not them only of him. And he puts the disciples in the position of teachers, not letting any superiority remain upon his own side, but pointing out their full equality. For the gain is mutual, he means, and I need the comfort from you, and you that from me. And how comes this to pass? “Through the mutual faith both of you and me.” For as in the case of fire, if any one gather together many

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¹²⁰¹ **Verse 12** is best understood as a quasi-correction, or modification of **v. 11**, to show that he does not mean that his coming to them would be a blessing to them alone, but also to himself; thus: I mean to say that I want to visit you not only that I may impart (*μεταδῶ*, **v. 11**) something unto you, but that I may be encouraged in you (or among you) through the action and reaction of our common (*ἐν ἀλλήλοις*) faith. Thus *τοῦτο δὲ ἐστίν* is taken not as simply explanatory, but as mildly adversative.—G.B.S.

lights, it is a bright flame that he kindles, thus also does it naturally happen with the faithful. For when we be by ourselves, torn away from others, we are somehow in worse spirits. But when we see one another, and are entwined¹²⁰² with the members of our own selves, great is the comfort we receive. You must not look to the present time, during which, by God's grace, both in city and in the desert itself, there be many hosts of believers, and all impiety hath been driven out; but consider, in that time, how great a good it was both for disciples to see their master, and for brethren who had come from another city to be seen of brethren. But that I may make what I am saying plainer, let me bring the matter to an example. For if it should even happen and come to pass (may it never do so!) that we had been carried away to the land of the Persians or Scythians or other barbarians, and had been scattered (7 mss. "torn asunder") by twos and threes in their cities, and were then suddenly to see any one of those here coming to us, reflect what a harvest of comfort we should reap of it! See ye not those too who are in the prisons, if they see any of their acquaintance, how they revive, and are quite fluttering with the pleasure? But if I compare those days with captivity and imprisonment, count it no wonder. For these suffered far harder things than those, scattered as they were, and driven about, and dwelling in the midst of famine and of wars, and tremblingly expecting daily death, and suspecting friends and kindred and relatives, and dwelling in the world as in a strange land, aye, and in far harder plight than they who live in another's country. This is why he says, "to the end that ye may be established and comforted with us by our mutual faith." And this he says, not as though himself needed any assistance from them (far from it; for how should the pillar of the Church, who was stronger than iron and the rock, the spiritual adamant, who was equal to the charge of countless cities), but that he should not make his language impetuous and his reproof vehement, he says, that he himself also needs their consolation. But if any one here should say, that the comfort was his gladness at the increase of their faith, and that Paul needed this, he would not be mistaking his meaning in this way either. If then thou desire, one might say, and pray, and wilt gain comfort and give comfort by it, what is there to hinder thy coming? By way of dissipating this suspicion then, he proceeds.

Ver. 13. "Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I desired to come unto you (but was let hitherto)."

Here is a compliance great as that of slaves, and a plain exhibition of his excellent temper (εὐγνωμοσύνης)! For, that he was let, he says, but why, he does not go on to say. For he does not pry into the command of his Master, but only obeys. And yet one might expect a person to start questions, as to why God hindered a city so conspicuous and great, and towards which the whole world was looking, from enjoying such a teacher, and that for so long a time. For he that had overcome the governing city, could easily go on to the subjects

1202 περιπλεκώμεν seems here to have a double sense from the context.

sesses in full measure not only the virtue of "spiritual love," but also that of courage and endurance, which enable him "to know no fear of enemies and eagerly to endure afflictions."⁵⁸ Consequently, such terrors befall the perfect not only at night, but during prayer as well. In his treatise *On Prayer*, Evagrius hands down several such occurrences that may appear to many as being utterly unbelievable.⁵⁹ One may suffice here. It recalls to us those nightmares of the angry, of which we have spoken in detail. But how differently the nameless saint reacts to these terrors here!

We once heard a story about one of the holy men of prayer who was assailed by the spiteful demon. No sooner had he lifted his hands in prayer than this demon transformed himself into a lion and, raising his forelegs up, he sunk his claws into either cheek of this athlete of prayer. But this man simply would not yield. He did not lower them until he had completed all his usual prayers.⁶⁰

⁵⁸Pr. 89.

⁵⁹Or. 106-112.

⁶⁰Ibid. 106.

CHAPTER 10

Dialogue with God

Anger and "pure prayer" are direct opposites and mutually exclusive—so much is clear. The former is, as it were, a caricature of the latter. For while at prayer—if one may even call it that—the angry man constantly has before his spiritual eyes the "image" of him who offended him or to whom he himself has caused grief, thereby making him into a "god" (or idol),¹ the true man of prayer "loses himself" entirely "in being together with God," in converse with him alone.² Only when one has fully grasped what this means can one realize what anger robs a person of.

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Prayer is a continual intercourse of the spirit with God. What state of soul, then, is required, that the spirit might thus strain after its Master without wavering, living constantly with him without intermediary?³

In his treatise *On Prayer*,⁴ Evagrius adopts a felicitous definition of prayer from Clement of Alexandria⁵ and develops it further. Here we touch upon the centerpiece of the Evagrian teaching on "true prayer," which undoubtedly is also based on personal experience. Like Clement,⁶ Evagrius in this definition also has in mind Moses, as will

¹M.c. 37.24 f.

²Or. 34.

³Ibid. 3.

⁴The same definition also appears in *In Ps.* 140:1 α and *Sk.* 28; thus, it is important for Evagrius.

⁵*Stromata* VII.39.6.

⁶Cf. *ibid.* VI.104.1.

become still clearer.⁷ The intellect is granted that state (κατάστασις), which it here requires, through "the quartet of virtues."⁸ These four virtues, when present in their "fullness," "unify the soul."⁹ This is particularly accomplished, however, through meekness, that most excellent virtue of Moses,¹⁰ for "prayer is a scion of meekness and angerlessness."¹¹ But meekness (or love) is itself "a scion of impassibility," which in turn is the "blossom of the practical life," the foundation of which life is "the keeping of the commandments."¹² The following chapter leads us one step further into the mystery of prayer.

If Moses, when he attempted to draw near the burning bush, was prohibited until he should remove the shoes from his feet,¹³ how should you not free yourself of every thought that is colored by passions, seeing that you wish to see One who is beyond every thought and perception?¹⁴

"Prayer," then, is both these things: "seeing" God and "holding converse" with him— becoming his "collocutor" (συνόμιλος). For both, Moses is the Old Testament type pointing forward to the future reality, for he was indeed allowed to see God, although only from behind.¹⁵ Nevertheless, he was permitted to speak with him "face to face, as a man speaks to his friend."¹⁶ "Seeing" therefore effects a greater nearness and directness than does "speaking."

The full reality of what was granted to Moses as a type was revealed only in the New Covenant. For Moses did not yet know what—or rather, who—this "face of God" was, how "seeing" was to be understood, and how "speaking" with God was possible "without

⁷See *Or.* 4.

⁸*Ibid.* 1.

⁹*Ibid.* 2.

¹⁰Num 12:3.

¹¹Cf. *Or.* 14.

¹²*Pr.* 81.

¹³Ex 3:2-5.

¹⁴*Or.* 4.

¹⁵Ex 33:18 ff.

¹⁶*Ibid.* 33:11.

intermediary." The Son who became man was the first to grant to us access to the Father, since he is the perfect "image of God"¹⁷ and the only true "exegete"¹⁸ of the Father.¹⁹ Indeed, who could turn to the Father "without intermediary" if not the Son! Man is only made capable of doing this when he has accepted faith in the Only-Begotten Son²⁰ and has himself become an adopted son of the Father by virtue of his incorporation into the Son's mystical body through holy baptism. This adoption is the work of the Holy Spirit, that "other Comforter" whom the Son has besought for us from the Father. Thus, he it is also who enables and authorizes the one who prays to raise the voice of the Son and like him to cry, "Abba, Father,"²¹ as we do in that prayer which the Only-Begotten One himself taught us.

If you wish to pray, then it is God's [help that] you need. He it is "who gives prayer to the man who prays."²² On that account call upon him saying: "Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come,"²³ that is, the Holy Spirit and thine Only-Begotten Son. This is what our Lord taught us when he said²⁴: "The Father is adored in spirit and in truth."²⁵

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"No one has ever seen God."²⁶ However, thanks to the Son's Incarnation, the Christian may "in true prayer" behold this "face of the Father in heaven," the sight of whom is reserved for the angels alone.²⁷

¹⁷2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15. Cf. *In Ps.* 16:2 α; 79:8 δ.

¹⁸John 1:18.

¹⁹*Ibid.* 14:6.

²⁰*Ibid.* 1:12 et passim.

²¹Rom 8:15.

²²1 Kgs 2:8.

²³Matt 6:9.

²⁴John 4:23.

²⁵Cf. *Or.* 59.

²⁶John 1:18.

²⁷Matt 18:10, cf. *In Ps.* 29:8 ζ.

By true prayer, a monk becomes another angel,²⁸ for he ardently longs to see the face of the Father in heaven.²⁹

"To see the face of the Father in heaven" means to behold the Son³⁰ and in him the Father. For it is written: "He who has seen me has seen the Father."³¹ This "seeing" is not a sensory, visionary process, for "to behold" means "to recognize,"³² since both concepts are synonymous.³³ Whoever longs, then, to behold the Father's face puts all his effort towards this end—to beholding the Son³⁴—and there is nothing the demons try to thwart so much as this "seeking" of the Son!³⁵

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Only he who sees his opposite has drawn near to him.³⁶ From this nearness, this "being together" (συνουσία),³⁷ there arises then that "converse with God" the Father, whose Old Testament type was Moses, but whose fullness was first revealed to us by the Son.

The man who loves God³⁸ constantly lives and speaks with him as a Father. He turns aside from every thought that is tinged with passion.³⁹

This "direct discourse" with the Father is only possible in his Holy Spirit and his Only-Begotten Son,⁴⁰ as we have seen. Whoever has learned, by God's grace, "to pray as one ought"⁴¹ has indeed become a "theologian,"⁴² since he "no longer honors the Creator because of

²⁸Luke 20:36.

²⁹Or. 113.

³⁰In Ps. 16:2 α.

³¹John 14:9.

³²In Ps. 23:6 γ.

³³Ibid. 68:29 ιζ.

³⁴Or. 51.

³⁵Ibid. 50.

³⁶Ep. Mel. 3 f.

³⁷Or. 34.

³⁸Deut 6:6.

³⁹Or. 54.

⁴⁰Ibid. 58.

⁴¹Rom 8:26; cf. Or. 20, 24, 49, 51.

⁴²Or. 60.

his works, but praises him because of himself."⁴³ For the Son and the Spirit, the only true and eternal "mediators" between the Father and his creation,⁴⁴ are themselves not creatures. Rather, they are "true God of true God," as is said in the Nicene Creed (381 AD). Accordingly, this is man's destiny already on earth! But nothing robs him so greatly of his true vocation as does anger. Thus, whoever allows himself to be dominated by the demon of anger not only becomes a "demon" himself, but also must simply have lost his mind.

No one who loves true prayer and yet gives way to anger or resentment can be absolved from the imputation of madness. For he resembles a man who wishes to see clearly and for this purpose he scratches his eyes.⁴⁵

Elsewhere, he speaks more drastically of this "darkening" of sight:

Whoever . . . is easily moved to anger is like a man who pierces himself in the eyes with a metal stylus.⁴⁶

This is more than merely a metaphor. As we have seen, the soul possesses two "eyes," like the body. With the left eye, the soul contemplates God's creatures; with the right, "she beholds the blessed light of the Holy Trinity at the time of prayer."⁴⁷ If both "eyes" are blinded, the "light of the eyes"⁴⁸—that is, the light of the intellect itself⁴⁹—is also extinguished, as is that "blessed light of the Holy Trinity," which it beheld. Yet this is the death of prayer, since:

Prayer is an intellectual state that arises only through the light of the Holy Trinity.⁵⁰

⁴³Ibid. 59.

⁴⁴Ep. Mel. 31.

⁴⁵Or. 64.

⁴⁶Gn. 5; cf. M.c. 32.15 f.

⁴⁷M.c. 42.6 f.

⁴⁸Ps 37:10.

⁴⁹Inst. mon. suppl. 10.

⁵⁰Sk. 27.

"Light" in Evagrius' works is first of all undoubtedly a biblical symbol of knowledge. Already in Hosea 10:12, we read, "Kindle for yourselves a light of knowledge." But when Evagrius speaks of the "appearance of that light . . . which makes 'the place of God' known,"⁵¹ and when he designates the "illuminated intellect" itself as God's "dwelling place,"⁵² then it becomes clear that he is speaking here of a direct, personal experience of God—"in a mirror, as it were"⁵³—of one's own self that is created "in the image of God." Evagrius always speaks only in biblical-symbolic phrases of this mystical experience in the highest sense, which undoubtedly was also granted to him.

The state of the intellect is an intelligible height, resembling the color of heaven, which is also granted the light of the Holy Trinity at the time of prayer.⁵⁴

In the background of this and related texts (the symbolic meaning of which cannot be more closely deciphered here) stands the sublime experience of God at Sinai, of which Exodus 24:9 ff. speaks. There, the elders of Israel together with Moses saw "the place where the God of Israel stood, beneath whose feet there was what looked like a sapphire pavement pure as the firmament itself in its purity." The intellect, cleansed of all passions, has exactly this experience: that is, "it beholds itself resembling the color of sapphire or of heaven" when God "breathes into it the related light."⁵⁵

When the intellect "has put off the old man and put on [the new man], born of grace,"⁵⁶ then at the time of prayer it will behold its own condition as resembling the color of sapphire or of heaven. In Scripture, this same [condition] is called "the place of God," which the elders beheld on Mount Sinai.⁵⁷

⁵¹*M.c.* 40.7 ff.

⁵²*Sk.* 25.

⁵³*Inst. mon. suppl.* 13.

⁵⁴*Sk.* 4.

⁵⁵*Ibid.* 2.

⁵⁶Eph 4:24; Col 3:9 f. The heart of the matter here is baptism!

⁵⁷*M.c.* 39.

However, this "heavenly state" of the intellect is destroyed by thoughts arising from anger: suspicion, hatred, and resentment, which "blind" the intellect more than all others.⁵⁸ They "extinguish" this "blessed light" of the intellect.⁵⁹

In pure thoughts, [there] is imprinted a splendid sky to see and a spacious region where to a certain extent⁶⁰ the reasons (λόγοι) of beings are beheld and the holy angels approach those who are worthy. And this vision that is imprinted—resentment causes it to be seen [only] obscurely, and anger when it flames up destroys it completely.⁶¹

Anger blots out not only the knowledge of the "reasons of beings" but also the "blessed light of the Holy Trinity" and the knowledge thereof. Indeed, whoever through his own fault has deprived himself of this sublime experience of God and his creation must have lost his mind.

⁵⁸*Ibid.* 32.3 ff.

⁵⁹*Ibid.* 37.35.

⁶⁰The text of *KG V.39* uses the expression *v'aikana* here, which A. Guillaumont translates as "how" (*comment*). In contrast, *Ep.* 39.5 (containing a slightly different version of the same text) reads *k'ma hu*, which W. Frankenberg quite fittingly translates as *ποσῶς*. Such reductions are also found elsewhere in Evagrius' works; cf. e.g. *Pr.* 53 and 55.

⁶¹*KG V.39.*

now, that we should not be condemned with the world.” (1 Cor. xi. 32.) And now indeed to many such things usually seem to come not of the wrath from above, but of the malice of man. But then the punishment from God shall be manifest, when the Judge, sitting upon the fearful tribunal, shall command some to be dragged to the furnaces, and some to the outer darkness,¹²¹⁴ and some to other inexorable and intolerable punishments. And why is it that he does not speak as plainly as this, the Son of God is coming with ten thousand angels, and will call each man to account, but says, that “the wrath of God is revealed?” His hearers were as yet novices, and therefore he draws them first by things quite allowed by them. And besides what is here mentioned, he also seems to me to be aiming against the Greeks. And this is why he makes his beginning from this, but afterwards he introduces the subject of Christ’s judgment.

“Against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness.” Here he showeth that the ways of ungodliness are many, and that of truth, one. For error is a thing various and multiform and compound, but the truth is one. And after speaking of doctrines he speaks of life, mentioning the unrighteousness of men. For there be various kinds of unrighteousness also. One is in money affairs, as when any one deals unrighteously by his neighbor in these; and another in regard to women, when a man leaves his own wife, and breaks in upon the marriage of another. For St. Paul calls this also defrauding, saying thus, “That no man go beyond or defraud his brother in the matter.” (1 Thess. iv. 6.) Others again injure not the wife or property, but the reputation of their neighbor, and this too is unrighteousness. For “a good name is better than great riches.” (Prov. xxii. 1.) But some say that this also is said of Paul about doctrines. Still there is nothing to prevent its having been said of both. But what it is “to hold the truth in unrighteousness,” learn from the sequel.

Ver. 19. “Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath showed it unto them.”

But this glory they invested stocks and stones with. As then he which is entrusted with the goods of the king, and is ordered to spend them upon the king’s glory, if he waste these upon robbers, and harlots, and witches, and make these splendid out of the king’s stores,

1214 St. Basil speaks similarly of various punishments, *Regulæ. Br. Tr. int.* 267, ed. Ben. text ii. p. 507. Theophylact on Matt. viii. 12, seems to allude to this passage. Both say that “outer darkness” implies an “inner,” but seemingly in opposite senses, Theoph. taking ἔσω to be towards Heaven. Origen on Matt. xxii. 13 makes it a temporary punishment. St. Chrys. on Matt. xxii. 13. St. Aug. on Ps. vi. 6. St. Jerome on Matt. viii. 12, take it otherwise. See also St. Bas. on Ps. 33 (4), 11, text i. 151 e. See Maldonatus on Matt. viii. 12, and St. Chrys. on Rom. xvi. 16, *infra* on the difference of punishments.

he is punished as having done the kingdom the greatest wrong. Thus they also who after having received the knowledge of God and of His glory, invested idols therewith, "held the truth in unrighteousness," and, at least as far as was in their power, dealt unrighteously by the knowledge, by not using it upon fitting objects. Now, has what was said become clear to you, or must one make it still clearer? Perhaps it were needful to say somewhat more. What then is it which is here said? The knowledge of Himself God placed in men from the beginning. But this knowledge they invested stocks and stones with, and so dealt unrighteously to the truth, as far at least as they might. For it abideth unchanged, having its own glory immutable. "And whence is it plain that He placed in them this knowledge, O Paul?" "Because," saith he, "that which may be known of Him is manifest in them." This, however, is an assertion, not a proof. But do thou make it good, and show me that the knowledge of God was plain to them, and that they willingly turned aside. Whence was it plain then? did He send them a voice from above? By no means. But what was able to draw them to Him more than a voice, that He did, by putting before them the Creation, so that both wise, and unlearned, and Scythian, and barbarian, having through sight learned the beauty of the things which were seen, might mount up to God.¹²¹⁵ Wherefore he says,

Ver. 20. "For the invisible things of Him from the Creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made."

Which also the prophet said, "The heavens declare the glory of God." (**Ps. xix. 1.**) For what will the Greeks (i.e. Heathen) say in that day? That "we were ignorant of Thee?" Did ye then not hear the heaven sending forth a voice by the sight, while the well-ordered harmony of all things spake out more clearly than a trumpet? Did ye not see the hours of night and day abiding unmoved continually, the goodly order of winter, spring, and the other seasons remaining both sure and unmoved, the tractableness (εὐγνωμοσύνην) of the sea amid all its turbulence and waves? All things abiding in order and by their beauty and their grandeur, preaching aloud of the Creator? For all these things and more than these doth Paul sum up in saying, "The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, even His eternal Power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." And yet it is not for this God hath made these things, even if this came of it. For it was not to bereave them of all excuse, that He set before them so great a system of teaching, but that they might come to know Him. But by not having recognized¹²¹⁶ Him they deprived themselves of every excuse, and then to show how they are bereaved of excuse, he says,

Ver. 21. "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God."

¹²¹⁵ Pascal. Pen. c. 20, thinks an inward illumination implied here.

¹²¹⁶ ἀγνοήσαντες 4 mss. and Sav. marg.; in text ἀγνωμονήσαντες, having been obstinate.

This is the one greatest charge; and the second after it is their also worshipping idols, as Jeremy too in accusing them said, "This people hath committed two evils: they have forsaken me the fountain of living water, and have dug for themselves broken cisterns." (Jer. ii. 13.) And then as a sign of their having known God, and not used their knowledge upon a fit object, he adduces this very thing, that they knew gods. Wherefore he adds, "because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God." And he names the cause through which they fell into such senselessness. What then is it? They trusted everything to their reasonings. Still he does not word it so, but in a much sharper language, "but became vain in their reasonings, and their foolish heart was darkened." For as in a night without a moon, if any one attempt to go by a strange road, or to sail over a strange sea, so far will he be from soon reaching his destination, that he will speedily be lost. Thus they, attempting to go the way leading to Heaven, and having destroyed the light from their own selves, and, in lieu of it, trusted themselves to the darkness of their own reasoning, and seeking in bodies for Him who is incorporeal, and in shapes for Him who hath no shape, underwent a most rueful shipwreck. But beside what has been said, he names also another cause of their error, when he says,

Ver. 22. "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools."

For having some great conceit of themselves, and not enduring to go the way which God had commanded them, they were plunged into the reasonings of senselessness (1 ms. *διανοίας*). And then to show and give in outline, what a rueful surge it was, and how destitute of excuse, he goes on to say,

Ver. 23. "And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things."

The first charge is, that they did not find God; the second was, that it was while they had great and clear (Sav. marg. "wise") means to do it; the third, that withal they said they were wise; the fourth, that they not only did not find that Reverend Being, but even lowered Him to devils and to stones and stocks. Now he takes down their haughtiness also in the Epistle to the Corinthians, but not in the same way there as here. For there it is from the Cross he gives them the blow, saying, "The foolishness of God is wiser than men." (1 Cor. i. 25.) But here, without any comparison, he holds their wisdom by itself up to ridicule, showing it to be folly and a mere display of vain boasting. Then, that you may learn that when they had the knowledge of God they gave it up thus treacherously, "they changed," he says. Now he that changeth, hath something to change. For they wished to find out more, and not bear with the limits given them, and so they were banished from these also. For they were lusters after new devices, for such is all that is Grecian. And this is why they stood against one another and Aristotle rose up against Plato, and the Stoics blustered (*ἐπρυάξαντο* 6 mss. "fenced themselves," *ἐπράξαντο*: which Field inclines to prefer) against him, and one has become hostile to one, another to another. So that one should not so much marvel

at them for their wisdom, as turn away from them indignant and hate them, because through this very thing they have become fools. For had they not trusted what they have to reasonings, and syllogisms, and sophistries, they would not have suffered what they did suffer. Then, to strengthen the accusation against them he holds the whole of their idolatry up to ridicule. For in the first place the changing even were a very fit subject of scorn. But to change to such things too, is beyond all excuse. For what then did they change it, and what was it which they invested with His Glory? Some conceptions they ought to have had about Him, as, for instance, that He is God, that He is Lord of all, that He made them, which were not, that He exerciseth a Providence, that He careth for them. For these things are the "Glory of God." To whom then did they ascribe it? Not even to men, but "to an image made like to corruptible man." Neither did they stop here, but even dropped down to the brutes, or rather to the images of these. But consider, I pray, the wisdom of Paul, how he has taken the two extremes, God the Highest, and creeping things the lowest: or rather, not the creeping things, but the images of these; that he might clearly show their evident madness. For what knowledge they ought to have had concerning Him Who is incomparably more excellent than all, with that they invested what was incomparably more worthless than all. But what has this to do with the philosophers? a man may say. To these belongs most of all what I have said to do with them. For they have the Egyptians who were the inventors of these things to their masters. And Plato, who is thought more reverend than the rest of them, glories in these masters. (Plat. Tim. 21. B. etc.) And his master is in a stupid awe of these idols, for he it is that bids them sacrifice the cock to Æsculapius¹²¹⁷ (his last words, Phædo), where (i.e. in his temple. So Field from mss.) are the images of these beasts, and creeping things. And one may see Apollo and Bacchus worshipped along with these creeping things. And some of the philosophers even lifted up to Heaven bulls, and scorpions, and dragons, and all the rest of that vanity. For in all parts did the devil zealously strive to bring men down before the images of creeping things, and to range beneath the most senseless of all things, him whom God hath willed to lift up above the heavens. And it is not from this only, but also from other grounds, that you will see their chief man to come under the remarks now made. For having made a collection of the poets, and having said that we should believe them upon matters relating to God, as having accurate knowledge, he has nothing else to bring forward

1217 Thus Tert. *Ap.* 46. Lact. *iii.* 20. Origen cont. Cels. *vi.* c. 4, quotes this as showing the Philosophers guilty of St. Paul's charge, at the same time speaking of Socrates' previous discourse as "what God had shown them;" the note of Spencer, *Ed. Ben.* i. 631, quotes an allegorical explanation. Theodoret, *Græc. Aff. Cur. Dis.* vii. de Sacr. says it was done to disprove the charge of Atheism. [Probably Socrates' real judgment on the popular mythology was, that it was an imperfect and economical revelation of a higher truth than it expressed: and its ceremonies the legitimate though conventional expression of true devotion. Thus "the cock to Æsculapius" was the sick man's thank-offering for recovery from "life's fitful fever."]

but the “linked sweetness” of these absurdities, and then says, that this utterly ludicrous trifling is to be held for true.^{1218 1219}

Ver. 24. “Wherefore also God gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves.”

Hence he shows, that even of the perversion of the laws it was ungodliness which was the cause, but He “gave them up,” here is, let them alone.¹²²⁰ For as he that hath the command in an army, if upon the battle lying heavy upon him he retreat and go away, gives up his soldiers to the enemies not by thrusting them himself, but by stripping them of his own assistance; thus too did God leave those that were not minded to receive what cometh from Him, but were the first to bound off from Him, though Himself having wholly fulfilled His own part. But consider; He set before them, for a form of doctrine, the world; He gave them

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1218 See Plat. Io 533 E. and perhaps Euthyph. 6 A. B: passages certainly not fairly representative of Plato’s deliberate opinions. But Greek Philosophy is here treated as attempting to rival the Gospel. The Fathers who most value what is true in it, as Clement of Alexandria and Justin Martyr, speak of it as from partial Divine Light, and use it against the false; as Cl. A. *Str.* 1. recommends the study of it for subordinate knowledge, and Cohort. *ad Gr.* quotes Heathens against the mythology, whose authors he considers led by demons to deceive men. So too Justin, *Ap. i.* 46, allows Heathens a partaking of the Λόγος, and 20, 55, 58, 62, etc., refers idol rites to the demons. St. Augustin *de Civ. Dei*, viii. 10, and elsewhere, gives a fair estimate of Gentile Philosophy. The Apostolical Constitutions, 1. i. c. 6, forbid studying heathen books. Cotelierius in his note quotes on the same side, 1. ii. c. 61, recog. x. 15, 42. Isid. *Sent.* iii. 13, etc., and the blame cast on Origen by many. On the other side Tert. *de Idol.* c. 10, who however only defends learning in heathen schools, rather than Christians should conform to heathen customs as teachers. Origen *Philocal.* c. 13. Greg. Naz. *Or.* 20. Hieron. *ep.* 84. 70 Vall. *ad Magnum Oratorem* Greg. Papa. *ad 1 Reg.* xiii. 19, 20. Theod. H. E. iv. 26, as checking excess in such studies, Greg. *ad Desiderium*, l. ix. *Ep.* 48. Hier. *adv. Luciferianos*, c. 5. *Ep.* 61, c. 1. Cassian. *Coll.* xiv. c. 12, etc.

1219 The steps of this degeneracy of the Gentile world as indicated in *v.* 21–23 may be indicated thus: (1) ceasing to give glory to God and to recognize his power and divineness. (2) Thanklessness. They lost the sense of their relation to him as recipients of his bounty. (3) They entered into vain and foolish speculations—διαλογισμοί. (4) These ended only in blindness of mind and heart to the truth which they once possessed. (5) Mistaking all this folly for wisdom, they were ripe for complete self-deception. They perverted their religious feeling by ceasing to make the glorious perfection of God the object of their worship and by substituting images of men and animals.—G.B.S.

1220 The expression: “God gave them up,” etc. is not to be so softened down into the idea of mere permission. With this *v.* (24) begins the description of God’s revelation of his wrath against them. This is introduced by διὸ; because they had pursued the course outlined in the preceding verses (19–23) God set in operation against them those moral and providential forces which reduced them to the lowest depth of misery and shame. *Vv.* 25–32 show what this exhibition of his wrath was and what were its consequences. For historic illustration of the condition of the Heathen world at this time, see Fisher, *Beginnings of Christianity*, chap. vi.—G.B.S.

reason, and an understanding capable of perceiving what was needful. None of these things did the men of that day use unto salvation, but they perverted to the opposite what they had received. What was to be done then? to drag them by compulsion and force? But this were not to make them virtuous. It remained then, after that, for Him to leave them alone, and this He did too, that in this way, if by no other, having by trial come to know the things they lusted after, they might flee from what was so shameful (3 mss. add εἰκότως, and with reason). For if any that was a king's son, dishonoring his father, should choose to be with robbers and murderers, and them that break up tombs, and prefer their doings to his father's house; the father leaves him, say, so that by actual trial, he may learn the extravagance of his own madness. But how comes he to mention no other sin, as murder, for instance, or covetousness, or other such besides, but only unchasteness? He seems to me to hint at his audience at the time, and those who were to receive the Epistle. "To uncleanness, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves."

Note the emphasis here, as it is most severe. For they stood not in need of any others, it means, to do insolent violence to them, but the very treatment the enemies would have shown them, this they did to themselves. And then, taking up the charge again, he says,

Ver. 25. "Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator."

Things which were matter for utter scorn, he puts down specially, but what seemed of a graver cast than the rest, in general terms; and by all he shows, that serving the creature is Grecian. And see how strong he makes his assertion, for he does not say, barely, "they served the creature," but "more than the Creator:" thus everywhere giving fresh force to the charge, and, by the comparison, taking from them all ground of mitigation. "Who is blessed forever. Amen." But by this, he means, He was not any whit injured. For Himself abideth "blessed for ever." Here he shows, that it was not in self-defence that He left them alone, inasmuch as He suffered nothing Himself. For even if these treated Him insolently, yet He was not insolently treated, neither was any scathe done to the bearings of His glory, but He abideth continually blessed. For if it often happen, that man through philosophy would not feel the insults men offered him, much less would God, the imperishable and unalterable Nature, the unchangeable and immovable Glory.

For men are in this respect made like unto God,¹²²¹ when they do not feel what is inflicted by them who would do them despite, and are neither insulted of others who insult them, nor beaten of them when beating them, nor made scorn of when they make scorn of them. And how in the nature of things can this be? it may be said. It is so, yea most certainly it is possible, when thou art not vexed at what is done. And how, it may be said, is it possible not to be vexed? Nay rather, how is it possible to be vexed? Tell me now, if your little child

¹²²¹ Greg. Nyss. i. p. 720. ἐπεὶ ἀπαθὲς τὸ Θεῖον, ὃ ἐν πάθει ὧν τῆς πρὸς τὸ Θεῖον συναφείας ἀποσχοινίζεται.

were to insult you, would you then reckon the insult an insult? What, but would you be vexed? Surely not. But and if you were to be vexed, would you not then be ridiculous? Thus too let us then get to feel disposed towards our neighbors, and then we shall have no sense of displeasure. For they that insult us are more senseless than children. Neither let us even seek to be free from insults, but when we are insulted to bear them. For this is the only secure honor. But why so? Because this you are master of, but that, another person. Do you not see the adamant reverberating the blows it receives? But nature, you will say, gives it this property. Yet you too have it in your power to become by free choice such, as that happens to be by nature. How? do you not know that the children in the furnace were not burned? and that Daniel in the den suffered no harm? This may even now come to pass. There stand by us too lions, anger and lust, with fearful teeth tearing asunder him that falleth among them. (Plato *Rep.* viii.) Become then like that (ἐκείνους 3 mss.) Daniel, and let not these affections fasten their fangs into thy soul. But that, you will say, was wholly of grace. Yes; because the acts¹²²² of free-will led the way thereto. So that if we be willing to train ourselves to a like character, even now the grace is at hand. And even though the brutes be an hungered, yet will they not touch thy sides. For if at the sight of a servant's body they were abashed, when they have seen the members of Christ, (and this is what we believers are,) how shall they do else than be still? Yet if they be not still, it is owing to the fault of those cast among them. For indeed many spend largely upon these lions, by keeping harlots, breaking through marriages, taking vengeance upon enemies. And so before ever they come to the bottom of the den they get torn in pieces. (*Dan.* vi. 24.) But with Daniel this did not so happen, neither yet would it with us, if we were so minded, but even a greater thing would take place than what then happened. For the lions hurt not him; and if we be sober-minded, then will they that hurt us even profit us. Thus then did Paul grow bright out of those that thwarted him and plotted against him, thus Job out of the many scourges, thus Jeremy out of the miry pit, thus Noah out of the flood, thus Abel out of the treachery, thus Moses out of the bloodthirsty Jews, thus, Elisha, thus each of the worthies of old, not out of relaxedness and softness, but out of tribulations and trials, came to be attired with their bright crowns. Wherefore also Christ, inasmuch as He knew this to be the groundwork of a good report, said to His disciples, "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (*John* xvi. 33.) What then, they will say, Have not many been turned to flight by these terrors? Yes, but that was not of the nature of temptation, but of their own remissness. But He that "with the temptation maketh also an escape, so that ye may be able to bear it" (*1 Cor.* x. 13), may He stand by all of us, and reach forth His hand, that being gloriously proclaimed victorious we may attain to the everlasting crowns, through the grace and love towards man

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1222 τὰ τῆς πρ. i.e. his fastings, etc. S. Ephrem notes that it was not the miracles which were supernatural, but the grace of the doers thereof, in *Nat. Dom.* ix. text 2. p. 427. f.