

Severian of Gabala

**A most Beneficial Sermon on Faith, and about the Law of
Nature, and on the Holy Spirit.**

(De fide et de lege natura)

CPG 4185

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¹ This translation was commissioned by Roger Pearse, Ipswich, and is released by him into the public domain. The Greek text translated is that of Montfaucon, as reprinted in the *Patrologia Graeca* 48, cols. 1081-1088. The column numbers are printed below as [M.1081], etc. According to the *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*, an Armenian version of the homily also exists: N. Akinian, in *Handes Amsorya* 73 (1959), col. 161-182.

A most Beneficial Sermon on Faith, and about the Law of Nature, and on the Holy Spirit.

I.

[M.1081] All scripture is god-breathed and useful,² having as its beginning and fountain of piety the spirit of truth. For from the holy and worshipful spirit, as though from some flourishing and fruitful spring, all the streams issue forth. And whatever the law declares, whatever the prophets prophesy, whatever the apostles preach, all of these truly resemble and are ascribed to the holy spirit. “For the one and the same spirit effects all things, privately distributing to each as he wills.”³ On account of this,⁴ all the beauties of piety flash forth and the words of truth shine and the treasures of godly wisdom abound, treasures not hidden in the earth but contemplated in the depth of piety; treasures that gladden souls, enlighten thoughts, convert the world,⁵ [and] enrich all the poverty of Adam. For just as he was brought down into humiliation after stripping off the original beauty of piety, so too was he enriched through the descent⁶ of our savior, the word of God. And Paul testifies [to this] somewhere, saying “I give thanks to God because you were enriched in him in every way, in every word and all knowledge.”⁷ He who receives the word of God is rich, but he who doesn’t receive the word of God is poor. And Jeremiah testifies [to this], saying, “And I said, ‘Perhaps they are poor. For this reason they aren’t able to hear the word of the Lord.’”⁸ But while the poor man is reproached, the rich man is exalted, the man who is rich in the word of truth, the man who abounds in the virtues of the fruitful philosophy.⁹ Such was David when he says, “I am like a fruitful olive-tree in the house of God.”¹⁰ A fruitful olive-tree, abounding not in leaves, but heavy with fruits. For there often exists a soul which, while abounding in branches and leaves, nonetheless doesn’t bear fruit, as Jeremiah said about Israel: “Israel is a vine that puts out many branches.”¹¹ “Putting out many branches,” not “bearing good fruits.” That [soul] is like this. But the prophet exults saying “I am like a fruitful olive-tree, abounding not in outward things, but teeming with inward things, a fruitful olive-tree in the house of God.” For neither is it a good thing to live outside the house of God. You will at any rate find many even outside the word of truth who are conspicuous for good deeds as far as

² 2 Tim 3:16.

³ 1 Cor 12:11.

⁴ Or, “this [spirit],” or, if the spirit is intended, “him.”

⁵ Or, “Turn back the world.”

⁶ Or, “condescension”

⁷ 1 Cor 1:4-5.

⁸ Jer 5:4.

⁹ Throughout this sermon, the noun φιλοσοφία and, especially, the verb φιλοσοφῶ, pose difficulties. “To philosophize” is both clumsy and often misses the point. Accordingly the verb is variously rendered as “speak philosophically about, behave in a philosophical manner, be philosophical,” etc, according to context. Here “philosophy” probably refers to the lifestyle and intellectual framework of the Christian, involving self-control, moderation, temperance, discipline, etc. The entries in Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, should be consulted by an interested reader.

¹⁰ Psalm 52:8; Septuagint 51:10.

¹¹ Hosea 10:1.

appearance is concerned.¹² You will find men who are sympathetic, compassionate, intent on justice.¹³ But there is no fruit in their deeds, since they are¹⁴ ignorant of the work of truth. For works are also good, but the highest work must precede. For when the Jews once said to the Lord, “What shall we do to perform the works of God?”¹⁵ he replied to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in the one he sent.”¹⁶ See how he called faith a work. And so, no sooner did you believe than you abounded in works, not because you are wanting in respect of works, but because faith is in and of itself full of good works. For works are for people and [come] from people, but faith [comes] from people toward God. Faith renders the man who is returning to God¹⁷ a citizen of heaven. Faith makes the person from earth an associate of God. Nothing is good outside of faith. Brothers, those who abound in good works and are ignorant of the God of piety are like (to use a figure of speech) the remains of corpses, which, though clothed in beautiful things, don’t perceive the beautiful things.¹⁸ For what is the advantage of a dead soul, dead to the word of God, but clothed with good works? Works occur in the hope of compensation and crowns. But if you are ignorant of the judge, what¹⁹ do you contend for? Faith mustn’t be stripped of good works in order that it not be insulted; but faith is higher than works. For just as humans ought to especially esteem being alive,²⁰ so too being nourished (for that which maintains our life is nourishment).²¹ In this way, our hope in Christ ought to be most important in our life,²² but also be nourished with good works. [M. 1082]. It is often possible for someone who isn’t being nourished to live, but it is not possible for someone who is not alive to be nourished. Moses fasted for forty days,²³ but after he had the living word in himself, the lack of earthly things did him no harm. So too in the matter of the condition of the soul. For while it must be nourished with good works, one must put on faith before works. You are not able demonstrate that, without faith, the man who performs works of righteousness lived, but I can show that, without works, the faithful man both lived and was deemed worthy of the kingdom. No one lived²⁴ without faith. The bandit, who only believed, was made righteous. And don’t say to me, “He didn’t have the opportunity to live,”²⁵ for I am not contending this point, but I proved this: that faith in and of itself saved him. For if he lived off faith,²⁶ and was neglectful of works, he was falling from salvation.²⁷ But the matter now under

¹² Κατὰ τὰ φαινόμενον.

¹³ Or, “righteousness.”

¹⁴ Literally, “were.”

¹⁵ John 6:28.

¹⁶ John 6:29.

¹⁷ Τὸν ἐπιστρεφόμενον, i.e. becoming a Christian.

¹⁸ Literally, “don’t have perception of.”

¹⁹ Or possibly, “who.”

²⁰ Literally, “Just as living ought to be especially esteemed in honor by humans.”

²¹ i.e. faith is equivalent to being alive, works to being nourished. Without faith (i.e. without being alive), works (i.e. nourishment) have no value. But, if someone is alive (i.e. has faith), being nourished (i.e. doing good works) is a chief concern to continue one’s life. The point is to have one’s priorities in right order.

²² Or, “to take the lead of (προηγείσθαι) our life.”

²³ Exodus 34:28.

²⁴ The context might suggest a translation of “come to life,” i.e. Christian life.

²⁵ Probably in the sense of conducting his life in accordance with his profession of faith.

²⁶ ἐπέζησε τῇ πίστει.

²⁷ The meaning is not clear, since this seems to contradict the main point of the argument that faith is sufficient for salvation. The Greek text is: εἰ γὰρ ἐπέζησε τῇ πίστει, καὶ ἔργων ἡμέλησεν, ἐξέπιπτε τῆς

consideration and being inquired into is that faith in and of itself saved, but works in and of themselves in no way justified the workers. And do you want to see precisely that works without faith don't give life? Cornelius is well spoken of for his charitable giving and prayers. He was ignorant of Christ but believed in God though he hadn't yet learned of the word of God. And because his works were good and wonderful, he was pleasing to God, the judge and lover of good things. But when the great eye of righteousness and truth, the impartial and just judge, saw that, while his works were good, they were dead, as not possessing faith, he sends a divine angel to act as a judge for his works,²⁸ with the result that he crowns the man who contends well with faith. The angel²⁹ says to him, "Cornelius, your prayers and your charitable giving have ascended before God as a memorial offering."³⁰ If moreover his prayer was heard and his charitable giving was received, what, I ask,³¹ was lacking for his salvation? "Send, then, to Joppa," he says, "and summon Simon who is called Peter, who will come and speak words to you in which you and all of your household will be saved."³² Therefore he didn't possess works as his salvation. For if he and his household are saved from what Peter preaches, Cornelius didn't have salvation from works until faith acted as judge for his works.³³ For this reason, even Peter, the blessed and honored apostle of Christ, after coming from Joppa and after seeing the grace of God poured out among those who were then considered to be foreign, after he understood God's judgment, says, "Truly I understand that God does not show partiality. But whoever acts righteously in every nation is acceptable to him."³⁴ He didn't say, "whoever acts righteously in every nation is saved," but "is acceptable," that is, is worthy of being received. Faith, accordingly, must shine before works,³⁵ and works must follow faith. And let no one insult faith, nor let him insult works by unbelief. Become a fruitful olive-tree, but in the house of God. To be "a fruitful olive-tree" denotes [that] works are good; being "in the house of God" points out faith. But what are the works of God? We all know [them], if we are willing to do [them]. For nothing is hidden. For while some matters of doctrine are in dispute, matters pertaining to works haven't been hidden. For nature dictates the laws. We know from ourselves what is good and what is evil. God established an unwritten law in nature [which] enlightens our minds. Let no one say, "I didn't read [the] law, I don't know the matters of the law." For if you deny the common law, the law of nature convicts you. Do you want to learn that God fixed the laws in nature which distinguish what is good and what is evil? Ask our behavior³⁶ itself why those who commit wicked actions flee the name of the wicked. Listen to how this is so. The adulterer commits adultery, yet when

σωτηρίας. Seville prints the same text. The context may suggest this interpretation: if the bandit had had the opportunity to do good works, but didn't do them, then *in that case* he fell from salvation. But since he didn't have the opportunity to do good works after coming to faith in Jesus (since this happened on the cross), his faith saved him without works. It is also possible that the text has been corrupted and an ἄν dropped out. If so, the text would read, "He would have been falling from salvation."

²⁸ Βραβεύοντα τοῖς ἔργοις.

²⁹ Literally, "who."

³⁰ Acts 10:31.

³¹ Μοι.

³² Acts 10:32.

³³ ἕως αὐτῷ τοῖς ἔργοις ἐβράβευσεν ἢ πίστις.

³⁴ Acts 10:34.

³⁵ Or, "must outshine works."

³⁶ ἀναστροφή.

he hears himself called an adulterer, he feels shame. Say to the confessed adulterer, “you adulterer,” and he is ashamed at hearing what he takes delight in doing. But if you consider the sin a good thing, why do you flee the name? Say to the perjurer, “you perjurer,” and he takes [M. 1083] the mention of his own deeds as an insult. In this way nature itself cries out that what is foul is foreign to the work of God. And what God made is good and exceedingly good and so very good, because³⁷ it is mixed even with the wicked and is ashamed of evil. Say to a self-controlled person, “you self-controlled person,” and he isn’t ashamed of the mention of whatever deed he delights in. Call the just man “just,” and he is crowned with his deed, he is proud of the name. For even if he excuses himself from the name because of his godly fear,³⁸ he nevertheless accepts the praise in his soul.

Consider how much evil lives in the world and doesn’t have its own characteristic appearance.³⁹ How does it not have its own characteristic appearance? If you examine carefully, you will find that no evil appears in⁴⁰ its own characteristic appearance. But unless it borrows the appearance of virtue, it doesn’t appear. Listen to how this is so. The liar doesn’t lie by admitting the lie, but deceives by feigning the truth. The person who does wrong doesn’t proclaim the truth⁴¹ but feigns what is not true, and then works his wrong-doing. Similarly, the deceitful person doesn’t point out his deceit, but feigns friendship, and undertakes his wickedness. The adulterer doesn’t assault the house after confessing his unlawful adultery, but insults divine matters by putting in his mouth the fiction of chastity. Do you see that evil doesn’t possess its own characteristic appearance? Similarly the sycophant, whenever he enters into the court, doesn’t enter after confessing this, [namely], the truth,⁴² but, after bringing forward a witness in the form of the truth, through his deceit proves the witness [to be a witness] of evil.⁴³ In this way evil doesn’t have its own characteristic appearance unless it borrows an appearance of virtue. For this reason the savior said, “They will come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are savage wolves.”⁴⁴ But let’s return to the subject.

II.

Do you want to see, brother, how powerful the innate law is? Our soul, too, even if it is mixed with evils, welcomes the good name. Often, rulers who breathe out greediness and think on nothing else but robbery and injustice, are won over by some people so as to

³⁷ The Latin translator renders this by a result clause, “it is so good that (i.e. with the result that) it is mixed with the wicked,” but ὅτι never introduces result clauses.

³⁸ Εὐλάβεια.

³⁹ Literally, “face,” πρόσωπον. The point is the ‘evil’ always assumes a good form in appearance, and then by this deceit works its evil. The outward appearance never corresponds to the inward intention.

⁴⁰ Literally, “from.”

⁴¹ Literally, “what is.”

⁴² Literally, “what is.”

⁴³ The text is here difficult. It reads, ἀλλὰ μάρτυρα ἀληθείας προστησάμενος τῷ σχήματι, διὰ τοῦ ψεύδους τὸν μάρτυρα τῆς κακίας ἐνδείκνυται. The Latin translation is rather loose: *Similiter et calumniator, quando ingreditur in iudicium, non hoc confitetur quod est, sed larvam assumit veritatis, quasi ei patrocinari velit, eam ex mendacio facit malitiae testem* [And similarly a false informer, when he enters into a court, doesn’t confess what is, but assumes a mask of truth, as though he wanted to defend it (i.e. the truth), from the lie he makes it a witness of evil.]

⁴⁴ Matt 7:15.

slacken the constraint that oppresses the poor man, or to forgive a debt, or to not defend those who have done harm or were accustomed to do harm.⁴⁵ And the man who came to make an effective petition with a ruler, a wicked ruler, doesn't immediately start from the truth. He doesn't tell him the truth,⁴⁶ but adds to him a name for virtue. [Or surely you know how people who make effective petitions always assume a certain demeanor?]⁴⁷ "You are a good man," he says. "Your name is celebrated, everyone sings of your good deeds." And he adds many such remarks to his appeal in order that he may be influenced⁴⁸ by the praises and flee wickedness. See how evil is overcome by the praises of virtue. No evil person wants to hear himself be called evil. For nature welcomes what is its own, even if one's resolution⁴⁹ chooses the opposite.⁵⁰ Therefore, beloved, let us become a fruitful olive-tree, abounding both in fruits and leaves; our words are our leaves, our conduct⁵¹ is our fruit. Let also your speech become honorable, and your conduct fruitful. For with the pious man, not even the leaf is to be thrown away. For David says, "His leaf will not fall away, and everything that he does will prosper."⁵² And the wonder! I considered how Adam went out of the garden naked and how David flourishes in the house of God. Adam⁵³ went out naked because of his transgression, while David,⁵⁴ clothed in virtues, cries out, "I am like a fruitful olive-tree!" Nothing strips us like unfruitfulness, and nothing clothes us like fruitfulness through good works.

Adam was formed. For I must now repeat what was said, since the repetition of good things confirms the teaching in our souls. For just as wool which is being dyed is continually put in the dyes in order that the dye may deeply pass on its own force, so too our souls must continually be thrown into the divine words in order that the ancient disgrace be washed away and we may put on the new beauty. For indeed that wool, whenever it receives the dye, lays aside the name of its nature, and receives the name of the dye. You no longer call it wool, but purple, or scarlet, or light-green, or something of this sort, such as the beauty [which] the dye provided to what was dyed. If, therefore, the dye changes the name of its nature, surely the nature of God changes the human, so that, before the dyeing, he is the same image, made of dust, [M. 1084], but after the dyeing, a shining, heavenly image?

Moreover Adam was formed poor from earth. For God, after taking dust, formed him. But Adam didn't see how he was formed, as I already said. For he didn't need to be present as a witness of the events, in order that he not exalt himself against God. For if he exalts himself while clothed in such a low condition, and is ignorant of his creator, and despises the one who formed [him], who would have contained the extravagance of his arrogance? For this reason God, after forming the human, put into the body⁵⁵ both great

⁴⁵ Or, "to harm those who were accustomed [to do harm]."

⁴⁶ Literally, "what is."

⁴⁷ This sentence is bracketed in the Greek text; perhaps the editor thinks it to be a gloss.

⁴⁸ Literally, "bent."

⁴⁹ Προαίρεσις.

⁵⁰ i.e. Nature, of which man is a part, is drawn to what is good, so people naturally like to be praised for goodness, virtue, kindness, moderation, etc; even so, people can choose to do what is evil.

⁵¹ Πολιτεία.

⁵² Psalm 1:3.

⁵³ Literally, "The former."

⁵⁴ Literally, "the latter."

⁵⁵ Πλάσμα.

faculties and many humiliations, so that God's grace may be wondered at through the power that is in the body,⁵⁶ and human pride⁵⁷ may be restrained through humiliation. He gave him a tongue to speak, to hymn God, to sing of divine matters, to expound the beauties of the creation. A small bit of flesh, the tongue, not even the size of the breadth of two fingers, discourses on heaven and earth. And why did I say "of fingers?" [It's not even the breadth of] a tip of a finger-nail.⁵⁸ But that small and insignificant tip speaks of heaven and earth, and, in order that it not think that it is some great thing and exalt itself above its nature, tumors and wounds are often mixed with it, in order that it may learn that it speaks of eternal and immortal matters, while itself being mortal, and that it must recognize the power of the one being proclaimed, and the weakness of the one proclaiming.⁵⁹ He gave him an eye, that little speck. For the center-part is the part that sees, the very center of the pupil. And nevertheless through that small speak it perceives all of creation. And in order that it not exalt itself by encompassing within its sight all of creation, eye diseases and eye sores and tears and whatever makes its sight cloudy are often also produced in order that from its infirmity it may recognize itself, but that from its workmanship⁶⁰ it may worship the craftsman as God. He gave him a considering heart, a root for thoughts, a fountain for considerations. But in those very spaces he made the formation of the bowels, which are full of excrement and all other filth, through which man eats, in order that, whenever the heart exalts itself, the gut may restrain it. And so both the gut and excrement are necessary for training. For if a man, while carrying around excrement, dares to be insolent, and not simply to be insolent, but even against God, as some barbarian kind dared to say, "I will set my throne above the stars, and I will be like the Most High,"⁶¹ if a man, while carrying around such excrement and filth speaks like this – if he had been completely separated from weakness and vileness,⁶² who would have endured him exalting himself? For this reason great Isaiah says to the arrogant, "Why does earth and ash boast?"⁶³ But let us return again to the subject.

God created man from dust. But man didn't see how he came into existence. For this reason he was also ignorant of his insignificance.⁶⁴ For God, as I already said, didn't make the soul older than the body in order that it not see the process of creation.⁶⁵ However, since he⁶⁶ is completely unaware from what lowly state he arose, and that the maker formed him from earth, he⁶⁷ turns him back into earth⁶⁸ from which he was taken up, in order that by having had experience again of his weakness, he may recognize both the ancient kindness⁶⁹ and the future benevolence [of God].⁷⁰ For when he was formed,

⁵⁶ Literally, "it."

⁵⁷ Or, "mind." Φρόνημα.

⁵⁸ The whole sentence reads: Οὐδὲ ἄκρον ὄνυχον. The phrase is a little puzzling, since the tongue is larger than the tip of a finger-nail.

⁵⁹ Literally, "what is the power of the one being proclaimed, what is the weakness of the one proclaiming."

⁶⁰ Δημιουργία.

⁶¹ Isaiah 14:14.

⁶² Εὐτέλεια.

⁶³ Sirach 10:9.

⁶⁴ Εὐτέλεια.

⁶⁵ Τὴν δημιουργίαν.

⁶⁶ i.e. the human.

⁶⁷ God.

⁶⁸ i.e. in death the body returns to dust.

⁶⁹ Εὐεργεσία.

he didn't see that he came into existence from the earth. Pay close attention so that the thought doesn't escape your notice.⁷¹ When Adam was being formed, he didn't see that he arose from earth. However, when he arises in the resurrection, he knows that he arises after stripping off dust. For although the dead man does not see himself, he nevertheless sees the one [who died] before him. We also see the dead dissolved into dust, and through what we see we are instructed. Did you not often see how bold and arrogant men are made humble and reduced in their deaths? A death is reported, and everyone's heart flutters, everyone's mind⁷² sinks. Whenever we see bare bones we talk philosophically⁷³ about the tombs; and whenever we perceive human nature consumed and dissolved, we immediately talk philosophically with one another. "See what we become, and where we come from!" And we talk nonsense. We went out from the tombs, and forgot our lowliness. At the tomb each person [M. 1085] says something like this. "O the wretchedness! O our pitiable life! See what we become!" Each person generally talks philosophically as though they were intending to renounce evil in every way. And, while inwardly he talks philosophically with words, externally he wars against God with his actions. For this reason God caused tombs to be established everywhere to remind us of our weakness. And so every city, every village has tombs before its entrances. Someone hastens to enter a ruling city that abounds in wealth and power and the other honors. Before he sees what he imagines, he first sees what he becomes: tombs before the cities, tombs before the fields. Everywhere there lies before us a lesson of our low condition, and we learn first what end we come to, and then [we learn] to see the inward phenomena.⁷⁴ And not only this, but also often when we are about to enter into a partnership of life,⁷⁵ we learn of the extreme lowly condition of our nature. Often a man, when he wants to take a wife, dictates to a notary the matters that pertain to the dowry. [There is] not yet a union, but death is immediately registered.⁷⁶ He hasn't yet enjoyed the companionship and the marriage, and immediately he defines death. He hasn't yet seen his wife, and he condemns both himself and her to death ahead of time, and writes the following: "If the husband dies before his wife, if the wife dies before her husband, such and such is arranged." In this way the ancient laws fixed reminders of our nature everywhere for everyone. And the votes of death are not only given for those who exist and are living, but also against those who are not yet born. For what does he say? "If the child who is going to be born dies." The fruit doesn't yet [exist], and the sentence was passed.⁷⁷ And so he recognizes his nature in the documents. But if he suffers one of things that befall humans, or if his wife dies, he forgets what he wrote and utters other words that befit a tragedy. "Did I have to suffer these things?" he says. "Did I expect to suffer these things and to be deprived of wedlock?" What then? Did you forget what you wrote? When you weren't involved in these troubles,⁷⁸ you recognized the limits of your

⁷⁰ Φιλανθρωπία.

⁷¹ Literally, "run by you."

⁷² Or, "pride."

⁷³ Φιλοσοφούμεν.

⁷⁴ Φαντάσματα.

⁷⁵ i.e. marriage.

⁷⁶ i.e. guidelines are established in the contract before the marriage is finalized to be followed should either of the two spouses die.

⁷⁷ Literally, "ran."

⁷⁸ Literally, "When you were outside of the troubles."

nature;⁷⁹ but when you fell in with these sufferings, did you forget the laws of nature? I speak about these matters⁸⁰ for the improvement⁸¹ of all, so that all may nobly bear all that befalls them, [and] so that you may not consider the judgments of God a penalty.⁸² Don't be philosophical when you aren't engaged in your sufferings,⁸³ but when you enter into them show your high-mindedness. When you grieve, remember the words with which you encourage a grieving person. What words do we use with grieving people? Do we not speak these things with them philosophically? "These misfortunes are human. You are not the only one to have faced the misfortune, you are not the only one to have endured the force of death. Even kings suffer these things, rulers have often suffered loss,⁸⁴ and leaders often suffer loss.⁸⁵ Recognize your nature: you are human. You too enjoy the common laws of nature with everyone."

III.

You say this and more than this when you comfort another person. Are you a noble teacher of others, but for yourself not even a pitiable student? It belongs to a great and noble soul to act philosophically in the height of one's sufferings. If someone can say in the face each of their misfortunes or griefs or losses, "You are just, Lord, and your judgments are right,"⁸⁶ as a human he suffers loss, but as a lover of God he is crowned.

Life, brothers, is full of much difficulty,⁸⁷ and it is at all events necessary that both the righteous and unrighteous, both the pious and the impious be afflicted. But the difference is great. For it is one thing to be disciplined as member of the family, but another thing to be flogged as a foreigner. A son is beaten, and a household slave is beaten. But one of them sinned as a slave, while the other as a free person, and as a son in need of correction.⁸⁸ The blows don't create equality of honor. If a pious person suffers the same things as an impious person, he doesn't become equal in honor with the impious person. But chastisement is assigned to the pious person⁸⁹ to afflict and examine him, but to the impious person to whip and punish him.⁹⁰ For this reason, blessed David, knowing these difficulties, says about the righteous, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous."⁹¹ But see what is added: "And the Lord will rescue them from all of them." He didn't yet name the affliction, but indicated the remedy. But concerning [M. 1086] their adversaries [he says], "Many are the whips of the sinner."⁹² And there is no added statement.⁹³

⁷⁹ Or simply, "nature."

⁸⁰ Literally, "these things are spoken."

⁸¹ Or, "chastisement."

⁸² Ζημία.

⁸³ Literally, "outside of the sufferings."

⁸⁴ Or, "have been punished."

⁸⁵ Or, "are punished."

⁸⁶ Psalm 119:137; Septuagint 118:137.

⁸⁷ Δυσκολία.

⁸⁸ ἐπιστροφή.

⁸⁹ Literally, "To this person."

⁹⁰ ἀλλὰ λογίζεται τούτῳ ἡ παιδεία εἰς θλίψιν καὶ δοκιμασίαν, τῷ δὲ ἀσεβεῖ εἰς μάστιγας καὶ τιμωρίαν. Literally, "Chastisement is charged to this person for affliction and examination, but to the impious person for whips and punishment."

⁹¹ Psalm 34:19; Septuagint 33:20.

⁹² Psalm 31:10.

“Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord will rescue them from all of them.” But let no one who is hearing this despair of himself or say, “If indeed I am whipped as a sinner, having no hope, my chastisement is fruitless.” For scripture now calls⁹⁴ upon the sinner, not the person who is completely foreign to piety, but the person who is afflicted, who has a share in piety but is slipping because of human affairs. Since God has mercy on sinners, all scripture is full of pledges of God’s benevolence. For he says, “As I live, ‘ says the Lord, ’ I do not desire the death of the sinner as much as that he turn and live.”⁹⁵ God swears, not as though disbelieving himself, but compelling our unbelief into belief. Accordingly, let every human say when being tested in afflictions, “You are just, Lord, and your judgments are right.” And at the same time he demonstrates⁹⁶ his noble soul and doesn’t⁹⁷ slacken his piety. Such was blessed Job, who waged war against all the sufferings, who conquered all the Devil’s terrors, who put an end to all his madness, who by the firmness of his mind⁹⁸ broke up the Devil’s waves, who was all at once deprived of everything and didn’t deny the Lord of everything. But his stratagems will receive their own account; for in truth to examine them requires its own occasion.⁹⁹ Let us not commit insult against his struggles by a cursory treatment of his words.¹⁰⁰ But let us have those things before our eyes which that noble and great combatant spoke. For when he puts a seal on his words, after being stripped of everything, he didn’t strip himself of his piety, but says, “The Lord gave, the Lord took away; as it seemed good to the Lord, so it happened.”¹⁰¹ His statement “it seemed good” is good. He yields to his sovereign power, he doesn’t meddle in his governance. He didn’t say what we said, “Why do the young die and the old remain? What sort of governance is this?” An old man desires death, weak in his flesh, lacking both money and all other consolation, and he doesn’t get his wish. And a child, who has a lovely beauty, longed for by his parents, is snatched away untimely. Learn not to inquire into such matters, learn to say, “Your judgments are a great abyss.”¹⁰² Learn to say, “You are just, Lord, and your judgments are right.” Learn to say, “As it seemed good to the Lord, so it happened.” Know his sovereign power so that you may know piety. But since the sermon has fallen into the glory of the holy spirit, let us also say something of the matters pertaining to doctrine to make us steadfast and firm. Just as Job, who said, “As it seemed good to the Lord, so it happened” demonstrated his sovereign rule and lordship, so too the apostles, displaying the masterly sovereign rule of the holy spirit, say, “It seemed good to the holy spirit to add nothing to you except for the necessary things.”¹⁰³ “It seemed good to the holy spirit.”

⁹³ Καὶ οὐδὲν τὸ ἐπαγόμενον.

⁹⁴ Literally, “called upon.”

⁹⁵ Ezekial 18:3, 23.

⁹⁶ Literally, “demonstrated.”

⁹⁷ Literally, “didn’t.”

⁹⁸ Γνώμη.

⁹⁹ Literally, “For in truth there is need for its own time for an examination.”

¹⁰⁰ Literally, “by a passing-by of his words.”

¹⁰¹ Job 1:21.

¹⁰² Psalm 35:7.

¹⁰³ Acts 15:28.

If it is proposed, “Why did it seem good to him? If the spirit is under laws and is subservient,¹⁰⁴ how did it seem good to one who is subordinate?¹⁰⁵ Aren’t the things that seem good to the king the things that happen, not what comes into the heads of his subjects? “As it seemed good to the Lord,” says Job. “It seemed good to the holy spirit,” say the apostles. The diction of supreme authority is equal in honor, since the glory of the kingdom is indivisible.¹⁰⁶ But the heretics’ evil again finds a way in. “For is it the case,” they say, “that since the apostles said ‘It seemed good to the holy spirit,’ but then added, ‘and to us,’ on this account the apostles have divine supreme authority?¹⁰⁷” Let these matters be attended to, so that they¹⁰⁸ don’t inflict upon untrained souls their poison of disobedience, so that they don’t pour heretical impiety into the ears of the simple.¹⁰⁹ For they often talk eloquently about such matters. “Let nothing, brother,” he says, “of what has been said shock you.” He calls you as a brother, but destroys you as an enemy. “Do not be astounded,” he says, “if the apostles said about the holy spirit, ‘It seemed good to the holy spirit.’ But see also what is added – ‘It seemed good to the holy spirit, and to us,’ it seemed good to the apostles. Are the apostles gods? Do they possess the supreme authority of God?”

Whenever the heretic says these things, let us bring forward the arrows from the holy scripture. “For the sharp arrows of the powerful man”¹¹⁰ are being sent in the heart of the enemies of the king. What, then, is there to say to him? If the fact that [M. 1087] the apostles are joined to the holy spirit diminishes the holy spirit’s worth, then the fact that Moses is joined to God diminishes God’s worth. I mean this: If you do not consider the statement “It seemed good to the holy spirit” to be great, because the apostles are joined, you will not be able to say that faith in God is great, because Moses is also joined to God. For scripture says, “The people believed in God and in Moses.”¹¹¹ But let us also bring forward another arrow. If the glory of the apostles, which is joined [to the holy spirit], reduces the holy spirit’s worth, Samuel, who is [also] attached, commits insult against God and diminishes his worth. For it is written, “And all the people feared the Lord and Samuel.”¹¹² Again, let us also bring forward another arrow against impiety. The fact that the apostles are joined to the holy spirit diminishes the holy spirit’s worth and divine supreme authority, and Gideon diminishes God’s worth, since he is attached to his name. For the whole host of enemies cried out, “Swords for the Lord and Gideon!”¹¹³ And so, as Moses is joined to God, not as one equal in honor with God, but as God’s servant, so too Samuel [is joined] with God, not as one equal in honor, but as a prophet, and Gideon, not as one equal in honor with God, but as a general of the war.

¹⁰⁴ Δουλεύει.

¹⁰⁵ Τῷ ὑποκειμένῳ.

¹⁰⁶ I understand this to mean that the same phrase, “It seemed good to...,” is used, by both Job, the apostles, and the holy spirit, because they are all part of the same kingdom, and as such share in the same indivisible glory.

¹⁰⁷ Literally, “supreme authority of divinity.” The heretics’ arguments seem to be aimed at diminishing the status of the holy spirit.

¹⁰⁸ i.e. the heretics.

¹⁰⁹ Or, “pure.”

¹¹⁰ Psalm 120:4; Septuagint 119:4.

¹¹¹ Exodus 14:31.

¹¹² 1 Samuel 12:18.

¹¹³ Judges 7:20.

In this way, too, the apostles [are joined] to the holy spirit, as preachers of the gospel. Accordingly, know his¹¹⁴ supreme authority, and don't commit insult against the holy spirit's worth. Know the inspired theology of the holy trinity, of the father and son and holy spirit. This is the uncreated nature, the true worth, the indivisible kingdom, the undivided honor, the indivisible hope, the incomprehensible glory of the father and of the son and of the holy spirit, to whom all glory, honor, and worship is due forever. Amen.

¹¹⁴ Or, "the."