

## Severian of Gabala

**A sermon on repentance and contrition and that God is quick to save and slow to punish; in which there is also a marvellous story about Rahab.**

**(De paenitentia et de compunctione)**

CPG 4186

Translated by Bryson Sewell<sup>1</sup>

2014

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<sup>1</sup> This translation was commissioned by Roger Pearse, Ipswich, and is released by him into the public domain. The text is attributed to Chrysostom in the manuscripts, where it appears as Sermon 7 of Chrysostom's "Nine sermons on Repentance", but is listed in the *Clavis Patrum Graecorum* (CPG) among the works of Severian of Gabala. The Greek text translated is that of Montfaucon, as reprinted in the *Patrologia Graeca* 49, columns 323-336. The text was also edited by Savile, *Chrysostomi Opera* 6, p.830-7. According to the CPG, an Old Russian version exists and has been printed. When this translation was nearly complete, I became aware of an existing English translation of Chrysostom's nine sermons. This includes a translation of this one: John Chrysostom, *On Repentance and Almsgiving*, Fathers of the Church 96 (1998), translated by G.G. Christo. The column numbers from Migne are printed below as [M.323], etc.

# **A sermon on repentance and contrition and that God is quick to save and slow to punish; in which [there is] also a marvellous story about Rahab.<sup>2</sup>**

Translated by Bryson Sewell. June 2014.

## I

[M. 323] The divine apostle<sup>3</sup> always uses divine and heavenly language and composes the gospel message with great skill;<sup>4</sup> he does not simply speak from his own opinion but presents the teachings from his royal authority. He uses this skill in a special degree when he introduces to those who are sinning his discourse on repentance. I will remind all of you of the subject.<sup>5</sup> You heard, moreover (to touch upon what was said in part<sup>6</sup>), that that noble and marvelous man, as I was recently discoursing, said, "...lest when I come I may mourn for many of those who have sinned previously and have not repented."<sup>7</sup> This great teacher was human in nature but in purpose a servant of God. And so, in the same way that he uses heavenly language, speaking as it were from the very heavens, he both threatens those who are sinning and promises atonement for those who repent. But when I say this, I do not ascribe the authority to Paul's language, but I refer it all to the grace of God, about which he was himself now saying, "Are you seeking evidence of the one who speaks in me, Christ?"<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, to those who are sinning he offers [the] medicine of kindness and repentance that leads to salvation.

But today the authority of our savior in the gospel agreed with the apostolic reading, granting<sup>9</sup> forgiveness of sins abundantly. For when our savior was healing the paralyzed man he said, as you just heard, "Child, your many sins are forgiven."<sup>10</sup> The forgiveness of sins is a fountain of salvation and a prize for repentance. For repentance is a remedy<sup>11</sup> that destroys sin. It is a gift from heaven, a wonderful power, by grace conquering the consequence<sup>12</sup> of the laws. For this reason it does not repel the fornicator, it does not scare away the adulterer, it does not turn away the drunkard, it does not abhor the idolater, it does not drive away the scoffer, it does not chase away the blasphemer, not the boaster, but it alters everyone; for repentance is a smelting furnace of sin.<sup>13</sup> But we

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<sup>2</sup> This is the title in Migne.

<sup>3</sup> Paul.

<sup>4</sup> Or, "knowledge."

<sup>5</sup> Literally, "the subject itself."

<sup>6</sup> More literally, "to touch upon what was said from [only] a part [of it]."

<sup>7</sup> 2 Corinthians 12:21.

<sup>8</sup> 2 Corinthians 13:3.

<sup>9</sup> This refers back to the "authority" of the savior in the gospel, "ἡ εὐαγγελικὴ τοῦ σωτῆρος ἀθεντία," which itself is probably meant to refer to Jesus himself, since "authority" does not grant forgiveness, but the one who possesses authority.

<sup>10</sup> Mark 2:5.

<sup>11</sup> Or, "a surgery."

<sup>12</sup> Or possibly, "obedience to the laws," ἀκολουθία.

<sup>13</sup> Or, "repentance of sin is a smelting furnace." One editor, Regulus, has, "It received everyone and alters everyone; for repentance is a smelting furnace of virtue."

must first know God's objective, applying ourselves to this consideration not by way of our own thoughts, but by demonstrating the truth that is borne out from the divine scriptures themselves. God's objective, to be patient with sinners, is doubly beneficial for salvation, guaranteeing for them<sup>14</sup> the salvation that comes from repentance, and storing up kindness for their descendents who are likely to advance in virtue. [M. 324] And, to resume the subject again, God is patient both so that the sinner may repent and not debar from salvation those who are born from him. For even if the sinner himself sins without repentance, God<sup>15</sup> often spares the root in order to preserve the fruit.<sup>16</sup> Often, then, he also alters the root itself, as I already said. But when that [root] falls into utter evil, God advantageously defers the punishment as he awaits the salvation of the repentant. And hear how this is so.

Tharra, Abraham's father, was a worshiper of idols, but he did not pay the penalty for his impiety at that time, and reasonably so. For if God had cut off the root in advance, where would so great a fruit of faith have issued from? What is more wretched than Esau? Consider for me another occasion of his kindness.<sup>17</sup> What is more shameless than his evil?<sup>18</sup> Is he not a fornicator and unholy, as the apostle says?<sup>19</sup> Is he not a murderer of his mother and a murderer of his father? Is he not a murderer of his brother, as far as his purpose was concerned?<sup>20</sup> Is he not hated by God? Scripture testifies to this, saying "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."<sup>21</sup> Accordingly, if he is a fornicator and a murderer of his brother and unholy and hated, why is he not destroyed? Why is he not cut off? Why does he not at once receive his fitting punishment? Why?

It is truly a fine thing to give the reason. If he had been cut off, the world would have lost the greatest fruit of righteousness. Listen to what type [of fruit this is]: "Esau fathered Reuel, Reuel fathered Zara, Zara [fathered] Job."<sup>22</sup> Do you see how great a blossom of endurance would have been destroyed, if God had previously demanded justice from the root?

## II

In all of these matters, take note of this consideration. It is for this reason that God is patient with the Egyptians who unbearably blaspheme: because of the churches that are now blossoming, because of the monasteries and those who practice an angelic<sup>23</sup> mode of life. For indeed, as those who are experienced in the secular laws<sup>24</sup> say, and as the laws of

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<sup>14</sup> The "them" referred to is probably the list of sinners just mentioned (the fornicator, the drunk, the blasphemer, etc). God's objective is 'doubly propitious' because it affects two groups, the parents (the root) and their offspring (the fruits). By sparing the parents, even if they deserve to be blotted out, God shows kindness to the children and gives them an opportunity for salvation.

<sup>15</sup> Literally, "he."

<sup>16</sup> i.e. those going to be born from him.

<sup>17</sup> Literally, "an occasion (ὀπóθησις) of another kindness."

<sup>18</sup> Literally, "That evil." This seems to refer either to the specific episodes that follow, or to Esau's wickedness in general.

<sup>19</sup> Hebrews 12:16.

<sup>20</sup> ὅσον εἰς πρόθεσιν.

<sup>21</sup> Romans 9:13; Malachi 1:2-3.

<sup>22</sup> Genesis 36.

<sup>23</sup> One editor, Regulus, prints "gospel," i.e. a life lived in accordance with the gospel.

<sup>24</sup> Or, "common."

the Romans prescribe, a pregnant woman, if she should commit some fault which brings with it a penalty of death, is not to be executed until she should bear her offspring. And this is indeed reasonable. For those who properly established the laws did not deem it appropriate for the faultless offspring to perish together with the woman who committed the wrong. And if human laws spare those who have committed no wrong, is it not considerably more reasonable that God will preserve the root, storing up for the fruits the benefit that comes from repentance? From now on, I ask you, receive the kindness that comes from repentance for sinners themselves. For indeed the same message<sup>25</sup> of benevolence is bestowed upon them. [M.325] If justice anticipated correction,<sup>26</sup> the world would be utterly destroyed and corrupted. If God was quick to punish, the church would not have gained Paul, it would not have received one so great and noble. For this reason, then, God<sup>27</sup> deferred dealing with him<sup>28</sup> while he was committing blasphemy in order to receive him when he was repenting. God's patience made the persecutor a preacher. God's patience made the tax collector an evangelist. God's patience had mercy on all of us, changed all, altered all. If you see that someone who was once a drunkard now has now [become] someone who fasts, if you see that someone who was once a blasphemer has now [become] a theologian,<sup>29</sup> if you see that the man who once stained his mouth with shameful songs is now purifying his soul with divine hymns, look with amazement on God's patience, and praise repentance, and, taking it up from this change, say, "This change is from the right hand of the Most High."<sup>30</sup> While God is good to all, to sinners he shows his own patience to a special degree. And if you want to hear a strange tale – strange with regard to what is customary, but true as regards piety – listen.

God appears [to be] altogether burdensome to the just, but mild to sinners and swift to kindness. He raises up the sinner who has fallen and says to him, "Does the man who falls not rise?" or "Does not the man who turns away turn back?"<sup>31</sup> And, "Why did the foolish daughter of Judah shamelessly turn away?"<sup>32</sup> And again, "Turn to me, and I will turn to you."<sup>33</sup> And in another place he confirms with an oath the salvation that comes from repentance because of his great benevolence. "As I live, 'says the Lord,' I do not desire the death of the sinner as much as that he turn and live."<sup>34</sup> To the righteous man he says, "If someone acts in all righteousness and all truth, and then turns and sins, I will not remember his righteousness, but he will die in his sin."<sup>35</sup> He thus uses diverse and various means in his planning, not changing himself, but advantageously distributing the dispensations<sup>36</sup> of his goodness. And listen to how this is so.

If he frightens the sinner and the person who is remaining in his sins, he carries him into despair and rejection of hope. But if he blesses the righteous man, he weakens

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<sup>25</sup> λόγος.

<sup>26</sup> i.e. if each fault was immediately punished with the appropriate punishment before any opportunity of repentance and correction was given, the world would be destroyed at once.

<sup>27</sup> Literally, "he."

<sup>28</sup> i.e. Paul.

<sup>29</sup> θεολόγος.

<sup>30</sup> Psalm 77:10; Septuagint 76:11.

<sup>31</sup> Jeremiah 8:4-5.

<sup>32</sup> Jeremiah 8:5.

<sup>33</sup> Zachariah 1:3.

<sup>34</sup> Ezekiel 33:11.

<sup>35</sup> Ezekiel 18:24.

<sup>36</sup> Οικονομία.

the intensity of his virtue and causes him to be neglectful of zeal as one who has already been blessed. For this reason he has mercy on the sinner, but frightens the righteous man. “He is fearful,” [scripture] says, “to all around him,”<sup>37</sup> and “The Lord is good to all.”<sup>38</sup> “He is fearful,” [scripture] says, “to all around him.” And who would these<sup>39</sup> be but the saints? “For God,” David says, “who is glorified in the counsel of saints, is great and fearful to all around him.” If he sees someone fallen, he extends a hand of kindness. If he sees someone standing,<sup>40</sup> he applies fear. This, too, belong to righteous judgment. For he causes the righteous man to stand fast through fear, and raises<sup>41</sup> up the sinner through kindness. And do you want to learn of his timely goodness and severity that is useful and suited to<sup>42</sup> us? Pay careful attention in order that the greatness of the thought may not escape your notice. That sinful woman [M. 326] who is testified as [having committed] every sin and lawlessness, who committed so many sins and was entangled in so many sinful deeds, after she thirsted for the salvation from repentance, she secretly entered<sup>43</sup> the banquet of the saints. I call it a banquet of saints because the Holy of Holies was present. For when our savior was reclining in the house of Simon the Pharisee, that sinful woman secretly entered and touched the feet of our savior and washed his feet with her tears and dried [them] with her hair. And that kindly [savior]<sup>44</sup> raises her up, she who was covered in so many sins, and says “Her sins are forgiven.”<sup>45</sup> It is not my proposal to examine the narrative now but only to bring forward the testimony. See his liberality! “Therefore I say to you, her many sins are forgiven, because she loved much.” And so the sinful woman received an amnesty<sup>46</sup> for so many sins. But Maria, Moses’ wife, is condemned to leprosy because of a little grumbling.<sup>47</sup> He says to sinners, “If your sins are like scarlet, I will make [them] white as snow.”<sup>48</sup> And he changes the darkness into light by the change of repentance, and puts an end to so great an abundance of evils by the voice of his goodness. To the man who walks in righteousness he says, “Whoever says to his brother, “Fool!,” is liable to the hell of fire.”<sup>49</sup> He applies<sup>50</sup> such severity to one word, and measures out so much liberality<sup>51</sup> to so many sins.

### III

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<sup>37</sup> Psalm 88:8 [Septuagint]

<sup>38</sup> Psalm 145:9; Septuagint 144:9.

<sup>39</sup> Literally, “they,” i.e. “those around him.”

<sup>40</sup> Possibly, “standing firm,” that is, in pride and arrogance.

<sup>41</sup> One editor, Regulus, prints: “He applies the fear of righteousness and righteous judgment, strengthening this man through fear, and raising that man through kindness.”

<sup>42</sup> Or, “adapted to.”

<sup>43</sup> ὑπεισήλθεν.

<sup>44</sup> ὁ φιλάνθρωπος.

<sup>45</sup> Luke 7:47.

<sup>46</sup> ἀμνηστία. This could also be rendered by “forgiveness,” literally “forgetfulness.”

<sup>47</sup> Numbers 12:10.

<sup>48</sup> Isaiah 1:18.

<sup>49</sup> Matthew 5:22.

<sup>50</sup> Literally, “applied.”

<sup>51</sup> ἀφθονία. This word is more commonly translated “abundance” or “plenty,” but “liberality” suits the context significantly better.

And, I ask you, consider another wonder. Since sins are registered as debts, he forgives sinners even the capital<sup>52</sup> when they repent, but from the righteous he demands even the interest. A debtor who owed many talents approached him and, as if by repentance and supplication, won over his judgment and said, “Lord, be patient with me, and I will repay everything.”<sup>53</sup> The kind [lord] did not wait for repayment, but counted his confession a discharge of the debt. He forgave the debtor who owed tens of thousands of talents everything, even the capitol itself. But he professes to demand even the interest from the righteous. “For why did you not give my money to the bankers,<sup>54</sup> and when I came I would have demanded it back with interest?”<sup>55</sup> I say this, not as though God were hostile to the righteous (for God desires nothing more than the righteous man), but, as I said before, he encourages the sinner in order to raise him up, and frightens the righteous man in order to make him steadfast. He forgives the first group many sins since they are hostile and conceited,<sup>56</sup> but from the other group he demands exactness even in trifling matters, since he desires them to have no deficiency in their excellence. For what a rich man is in this world, a righteous man is to God; and what a poor man is in the world, a sinner is to God. Nothing is poorer than the sinner, and nothing is richer than the man who acts righteously. For this reason Paul says about those who live in piety and prosperity, “I give thanks to God because in him you were enriched in everything, in every word and all knowledge.”<sup>57</sup> But about the impious, blessed Jeremiah says, “Perhaps they are poor; for this reason they were not able to hear the word of the Lord.”<sup>58</sup> Do you see how he calls those who are separated from [M. 327] piety poor? He accordingly shows mercy to sinners as to the poor, and makes demands of those who act righteously as of the rich, showing kindness to the first group because of their poverty, but demanding accounts from the other group with great exactness because of their wealth of piety. And<sup>59</sup> what he does in the case of the righteous and sinners he also does in the case of the rich and poor. And in the same way that he raises the sinner because of his kindness, but frightens the righteous man through his severity, he arranges his administration in worldly<sup>60</sup> affairs. If he sees rulers shining too brightly in their honors – kings, leaders, all who are conspicuous for wealth – he speaks with them to inspire fear<sup>61</sup> and advantageously inflicts fear onto their rule.<sup>62</sup> “And now, kings, understand, be taught, all who judge the earth. Serve the Lord in fear, and rejoice in him with trembling,”<sup>63</sup> because “He is king of kings, and lord of lords.”<sup>64</sup> Where there is a command of power, he inflicts the fear of his own kingdom. Where there is humiliation of [one’s] insignificance,<sup>65</sup> he applies the medicine of his own kindness. For God is this great king

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<sup>52</sup> i.e. the original sum of a debt before interest is added.

<sup>53</sup> Matthew 18:26.

<sup>54</sup> One editor, Regulus, prints “bank.”

<sup>55</sup> Luke 19:23; Matthew 25:27.

<sup>56</sup> Or, “as enemies and conceited people.” i.e. by being forgiven they may be won over.

<sup>57</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:4-5.

<sup>58</sup> Jeremiah 5:4.

<sup>59</sup> Or, “but.”

<sup>60</sup> Or, “secular.”

<sup>61</sup> Literally, “with fear.”

<sup>62</sup> δυναστεία.

<sup>63</sup> Psalm 2:10-11.

<sup>64</sup> 1 Timothy 6:15.

<sup>65</sup> ταπεινώσις εὐτελείας.

of kings and lord of lords. This very one, again descending from his own dignity, is found according to holy scripture to be a father of orphans and a judge for widows,<sup>66</sup> a king of kings, a ruler of rulers, a lord of lords. Do you see the great abundance of his kindness? Do you see that the fear of piety and his authority<sup>67</sup> is beneficial? For where he saw that authority was sufficient for encouragement, he added fear as an aid. But where he saw orphan-hood debilitated by weakness,<sup>68</sup> and the poverty of widow-hood by laziness,<sup>69</sup> he brought his kindness as a comfort. “I am a father of orphans.” He does two things: he shows kindness, and chastises oppressive rule.<sup>70</sup> He calls himself a father of orphans, in order both to comfort those in misfortune and to terrify those in power so that they do not abuse orphans and widows.

But after death stripped a man of his father, or deprived a wife of her husband, the decree of God’s<sup>71</sup> kindness renewed those whom the law of nature destroyed. And the same grace gave the king of the saints to be the judge to the widow<sup>72</sup> and a father for the orphan. “And so,” he says, “you wrongdoer, if you abuse widows, you anger the one who provides for widows. If you wrong orphans, you wrong sons of God. I am the father of orphans and the judge for widows.” Who is so bold in his impiety so as to wrong sons of God and abuse the widows who are under God’s provision? Do you see how he beneficially furnishes the remedies of piety, and how he frightens some, but shows mercy to others, not dividing himself, but fitting himself to the dispositions of the people? Accordingly, brothers, let us apply to ourselves the remedy that leads to salvation: repentance. Or rather let us receive from God the repentance that heals us. For we do not apply this remedy<sup>73</sup> to him, but he himself supplied it to us. Do you see his strictness in the law? Do you see his kindness in grace? When I talk of the strictness in the law, I am not slandering [his] judgment, but am proclaiming the kindness of the grace of the gospel. For the law obstinately punished sinners, but grace, with great patience, defers the punishment in order to induce correction. Therefore, brothers, let us receive repentance as a remedy leading to salvation, let us receive the remedy that blots out our [M. 328] offences. But repentance is not what is proclaimed in a word, but rather what is confirmed in actions. Repentance is what blots out the filth of impiety from the heart itself. For [he] says, “Wash yourselves, become clean, remove your wicked deeds from your hearts, and from<sup>74</sup> before my eyes.”<sup>75</sup> What does the redundancy of the phrase mean? Was not the statement, “Remove your wicked deeds from your hearts,” sufficient to make everything known? Why, then, [is] “from before my eyes” [added]? It is because human eyes see one way and God’s eye sees in another way. For, “A human looks at the face, but God looks into the heart.”<sup>76</sup> “Do not,” he says, “adulterate repentance with

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<sup>66</sup> Psalm 68:5; Septuagint 67:6.

<sup>67</sup> ἐξουσία.

<sup>68</sup> εὐτέλεια.

<sup>69</sup> ἀτονία. i.e. by the neglect of others who should – but are not – caring for widows.

<sup>70</sup> δυναστεία.

<sup>71</sup> “God” is added for clarity.

<sup>72</sup> Literally, “to this [woman].”

<sup>73</sup> “Remedy” is added for clarity.

<sup>74</sup> Or, without the “from,” “before my eyes.”

<sup>75</sup> Isaiah 1:16.

<sup>76</sup> 1 Samuel 16:7; Septuagint 1 Kings 16:7.

appearances, but receive the fruits of repentance before my eyes, which search for what is hidden.”

#### IV

And as we are being cleansed of our sins, we must hold our very sins before our eyes. Although God forgives you of your sin, nevertheless *you*, for the security of your own soul, hold your sin before your eyes. For the remembrance of past [sins] becomes a check against future [sins]. And the man who is stung over his former [sins] shows his resolve to be more secure in what he does later.<sup>77</sup> For this reason David, too, says, “And my sin is always before me,”<sup>78</sup> in order that by holding his former [sins] before his eyes he might not fall into future [sins]. As to the fact that God demands this condition from us, listen to him when he says, “I am the one who blots out your sins, and I *will not* remember [them]. But you, remember [them], and let us be judged, says the Lord. You first speak of your sins in order that you may be made righteous.”<sup>79</sup> God does not wait for a time after [your] repentance.<sup>80</sup> You spoke of your sin and were made righteous. Upon your repentance you received mercy. Time does not defend [the sinner], but the character of the repentant man extinguishes his sin. It is also possible for one who has for a long time not to attain salvation, and in a little time, after sincerely<sup>81</sup> confessing, to strip off his sin. Blessed Samuel spent a lot of time praying for Saul and spent many nights staying awake for the salvation of the sinner. But God, dismissing this<sup>82</sup> time (for the repentance of the sinner did not coincide with the prophet’s supplication), says to his own prophet, “How long do you lament for Saul, and I have rejected him?”<sup>83</sup> “How long” signifies the time and the patience<sup>84</sup> of the man supplicating. And God dismissed the time the prophet spent in supplication, for the king’s repentance did not coincide with the righteous man’s intercession. But as for David, after he was convicted of his sin by holy Nathan the prophet and, in the face of the threat, immediately demonstrated sincere conversion and said, “I sinned against the Lord,”<sup>85</sup> – in one moment, one phrase sincerely uttered immediately brought perfect salvation to him when he repented. For at once his amendment overcame his sentence.<sup>86</sup> Nathan at any rate says to him, “And the Lord has forgiven your sin.”<sup>87</sup>

Please, see that God is slow to punish and quick to save! And I ask you, consider first how the kind [Lord] reproached [him] after a long period of time. David sinned, the woman conceived, and no reproach followed upon the sin, but after the infant, who resulted from the sin, was born, the doctor<sup>88</sup> of the sin was<sup>89</sup> dispatched. But why [M.

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<sup>77</sup> Literally, “in the secondary [matters].”

<sup>78</sup> Psalm 51:3; Septuagint Psalm 50:5.

<sup>79</sup> Isaiah 43:25-26.

<sup>80</sup> i.e. God does not wait for a time after one repents to forgive the repentant, but the forgiveness is simultaneous with one’s repentance.

<sup>81</sup> One editor, Regulus, has “and sincerely in a brief moment.”

<sup>82</sup> Literally, “the.”

<sup>83</sup> 1 Samuel 16:1; Septuagint 1 Kings 16:1.

<sup>84</sup> Or, “vigil.” παραμονή.

<sup>85</sup> 2 Samuel 12:13; Septuagint 2 Kings 12:13.

<sup>86</sup> i.e. a sentence of condemnation.

<sup>87</sup> 2 Samuel 12:13; Septuagint 2 Kings 12:13.

<sup>88</sup> Presumably this refers to Nathan the prophet.

329] did he not immediately correct [him] after he sinned? Because he knows that the souls<sup>90</sup> of those who are sinning are blind in the bloom of their sins, and so the ears of those who are soaked in the depth of their sin become quite deaf. Therefore he delays bringing help when one's passion is seething, but after so much time, reproach draws near; and repentance and forgiveness are available<sup>91</sup> in one brief moment. "And the Lord has forgiven your sin." O the plan of the one who made the threat! Do you see that he is quick to save? He does this in other matters, too, being slow to destroy but quick to help. What I mean is this. Among us humans, buildings are constructed over long periods of time, and we take a long time to build a house. The building process takes a long time, but its demolition requires little. With God, however, the opposite is true. When he creates, he creates quickly; when he destroys, he destroys slowly. God is quick in creating, slow in destroying, since both of these befit God. The first<sup>92</sup> results from his power; the second,<sup>93</sup> from his goodness. He is quick because of his immense power, slow because of his great goodness. A proof of these<sup>94</sup> statements is experience of the facts. In six days God created the heavens and the earth, the great mountains,<sup>95</sup> the plains, the ravines, the dells, the forests, the plants, springs,<sup>96</sup> rivers, [the] paradise,<sup>97</sup> all the visible variation, this great and wide sea, the islands, the coastal regions, and the inland regions. God made all of this visible world, and the beauty it contains,<sup>98</sup> in six days. In six days he made<sup>99</sup> the rational animals in it, and the irrational, and all of the visible ordering.<sup>100</sup> And so this [God], who is quick to create, when he resolved to destroy one city, was found to be slow because of his goodness. He wants to destroy Jericho, and says to Israel, "Surround it for six days, and on the seventh day the wall will fall."<sup>101</sup> Do you<sup>102</sup> construct the whole universe in six days, but destroy one city in seven days? What hinders your sovereignty? Why do you not destroy it all at once? Does not the prophet cry out about you saying, "If you open the heavens, trembling will seize the mountains from before you, and they will melt as wax before fire?"<sup>103</sup> Does not David say as he recounts your deeds, "Will we not fear when the earth is troubled, and when mountains are moved to the hearts of oceans?"<sup>104</sup> You are able to move mountains and to cast them into the sea, and you do not want to destroy one city that resists you, but you give seven days for its destruction? Why? "My power," he says "is not inadequate, but my kindness is patient. I give seven days, just as<sup>105</sup> [I gave] three days to Nineveh. Perhaps the city<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Literally, "is dispatched."

<sup>90</sup> Literally, "soul."

<sup>91</sup> Literally, "are in."

<sup>92</sup> i.e. that God is quick in creating.

<sup>93</sup> i.e. that God is slow in destroying.

<sup>94</sup> Literally, "the."

<sup>95</sup> Literally, "the greatneses of the mountains."

<sup>96</sup> Or, "streams."

<sup>97</sup> παράδεισος.

<sup>98</sup> Literally, "the beauty that is in it."

<sup>99</sup> Literally, "makes."

<sup>100</sup> διοίκησις.

<sup>101</sup> Joshua 6:3-5.

<sup>102</sup> God is being directly addressed.

<sup>103</sup> Isaiah 64:1-2. Literally, "before the face of fire."

<sup>104</sup> Psalm 46:2; Septuagint 45:3.

<sup>105</sup> Or, "since."

will receive the preaching of repentance and will be saved.” And who is the one preaching repentance to them? Enemies surrounded them with a wall; the general surrounded the walls; the fear was great; the uproar was great. And so what sort of path to repentance did you open for them? For you did not dispatch a prophet to them, did you? You did not send an evangelist, for there was no one admonishing them as to what was good for them, was there? “Yes,” he says, “inside they had a teacher of repentance, that wonderful Rahab, whom I saved through repentance.” She was of the same dough, but because she was not of the same mind, she did not share in their sin, she who did not share in their unbelief.

## V

And I ask you, see the novel preaching of his kindness! He who says in the law, “You shall not commit adultery,<sup>107</sup> you shall not fornicate,” [M. 330] after changing the statement because of his kindness, cries out through blessed Jesus,<sup>108</sup> “Let Rahab the prostitute live!”<sup>109</sup> That Jesus, the son of Nave, who says, “Let the prostitute live!” was an image<sup>110</sup> of the lord Jesus who says, “Prostitutes and tax-collectors will go before you into the kingdom of the heavens.”<sup>111</sup> If she is to live, why is she a prostitute? Why “let her live?” He says, “I mention her former condition in order that you may wonder at her later change. And what did Rahab do,” he says, “that produced salvation? Is it because she received the spies in peace? Even a woman innkeeper does this. But she does not reap salvation from her speech<sup>112</sup> alone, but chiefly from her faith and disposition toward God.” And in order that you may learn the greatness of the faith that was in her, listen to scripture itself when it describes the virtues testified about her. She was in a brothel like a pearl mixed with filth, gold thrown into mud, a blossom of piety covered with thorns,<sup>113</sup> [her] pious soul was imprisoned in a place of impiety. Please pay careful attention. She received the spies, and the one<sup>114</sup> whom Israel abandoned in the desert Rahab proclaimed in the brothel. What do I mean by “Israel in the desert?” When the mountain was filled with a cloud and darkness and trumpet-blasts and flashes of lightning and the other terrors, [Israel] heard [a voice] from God from amidst the fire, “Hear, Israel, the Lord your God, the Lord is one.”<sup>115</sup> “You shall not have other gods.”<sup>116</sup> “I am in the heaven above, and in the earth below, and apart from me there is no god.”<sup>117</sup>

When Israel heard this, they<sup>118</sup> cast a calf and rejected God. They were ignorant of their master, they renounced their benefactor, and they said<sup>119</sup> to Aaron, “Make gods for

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<sup>106</sup> Literally, “it.”

<sup>107</sup> Exodus 20:14.

<sup>108</sup> In Greek, Ἰησοῦς. This is commonly rendered as Joshua, son of Nun, in modern bibles. I translate it here as “Jesus” to be consistent with the Greek. The two are equivalent.

<sup>109</sup> Joshua 6:17.

<sup>110</sup> εἰκών.

<sup>111</sup> Matthew 21:31.

<sup>112</sup> λέξις.

<sup>113</sup> Or perhaps, “buried under thorns.”

<sup>114</sup> i.e. God.

<sup>115</sup> Deuteronomy 6:4. Or, “Hear, Israel, the Lord is God, the Lord is one.”

<sup>116</sup> Exodus 20:4.

<sup>117</sup> Deuteronomy 4:39.

<sup>118</sup> Literally, “it.” Changed to the plural throughout.

us!”<sup>120</sup> If they are gods, why [do they say] “make?” How are things that come into existence gods? Thus is evil blind:<sup>121</sup> it fights with itself and destroys itself. One calf was made, and thankless Israel cries out, “These are your gods, Israel, who led you out of Egypt!”<sup>122</sup> “These are your gods” – they are looking at *one* calf, *one* idol that was made. Why, then, [do they say] “these are [your] gods?” In order to show that they do not worship only what they see, but also imagine a multiplicity of gods. They<sup>123</sup> are expressing their mind,<sup>124</sup> they are not judging what is visible. But to return to the subject, what Israel heard – Israel, who was surrounded with so many wonders and guided by so great a law – and rejected, these Rahab proclaims, imprisoned in a brothel. “We learned all your God did to the Egyptians in the desert.”<sup>125</sup> The Jew says, “These are your gods who led you out of Egypt!” But the prostitute ascribes her salvation not to gods, but to God. “We learned all that your God did to the Egyptians in the desert, and we heard, and our heart melted, and there is no longer strength in us.” “We learned all your God did.” Do you see how she receives the word<sup>126</sup> of the lawgiver through faith? “And I know that your God is in heaven above, and in the earth below, and apart from him there is no God.”

Rahab is an image of the church that was once mixed up in the prostitution of the daemons but now receives the spies of Christ – not those from Jesus the son of Nave, but the apostles sent from Jesus, the true savior. “I learned,” she says, “that your God is in heaven above and in the earth below, and apart from him there is no God.” The Jews received these things but did not guard them. The church heard these things [M. 331] and guarded them carefully. Accordingly, Rahab is worthy of all praise, the image of the church. For this reason, noble Paul, too, after he understood the worth of faith itself,<sup>127</sup> and not having considered her disreputable because of her former condition, but esteemed because of her God-inspired change, reckons her with all the saints, and after saying, “By faith Abel offered sacrifice,<sup>128</sup> by faith Abraham did such and such,<sup>129</sup> by faith Noah built an ark;<sup>130</sup> by faith Moses did and accomplished such and such,”<sup>131</sup> – after mentioning all the saints in turn, he adds in the last place, “By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish together with the disobedient, because she received the spies and let them out by another road.”<sup>132</sup> And see how she mixed her own honesty<sup>133</sup> with great wisdom! For when men were sent from the king searching for the spies, they say to her, “Did men

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<sup>119</sup> Literally, “say.”

<sup>120</sup> Exodus 32:1.

<sup>121</sup> Or, “Evil is so blind.”

<sup>122</sup> Exodus 32:4.

<sup>123</sup> The subject is unclear. The verb is singular; this could then refer back to “Israel,” and be rendered by “they.”

<sup>124</sup> γνώμη.

<sup>125</sup> Joshua 2:9.

<sup>126</sup> ῥῆμα.

<sup>127</sup> Or possibly, “the worth of her faith.”

<sup>128</sup> Hebrews 11:4. Note, too, that Severian ascribes the Epistle to the Hebrews to Paul.

<sup>129</sup> Hebrews 11:8.

<sup>130</sup> Hebrews 11:7.

<sup>131</sup> Hebrews 11:24.

<sup>132</sup> Hebrews 11:31.

<sup>133</sup> εὐγνωμοσύνη.

come to you?”<sup>134</sup> She says to them, “Yes, they came in.” She first builds the truth, and in this way introduces the lie. For a lie by itself is never believed unless it first exhibits the truth. For this reason, those who lie persuasively first say things which are true and confessed by all, and then introduce the false and doubtful matters. “Did the spies come to you?” “Yes,” she says. If she had said “No” from the very start, she would have provoked them to make a search. But she says, “They came in and went out by this road; pursue them and you will overtake them.” O beautiful lie! O beautiful cunning that does not betray divine matters, but guards piety! If moreover repentance deemed Rahab worthy of such salvation, and [if she] is proclaimed through the mouth of saints, with Jesus the son of Nave crying out in the desert, “Let Rahab the prostitute live!” and Paul saying, “By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish together with the disobedient,” how much more shall we, if we bring forward repentance, receive salvation? The present is the time for repentance, for the fear of the sins that hang over us is great unless repentance anticipates our punishment. “Let us anticipate<sup>135</sup> his presence in thanksgiving.”<sup>136</sup> Let us quench the fire of sins, not with great amounts of water, but with small tears. For the fire of our sin is great, but is quenched with a small tear. For the tear quenches a fire of sins and washes away the stink of sin. Blessed David testifies to this, saying and showing how great the power of a tear is. For he says, “I will wash my bed each night, with tears I will moisten my bedding.”<sup>137</sup> And indeed, if he wanted to demonstrate the abundance of his tears, it would have been sufficient to say “with tears I will moisten my bedding.” Why, then, did he place the statement “I will wash” first? In order to show that tears are a bath and a cleansing of sins.

## VI

Our sins are the reason for all our ills. Because of our sins, we have<sup>138</sup> pains; because of our sins, we have troubles; because of our sins, we have wars; because of our sins, we have diseases, and all the sufferings that assail us from which it is difficult to heal. For just as the best doctors do not examine the visible sufferings, but examine the cause of the visible [sufferings], so too our savior, in his desire to show that sin is the reason for all the ills in human life,<sup>139</sup> says to the man with the paralyzed body – when<sup>140</sup> the doctor of souls saw that he was paralyzed first in his soul, and then in his body, he says to him, “Behold, you have become well; sin no longer, in order that something worse does not

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<sup>134</sup> Joshua 2:3-4.

<sup>135</sup> In the context of this sermon, the verb *προφθάνω*, normally rendered in this psalm as “Let us approach,” as the Septuagint lexica specify, is probably better understood in its more basic meaning, “To anticipate, be before;” hence “Let us anticipate....” This understanding of the verb corresponds much better to the meaning of the passage as a whole: we are to take preemptive action as concerns our faith before we are faced with God’s judgment.

<sup>136</sup> Psalm 94:2; Septuagint 95:2.

<sup>137</sup> Or, “couch.” Psalm 6:6; Septuagint 6:7.

<sup>138</sup> “We have” is added for clarity throughout.

<sup>139</sup> Literally, “among humans.”

<sup>140</sup> The transition is just as rough in the Greek as it is in this translation.

happen to you.”<sup>141</sup> And so his sin was also the cause of his former sickness.<sup>142</sup> This is a cause of loss;<sup>143</sup> this also becomes the cause of pain; this, of every misfortune.

But I wonder at this: how God, after giving pain to man from the beginning because of his sin, by a judgment does away with judgment, and by a sentence of condemnation gets rid of the sentence of condemnation. Listen to how this is so. Pain was given because of sin, but through pain sin is done away with. Pay close attention. When God threatens the woman and applies punishment because of her transgression, he says to her, “In pain you shall bear children.”<sup>144</sup> And he showed the fruit of sin: pain. But how great is the gift-giver! What he gave for punishment he changed for salvation. Sin begot pain. Pain got rid of sin. And just as a worm, born from a piece of wood, consumes the wood itself, so too pain, after being born from sin, consumes sin, when it is applied through repentance.

For this reason Paul says, “Godly pain produces repentance that leads to salvation without regret.”<sup>145</sup> Grief over one’s sin befits sinners. For, “Blessed are those who grieve, because they will be comforted.”<sup>146</sup> Lament over your sin, in order that you may not bewail your punishment! Make your defense to the judge before you enter the tribunal! Or do you not know that all who want to win over the judge do not court the judge during the examination itself of the trial, but before they enter the tribunal, either through friends or patrons or some other means, they court the judge? And so, also in the case of God, it is not possible to persuade the judge at the time of the tribunal stand; but before the time of the judgment, it is possible to win over the judge. For this reason David said, “Let us anticipate his presence in thanksgiving.”<sup>147</sup> There,<sup>148</sup> the orators’ art does not mislead the great judge. Power does not win him over; he is not persuaded by one’s rank. He does not feel shame before one’s presence.<sup>149</sup> He is not corrupted by money, but his righteous judgment is fearful and inexorable.

Here, therefore, let us win over the judge and let us call on him. Here, let us earnestly entreat him with all of our strength, but not with money – or rather, if I must speak the truth, our kind [Lord] is persuaded even by money. He does not receive it himself, but through the poor. Give money to a poor person, and you have won over the judge. I say these things treating you as friends, since repentance apart from charitable giving<sup>150</sup> is dead and wingless. Repentance can not become winged if it does not possess the wing of charitable giving. For this reason, Cornelius’ charitable giving became a wing for his piety after he rightly repented. For “Your charitable gifts,” [scripture] says, “and your prayers have ascended into heaven.”<sup>151</sup> And so, if his repentance had not had charitable giving as its wing, it would not have gone into heaven. And so today a market of charitable giving has been opened. For we see the prisoners and the poor; we see those

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<sup>141</sup> John 5:14.

<sup>142</sup> Or, “of the sickness that previously had seized [him].”

<sup>143</sup> Or, “punishment.”

<sup>144</sup> Genesis 3:16.

<sup>145</sup> 2 Corinthians 7:10.

<sup>146</sup> Matthew 5:5.

<sup>147</sup> Psalm 95:2; Septuagint 94:2.

<sup>148</sup> i.e. before God.

<sup>149</sup> Or possibly, “He does not give regard to appearance.”

<sup>150</sup> ἔλεημοσύνη.

<sup>151</sup> Acts 10:4.

who are carried about in the market-place;<sup>152</sup> we see those who cry out; we see those who weep; we see those who groan. A wonderful market lies before us; but a market has no other profession, and a merchant no other purpose, than to purchase goods at a low price and to sell them at a high price. Is this not the objective of every merchant? Does anyone apply himself to commerce for any other reason than to sell at a high price what he purchased at a low price, and to take up a profit many times over? God has set such a market before us. Purchase righteous deeds<sup>153</sup> at a low price in order to resell them in the future at a high price, if, at any rate, one must [M. 333] call “requiting”<sup>154</sup> “resale.”<sup>155</sup> Here, righteousness is purchased at a low cost.<sup>156</sup> through a cheap piece of bread, through a cheap garment, through a cup of cold water. “Whoever gives [someone] a cup of cold water,” the teacher of spiritual commerce says, “truly I tell you, he will not lose his reward.”<sup>157</sup> A cup of cold water brings a reward, but garments and money, given because of kindness, do not bring rewards? Quite the opposite – they are richly rewarded. Why, then, did he mention a cup of cold water? He spoke of an act of charitable giving that costs nothing, for you do not spend wood on cold water or anything else besides. If, where the gift costs nothing, the gratitude for the act of kindness is so great, what great reward must we eagerly await from the just judge where there is an abundance of garments, a fortune of money, and a surplus of the other goods? When virtues, then, are set out, being sold at a low price, let us take them, seize them, purchase them from the great gift-giver. “Those who are thirsty, “he says, “come to the water, and all who have no money, come and buy.”<sup>158</sup> When the market is set before us, let us buy acts of charitable giving, or rather, let us purchase salvation through our charitable giving. You clothe Christ when you clothe a poor person.<sup>159</sup> “I know these things very well,” someone says. “I have learned these things before; you were not the first to teach them. We did not hear this from you first; you are not preaching novelties, but what many of those who are present often taught.” I too know, I know that you have often learned these things, and things like these, but would that we who have often learned them would do what is good, even something small. “The person who has compassion on a poor person lends to God.”<sup>160</sup> Let us lend our charitable giving to God, in order to receive repayment for our kindness. But O that most wise saying! “The person who has compassion on a poor person lends to God.” Why did it not say, “The person who has compassion on a poor person *gives* to God,” but “*lends*?” The scripture knows our greediness; it attended to the fact that our insatiability, looking to greed, seeks a profit. And for this reason it did not simply say, “The person who has compassion on a poor person *gives* to God,” in order that you may not think that the recompense is simple, but “The person who has compassion on a poor person *lends* to God.” If God borrows from us, he is then our

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<sup>152</sup> Implying, of course, the infirm; but the text can also mean, “those wandering about in the marketplace,” which would refer to the poor more generally.

<sup>153</sup> δικαιοσύνη.

<sup>154</sup> ἀνταπόδοσις.

<sup>155</sup> μετάπρασις.

<sup>156</sup> Literally, “through few things.”

<sup>157</sup> Matthew 10:42.

<sup>158</sup> Isaiah 55:1.

<sup>159</sup> Matthew 10:42.

<sup>160</sup> Proverbs 19:17.

debtor. What do you want to have him as, a judge or a debtor? The debtor feels regard for the lender. The judge does not revere the borrower.

## VII

But it is also necessary to see in another way why God said, “The person who gives to the poor person lends to me.” When he saw our greed inclining to profit, as I said before, and the person with money nowhere being willing to lend it without a security (for the lender demands either a pledge or sureties or someone to act as guarantor, and through these three securities he entrusts his own money, since he receives either securities, as I already said, or a pledge,<sup>161</sup> or sureties) – when, moreover, God saw that no one lends without these, or has regard for kindness, but looks to gain alone, and [when he saw] that the poor person was bereft of all of these, since he did not have a pledge (for he possesses nothing, bearing no securities, since he has been stripped naked; he does not provide someone as a guarantor, since he is not trusted because of his poverty) – when, moreover, God<sup>162</sup> saw him running great risk because of his poverty, and the person with money being in danger because of his inhumanity, he inserted himself into the middle as a pledge for the poor person and a surety for the lender. “You distrust this man,” he says, “because of his poverty; trust me on account of my abundance.” He saw the poor person and had compassion on him; he saw the poor person and did not overlook him, but gave himself as a security [M. 344] to him who had nothing, and stood beside the person in need because of his great goodness. Blessed David gives proof to this kindness and says, “Because he stood at the right side of the poor person.”<sup>163</sup> “The person who has compassion on a poor person lends to God.” “Be confident,” he says, “you are lending to me.” “And what great benefit do I derive by lending to you?” It is the height of lawlessness<sup>164</sup> to demand a reason from God – yet, in order to accommodate myself to your lawlessness,<sup>165</sup> and in order that I may break down your severity with kindness, let us dispute about these matters together. What do you gain when you lend to others? What do you seek from them for a profit? Is it not an interest rate of one percent, if you pursue the legal rate? But if you increase your insatiable desire, you will reap your wrong-doing two or three times over. But I conquer your greediness; I surpass your greedy appetite.<sup>166</sup> I cover your intemperance with my abundance. You seek a rate of one percent, but I give to you a hundred fold.” “And so you borrow, Lord, and here you borrow from me my charitable giving to the poor person, in order that at some point you may repay me for these things? I require an agreement since I want to confirm the contract. Tell<sup>167</sup> me the exact time when I’ll be repaid.<sup>168</sup> Determine the appointed time for repayment.” This is certainly redundant, for “The Lord is faithful in all his words.”<sup>169</sup> But since it is the

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<sup>161</sup> Literally, “a pledge of/for the affairs.”

<sup>162</sup> Literally, “he.”

<sup>163</sup> Psalm 109:31; Septuagint 108:31.

<sup>164</sup> Literally, “It is very much most unlawful.”

<sup>165</sup> Or, “to show consideration for your lawlessness.” i.e. to deal with you on your own ground, to demonstrate the truth of what I’m saying by your own standards.

<sup>166</sup> Literally, “appetite for greediness.”

<sup>167</sup> Literally, “give.”

<sup>168</sup> Literally, “exact time of repayment.”

<sup>169</sup> Psalm 145:13; Septuagint 144:13.

custom and object of a person who borrows in good faith to measure out the times and to determine the days, hear when and where he who borrows through the poor person repays his debt to you. “When the son of man sits on the throne of his glory, and places the sheep on his right, and the young goats on his left, and he will say to those on his right...” – pay attention here how the debtor is well minded to the lender, how the borrower repays the lender with great thanks – “come, you who are blessed by my father, inherit the kingdom which was prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”<sup>170</sup> For what? “Because I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink. I was naked, and you clothed me; in prison, and you came to me. I was sick, and you looked after me. I was a stranger, and you received me.”<sup>171</sup> Then, those who ministered well in a time of need, looking back to their own weakness and to the worth of the one who borrowed [from them], say, “Lord, when did we see that you were hungry and feed you? Or [when did we see that you] were thirsty, and we gave you something to drink?”<sup>172</sup> [You are the one] on whom the eyes of all place there hope, and you give [them] food in abundance?<sup>173</sup> How great is his goodness! He conceals his worth because of his kindness. For “I was hungry and you gave me something to eat.” How great is his goodness, how immeasurable his kindness! The one who gives nourishment to all flesh, and opens his hands, and fills every living creature with goodwill, says, “I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat.” His worth is not lessened, but his kindness gives surety for the poor. “I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink.” Who is the one who is saying these things? He who pours in<sup>174</sup> the nature of the waters into lakes and rivers and springs, he who says through the gospels, “He who believes in me, just as scripture said, ‘Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.’”<sup>175</sup> He who said, “If someone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.”<sup>176</sup> But, “I was naked,” [M. 335], he says, “and you clothed me.” We clothed the one who clothes the sky with clouds, the one who clothes the whole church, and the whole world. “For as many as you were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”<sup>177</sup> “I was in prison.” You were in prison, you who lead out those who are in chains? Interpret what you are saying, for your worth repudiates what is being said. When did we see you in such need? When did we do these things? “Inasmuch as you have done [these] to one of the least of these,” he says, “you did [them] to me.”<sup>178</sup> Is not this saying true, “The person who has compassion on the poor person lends to God?” And see the wonder! He mentioned no other work of virtue than this, and yet he could have said, “Come, you who are blessed by my father, because you were self-controlled, because you lived as virgins, because you undertook an angelic mode of life.” But he is silent on these points, not because they are unworthy of mention, but because they are secondary to kindness. But in the same way that he showed that the kingdom was given to those at his right because of their kindness, he also threatens punishment to those on his left because of their unfruitfulness. “Go, you

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<sup>170</sup> Matthew 25:31-34.

<sup>171</sup> Matthew 25:34-36.

<sup>172</sup> Matthew 25:37.

<sup>173</sup> Psalm 145:15; Septuagint 144:15.

<sup>174</sup> Saville: “pours out.”

<sup>175</sup> John 7:38.

<sup>176</sup> John 7:37.

<sup>177</sup> Galatians 3:27.

<sup>178</sup> Matthew 25:40.

who are accursed, to the outer darkness, which was prepared for the Devil and his angels.”<sup>179</sup> Why? For what? “Because I was hungry, and you did not give me anything to eat.”<sup>180</sup> He did not say, “Because you fornicated, because you perjured your oath.” These too are admittedly evil, but are lower down than inhumanity and unmercifulness. “But why, Lord, do you not make mention of other paths?” “I do not judge,” he says, “the sin, but the inhumanity. I do not judge those who have sinned, but those who have not repented. I condemn you for inhumanity because, although you possess so great and so large a means of achieving salvation – charitable giving – by which all sins could be blotted out, you disregard such kindness. Moreover, I reproach inhumanity as a root of evil and all impiety. I praise kindness as a root of all good things. And while to some I threaten eternal fire, to others I promise the kingdom of the heavens.” Master, your promises are good, and your expected kingdom is good, and again your threatened hell;<sup>181</sup> for the one persuades, [M. 336] the other causes fright. For the kingdom persuades well, but hell beneficially causes fright. For God threatens hell, not in order that he may cast [you] into hell, but to deliver you from hell. For if he wanted to punish [you], he would not have threatened [you] beforehand, in order for you to securely flee what was threatened. He threatens punishment in order that we may flee the experience of the punishment. He frightens [us] with a word in order not to punish [us] by an act. And so let us lend our kindness to God, let us lend it, in order that we may find him as our debtor, as I already said, and not as our judge. For the debtor feels regard for the lender, he feels regard for him and reveres him. If the lender goes to the door of the debtor, if he has no money, he flees; but if he is rich, he confidently welcomes him. Please, considerer another wonder of the just judge which is furnished from human affairs. If you lend to someone when he is in a state of poverty, and if the borrower advances to prosperity, and is able to pay back the rest of the debt, he escapes the notice of the many and makes repayment, in order that he may not be ashamed because of his former state. And while he gives thanks, he conceals the kind deed, since he is ashamed of his former poverty. But God does not act like this, but borrows in private, and repays the debt openly. For when he receives, it is through an unnoticed act of charitable giving. But when he makes repayment, he makes repayment in view of all of creation. But perhaps someone will say, “But why has he not similarly given to the poor person as he has given to me, a rich person?” He could have given similarly to both you and the poor person, but he did not want your wealth to be fruitless, or the other person’s poverty to be without reward. He granted you who are rich to be rich in charitable giving and to disperse [it] in righteousness. For “He dispersed [it], he gave to the poor. His righteousness remains forever.”<sup>182</sup> Do you see that the rich man stores up eternal righteousness from his charitable giving? Again, consider the poor person. Since he does not possess wealth, by which he would produce righteousness, he possesses poverty, from which he reaps eternal patience. For, “The patience of the poor will never perish,”<sup>183</sup> in Christ our Lord, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

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<sup>179</sup> Matthew 25:41.

<sup>180</sup> Matthew 25:42.

<sup>181</sup> γέεννα.

<sup>182</sup> Psalm 112:9; Septuagint 111:9.

<sup>183</sup> Psalm 9:18; Septuagint 9:19.