

ST. GREGORY, BISHOP OF NAZIANZEN, CALLED THE THEOLOGIAN:

ORATION XLV (Second Paschal Oration).

Translated by Charles Gordon Browne and James Edward Swallow

[Gaps in the Greek text are indicated by . . .]

ONE.

I will stand upon my watch, saith the venerable Habakkuk [2:1]; and I will take my post beside him today on the authority and observation which was given me of the Spirit; and I will look forth, and will observe what shall be said to me. Well, I have taken my stand, and looked forth; and behold a man riding on the clouds and he is very high, and his countenance is as the countenance of an Angel, and his vesture as the brightness of piercing lightning; and he lifts his hand toward the East, and cries with a loud voice. His voice is like the voice of a trumpet; and round about Him is as it were a multitude of the Heavenly Host; and he saith: "Today is salvation come unto the world, to that which is visible, and to that which is invisible. Christ is risen from the dead, rise ye with Him. Christ is returned again to Himself, return ye. Christ is freed from the tomb, be ye freed from the bond of sin. The gates of hell are opened, and death is destroyed, and the old Adam is put aside, and the New is fulfilled; if any man be in Christ he is a new creature; be ye renewed." Thus he speaks; and the rest sing out, as they did before when Christ was manifested to us by His birth on earth, their "glory to God in the highest, on earth, peace, goodwill among men." And with them I also utter the same words among you. And would that I might receive a voice that should rank with the Angel's, and should sound through all the ends of the earth!

TWO.

The Lord's Passover, the Passover, and again I say the Passover to the honour of the Trinity! This is to us a Feast of feasts and a Solemnity of solemnities as far exalted above all others (not only those which are merely human and creep on the ground, but even those which are of Christ Himself, and are celebrated in His honour) as the Sun is above the stars. Beautiful indeed yesterday was our splendid array, and our illumination, in which both in public and private we associated ourselves, every kind of men, and almost every rank, illuminating the night with our crowded fires, formed after the fashion of that great light, both that with which the heaven above us lights its beacon fires, and that which is above the heavens, amid the angels (the first luminous nature, next to the first nature of all, because springing directly from it), and that which is in the Trinity, from which all light derives its being, parted from the undivided light and honoured. But today's is more beautiful and more illustrious; inasmuch as yesterday's light was a forerunner of the rising of the Great Light, and as it were a kind of rejoicing in preparation for the Festival; but today we are celebrating the Resurrection itself, no longer as an object of expectation, but as having already come to pass, and gathering the whole world unto itself. Let then different persons bring forth different fruits and offer different offerings at this season, smaller or greater . . . such spiritual offerings as are dear to God . . . as each may have power. For scarcely Angels themselves could offer gifts

worthy of its rank, those first and intellectual and pure beings, who are also eye-witnesses of the Glory that is on high;
if even these can attain the full strain of praise.
We will for our part offer a discourse, the best and most precious thing we have--especially as we are praising the Word
for the blessing which He hath bestowed on the reasoning creation. I will begin from this point. For I cannot endure, when I am engaged in offering the sacrifice of the lips concerning the Great Sacrifice and the greatest of days, to fail to recur to God, and to take my beginning from Him. Therefore I pray you, cleanse your mind and ears and thoughts, all you who delight in such subjects, since the discourse will be concerning God, and will be divine; that you may depart filled with delights of a sort that do not pass away into nothingness. And it shall be at once very full and very concise, so as neither to distress you by its deficiencies, nor to displease you by satiety.

THREE.

God always was and always is, and always will be; or rather, God always -is-, for "was" and "will be" are fragments of our time, and of changeable nature. But He is Eternal Being; and this is the Name He gives Himself when giving the Oracles to Moses in the Mount. For in Himself He sums up and contains all Being, having neither beginning in the past nor end in the future . . . like some great Sea of Being, limitless and unbounded, transcending all conception of time and nature, only adumbrated by the mind, and that very dimly and scantily . . . not by His Essentials but by His Environment, one image being got from one source and another from another, and combined into some sort of presentation of the truth, which escapes us before we have caught it, and which takes to flight before we have conceived it, blazing forth upon our master-part, even when that is cleansed as the lightning flash which will not stay its course upon our sight . . . in order, as I conceive, by that part of it which we can comprehend to draw us to itself (for that which is altogether incomprehensible is outside the bounds of hope, and not within compass of endeavour); and by that part of It which we cannot comprehend to move our wonder; and as an object of wonder to become more of an object of desire; and being desired, to purify; and purifying to make us like God; so that, when we have become like Himself, God may, to use a bold expression, hold converse with us as God; being united to us, and known by us; and that perhaps to the same extent as He already knows those who are known to Him. The Divine nature, then, is boundless; even though one may conceive that because He is of a simple Nature He is therefore either wholly incomprehensible or perfectly comprehensible. For let us further enquire what is implied by "is of a simple Nature?" For it is quite certain that this simplicity is not itself its nature, just as composition is not by itself the essence of compound beings.

FOUR.

And when Infinity is considered from two points of view, beginning and end (for that which is beyond these and not limited by them is Infinity), when the mind looks into the depths above, not having where to stand, and leans upon phenomena to form an idea of God, it calls the Infinite and Unapproachable which it finds there by the name of the Unoriginate.

And when it looks into the depth below and at the future, it calls Him Undying and Imperishable. And when it draws a conclusion from the whole, it calls Him Eternal. For Eternity is neither time nor part of time; for it cannot be measured.

But what time measured by the course of the sun is to us, that Eternity is to the Everlasting; namely a sort of timelike movement and interval, coextensive with Their Existence.

This however is all that I must now say of God; for the present is not a suitable time, as my present subject is not the doctrine of God, but that of the Incarnation. And when I say God, I mean Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; for Godhead is

neither diffused beyond These, so as to introduce a mob of gods, nor yet bounded by a smaller compass than These, so as to condemn us for a poverty stricken conception of Deity, either Judaizing to save the -Monarchia-, or falling into heathenism by the multitude of our gods. For the evil on either side is the same, though found in contrary directions. Thus then is the Holy of Holies, Which is hidden even from the Seraphim, and is glorified with a thrice-repeated Holy meeting in one ascription of the title Lord and God, as one of our predecessors has most beautifully and loftily reasoned out.

FIVE.

But since this movement of Self-contemplation alone could not satisfy Goodness, but Good must be poured out and go forth beyond Itself, to multiply the objects of Its beneficence (for this was essential to the highest Goodness), He first conceived the Angelic and Heavenly Powers. And this conception was a work fulfilled by His word and perfected by His Spirit. And so the Secondary Splendours came into being, as the ministers of the Primary Splendour (whether we are to conceive of them as intelligent Spirits, or as Fire of an immaterial and incorporeal kind, or as some other nature approaching this as near as may be). I should like to say that they are incapable of movement in the direction of evil, and susceptible only of the movement of good, as being about God and illuminated with the first Rays from God (for earthly beings have but the second illumination), but I am obliged to stop short of saying that they are immovable, and to conceive and speak of them as only difficult to move, because of him who for His Splendour was called Lucifer, but became and is called Darkness though his pride; and the Apostate Hosts who are subject to him, creators of evil by their revolt against good, and our inciters.

SIX.

Thus then and for these reasons, He gave being to the world of thought, as far as I can reason on these matters, and estimate great things in my own poor language. Then, when His first Creation was in good order, He conceives a second world, material and visible; and this a system of earth and sky and all that is in the midst of them; an admirable creation indeed when we look at the fair form of every part, but yet more worthy of admiration when we consider the harmony and unison of the whole, and how each part fits in with every other in fair order, and all with the whole, tending to the perfect completion of the world as a Unit. This was to shew that He could call into being not only a nature akin to Himself, but also one altogether alien to Him. For akin to Deity are those natures which are intellectual and only to be comprehended by the mind; but all of which sense can take cognizance are utterly alien to It; and of these the furthest removed from It are all those which are entirely destitute of soul and power of motion.

SEVEN.

Mind then and sense, thus distinguished from each other, had remained within their own boundaries, and bore in themselves the magnificence of the Creator-Word, silent praisers and thrilling heralds of His mighty work. Not yet was there any mingling of both, nor any mixture of these opposites, tokens of a greater wisdom and generosity in the creation of natures; nor as yet, were the whole riches of goodness made known. Now the Creator-Word, determined to exhibit this, and to produce a single living being out of both -- the invisible and the visible creation, I mean -- fashions Man; and taking a body from already existing matter, and placing in it a Breath taken from himself (which the Word knew to be an intelligent soul, and the image of God), as a sort of second world, great in littleness, He placed him on the earth, a new Angel, a mingled worshipper, fully initiated into the visible

creation, but only partially into the intellectual; king of all upon the earth, but subject to the King above; earthly and heavenly; temporal and yet immortal; visible and yet intellectual; half-way between greatness and lowliness; in one person combining spirit and flesh; spirit because of the favour bestowed on him, flesh on account of the height to which he had been raised; the one that he might continue to live and glorify his benefactor, the other that he might suffer, and by suffering be put in remembrance, and be corrected if he became proud in his greatness; a living creature,

trained here and then moved elsewhere; and to complete the mystery, deified by its inclination to God . . . for to this, I

think, tends that light of Truth which here we possess but in measure; that we should both see and experience the Splendour of God, which is worthy of Him Who made us, and will dissolve us, to remake us after a loftier fashion. EIGHT.

This being He placed in paradise -- whatever that paradise may have been (having honoured him with the gift of free will, in order that good might belong to him as the result of his choice, no less than to Him Who had implanted the seeds

of it) -- to till the immortal plants, by which is perhaps meant the Divine conceptions, both the simpler and the more perfect; naked in his simplicity and inartificial life; and without any covering or screen; for it was fitting that he who was from the beginning should be such. And He gave Him a Law, as material for his free will to act upon. This Law was

a commandment as to what plants he might partake of and which one he might not touch.

This latter was the Tree of Knowledge; not, however, because it was evil from the beginning when planted; nor was it

forbidden because God grudged it to men -- let not the enemies of God wag their tongues in that direction, or imitate the

serpent. But it would have been good if partaken of at the proper time; for the Tree was, according to my theory, Contemplation, which it is only safe for those who have reached the maturity of habit to enter upon; but which is not good for those who are still somewhat simple and greedy; just as neither is solid food good for those who are yet tender

and have need of milk.

But when through the devil's malice and the woman's caprice, to which she succumbed as the more tender, and which

she brought to bear upon the man, as she was the more apt to persuade -- alas for my weakness, for that of my first father was mine; he forgot the commandment which had been given him, and yielded to the baleful fruit; and for his sin

was banished at once from the tree of life, and from paradise, and from God; and put on the coats of skins, that is, perhaps, the coarser flesh, both mortal and contradictory. And this was the first thing which he learnt -- his own shame

-- and he hid himself from God.

Yet here too he makes a gain, namely death and the cutting off of sin, in order that evil may not be immortal. Thus, his

punishment is changed into a mercy, for it is in mercy, I am persuaded, that God inflicts punishment.

NINE.

And having first been chastened by many means because his sins were many, whose root of evil sprang up through divers causes and sundry times, by word, by law, by prophets, by benefits, by threats, by plagues, by waters, by fires, by wars, by victories, by defeats, by signs in heaven, and signs in the air, and in the earth, and in the sea; by unexpected

changes of men, of cities, of nations (the object of which was the destruction of wickedness) -- at last he needed a stronger remedy, for his diseases were growing worse: mutual slaughters, adulteries, perjuries, unnatural crimes, and that

first and last of all evils, idolatry, and the transfer of worship from the Creator to the creatures.

As these required a greater aid, so they also obtained a greater. And that was that the Word of God Himself, Who is before all worlds, the Invisible, the Incomprehensible, the Bodiless, the Beginning of beginning, the Light of Light, the

Source of Life and Immortality, the Image of the Archetype, the Immovable Seal, the Unchangeable Image, the Father's

Definition and Word, came to His own Image, and took on Him Flesh for the sake of our flesh, and mingled Himself

with an intelligent soul for my soul's sake, purifying like by like; and in all points except sin was made Man; conceived by the Virgin, who first in body and soul was purified by the Holy Ghost, for it was needful both that Child-bearing should be honoured and that Virginité should receive a higher honour. He came forth then, as God, with That which He had assumed; one Person in two natures, flesh and Spirit, of which the latter deified the former. O new commingling; O strange conjunction! the Self-existent comes into Being, the Uncreated is created, That which cannot be contained is contained by the intervention of an intellectual soul mediating between the Deity and the corporeity of the flesh. And He who gives riches became poor; for He assumes the poverty of my flesh, that I may assume the riches of His Godhead. He that is full empties Himself; for He empties Himself of His Glory for a short while, that I may have a share in His Fulness. What is the riches of His Goodness? What is this mystery that is around me? I had a share in the Image and I did not keep it; He partakes of my flesh that He may both save the Image and make the flesh immortal. He communicates a Second Communion, far more marvellous than the first, inasmuch as then He imparted the better nature, but now He Himself assumes the worse. This is more godlike than the former action; this is loftier in the eyes of all men of understanding.

TEN. But perhaps some one of those who are too impetuous and festive may say, "What has all this to do with us? Spur on your horse to the goal; talk to us about the Festival and the reasons for our being here today." Yes, this is what I am about to do, although I have begun at a somewhat previous point, being compelled to do so by the needs of my argument.

There will be no harm in the eyes of scholars and lovers of the beautiful if we say a few words about the word Pascha itself, for such an addition will not be useless in their ears. This great and venerable Pascha is called Phaska by the Hebrews in their own language; and the word means Passing Over. Historically, from their flight and migration from Egypt into the Land of Canaan; spiritually, from the progress and ascent from things below to things above and to the Land of Promise. And we observe that a thing which we often find to have happened in Scripture, the change of certain nouns from an uncertain to a clearer sense, or from a coarser to a more refined, has taken place in this instance. For some people, supposing this to be a name of the Sacred Passion, and in consequence Grecizing the word by changing Phi and Kappa into Pi and Chi, called the Day Pascha. And custom took it up and confirmed the word, with the help of the ears of most people, to whom it had a more pious sound.

ELEVEN.

But before our time the Holy Apostle declared that the Law was but a shadow of the things to come, which are conceived by thought. And God too, who in still older times gave oracles to Moses, said when giving laws concerning these things, "See thou make all things according to the pattern shewed thee in the Mount," when He shewed him the visible signs as an adumbration of and design for the things that are invisible [Ex. 25:40]. And I am persuaded that none of these things has been ordered in vain, none without a reason, none in a grovelling manner or unworthy of the legislation of God and the ministry of Moses, even though it be difficult in each type to find a theory descending to the most delicate details, to every point about the Tabernacle itself, and its measures and materials, and the Levites and Priests who carried them, and all the particulars which were enacted about the Sacrifices and the purifications and the Offerings; and though these are only to be understood by those who rank with Moses in virtue, or have made the nearest approach to his learning.

For in that Mount itself God is seen by men; on the one hand through His own descent from His lofty abode, on the other through His drawing us up from our abasement on earth, that the Incomprehensible may be in some degree, and as far as is safe, comprehended by a mortal nature. For in no other way is it possible for the denseness of a material body and an imprisoned mind to come into consciousness of God, except by His assistance. Then therefore all men do not seem to have been deemed worthy of the same rank and position; but one of one place and one of another, each, I think, according to the measure of his own purification. Some have even been altogether driven away, and only permitted to hear the Voice from on high, namely those whose dispositions are altogether like wild beasts, and who are unworthy of divine mysteries.

TWELVE.

But we, standing midway between those whose minds are utterly dense on the one side, and on the other those who are very contemplative and exalted, that we may neither remain quite idle and immovable, nor yet be more busy than we ought, and fall short of and be estranged from our purpose -- for the former course is Judaic and -pos tapeinon-, and the latter is only fit for the dream-soothsayer, and both alike are to be condemned -- let us say our say upon these matters, so far as is within our reach, and not very absurd, or exposed to the ridicule of the multitude.

Our belief is that since it was needful that we, who had fallen in consequence of the original sin, and had been led away

by pleasure, even as far as idolatry and unlawful bloodshed, should be recalled and raised up again to our original position through the tender mercy of God our Father, Who could not endure that such a noble work of His own hands

as Man should be lost to Him; the method of our new creation, and of what should be done, was this: that all violent remedies were disapproved, as not likely to persuade us, and as quite possibly tending to add to the plague, through our

chronic pride; but that God disposed things to our restoration by a gentle and kindly method of cure. For a crooked sapling will not bear a sudden bending the other way, or violence from the hand that would straighten it, but will be more quickly broken than straightened; and a horse of a hot temper and above a certain age will not endure the tyranny

of the bit without some coaxing and encouragement.

Therefore the Law is given to us as an assistance, like a boundary wall between God and idols, drawing us away from

the one and to the Other. And it concedes a little at first, that it may receive that which is greater. It concedes the Sacrifices for a time, that it may establish God in us, and then when the fitting time shall come may abolish the Sacrifices also; thus wisely changing our minds by gradual removals, and bringing us over to the Gospel when we have

already been trained to a prompt obedience.

THIRTEEN.

Thus then and for this cause the written Law came in, gathering us into Christ; and this is the account of the Sacrifices

as I account for them. And that you may not be ignorant of the depth of His Wisdom and the riches of His unsearchable

judgements, He did not leave even these unhallowed altogether, or useless, or with nothing in them but mere blood.

But

that great, and if I may say so, in Its first nature unsacrificeable Victim, was intermingled with the Sacrifices of the Law,

and was a purification, not for a part of the world, nor for a short time, but for the whole world and for all time.

For this reason a Lamb was chosen for its innocence, and its clothing of the original nakedness. For such is the Victim

That was offered for us, Who is both in Name and fact the Garment of incorruption. And He was a perfect Victim not

only on account of His Godhead, than which nothing is more perfect; but also on account of that which He assumed having been anointed with Deity, and having become one with That which anointed It, and I am bold to say, made equal with God.

A Male, because offered for Adam; or rather the Stronger for the strong, when the first Man had fallen under sin; and chiefly because there is in Him nothing feminine, nothing unmanly; but He burst from the bonds of Virgin-Mother's womb with much power, and a Male was brought forth by the Prophetess [Isaiah 13:3], as Isaiah declares the good tidings.

And of a year old because he is the Sun of righteousness setting out from heaven, and circumscribed by His visible Nature, and returning unto Himself. And "the blessed crown of Goodness," -- being on every side equal to Himself and

alike; and not only this, but also as giving life to all the circle of the virtues, gently commingled and intermixed with each

other, according to the Law of Love and Order. And Immaculate and guileless, as being the Healer of faults, and of the

defects and taints that come from sin. For though He both took on Him our sins and bare our diseases [Isaiah 53:4], yet

He did not Himself suffer aught that needed healing. For He was tempted in all points like as we are yet without sin [Hebrews 4:15]. For he that persecuted the Light that shineth in darkness could not overtake Him.

FOURTEEN.

What more? The First Month is introduced, or rather the beginning of months, whether it was so among the Hebrews from the beginning, or was made so later on this account, and became the first in consequence of the Mystery; and the

Tenth of the month, for this is the most complete number, of units the first perfect unit, and the parent of perfection.

And it is kept until the fifth day, perhaps because the Victim, of Whom I am speaking, purifies the five senses, from which comes falling into sin, and around which the war rages, inasmuch as they are open to the incitements to sin.

And

it was chosen, not only out of the lambs, but also out of the inferior species, which are placed on the left hand -- the kids; because He sacrificed not only for the righteous, but also for sinners; and perhaps even more for these, inasmuch

as we have greater need of His mercy.

And we need not be surprised that a lamb for a house should be required as the best course, but if that could not be, then one might be obtained by contributions (owing to poverty) for the houses of a family; because it is clearly best that each individual should suffice for his own perfecting, and should offer his own living sacrifice holy unto God

Who

called him, being consecrated at all times and in every respect. But if that cannot be, then that those who are akin in virtue and of like disposition should be made use of as helpers. For I think this provision means that we should communicate of the Sacrifice to those who are nearest, if there be need.

FIFTEEN.

Then comes the Sacred Night, the Anniversary of the confused darkness of the present life, into which the primaeval darkness is dissolved, and all things come into life and rank and form, and that which was chaos is reduced to order.

Then we flee from Egypt, that is from sullen persecuting sin; and from Pharaoh the unseen tyrant, and the bitter taskmasters, changing our quarters to the world above; and are delivered from the clay and the brickmaking, and from

the husks and dangers of this fleshly condition, which for most men is only not overpowered by mere husklike calculations. Then the Lamb is slain, and act and word are sealed with the Precious Blood; that is, habit and action, the

sideposts of our doors; I mean, of course, of the movements of mind and opinion, which are rightly opened and closed

by contemplation, since there is a limit even to thoughts. Then the last and gravest plague upon the persecutors, truly worthy of the night; and Egypt mourns the first-born of her own reasonings and actions which are also called in the Scripture the Seed of the Chaldeans [Judith 5:6] removed, and the children of Babylon dashed against the rocks and destroyed [Ps. 136(137):8]; and the whole air is full of the cry and clamour of the Egyptians; and then the Destroyer of

them shall withdraw from us in reverence of the Unction. Then the removal of leaven; that is, of the old and sour wickedness, not of that which is quickening and makes bread; for seven days, a number which is of all the most

mystical, and is co-ordinate with this present world, that we may not lay in provision of any Egyptian dough, or relic of Pharisaic or ungodly teaching.

SIXTEEN.

Well, let them lament; we will feed on the Lamb toward evening -- for Christ's Passion was in the completion of the ages; because too He communicated His Disciples in the evening with His Sacrament, destroying the darkness of sin;

and not sodden, but roast -- that our word may have in it nothing that is unconsidered or watery, or easily made away with; but may be entirely consistent and solid, and free from all that is impure and from all vanity. And let us be aided

by the good coals [Isaiah 6:6], kindling and purifying our minds from Him That cometh to send fire on the earth, that

shall destroy all evil habits, and to hasten its kindling. Whatsoever then there be, of solid and nourishing in the Word,

shall be eaten with the inward parts and hidden things of the mind, and shall be consumed and given up to spiritual digestion; aye, from head to foot, that is, from the first contemplations of Godhead to the very last thoughts about the

Incarnation.

Neither let us carry aught of it abroad, nor leave it till the morning; because most of our Mysteries may not be carried

out to them that are outside, nor is there beyond this night any further purification; and procrastination is not creditable

to those who have a share in the Word. For just as it is good and well-pleasing to God not to let anger last through the

day, but to get rid of it before sunset, whether you take this of time or in a mystical sense, for it is not safe for us that the Sun of Righteousness should go down upon our wrath; so too we ought not to let such Food remain all night, nor to

put it off till to-morrow. But whatever is of bony nature and not fit for food and hard for us even to understand, this must not be broken; that is, badly divined and misconceived (I need not say that in the history not a bone of Jesus was

broken, even though His death was hastened by His crucifiers on account of the Sabbath); nor must it be stripped off and thrown away, lest that which is holy should be given to the dogs, that is, to the evil hearers of the Word; just as the

glorious pearl of the Word is not to be cast before swine; but it shall be consumed with the fire with which the burnt offerings also are consumed, being refined and preserved by the Spirit That searcheth and knoweth all things, not destroyed in the waters, nor scattered abroad as the calf's head which was hastily made by Israel was by Moses, for a reproach for their hardness of heart [Exod. 32:20].

SEVENTEEN.

Nor would it be right for us to pass over the manner of this eating either, for the Law does not do so, but carries its mystical labour even to this point in the literal enactment. Let us consume the Victim in haste, eating It with unleavened

bread, with bitter herbs, and with our loins girded, and our shoes on our feet, and leaning on staves like old men; with

haste, that we fall not into that fault which was forbidden to Lot by the commandment, that we look not around, nor stay in all that neighbourhood, but that we escape to the mountain, that we be not overtaken by the strange fire of Sodom, nor be congealed into a pillar of salt in consequence of our turning back to wickedness; for this is the result of

delay [Gen. 19:17].

"With bitter herbs," for a life according to the Will of God is bitter and arduous, especially to beginners, and higher than

pleasures. For although the new yoke is easy and the burden light, as you are told [Matt. 11:20], yet this is on account

of the hope and the reward, which is far more abundant than the hardships of this life. If it were not so, who would not

say that the Gospel is more full of toil and trouble than the enactments of the Law? For, while the Law prohibits only

the completed acts of sin, we are condemned for the causes also, almost as if they were acts.

The Law says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery"; but -you- may not even -desire-, kindling passion by curious and earnest looks. "Thou shalt not kill," says the Law; but -you- are not even to return a blow, but on the contrary are to offer yourself to the smiter. How much more ascetic is the Gospel than the Law!

"Thou shalt not forswear thyself" is the Law; but -you- are not to swear at all, either a greater or a lesser oath, for an oath is the parent of perjury. "Thou shalt not join house to house, nor field to field, oppressing the poor"; but -you- are

to set aside willingly even your just possessions, and to be stripped for the poor, that without encumbrance you may take up the Cross and be enriched with the unseen riches.

EIGHTEEN.

And let the loins of the unreasoning animals be unbound and loose, for they have not the gift of reason which can overcome pleasure (it is not needful to say that even they know the limit of natural movement). But let that part of your being which is the seat of passion, and which neighs, as Holy Scripture calls it [Jer. 5:8], when sweeping away this

shameful passion, be restrained by a girdle of continence, so that you may eat the Passover purely, having mortified your members which are upon the earth, and copying the girdle of John, the Hermit and Forerunner and great Herald of the Truth.

Another girdle I know, the soldierly and manly one, I mean, from which the Euzoni of Syria and certain Monzoni take

their name. And it is in respect of this too that God saith in an oracle to Job, "Nay, but gird up thy loins like a man, and

give a manly answer" [Job 38:3]. With this also holy David boasts that he is girded with strength from God, and speaks

of God Himself as clothed with strength and girded about with power -- against the ungodly of course -- a declaration of

the abundance of His power, and, as it were, its restraint, just as also He clothes Himself with Light as with a garment.

For who shall endure His unrestrained power and light? Do I enquire what there is common to the loins and to truth? What then is the meaning to St. Paul of the expression, "Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth?" [Eph.

5:14]. Is it perhaps that contemplation is to restrain concupiscence, and not to allow it to be carried in another direction? For that which is disposed to love in a particular direction will not have the same power towards other pleasures.

NINETEEN.

And as to -shoes-, let him who is about to touch the Holy Land which the feet of God have trodden, put them off, as Moses did upon the Mount, that he may bring there nothing dead; nothing to come between Man and God. So too if any disciple is sent to preach the Gospel, let him go in a spirit of philosophy and without excess, inasmuch as he must,

besides being without money and without staff and with but one coat, also be barefooted, that the feet of those who preach the Gospel of Peace and every other good may appear beautiful [Isaiah 52:7]. But he who would flee from Egypt and the things of Egypt must put on shoes for safety's sake, especially in regard to the scorpions and snakes in which Egypt so abounds, so as not to be injured by those which watch the heel, which also we are bidden to tread under foot.

And concerning -the staff- and the signification of it, my belief is as follows. There is one I know to lean upon, and another which belongs to Pastors and Teachers, and which corrects human sheep. Now the Law prescribes to you the staff to lean upon, that you may not break down in your mind when you hear of God's Blood, and His Passion and His

death; and that you may not be carried away to heresy in your defence of God; but without shame and without doubt may eat the Flesh and drink the Blood, if you are desirous of true life, neither disbelieving His words about His Flesh,

nor offended at those about His Passion. Lean upon this, and stand firm and strong, in nothing shaken by the adversaries nor carried away by the plausibility of their arguments. Stand upon thy High Place; in the Courts of Jerusalem place thy feet; lean upon the Rock, that thy steps in God be not shaken.

TWENTY.

What sayest thou? Thus it hath pleased Him that thou shouldest come forth out of Egypt, the iron furnace; that thou

shouldest leave behind the idolatry of that country, and be led by Moses and his lawgiving and martial rule. I give thee a piece of advice which is not my own, or rather which is very much my own, if thou consider the matter spiritually. Borrow from the Egyptians vessels of gold and silver [Exod. 11:2]; with these take thy journey; supply thyself for the road with the goods of strangers, or rather with thine own. There is money owing to thee, the wages of thy bondage and of thy brickmaking; be clever on thy side too in asking retribution; be an honest robber. Thou didst suffer wrong there whilst thou wast fighting with the clay (that is, this troublesome and filthy body) and wast building cities foreign and unsafe, "whose memorial perishes with a cry" [Ps. 9:7 LXX]. What then? Dost thou come out for nothing and without wages? But why wilt thou leave to the Egyptians and to the powers of thine adversaries that which they have gained by wickedness, and will spend with yet greater wickedness? It does not belong to them: they have ravished it, and have sacrilegiously taken it as plunder from Him who saith, The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine, and I give it to whom I will. Yesterday it was theirs, for it was permitted to be so; to-day the Master takes it and gives it to thee, that thou mayest make a good and saving use of it. Let us make to ourselves friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness, that when we fail, they may receive us in the time of judgment [Luke 16:9].

TWENTY-ONE.

If you are a Rachel or a Leah, a patriarchal and great soul, steal whatever idols of your father you can find; [Gen. 31:19] not, however, that you may keep them, but that you may destroy them; and if you are a wise Israelite remove them to the Land of the Promise, and let the persecutor grieve over the loss of them, and learn through being outwitted that it was vain for him to tyrannize over and keep in bondage better men than himself. If thou doest this, and comest out of Egypt thus, I know well that thou shalt be guided by the pillar of fire and cloud by night and day. The wilderness shall be tamed for thee, and the Sea divided; Pharaoh shall be drowned; bread shall be rained down; the rock shall become a fountain; Amalek shall be conquered, not with arms alone, but with the hostile hand of the righteous forming both prayers and the invincible trophy of the Cross; the River shall be cut off; the sun shall stand still; and the moon be restrained; walls shall be overthrown even without engines; swarms of hornets shall go before thee to make a way for Israel, and to hold the Gentiles in check; and all the other events which are told in the history after these and with these (not to make a long story) shall be given thee of God. Such is the feast thou art keeping to-day; and in this manner I would have thee celebrate both the Birthday and the Burial of Him Who was born for thee and suffered for thee. Such is the Mystery of the Passover; such are the mysteries sketched by the Law and fulfilled by Christ, the Abolisher of the letter, the Perfecter of the Spirit, who by His Passion taught us how to suffer, and by His glorification grants us to be glorified with Him.

TWENTY-TWO

Now we are to examine another fact and dogma, neglected by most people, but in my judgment well worth enquiring into. To Whom was that Blood offered that was shed for us, and why was it shed? I mean the precious and famous Blood of our God and Highpriest and Sacrifice. We were detained in bondage by the Evil One, sold under sin, and receiving pleasure in exchange for wickedness. Now, since a ransom belongs only to him who holds in bondage, I ask to whom was this offered, and for what cause? If to the Evil One, fie upon the outrage! If the robber receives ransom, not only from God, but a ransom which consists of God Himself, and has such an illustrious payment for his tyranny, a payment for whose sake it would have been right for him to have left us alone altogether. But if to the Father, I ask first, how? For it was not by Him that we were being oppressed; and next, On what principle did the Blood of His Only begotten Son delight the Father, Who would not receive even Isaac, when he was being offered by his Father, but

changed the sacrifice, putting a ram in the place of the human victim? Is it not evident that the Father accepts Him, but neither asked for Him nor demanded Him; but on account of the Incarnation, and because Humanity must be sanctified by the Humanity of God, that He might deliver us Himself, and overcome the tyrant, and draw us to Himself by the mediation of His Son, Who also arranged this to the honour of the Father, Whom it is manifest that He obeys in all things? So much we have said of Christ; the greater part of what we might say shall be revered with silence. But that brazen serpent [Num. 21:9] was hung up as a remedy for the biting serpents, not as a type of Him that suffered for us, but as a contrast; and it saved those that looked upon it, not because they believed it to live, but because it was killed, and killed with it the powers that were subject to it, being destroyed as it deserved. And what is the fitting epitaph for it from us? "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Thou art overthrown by the Cross; thou art slain by Him who is the Giver of life; thou art without breath, dead, without motion, even though thou keepest the form of a serpent lifted up on high on a pole.

TWENTY-THREE.

Now we will partake of a Passover which is still typical, though it is plainer than the old one. For that is ever new which is now becoming known. It is ours to learn what is that drinking and that enjoyment, and His to teach and communicate the Word to His disciples. For teaching is food, even to the Giver of food. Come hither then, and let us partake of the Law, but in a Gospel manner, not a literal one; perfectly, not imperfectly; eternally, not temporarily.

Let

us make our Head, not the earthly Jerusalem, but the heavenly City [Heb. 12:22]; not that which is now trodden under

foot by armies [Luke 21:20-24], but that which is glorified by Angels. Let us sacrifice not young calves, nor lambs that

put forth horns and hoofs [Ps. 64:32], in which many parts are destitute of life and feeling; but let us sacrifice to God the sacrifice of praise upon the heavenly Altar, with the heavenly dances, let us hold aside the first veil; let us approach

the second, and look into the Holy of Holies [Heb. 13:15 and 10:20].

Shall I say that which is a greater thing yet? Let us sacrifice -ourselves- to God; or rather let us go on sacrificing throughout every day and at every moment. Let us accept anything for the Word's sake. By sufferings let us imitate His

Passion: by our blood let us reverence His Blood: let us gladly mount upon the Cross. Sweet are the nails, though they

be very painful. For to suffer with Christ and for Christ is better than a life of ease with others.

TWENTY-FOUR.

If you are a Simon of Cyrene, take up the cross and follow. If you are crucified with Him as a robber, acknowledge God

as a penitent robber. If even He was numbered among the transgressors for you and your sin, do you become law-abiding for His sake. Worship Him Who was hanged for you, even if you yourself are hanging; make some gain even

from your wickedness; purchase salvation by your death; enter with Jesus into Paradise, so that you may learn from what you have fallen. Contemplate the glories that are there; let the murderer die outside with his blasphemies; and if

you be a Joseph of Arimathaea, beg the Body from him that crucified Him, make thine own that which cleanses the world. If you be a Nicodemus, the worshipper of God by night, bury Him with spices.

If you be a Mary, or another Mary, or a Salome, or a Joanna, weep in the early morning. Be first to see the stone taken

away, and perhaps you will see the Angels and Jesus Himself. Say something; hear His Voice. If He say to you, Touch

Me not, stand afar off; reverence the Word, but grieve not; for He knoweth those to whom He appeareth first. Keep the

feast of the Resurrection; come to the aid of Eve who was first to fall, of Her who first embraced the Christ, and made

Him known to the disciples. Be a Peter or a John; hasten to the Sepulchre, running together, running against one another, vying in the noble race. And even if you be beaten in speed, win the victory of zeal; not -looking- into the tomb, but -going- in. And if, like a Thomas, you were left out when the disciples were assembled to whom Christ shews

Himself, when you do see Him be not faithless; and if you do not believe, then believe those who tell you; and if you cannot believe them either, then have confidence in the print of the nails. If He descend into Hell, descend with Him. Learn to know the mysteries of Christ there also, what is the providential purpose of the twofold descent, to save all men absolutely by His manifestation, or there too only them that believe.

TWENTY-FIVE.

And if He ascend up into Heaven, ascend with Him. Be one of those angels who escort Him, or one of those who receive Him. Bid the gates be lifted up [Ps. 23(24):7], or be made higher, that they may receive Him, exalted after His

Passion. Answer to those who are in doubt because He bears up with Him His body and the tokens of His Passion, which He had not when He came down, and who therefore inquire, "Who is this King of Glory?", that it is "the Lord strong and mighty", as in all things that He hath done from time to time and does, so now in His battle and triumph for

the sake of Mankind. And give to the doubting of the question the twofold answer. And if they marvel and say as in Isaiah's drama: "Who is this that cometh from Edom" and from the things of earth? Or "how are the garments red of Him that is without blood or body, as of one that treads in the full wine-press?" [Isaiah 63:1-2] Set forth the beauty of

the array of the Body that suffered, adorned by the Passion, and made splendid by the Godhead, than which nothing can be more lovely or more beautiful.

TWENTY-SIX.

To this what will those cavillers say, those bitter reasoners about Godhead, those detractors of all things that are praiseworthy, those darkeners of Light, uncultured in respect of Wisdom, for whom Christ died in vain, unthankful creatures, the work of the Evil One? Do you turn this benefit into a reproach to God? Will you deem Him little on this

account, that He humbled Himself for your sake, and because to seek for that which had wandered the Good Shepherd,

He who layeth down His life for the sheep, came upon the mountains and hills upon which you used to sacrifice, and found the wandering one; and having found it, took it upon His shoulders, on which He also bore the wood; and having

borne it, brought it back to the life above; and having brought it back, numbered it among those who have never strayed?

That He lit a candle, His own flesh, and swept the house, by cleansing away the sin of the world, and sought for the coin, the Royal Image that was all covered up with passions, and calls together His friends, the Angelic Powers, at the

finding of the coin, and makes them sharers of His joy, as He had before made them sharers of the secret of His Incarnation? That the Light that is exceeding bright should follow the Candle-Forerunner, and the World, the Voice, and

the Bridegroom, the Bridegroom's friend, that prepared for the Lord a peculiar people and cleansed them by the water in

preparation for the Spirit?

Do you Reproach God with this? Do you conceive of Him as less because He girds Himself with a towel and washes His disciples, and shows that humiliation is the best road to exaltation; because He humbles Himself for the sake of the

soul that is bent down to the ground, that He may even exalt with Himself that which is bent double under a weight of

sin? How comes it that you do not also charge it upon Him as a crime that He eateth with Publicans and at Publicans' tables, and makes disciples of Publicans that He too may make some gain? And what gain? The salvation of sinners.

If

so, one must blame the physician for stooping over suffering and putting up with evil smells in order to give health to

the sick; and him also who gives health to the sick; and him also who leans over the ditch, that he may, according to the

Law, save the beast that has fallen into it.

TWENTY-SEVEN.

He was sent, but sent according to His Manhood (for He was of two Natures), since He was hungry and thirsty and weary, and was distressed and wept, according to the Laws of human nature. But even if he were sent also as God, what of that? Consider the Mission to be the good pleasure of the Father, to which He refers all that concerns Himself,

both that He may honour the Eternal Principle, and that He may avoid the appearance of being a rival God. For He is said on the one hand to have been betrayed, and on the other is written that He gave Himself up; and so too that He

was raised and taken up by the Father, and also that of His own power He rose and ascended. The former belongs to the Good Pleasure, the latter to His own Authority; but you dwell upon all that diminishes Him, while you ignore all that exalts Him. For instance, you score that He suffered, but you do not add "of His own Will."

Ah, what things has the Word even now to suffer! By some He is honoured as God but confused with the Father; by others He is dishonoured as Flesh, and is severed from God. With whom shall He be most angry -- or rather which shall

He forgive -- those who falsely contract Him, or those who divide Him? For the former ought to have made a distinction, and the latter to have made a Union, the one in number, and the other in Godhead. Do you stumble at His Flesh? So did the Jews. Do you call Him a Samaritan, and the rest which I will not utter? This did not even the demons,

O man more unbelieving than demons, and more stupid than Jews. The Jews recognized the title Son as expressing equal

rank; and the demons knew that He who drove them out was God, for they were persuaded by their own experience. But you will not either admit the equality or confess the Godhead. It would have been better for you to have been circumcised and a demoniac -- to reduce the matter to an absurdity -- than in uncircumcision and robust health to be thus ill and ungodly disposed.

But for our war with such men, let it be brought to an end by their returning, however late, to a sound mind, if they will; or else if they will not, let it be postponed to another occasion, if they continue as they are. Anyhow, we will have

no fear when contending for the Trinity with the help of the Trinity.

TWENTY-EIGHT.

It is now needful for us to sum up our discourse as follows:

We were created that we might be made happy. We were made happy when we were created. We were entrusted with

Paradise that we might enjoy life. We received a Commandment that we might obtain a good repute by keeping it; not

that God did not know what would take place, but because He had laid down the law of Free Will. We were deceived because we were the objects of envy. We were cast out because we transgressed. We fasted because we refused to fast,

being overpowered by the Tree of Knowledge. For the Commandment was ancient, coeval with ourselves, and was a kind of education of our souls and curb of luxury, to which we were reasonably made subject, in order that we might recover by keeping it that which we had lost by not keeping it. We needed an Incarnate God, a God put to death, that we might live. We were put to death together with Him, that we might be cleansed; we rose again with Him because we

were put to death with Him; we were glorified with Him, because we rose again with Him.

TWENTY-NINE.

Many indeed are the miracles of that time: God crucified; the sun darkened and again rekindled; for it was fitting that the

creatures should suffer with their Creator; the veil rent; the Blood and Water shed from His Side; the one as from a man,

the other as above man; the rocks rent for the Rock's sake; the dead raised for a pledge of the final Resurrection of all

men; the Signs at the Sepulchre and after the Sepulchre, which none can worthily celebrate; and yet none of these equal

to the Miracle of my salvation. A few drops of Blood recreate the whole world, and become to all men what rennet is to milk, drawing us together and compressing us into unity. [Rennet is the membrane of a cow's stomach, used by some traditional dairy-farmers in the process of curdling milk. -Editor]

THIRTY.

But, O Pascha, great and holy and purifier of all the world -- O Word of God and Light and Life and Wisdom and Might

-- for I rejoice in all Thy names -- O Offspring and Expression and Signet of the Great Mind; O Word conceived and Man contemplated, Who bearest all things, binding them by the Word of Thy power; receive this discourse, not now as

firstfruits, but perhaps as the completion of my offerings, a thanksgiving, and at the same time a supplication, that we

may suffer no evil beyond those necessary and sacred cares in which our life has been passed; and stay the tyranny of

the body over us; (Thou seest, O Lord, how great it is and how it bows me down) or Thine own sentence, if we are to

be condemned by Thee. But if we are to be released, in accordance with our desire, and be received into the Heavenly

Tabernacle, there too it may be we shall offer Thee acceptable Sacrifices upon Thine Altar, to Father and Word and Holy Ghost; for to Thee belongeth all glory and honour and might, world without end. Amen.

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The St. Pachomius Orthodox Library, July 1995.

Have mercy, O Lord, on Thy servants Charles and James the translators,
and the Friar Martin, Bertram, Clay-Edward, Craig, Elizabeth, Iain,
James, Jeff, Jeff, Kate, Lori, Malachi, Maurice, Michael, Nigel, Paul,
Stephen, Steven and Vassilios, the scribes.

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THE END, AND TO GOD BE THE GLORY!

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