

THE CITY OF GOD AGAINST THE PAGANS

By Saint Aurelius Augustine

[Podcast 34 of 50]

BOOK SEVENTEENTH. ARGUMENT. IN THIS BOOK THE HISTORY OF THE CITY OF GOD IS TRACED DURING THE PERIOD OF THE KINGS AND PROPHETS FROM SAMUEL TO DAVID, EVEN TO CHRIST; AND THE PROPHECIES WHICH ARE RECORDED IN THE BOOK OF KINGS, PSALMS, AND THOSE OF SOLOMON, ARE INTERPRETED OF CHRIST AND THE CHURCH.

[End of Argument]

1. Of the prophetic age. By the favour of God we have treated distinctly of His promises made to Abraham, that both the nation of Israel according to the flesh, and all nations according to faith, should be his seed, and the City of God, proceeding according to the order of time, will point out how they were fulfilled. Having therefore in the previous book come down to the reign of David, we shall now treat of what remains, so far as may seem sufficient for the object of this work, beginning at the same reign. Now, from the time when holy Samuel began to prophesy, and ever onward until the people of Israel was led captive into Babylonia, and until, according to the prophecy of holy Jeremiah, on Israel's return thence after seventy years, the house of God was built anew, this whole period is the prophetic

age. For although both the patriarch Noah himself, in whose days the whole earth was destroyed by the flood, and others before and after him down to this time when there began to be kings over the people of God, may not undeservedly be styled prophets, on account of certain things pertaining to the city of God and the kingdom of heaven, which they either predicted or in any way signified should come to pass, and especially since we read that some of them, as Abraham and Moses, were expressly so styled, yet those are most and chiefly called the days of the prophets from the time when Samuel began to prophesy, who at God's command first anointed Saul to be king, and, on his rejection, David himself, whom others of his issue should succeed as long as it was fitting they should do so. If, therefore, I wished to rehearse all that the prophets have predicted concerning Christ, while the city of God, with its members dying and being born in constant succession, ran its course through those times, this work would extend beyond all bounds. First, because the Scripture itself, even when, in treating in order of the kings and of their deeds and the events of their reigns, it seems to be occupied in narrating as with historical diligence the affairs transacted, will be found, if the things handled by it are considered with the aid of the Spirit of God, either more, or certainly not less, intent on foretelling things to come than on relating things past. And who that thinks even a little about it does not know how laborious and prolix a work it would be, and how many volumes it would require to search this out by thorough investigation and demonstrate it by argument? And then, because of that which without dispute pertains to prophecy, there are so many things concerning Christ and the kingdom of heaven, which is the city of God, that to explain these a larger discussion would be necessary than the due

proportion of this work admits of. Therefore I shall, if I can, so limit myself, that in carrying through this work, I may, with God's help, neither say what is superfluous nor omit what is necessary.

2. At what time the promise of God was fulfilled concerning the land of Canaan, which even carnal Israel got in possession. In the preceding book we said, that in the promise of God to Abraham two things were promised from the beginning, the one, namely, that his seed should possess the land of Canaan, which was intimated when it was said, "Go into a land that I will show thee, and I will make of thee a great nation;" but the other far more excellent, concerning not the carnal but the spiritual seed, by which he is the father, not of the one nation of Israel, but of all nations who follow the footsteps of his faith, which began to be promised in these words, "And in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." And thereafter we showed by yet many other proofs that these two things were promised. Therefore the seed of Abraham, that is, the people of Israel according to the flesh, already was in the land of promise; and there, not only by holding and possessing the cities of the enemies, but also by having kings, had already begun to reign, the promises of God concerning that people being already in great part fulfilled: not only those that were made to those three fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and whatever others were made in their times, but those also that were made through Moses himself, by whom the same people was set free from servitude in Egypt, and by whom all bygone things were revealed in his times, when he led the people through the wilderness. But neither by the illustrious leader Jesus the son of Nun, who led that people into the land of promise, and, after driving out the nations, divided it among the twelve

tribes according to God's command, and died; nor after him, in the whole time of the judges, was the promise of God concerning the land of Canaan fulfilled, that it should extend from some river of Egypt even to the great river Euphrates; nor yet was it still prophesied as to come, but its fulfilment was expected. And it was fulfilled through David, and Solomon his son, whose kingdom was extended over the whole promised space; for they subdued all those nations, and made them tributary. And thus, under those kings, the seed of Abraham was established in the land of promise according to the flesh, that is, in the land of Canaan, so that nothing yet remained to the complete fulfilment of that earthly promise of God, except that, so far as pertains to temporal prosperity, the Hebrew nation should remain in the same land by the succession of posterity in an unshaken state even to the end of this mortal age, if it obeyed the laws of the Lord its God. But since God knew it would not do this, He used His temporal punishments also for training His few faithful ones in it, and for giving needful warning to those who should afterwards be in all nations, in whom the other promise, revealed in the New Testament, was about to be fulfilled through the incarnation of Christ.

3. Of the threefold meaning of the prophecies, which are to be referred now to the earthly, now to the heavenly Jerusalem, and now again to both. Wherefore just as that divine oracle to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the other prophetic signs or sayings which are given in the earlier sacred writings, so also the other prophecies from this time of the kings pertain partly to the nation of Abraham's flesh, and partly to that seed of his in which all nations are blessed as fellow-heirs of Christ by the New Testament, to the possessing of eternal life and the kingdom of the heavens. Therefore they pertain

partly to the bond maid who gendereth to bondage, that is, the earthly Jerusalem, which is in bondage with her children; but partly to the free city of God, that is, the true Jerusalem eternal in the heavens, whose children are all those that live according to God in the earth: but there are some things among them which are understood to pertain to both,—to the bond maid properly, to the free woman figuratively. Therefore prophetic utterances of three kinds are to be found; forasmuch as there are some relating to the earthly Jerusalem, some to the heavenly, and some to both. I think it proper to prove what I say by examples. The prophet Nathan was sent to convict king David of heinous sin, and predict to him what future evils should be consequent on it. Who can question that this and the like pertain to the terrestrial city, whether publicly, that is, for the safety or help of the people, or privately, when there are given forth for each one's private good divine utterances whereby something of the future may be known for the use of temporal life? But where we read, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make for the house of Israel, and for the house of Judah, a new testament: not according to the testament that I settled for their fathers in the day when I laid hold of their hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my testament, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the testament that I will make for the house of Israel: after those days, saith the Lord, I will give my laws in their mind, and will write them upon their hearts, and I will see to them; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people;"—without doubt this is prophesied to the Jerusalem above, whose reward is God Himself, and whose chief and entire good it is to have Him, and to be His. But this pertains to both, that the city of God is called Jerusalem, and that it is prophesied the house

of God shall be in it; and this prophecy seems to be fulfilled when king Solomon builds that most noble temple. For these things both happened in the earthly Jerusalem, as history shows, and were types of the heavenly Jerusalem. And this kind of prophecy, as it were compacted and commingled of both the others in the ancient canonical books, containing historical narratives, is of very great significance, and has exercised and exercises greatly the wits of those who search holy writ. For example, what we read of historically as predicted and fulfilled in the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, we must also inquire the allegorical meaning of, as it is to be fulfilled in the seed of Abraham according to faith. And so much is this the case, that some have thought there is nothing in these books either foretold and effected, or effected although not foretold, that does not insinuate something else which is to be referred by figurative signification to the city of God on high, and to her children who are pilgrims in this life. But if this be so, then the utterances of the prophets, or rather the whole of those Scriptures that are reckoned under the title of the Old Testament, will be not of three, but of two different kinds. For there will be nothing there which pertains to the terrestrial Jerusalem only, if whatever is there said and fulfilled of or concerning her signifies something which also refers by allegorical prefiguration to the celestial Jerusalem; but there will be only two kinds, one that pertains to the free Jerusalem, the other to both. But just as, I think, they err greatly who are of opinion that none of the records of affairs in that kind of writings mean anything more than that they so happened, so I think those very daring who contend that the whole gist of their contents lies in allegorical significations. Therefore I have said they are threefold, not twofold. Yet, in holding this opinion, I do

not blame those who may be able to draw out of everything there a spiritual meaning, only saving, first of all, the historical truth. For the rest, what believer can doubt that those things are spoken vainly which are such that, whether said to have been done or to be yet to come, they do not beseem either human or divine affairs? Who would not recall these to spiritual understanding if he could, or confess that they should be recalled by him who is able?

4. About the prefigured change of the Israelitic kingdom and priesthood, and about the things Hannah the mother of Samuel prophesied, personating the Church. Therefore the advance of the city of God, where it reached the times of the kings, yielded a figure, when, on the rejection of Saul, David first obtained the kingdom on such a footing that thenceforth his descendants should reign in the earthly Jerusalem in continual succession; for the course of affairs signified and foretold, what is not to be passed by in silence, concerning the change of things to come, what belongs to both Testaments, the Old and the New,—where the priesthood and kingdom are changed by one who is a priest, and at the same time a king, new and everlasting, even Christ Jesus. For both the substitution in the ministry of God, on Eli's rejection as priest, of Samuel, who executed at once the office of priest and judge, and the establishment of David in the kingdom, when Saul was rejected, typified this of which I speak. And Hannah herself, the mother of Samuel, who formerly was barren, and afterwards was gladdened with fertility, does not seem to prophesy anything else, when she exultingly pours forth her thanksgiving to the Lord, on yielding up to God the same boy she had born and weaned with the same piety with which she had vowed him. For she says, "My heart is made strong in

the Lord, and my horn is exalted in my God; my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; I am made glad in Thy salvation. Because there is none holy as the Lord; and none is righteous as our God: there is none holy save Thee. Do not glory so proudly, and do not speak lofty things, neither let vaunting talk come out of your mouth: for a God of knowledge is the Lord, and a God preparing His curious designs. The bow of the mighty hath He made weak, and the weak are girded with strength. They that were full of bread are diminished; and the hungry have passed beyond the earth: for the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble. The Lord killeth and maketh alive: He bringeth down to hell, and bringeth up again. The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich: He bringeth low and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, that He may set him among the mighty of [His] people, and maketh them inherit the throne of glory; giving the vow to him that voweth, and He hath blessed the years of the just: for man is not mighty in strength. The Lord shall make His adversary weak: the Lord is holy. Let not the prudent glory in his prudence; and let not the mighty glory in his might; and let not the rich glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, to understand and know the Lord, and to do judgment and justice in the midst of the earth. The Lord hath ascended into the heavens, and hath thundered: He shall judge the ends of the earth, for He is righteous: and He giveth strength to our kings, and shall exalt the horn of His Christ." Do you say that these are the words of a single weak woman giving thanks for the birth of a son? Can the mind of men be so much averse to the light of truth as not to perceive that the sayings this woman pours forth exceed her measure? Moreover, he who is suitably interested in these things which have

already begun to be fulfilled even in this earthly pilgrimage also, does he not apply his mind, and perceive, and acknowledge, that through this woman—whose very name, which is Hannah, means “His grace”—the very Christian religion, the very city of God, whose king and founder is Christ, in fine, the very grace of God, hath thus spoken by the prophetic Spirit, whereby the proud are cut off so that they fall, and the humble are filled so that they rise, which that hymn chiefly celebrates? Unless perchance any one will say that this woman prophesied nothing, but only lauded God with exulting praise on account of the son whom she had obtained in answer to prayer. What then does she mean when she says, “The bow of the mighty hath He made weak, and the weak are girded with strength; they that were full of bread are diminished, and the hungry have gone beyond the earth; for the barren hath born seven, and she that hath many children is waxed feeble?” Had she herself born seven, although she had been barren? She had only one when she said that; neither did she bear seven afterwards, nor six, with whom Samuel himself might be the seventh, but three males and two females. And then, when as yet no one was king over that people, whence, if she did not prophesy, did she say what she puts at the end, “He giveth strength to our kings, and shall exalt the horn of His Christ?” Therefore let the Church of Christ, the city of the great King, full of grace, prolific of offspring, let her say what the prophecy uttered about her so long before by the mouth of this pious mother confesses, “My heart is made strong in the Lord, and my horn is exalted in my God.” Her heart is truly made strong, and her horn is truly exalted, because not in herself, but in the Lord her God. “My mouth is enlarged over mine enemies;” because even in pressing straits the word of God is not bound, not even in preachers who are bound.

“I am made glad,” she says, “in Thy salvation.” This is Christ Jesus Himself, whom old Simeon, as we read in the Gospel, embracing as a little one, yet recognising as great, said, “Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.”

Therefore may the Church say, “I am made glad in Thy salvation. For there is none holy as the Lord, and none is righteous as our God;” as holy and sanctifying, just and justifying. “There is none holy beside Thee;” because no one becomes so except by reason of Thee. And then it follows, “Do not glory so proudly, and do not speak lofty things, neither let vaunting talk come out of your mouth. For a God of knowledge is the Lord.” He knows you even when no one knows; for “he who thinketh himself to be something when he is nothing deceiveth himself.” These things are said to the adversaries of the city of God who belong to Babylon, who presume in their own strength, and glory in themselves, not in the Lord; of whom are also the carnal Israelites, the earth-born inhabitants of the earthly Jerusalem, who, as saith the apostle, “being ignorant of the righteousness of God,” that is, which God, who alone is just, and the justifier, gives to man, “and wishing to establish their own,” that is, which is as it were procured by their own selves, not bestowed by Him, “are not subject to the righteousness of God,” just because they are proud, and think they are able to please God with their own, not with that which is of God, who is the God of knowledge, and therefore also takes the oversight of consciences, there beholding the thoughts of men that they are vain, if they are of men, and are not from Him. “And preparing,” she says, “His curious designs.” What curious designs do we think these are, save that the proud must fall, and the humble rise? These curious designs she recounts, saying, “The bow of the mighty is made weak, and the

weak are girded with strength." The bow is made weak, that is, the intention of those who think themselves so powerful, that without the gift and help of God they are able by human sufficiency to fulfil the divine commandments; and those are girded with strength whose inward cry is, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak." "They that were full of bread," she says, "are diminished, and the hungry have gone beyond the earth." Who are to be understood as full of bread except those same who were as if mighty, that is, the Israelites, to whom were committed the oracles of God? But among that people the children of the bond maid were diminished,—by which word minus, although it is Latin, the idea is well expressed that from being greater they were made less,—because, even in the very bread, that is, the divine oracles, which the Israelites alone of all nations have received, they savour earthly things. But the nations to whom that law was not given, after they have come through the New Testament to these oracles, by thirsting much have gone beyond the earth, because in them they have savoured not earthly, but heavenly things. And the reason why this is done is as it were sought; "for the barren," she says, "hath born seven, and she that hath many children is waxed feeble." Here all that had been prophesied hath shone forth to those who understood the number seven, which signifies the perfection of the universal Church. For which reason also the Apostle John writes to the seven churches, showing in that way that he writes to the totality of the one Church; and in the Proverbs of Solomon it is said aforetime, prefiguring this, "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath strengthened her seven pillars." For the city of God was barren in all nations before that child arose whom we see. We also see that the temporal Jerusalem, who had many children, is now waxed feeble. Because,

whoever in her were sons of the free woman were her strength; but now, forasmuch as the letter is there, and not the spirit, having lost her strength, she is waxed feeble. "The Lord killeth and maketh alive:" He has killed her who had many children, and made this barren one alive, so that she has born seven. Although it may be more suitably understood that He has made those same alive whom He has killed. For she, as it were, repeats that by adding, "He bringeth down to hell, and bringeth up." To whom truly the apostle says, "If ye be dead with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." Therefore they are killed by the Lord in a salutary way, so that he adds, "Savour things which are above, not things on the earth;" so that these are they who, hungering, have passed beyond the earth. "For ye are dead," he says: behold how God savingly kills! Then there follows, "And your life is hid with Christ in God:" behold how God makes the same alive! But does He bring them down to hell and bring them up again? It is without controversy among believers that we best see both parts of this work fulfilled in Him, to wit, our Head, with whom the apostle has said our life is hid in God. "For when He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all," in that way, certainly, He has killed Him. And forasmuch as He raised Him up again from the dead, He has made Him alive again. And since His voice is acknowledged in the prophecy, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell," He has brought Him down to hell and brought Him up again. By this poverty of His we are made rich; for "the Lord maketh poor and maketh rich." But that we may know what this is, let us hear what follows: "He bringeth low and lifteth up;" and truly He humbles the proud and exalts the humble. Which we also read elsewhere, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." This is the

burden of the entire song of this woman whose name is interpreted "His grace." Farther, what is added, "He raiseth up the poor from the earth," I understand of none better than of Him who, as was said a little ago, "was made poor for us, when He was rich, that by His poverty we might be made rich." For He raised Him from the earth so quickly that His flesh did not see corruption. Nor shall I divert from Him what is added, "And raiseth up the poor from the dunghill." For indeed he who is the poor man is also the beggar. But by the dunghill from which he is lifted up we are with the greatest reason to understand the persecuting Jews, of whom the apostle says, when telling that when he belonged to them he persecuted the Church, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ; and I have counted them not only loss, but even dung, that I might win Christ." Therefore that poor one is raised up from the earth above all the rich, and that beggar is lifted up from that dunghill above all the wealthy, "that he may sit among the mighty of the people," to whom He says, "Ye shall sit upon twelve thrones," "and to make them inherit the throne of glory." For these mighty ones had said, "Lo, we have forsaken all and followed Thee." They had most mightily vowed this vow. But whence do they receive this, except from Him of whom it is here immediately said, "Giving the vow to him that voweth?" Otherwise they would be of those mighty ones whose bow is weakened. "Giving," she saith, "the vow to him that voweth." For no one could vow anything acceptable to God, unless he received from Him that which he might vow. There follows, "And He hath blessed the years of the just," to wit, that he may live for ever with Him to whom it is said, "And Thy years shall have no end." For there the years abide; but here they pass away, yea, they perish: for before they come they are not, and

when they shall have come they shall not be, because they bring their own end with them. Now of these two, that is, "giving the vow to him that voweth," and "He hath blessed the years of the just," the one is what we do, the other what we receive. But this other is not received from God, the liberal giver, until He, the helper, Himself has enabled us for the former; "for man is not mighty in strength." "The Lord shall make his adversary weak," to wit, him who envies the man that vows, and resists him, lest he should fulfil what he has vowed. Owing to the ambiguity of the Greek, it may also be understood "his own adversary." For when God has begun to possess us, immediately he who had been our adversary becomes His, and is conquered by us; but not by our own strength, "for man is not mighty in strength." Therefore "the Lord shall make His own adversary weak, the Lord is holy," that he may be conquered by the saints, whom the Lord, the Holy of holies, hath made saints. For this reason, "let not the prudent glory in his prudence, and let not the mighty glory in his might, and let not the rich glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this,—to understand and know the Lord, and to do judgment and justice in the midst of the earth." He in no small measure understands and knows the Lord who understands and knows that even this, that he can understand and know the Lord, is given to him by the Lord. "For what hast thou," saith the apostle, "that thou hast not received? But if thou hast received it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" That is, as if thou hadst of thine own self whereof thou mightest glory. Now, he does judgment and justice who lives aright. But he lives aright who yields obedience to God when He commands. "The end of the commandment," that is, to which the commandment has reference, "is charity out of a pure heart, and a

good conscience, and faith unfeigned." Moreover, this "charity," as the Apostle John testifies, "is of God." Therefore to do justice and judgment is of God. But what is "in the midst of the earth?" For ought those who dwell in the ends of the earth not to do judgment and justice? Who would say so? Why, then, is it added, "In the midst of the earth?" For if this had not been added, and it had only been said, "To do judgment and justice," this commandment would rather have pertained to both kinds of men,—both those dwelling inland and those on the sea-coast. But lest any one should think that, after the end of the life led in this body, there remains a time for doing judgment and justice which he has not done while he was in the flesh, and that the divine judgment can thus be escaped, "in the midst of the earth" appears to me to be said of the time when every one lives in the body; for in this life every one carries about his own earth, which, on a man's dying, the common earth takes back, to be surely returned to him on his rising again. Therefore "in the midst of the earth," that is, while our soul is shut up in this earthly body, judgment and justice are to be done, which shall be profitable for us hereafter, when "every one shall receive according to that he hath done in the body, whether good or bad." For when the apostle there says "in the body," he means in the time he has lived in the body. Yet if any one blaspheme with malicious mind and impious thought, without any member of his body being employed in it, he shall not therefore be guiltless because he has not done it with bodily motion, for he will have done it in that time which he has spent in the body. In the same way we may suitably understand what we read in the psalm, "But God, our King before the worlds, hath wrought salvation in the midst of the earth;" so that the Lord Jesus may be understood to be our God who is before

the worlds, because by Him the worlds were made, working our salvation in the midst of the earth, for the Word was made flesh and dwelt in an earthly body. Then after Hannah has prophesied in these words, that he who glorieth ought to glory not in himself at all, but in the Lord, she says, on account of the retribution which is to come on the day of judgment, "The Lord hath ascended into the heavens, and hath thundered: He shall judge the ends of the earth, for He is righteous." Throughout she holds to the order of the creed of Christians: For the Lord Christ has ascended into heaven, and is to come thence to judge the quick and dead. For, as saith the apostle, "Who hath ascended but He who hath also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up above all heavens, that He might fill all things." Therefore He hath thundered through His clouds, which He hath filled with His Holy Spirit when He ascended up. Concerning which the bond maid Jerusalem that is, the unfruitful vineyard is threatened in Isaiah the prophet that they shall rain no showers upon her. But "He shall judge the ends of the earth" is spoken as if it had been said, "even the extremes of the earth." For it does not mean that He shall not judge the other parts of the earth, who, without doubt, shall judge all men. But it is better to understand by the extremes of the earth the extremes of man, since those things shall not be judged which, in the middle time, are changed for the better or the worse, but the ending in which he shall be found who is judged. For which reason it is said, "He that shall persevere even unto the end, the same shall be saved." He, therefore, who perseveringly does judgment and justice in the midst of the earth shall not be condemned when the extremes of the earth shall be judged. "And giveth," she saith, "strength to our kings," that He may

not condemn them in judging. He giveth them strength whereby as kings they rule the flesh, and conquer the world in Him who hath poured out His blood for them. "And shall exalt the horn of His Christ." For He of whom it was said above, "The Lord hath ascended into the heavens," meaning the Lord Christ, Himself, as it is said here, "shall exalt the horn of His Christ." Who, therefore, is the Christ of His Christ? Does it mean that He shall exalt the horn of each one of His believing people, as she says in the beginning of this hymn, "Mine horn is exalted in my God?" For we can rightly call all those christs who are anointed with His chrism, forasmuch as the whole body with its head is one Christ. These things hath Hannah, the mother of Samuel, the holy and much-praised man, prophesied, in which, indeed, the change of the ancient priesthood was then figured and is now fulfilled, since she that had many children is waxed feeble, that the barren who hath born seven might have the new priesthood in Christ.

5. Of those things which a man of God spake by the Spirit to Eli the priest, signifying that the priesthood which had been appointed according to Aaron was to be taken away. But this is said more plainly by a man of God sent to Eli the priest himself, whose name indeed is not mentioned, but whose office and ministry show him to have been indubitably a prophet. For it is thus written: "And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said, Thus saith the Lord, I plainly revealed myself unto thy father's house, when they were in the land of Egypt slaves in Pharaoh's house; and I chose thy father's house out of all the sceptres of Israel to fill the office of priest for me, to go up to my altar, to burn incense and wear the ephod; and I gave thy father's house for food all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel.

Wherefore then hast thou looked at mine incense and at mine offerings with an impudent eye, and hast glorified thy sons above me, to bless the first-fruits of every sacrifice in Israel before me? Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I said thy house and thy father's house should walk before me for ever: but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me will I honour, and he that despiseth me shall be despised. Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thy seed, and the seed of thy father's house, and thou shalt never have an old man in my house. And I will cut off the man of thine from mine altar, so that his eyes shall be consumed, and his heart shall melt away; and every one of thy house that is left shall fall by the sword of men. And this shall be a sign unto thee that shall come upon these thy two sons, Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die both of them. And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to all that is in mine heart and in my soul; and I will build him a sure house, and he shall walk before my Christ for ever. And it shall come to pass that he who is left in thine house shall come to worship him with a piece of money, saying, Put me into one part of thy priesthood, that I may eat bread." We cannot say that this prophecy, in which the change of the ancient priesthood is foretold with so great plainness, was fulfilled in Samuel; for although Samuel was not of another tribe than that which had been appointed by God to serve at the altar, yet he was not of the sons of Aaron, whose offspring was set apart that the priests might be taken out of it. And thus by that transaction also the same change which should come to pass through Christ Jesus is shadowed forth, and the prophecy itself in deed, not in word, belonged to the Old Testament properly, but figuratively to the New, signifying by the fact just what was said by the word to Eli the priest through the

prophet. For there were afterwards priests of Aaron's race, such as Zadok and Abiathar during David's reign, and others in succession, before the time came when those things which were predicted so long before about the changing of the priesthood behoved to be fulfilled by Christ. But who that now views these things with a believing eye does not see that they are fulfilled? Since, indeed, no tabernacle, no temple, no altar, no sacrifice, and therefore no priest either, has remained to the Jews, to whom it was commanded in the law of God that he should be ordained of the seed of Aaron; which is also mentioned here by the prophet, when he says, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I said thy house and thy father's house shall walk before me for ever: but now the Lord saith, That be far from me; for them that honour me will I honour, and he that despiseth me shall be despised." For that in naming his father's house he does not mean that of his immediate father, but that of Aaron, who first was appointed priest, to be succeeded by others descended from him, is shown by the preceding words, when he says, "I was revealed unto thy father's house, when they were in the land of Egypt slaves in Pharaoh's house; and I chose thy father's house out of all the sceptres of Israel to fill the office of priest for me." Which of the fathers in that Egyptian slavery, but Aaron, was his father, who, when they were set free, was chosen to the priesthood? It was of his lineage, therefore, he has said in this passage it should come to pass that they should no longer be priests; which already we see fulfilled. If faith be watchful, the things are before us: they are discerned, they are grasped, and are forced on the eyes of the unwilling, so that they are seen: "Behold the days come," he says, "that I will cut off thy seed, and the seed of thy father's house, and thou shalt never have an old man in mine house. And I will cut off the man of

thine from mine altar, so that his eyes shall be consumed and his heart shall melt away." Behold the days which were foretold have already come. There is no priest after the order of Aaron; and whoever is a man of his lineage, when he sees the sacrifice of the Christians prevailing over the whole world, but that great honour taken away from himself, his eyes fail and his soul melts away consumed with grief. But what follows belongs properly to the house of Eli, to whom these things were said: "And every one of thine house that is left shall fall by the sword of men. And this shall be a sign unto thee that shall come upon these thy two sons, Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die both of them." This, therefore, is made a sign of the change of the priesthood from this man's house, by which it is signified that the priesthood of Aaron's house is to be changed. For the death of this man's sons signified the death not of the men, but of the priesthood itself of the sons of Aaron. But what follows pertains to that Priest whom Samuel typified by succeeding this one. Therefore the things which follow are said of Christ Jesus the true Priest of the New Testament: "And I will raise me up a faithful Priest that shall do according to all that is in mine heart and in my soul; and I will build Him a sure house." The same is the eternal Jerusalem above. "And He shall walk," saith He, "before my Christ always." "He shall walk" means "he shall be conversant with," just as He had said before of Aaron's house, "I said that thine house and thy father's house shall walk before me for ever." But what He says, "He shall walk before my Christ," is to be understood entirely of the house itself, not of the priest, who is Christ Himself, the Mediator and Saviour. His house, therefore, shall walk before Him. "Shall walk" may also be understood to mean from death to life, all the time this mortality passes through, even to the end

of this world. But where God says, "Who will do all that is in mine heart and in my soul," we must not think that God has a soul, for He is the Author of souls; but this is said of God tropically, not properly, just as He is said to have hands and feet, and other corporal members. And, lest it should be supposed from such language that man in the form of this flesh is made in the image of God, wings also are ascribed to Him, which man has not at all; and it is said to God, "Hide me under the shadow of Thy wings," that men may understand that such things are said of that ineffable nature not in proper but in figurative words. But what is added, "And it shall come to pass that he who is left in thine house shall come to worship Him," is not said properly of the house of this Eli, but of that Aaron, the men of which remained even to the advent of Jesus Christ, of which race there are not wanting men even to this present. For of that house of Eli it had already been said above, "And every one of thine house that is left shall fall by the sword of men." How, therefore, could it be truly said here, "And it shall come to pass that every one that is left shall come to worship him," if that is true, that no one shall escape the avenging sword, unless he would have it understood of those who belong to the race of that whole priesthood after the order of Aaron? Therefore, if it is of these the predestinated remnant, about whom another prophet has said, "The remnant shall be saved;" whence the apostle also says, "Even so then at this time also the remnant according to the election of grace is saved;" since it is easily understood to be of such a remnant that it is said, "He that is left in thine house," assuredly he believes in Christ; just as in the time of the apostle very many of that nation believed; nor are there now wanting those, although very few, who yet believe, and in them is fulfilled what this man of God has here immediately added, "He shall come to

worship him with a piece of money;" to worship whom, if not that Chief Priest, who is also God? For in that priesthood after the order of Aaron men did not come to the temple or altar of God for the purpose of worshipping the priest. But what is that he says, "With a piece of money," if not the short word of faith, about which the apostle quotes the saying, "A consummating and shortening word will the Lord make upon the earth?" But that money is put for the word the psalm is a witness, where it is sung, "The words of the Lord are pure words, money tried with the fire." What then does he say who comes to worship the priest of God, even the Priest who is God? "Put me into one part of Thy priesthood, to eat bread." I do not wish to be set in the honour of my fathers, which is none; put me in a part of Thy priesthood. For "I have chosen to be mean in Thine house;" I desire to be a member, no matter what, or how small, of Thy priesthood. By the priesthood he here means the people itself, of which He is the Priest who is the Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. This people the Apostle Peter calls "a holy people, a royal priesthood." But some have translated, "Of Thy sacrifice," not "Of Thy priesthood," which no less signifies the same Christian people. Whence the Apostle Paul says, "We being many are one bread, one body." [And again he says, "Present your bodies a living sacrifice."] What, therefore, he has added, to "eat bread," also elegantly expresses the very kind of sacrifice of which the Priest Himself says, "The bread which I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." The same is the sacrifice not after the order of Aaron, but after the order of Melchisedec: let him that readeth understand. Therefore this short and salutarily humble confession, in which it is said, "Put me in a part of Thy priesthood, to eat bread," is itself the piece of money, for it is both brief, and it is the Word of God who dwells

in the heart of one who believes. For because He had said above, that He had given for food to Aaron's house the sacrificial victims of the Old Testament, where He says, "I have given thy father's house for food all things which are offered by fire of the children of Israel," which indeed were the sacrifices of the Jews; therefore here He has said, "To eat bread," which is in the New Testament the sacrifice of the Christians.

6. Of the Jewish priesthood and kingdom, which, although promised to be established for ever, did not continue; so that other things are to be understood to which eternity is assured. While, therefore, these things now shine forth as clearly as they were loftily foretold, still some one may not vainly be moved to ask, How can we be confident that all things are to come to pass which are predicted in these books as about to come, if this very thing which is there divinely spoken, "Thine house and thy father's house shall walk before me for ever," could not have effect? For we see that priesthood has been changed; and there can be no hope that what was promised to that house may some time be fulfilled, because that which succeeds on its being rejected and changed is rather predicted as eternal. He who says this does not yet understand, or does not recollect, that this very priesthood after the order of Aaron was appointed as the shadow of a future eternal priesthood; and therefore, when eternity is promised to it, it is not promised to the mere shadow and figure, but to what is shadowed forth and prefigured by it. But lest it should be thought the shadow itself was to remain, therefore its mutation also behoved to be foretold. In this way, too, the kingdom of Saul himself, who certainly was reprobated and rejected, was the shadow of a kingdom yet to come which should remain to eternity. For, indeed, the oil with which he was anointed, and from

that chrisom he is called Christ, is to be taken in a mystical sense, and is to be understood as a great mystery; which David himself venerated so much in him, that he trembled with smitten heart when, being hid in a dark cave, which Saul also entered when pressed by the necessity of nature, he had come secretly behind him and cut off a small piece of his robe, that he might be able to prove how he had spared him when he could have killed him, and might thus remove from his mind the suspicion through which he had vehemently persecuted the holy David, thinking him his enemy. Therefore he was much afraid lest he should be accused of violating so great a mystery in Saul, because he had thus meddled even his clothes. For thus it is written: "And David's heart smote him because he had taken away the skirt of his cloak." But to the men with him, who advised him to destroy Saul thus delivered up into his hands, he saith, "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, the Lord's christ, to lay my hand upon him, because he is the Lord's christ." Therefore he showed so great reverence to this shadow of what was to come, not for its own sake, but for the sake of what it prefigured. Whence also that which Samuel says to Saul, "Since thou hast not kept my commandment which the Lord commanded thee, whereas now the Lord would have prepared thy kingdom over Israel for ever, yet now thy kingdom shall not continue for thee; and the Lord will seek Him a man after His own heart, and the Lord will command him to be prince over His people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee," is not to be taken as if God had settled that Saul himself should reign for ever, and afterwards, on his sinning, would not keep this promise; nor was He ignorant that he would sin, but He had established his kingdom that it might be a figure of the eternal kingdom. Therefore he

added, "Yet now thy kingdom shall not continue for thee." Therefore what it signified has stood and shall stand; but it shall not stand for this man, because he himself was not to reign for ever, nor his offspring; so that at least that word "for ever" might seem to be fulfilled through his posterity one to another. "And the Lord," he saith, "will seek Him a man," meaning either David or the Mediator of the New Testament, who was figured in the chrism with which David also and his offspring was anointed. But it is not as if He knew not where he was that God thus seeks Him a man, but, speaking through a man, He speaks as a man, and in this sense seeks us. For not only to God the Father, but also to His Only-begotten, who came to seek what was lost, we had been known already even so far as to be chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. "He will seek him" therefore means, He will have His own (just as if He had said, Whom He already has known to be His own He will show to others to be His friend). Whence in Latin this word (*quærit*) receives a preposition and becomes *acquirit* (acquires), the meaning of which is plain enough; although even without the addition of the preposition *quærere* is understood as *acquirere*, whence gains are called *quæstus*.

7. Of the disruption of the kingdom of Israel, by which the perpetual division of the spiritual from the carnal Israel was prefigured. Again Saul sinned through disobedience, and again Samuel says to him in the word of the Lord, "Because thou hast despised the word of the Lord, the Lord hath despised thee, that thou mayest not be king over Israel." And again for the same sin, when Saul confessed it, and prayed for pardon, and besought Samuel to return with him to appease the Lord, he said, "I will not return with thee:

for thou hast despised the word of the Lord, and the Lord will despise thee that thou mayest not be king over Israel. And Samuel turned his face to go away, and Saul laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and rent it. And Samuel said unto him, The Lord hath rent the kingdom from Israel out of thine hand this day, and will give it to thy neighbour, who is good above thee, and will divide Israel in twain. And He will not be changed, neither will He repent: for He is not as a man, that He should repent; who threatens and does not persist." He to whom it is said, "The Lord will despise thee that thou mayest not be king over Israel," and "The Lord hath rent the kingdom from Israel out of thine hand this day," reigned forty years over Israel,—that is, just as long a time as David himself,—yet heard this in the first period of his reign, that we may understand it was said because none of his race was to reign, and that we may look to the race of David, whence also is sprung, according to the flesh, the Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. But the Scripture has not what is read in most Latin copies, "The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel out of thine hand this day," but just as we have set it down it is found in the Greek copies, "The Lord hath rent the kingdom from Israel out of thine hand;" that the words "out of thine hand" may be understood to mean "from Israel." Therefore this man figuratively represented the people of Israel, which was to lose the kingdom, Christ Jesus our Lord being about to reign, not carnally, but spiritually. And when it is said of Him, "And will give it to thy neighbour," that is to be referred to the fleshly kinship, for Christ, according to the flesh, was of Israel, whence also Saul sprang. But what is added, "Good above thee," may indeed be understood, "Better than thee," and indeed some have thus translated it; but it is better taken thus, "Good above thee," as meaning that

because He is good, therefore He must be above thee, according to that other prophetic saying, "Till I put all Thine enemies under Thy feet." And among them is Israel, from whom, as His persecutor, Christ took away the kingdom; although the Israel in whom there was no guile may have been there too, a sort of grain, as it were, of that chaff. For certainly thence came the apostles, thence so many martyrs, of whom Stephen, is the first, thence so many churches, which the Apostle Paul names, magnifying God in their conversion. Of which thing I do not doubt what follows is to be understood, "And will divide Israel in twain," to wit, into Israel pertaining to the bond woman, and Israel pertaining to the free. For these two kinds were at first together, as Abraham still clave to the bond woman, until the barren, made, fruitful by the grace of God, cried, "Cast out the bond woman and her son." We know, indeed, that on account of the sin of Solomon, in the reign of his son Rehoboam Israel was divided in two, and continued so, the separate parts having their own kings, until that whole nation was overthrown with a great destruction, and carried away by the Chaldeans. But what was this to Saul, when, if any such thing was threatened, it would be threatened against David himself, whose son Solomon was? Finally, the Hebrew nation is not now divided internally, but is dispersed through the earth indiscriminately, in the fellowship of the same error. But that division with which God threatened the kingdom and people in the person of Saul, who represented them, is shown to be eternal and unchangeable by this which is added, "And He will not be changed, neither will He repent: for He is not as a man, that He should repent; who threatens and does not persist,"—that is, a man threatens and does not persist, but not God, who does not repent like man. For when we read that He repents, a change of

circumstance is meant, flowing from the divine immutable foreknowledge. Therefore, when God is said not to repent, it is to be understood that He does not change. We see that this sentence concerning this division of the people of Israel, divinely uttered in these words, has been altogether irremediable and quite perpetual. For whoever have turned, or are turning, or shall turn thence to Christ, it has been according to the foreknowledge of God, not according to the one and the same nature of the human race. Certainly none of the Israelites, who, cleaving to Christ, have continued in Him, shall ever be among those Israelites who persist in being His enemies even to the end of this life, but shall for ever remain in the separation which is here foretold. For the Old Testament, from the Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, profiteth nothing, unless because it bears witness to the New Testament.

Otherwise, however long Moses is read, the veil is put over their heart; but when any one shall turn thence to Christ, the veil shall be taken away. For the very desire of those who turn is changed from the old to the new, so that each no longer desires to obtain carnal but spiritual felicity. Wherefore that great prophet Samuel himself, before he had anointed Saul, when he had cried to the Lord for Israel, and He had heard him, and when he had offered a whole burnt-offering, as the aliens were coming to battle against the people of God, and the Lord thundered above them and they were confused, and fell before Israel and were overcome; [then] he took one stone and set it up between the old and new Massephat (Mizpeh), and called its name Ebenezer, which means "the stone of the helper," and said, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." Massephat is interpreted "desire." That stone of the helper is the mediation of the Saviour, by which we go from the old Massephat to the new,—that is, from the desire with

which carnal happiness was expected in the carnal kingdom to the desire with which the truest spiritual happiness is expected in the kingdom of heaven; and since nothing is better than that, the Lord helpeth us hitherto.

