§85.

To you also may this kind of alienation from our Lord be meant by the prophet Amos, who said "I have hated and rejected your festival days, and I will not receive the savour in your solemn assemblies. Although you offer your burnt sacrifices and hosts, I will not accept them, and I will not cast my eye on the vows of your declaration. Take the sound of your songs, and the music of your organs, away from me. I will not hear."

While your abundance of victuals consumes the very bowels of your souls, the famine of the evangelical meat rages violently within you. As the aforesaid prophet has foretold, saying, "our Lord has said 'Behold, the day shall come, when I will send out a famine upon the earth; not the famine of bread, nor the thirst of water, but a famine in hearing the word of God. The waters shall be moved from sea to sea, and they shall run over from the north and even into the east, seeking the word of our Lord, but they shall not find it."

§86.

Let holy Micah, who like a heavenly trumpet sounded loudly forth against the deceitful princes of the people, also pierce your ears, saying, "Hear me now, you princes of the house of Jacob: 'Is it not for you who hate goodness and seek after mischief, who pluck the skins from men, and their flesh from their bones, to know judgment? Even as they have eaten the flesh of my people, and flayed their skins from them, broken their bones to pieces, and hewed them small as meat to the pot, they shall cry to God, and he will not hear them. In that season, he will turn his face away from them, because they have behaved wickedly in their inventions'. So speaks our Lord about the prophets who seduce my people, who bite with their teeth, and preach against them peace and, if a man gives nothing to stop their mouths, they raise and sanctify a war against him. Night shall therefore fall on you in place of a vision, and darkness on you in lieu of divination. The sun shall set upon your prophets, and the day shall grow dark on them. Seeing dreams, they shall be confounded, and the diviners shall be derided, and they shall speak ill against all men, because there shall not be any one that will hear them. I, myself, shall do my utmost with my strongest endeavours in the spirit of our Lord, in judgment and in power, that I may declare to the house of Jacob their impieties, and to Israel their offences. Listen, therefore, to these words, you captains of the house of Jacob, and you remnants of the house of Israel, who abhor judgment, and overthrow all righteousness, who build up Zion in blood, and Jerusalem in iniquities. Her rulers have judged for rewards, her priests answered for hire, and her prophets divined for money. They rested on our Lord, saying, 'and is not the Lord among us? Evils shall not fall upon us. Because of this, Zion will be ploughed up like a field, Jerusalem closed like the watchhouse of a garden, and the mountain of the house become the place of a woody wilderness."

And after some words ensuing: "Woe is me for that I am become as he that gathers stubble in the harvest, and a cluster of grapes in the vintage when the principal branch is not left to be eaten. Woe is me that when a soul has perished through earthly actions, the sinners arise from the earth with reverence, but he

that shall impose correction on men does not appear. All contend in judgment for blood, and everyone prepares his hands for mischief and afflicts his neighbour with tribulation.

§87.

Listen likewise how, also in times past, the famous prophet Zephaniah argued concerning your riotous and unruly leaders (he spoke of Jerusalem, which is spiritually to be understood the church or the soul), saying, “O, city that was beautiful and set at liberty, the messenger dove has not heard the voice, nor yet entertained discipline, she has not trusted in our Lord, and she has not approached her God.” And he explained the reason why: “Her princes have been like roaring lions. Her judges, like the wolves of Arabia, did not leave anything in the morning. Her prophets carried the spirit of a contemptuous despising man. Her priests made profane what was holy, and dealt wickedly in the law, but our Lord is upright in the midst of his people. In the morning he will not do injustice, in the morning He will give his judgment.”

§88.

But hear also blessed Zachariah the prophet, admonishing you in the name of God: “For thus said our Almighty Lord, ‘Judge righteously, and let everyone show mercy and pity towards his brother. Do not hurt the widow, orphan, stranger, or poor man through your power, and do not let not any man keep the malice of his brother in his heart.’ There are those who have been stubborn not to observe these commands, and closed their ears that they might not listen, and framed their hearts not to be persuaded, so that they might not listen to my law and words, which our Almighty Lord has sent in his Spirit, through the hands of his former prophets. They carry their foolishness on their backs, and raised a great wrath in our Almighty Lord.”

And again; “They who have spoken, have spoken cruelly, and diviners have uttered false visions and deceitful dreams, and given vain consolations. Because of this, they are made as dry as sheep, and they suffer because no goodness was to be found. My wrath is heaped onto the shepherds, and will be visited on their lambs.”

And within a few words after: “The pastors lament because their greatness has become misery. The lions roar, because the banks of Jordan have become desolate. Thus said our Almighty Lord: ‘Those who led the people have murdered, and they have not repented. Those who sold them, have said that our Lord is blessed and we have become rich, and their pastors have suffered nothing concerning them. For this I will not spare my hand on the inhabitants of the earth, said our Lord.”

§89.

Hear, moreover, how the holy prophet Malachi denounces you, saying “You priests who despise my name, and have said, ‘Wherein do we despise your

name?' in offering polluted bread at my altar, and you have said, 'How have we polluted it?' In that you have said 'the table of our Lord is as nothing', and have despised such things as have been placed on it. If you bring what is blind as an offering, is it not evil? If you offer what is lame or languishing, is it not evil? Offer, the same to your governor, and see if he will accept it. 'If he will accept it from you', said our Almighty Lord, 'then humbly pray before the countenance of your God, and earnestly beseech him (for by your hands have these things been committed) if he will happily accept it from you'."

And again: "And out of your ravenous theft you have brought in the lame and languishing, and brought it in as an offering. 'Shall I receive the same at your hands?', said our Lord. Accursed is the deceitful man who has in his flock one of the male kind, and yet making his vow offers the weakest to our Lord, because 'I am a mighty king', said our Lord of hosts, 'and my name is terrible among the Gentiles'.'

And now, priests, this commandment concerns you. "If you will not hear, and resolve in your hearts to give glory to my name", said our Lord of hosts, "I will send you into poverty, and curse your blessings, because you have not settled these things in your hearts. Behold I will stretch out my arm over you, and spread the dung of your sins over your countenances." But, so that you may in the meantime, prepare your organs and instruments of mischief, to be converted into goodness with more zeal, listen (if there remains even a little disposition to do so in your hearts) what he said of a holy priest. "My covenant of life and peace was with him (for historically he did spoke of Levi and Moses). I put fear into him, and he was timorous with me. He was afraid of hearing my name. The law of truth was in his mouth, and no iniquity passed his lips. He walked with me in peace and equity, and turned away many from unrighteousness. The lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and from out of his mouth shall come the words of the law, because he is the Angel of our Lord of hosts."

And now, again, he changes his manner, and rebukes and reproves the unrighteous, saying "Our Lord of hosts said, 'You have departed from the way, and scandalised many in the law, and made void my covenant with Levi. In regard of this, I have made you contemptible and abject among my people. You have not observed my ways in the law, and accepted those of men.' Is there not one Father of all of usl? Did not one God create us? Why, therefore, does everyone despise his brother?"

And again, "Behold our Lord of hosts will come, and who can imagine the day of his coming, and who shall be able to stand and look at him? For he shall pass forth as a burning fire, and as the fuller's herb, and he shall sit melting and working silver. You shall purge the sons of Levi, and shine them as bright as gold and silver."

And somewhat afterwards: "Our Lord said 'Your words have grown strong against me', and you have replied 'He is vain who serves God. What profit do we make because we have kept his commandments, and walked sorrowfully before

our Lord of hosts. We shall now, therefore, call the arrogant blessed, because they have been built up and made great, while working their iniquity. They have tempted God, and are unharmed."

§90.

But hear also what Ezekiel the prophet said, "Woe after woe shall come, messenger after messenger shall follow, the vision shall be sought from the prophet, and the law shall vanish from the priests and counsel from the elders."

And again: "Thus said our Lord, 'Because your speeches are lies, and your divinations vain, I will come to you. I will stretch out my hand on your prophets, who see lies, and on those who speak vain things. They shall not rule my people they shall not be, and their names shall not be written in the Scripture of the house of Israel. You shall know that I am the Lord'. They shall not enter into the land of Israel, because they have seduced my people, saying they offer 'the peace of our Lord', when there is no peace of our Lord. Here have they built the wall and anointed it, but it shall fall."

And within some words afterwards: "Woe be to these who fashion cushions to rest any arm, and cover the eyes of people of all ages, blinding them to the subversion of their souls, which are subverted. You possess their souls, and have contaminated my message to my people, for a handful of barley and a piece of bread. When my people listen to your vain speeches, you slaughter the souls of those who should not die, and promised the delivery of the souls that are not fit to live."

And afterwards: "Sons of men, you are like earth which is not been watered. The rain has not fallen on you on the day of wrath, when your princes were in your midst, like roaring lions feasting on their prey, devouring the souls in their power, and receiving rewards, and when the number of widows in your midst was multiplied. When your priests despised my law and defiled my holy things, they did not distinguish between the holy and polluted, and not separate the unclean from the clean. They veiled their eyes from my sabbaths, and on those days they defiled everything."

§91.

And again: "Our Lord said, 'I sought an honest man among them, who should stand in front of me to prevent the disaster that should fall upon the earth, so that I should not utterly destroy it in the end. But I did not find him.' And so, the whole design of His mind was poured out on their heads, and 'the fire of my wrath will consume them', said our Lord."

And somewhat after: "And the word of our Lord was spoken to me, saying: 'Son of man, tell the children of my people that I shall bring my sword on their land. The people shall choose one among them to be a watchman, and if he sees the sword coming against the land, he shall sound the alarm with his trumpet. Whoever truly hears the sound of the trumpet, but does not take heed, will be

caught by the sword. His own blood shall be on his own head, because he was not watchful when he heard the sound of the trumpet. His own blood shall be on him, because this man, although he has preserved his own soul, has delivered himself. But if the watchman sees the sword coming, and does not give the alarm with his trumpet, the people shall be unaware, and the sword shall take away a soul from among them. The soul itself is caught, for its own iniquities, but its blood is on the hands of the watchman. And you, son of man, I have appointed you a watchman over the house of Israel. If you hear the words from out of my mouth, when I say to a sinner that he shall die the death, but you will not tell how the wicked may return from their path, then the unjust himself shall die in his iniquity, and I will truly require his blood at your hands. But if you shall warn him of the wickedness of his ways, that he may avoid the same, but he nevertheless will not withdraw himself from his course, then this man shall die in his impiety, but you will have preserved your own soul."

§92.

And so let these few, among a multitude of prophetical testimonies, suffice, by which the pride or sloth of our stubborn priests may be repelled, so that they may not suppose that we act for ourselves, but denounce such threats against them by the authority of the laws, and saints. And now let us also hear what the trumpet of the gospel, sounding to the whole world, likewise speaks to disordered priests. As we have often said, our discourse does not to treat those who lawfully obtained the apostolical seat, and who rightly and skilfully understand how to dispose of their spiritual food (in time convenient) to their fellow servants (if at this time, there are great number of these remaining in our country). We only talk about the ignorant and inexpert shepherds, who leave their flock, and feed on vain matters, and do not have the words of a learned pastor.

And therefore, it is an evident token that a person is not a lawful pastor, indeed not not even an ordinary Christian, who rejectz and denies these sayings, which are not so much ours (which are of very little worth) as the decrees of the Old and New Testament, even as one of ours rightly says, "We exceedingly desire that the enemies of the church should also, without any form of truce, be our adversaries, and that its friends and defenders should be accounted, not only our confederates, but also our fathers and governors."

For let every one, through true examination, call his own conscience into account, and he shall easily find, whether he possesses his priestly chair according to true reason, or not. Let us see, I say, what the Saviour and Creator of the world has spoken. "You are," said he, "the salt of the earth. If it happens that the salt vanishes, how shall it be salted? It serves no further purpose than it should be cast out of doors, and trampled under the feet of men."

§93.

This only testimony might abundantly suffice to refute all such as are impudent; but that it may be yet, by the words of Christ, more evidently proved with what intolerable bonds of crimes these false priests entangle and oppress themselves, some other sayings are also to be adjoined; for it follows: “You are the light of the world. A city placed on a mountain cannot be hid. Nor do you light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but in a candlestick so that it may shine on all who are in the house.” What priest, therefore, of this kind which is so possessed with the blindness of ignorance, shines today with the lamp of learning and good works, in any house like the light of the brightest candle, on all who sit in the darksome night? Which one is considered so safe a public and conspicuous refuge, to all the children universally of the church that, to his countrymen, he may be like a defensible and strong city situated on the top of a high mountain?

Moreover, which one of them can accomplish in one day that which follows: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven,” when, instead, a dark cloud and the black night of their offences, hang over the island, in such a way, that almost all turn away from the righteous course, and wander astray through unpassable and cumbersome paths of wickedness.

Their heavenly Father is not only diminished by their works not magnified, but also intolerably blasphemed. Therefore, I would gladly wish to interpret, as far as my meanness allows, in some historical or moral sense, the testimonies of holy scripture, which I have either already cited, or which follow in this epistle.

§94.

But for fear that this, our little work, should be immeasurably tedious to those who despise, loathe, and disdain, not so much our speeches, as God’s sayings, I have already proposed, and mean to affirm hereafter these sentences plainly without any decoration. To proceed, within a few words after “For whoever shall break one of the lowest of these commandments, and so instruct men, shall be called the lowest in the kingdom of heaven.”

And again: “Judge not, so that you may not be judged. For, in what judgment you judge, so you shall be judged.” And which one, I pray you, of your company will also regard that which follows: “But why do you see,” said he, “the splinter in your brother’s eye, and not the plank in you own eye? Or how do you say to your brother, ‘let me to cast the splinter out of your eye’, and not see that the plank still remains in your own eye?”

Or this which follows: “Do not give what is holy to dogs, nor cast your pearls before swine, because maybe they will tread them under their feet, and turn again to attack you”; which has often befallen you. And, admonishing the people, that they should not be seduced by deceitful doctors, such as you, he said: “Keep yourselves carefully from false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s

clothing, but are inwardly ravenous wolves. By their fruit shall you know them. Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? So, every good tree bears good fruit, and every evil one bears evil fruit."

And somewhat afterward: "Not everyone who says unto me 'Lord, Lord' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does the will of my Father, that is in heaven, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."

§95.

And what shall then become of you, who, as the prophet has said, "believe God only with your lips, and do not adhere to him with your hearts?" And how do you fulfil that which follows: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep into the midst of wolves", when you act quite contrarily, and proceed like wolves against a flock of sheep? Or this other following sentence: "Be wise as serpents and simple as doves", since you are only ready to bite others with your deadly mouths, and not to defend your head, which is Christ, with the interposition of your body. With all the endeavours of your evil actions you tread Him under foot. Neither have you the simplicity of doves, but rather the resemblance of the black crow, which taking her flight out of the ark, that is, the church of God, never returned after finding the carrion of earthly pleasures.

But let us look at the rest. "Fear not," said he, "those who kill the body, but are not able to slay the soul, but fear him who can overthrow both soul and body in hell." Ask youreselves which of these you have performed. And, which one of you are not wounded in the very secrets of their heart, by this following testimony against evil prelates, which our Saviour uttered to his apostles: "Do you tolerate them, the blind leaders of the blind? But, if the blind is a guide to the blind, both shall fall into the ditch?" But, doubtless, the people whom you govern, or rather beguile, have just occasion to listen to it.

§96.

Mark also the words of our Lord speaking to his apostles, and to the people, which words likewise (as I hear) you yourselves are not ashamed to pronounce often in public: "The scribes and pharisees have sat on the chair of Moses. Therefore, observe and accomplish all that they tell you, but do not do according to their works. For they only preach, but do nothing themselves." It is truly, for priests, a dangerous and superfluous doctrine, which is overclouded with sinful actions. 'Woe be to you hypocrites, who close the kingdom of heaven from men, and you neither enter, nor allow those who would to enter." For you shall be tormented with horrible pains, not only in respect of your great offences, which you pile up for punishment in the world to come, but also in regard of those who daily perish through your bad example, whose blood shall be on your hands on the day of judgment.

Give also, your diligent attention to the misery, which the parable set before your eyes, about the servant, who said in his heart, "My Lord delays his coming," and upon this occasion, has perhaps, "begun to strike his fellow

servants, and eat and drink with drunkards. The Lord of the same servant, therefore', said he, 'will come on a day when he does not expect him, and at an hour of which he is ignorant, will separate him away from his holy priests, and put him with the hypocrites' (that is, with those who, under the pretence of priesthood, conceal much iniquity). There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth", such as has not been experienced in this present life, for either the daily ruin of the children of our holy mother church or for the desire of the kingdom of heaven.

§97.

But let us see what Paul, the true scholar of Christ, and master of the Gentiles, who is a mirror of every ecclesiastical doctor, "Even as I am the disciple of Christ", speaks about a work of such importance in his first epistle on this wise. "Because when they have known God, they have not magnified him as God, or given thanks to him; but vanished in their own cogitations, and their foolish hearts are blinded; claiming themselves to be wise, they are made into fools." Although this seems to be spoken to the Gentiles, look into it notwithstanding, because it may conveniently be applied to the priests and people of this age.

And after a few words, "They have turned," said he, "the truth of God into lying, and have reverenced and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Therefore, God has given them over to passions of ignominy." And again, "As they have not allowed themselves to have God in their knowledge, God has yielded them up to a reprobate sense, that they may do such things as are wrong, being refilled with all iniquity, malice, uncleanness of life, fornication, covetousness, wickedness, envy, murder (i.e. of the souls of the people), contention, and deceit. They are wicked, backbiters, detractors, who are hateful to God, spiteful, proud, puffed up, and devisers of mischief, disobedient to their parents, senseless, disordered, without mercy, and without affection. When they had known the justice of God, they never understood that they who commit such things, are only worthy of death."

§98.

And now which of the aforesaid has, indeed, been devoid of all these? And if they were, they may yet, perhaps, be caught in the sense of the following sentence, where he said: "Not only those who do these things, but those also who consent to them", for none of them truly are free from this wickedness. And afterwards, "But you, according to your hardness and impenitent heart, lay up wrath, for yourself, against the day of wrath and revelation of the just judgment which God will deliver to everyone according to his works."

And again, "For there is no acceptance of rank by God. Whoever has offended outside the law, shall also perish outside the law. Whoever has offended in the law, shall be judged by the law. For the listeners of the law shall not be accounted as just, but the followers of the law shall be justified by God." How severe a sentence shall they receive — those who not only leave undone what

they ought to do, who do not forbear what they are forbidden, but also flee away from the very hearing of the word of God?

§99.

But let us pass over to that which follows to this effect: “What shall we therefore say, shall we continue still in sin that grace may abound? God forbid, for we who are dead to sin, how shall we again live in the same?” And somewhat afterwards, “Who shall separate us,” said he, “from the love of Christ, tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or the sword?” Which one, I pray, of all of you shall, with such an affection be possessed in the inward secret of his heart, since you do not only labour for achieving of piety, but also endure many things for the working of impiety, and offending of Christ?

Or who has respected that which follows? “The night has passed, and the day approached. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light, even as in the day. Let us walk honestly, not in gluttony, and drunkenness, not in laziness and wantonness, not in contention and emulation, but put on our Lord Jesus Christ and not submit your flesh to lustful desire.”

§100.

And again, in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, he said: “As a wise workmaster have I laid the foundation. Another will build on it, but let every man consider how he builds. For no other man can lay any other foundation besides that which is laid, even Christ Jesus. But if any man builds on this, gold, and silver, precious stones, hay, wood, or stubble, everyone’s work shall be manifest. The day of our Lord shall expose the same, because it shall be revealed in fire. The fire shall test what everyone’s work is, and if anyone’s work remains, it will have been judged by the fire. Whoever shall build on this foundation, shall receive their reward. But, if any man’s work burns, he shall suffer detriment. Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone violates the temple of God, God will destroy them.”

And again, “If any man in this world seems to be wise among you, let him be made a fool so that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God.”

And within a few words afterwards, “Your gloryfying is not good. Do you not know that a little rotten leavening corrupts the whole mass? Purge therefore, the old leavening that you may be the new.” How shall the old leavening, which is sin, be purged, so that from day to day the whole is increasdd with your uttermost endeavours?

And yet again, “I have written to you in my epistle, that you should not intermingle with fornicators. I do not mean all fornicators of this world, or the avaricious, ravenous, and idolatrous. If you did, you would have to leave this

world. But now I write to you, that you should not intermingle with anyone named a brother, who is a fornicator, or avaricious, an idolator, a slanderer, a drunkard, or ravenous. With one such as this, you should not so much as eat." But a felon does not condemn his fellow thief, whom he rather likes, defends, and loves, as a companion of his offence, for stealing or other open robbery.

§101.

Also, in his second epistle unto the Corinthians; "Having therefore," he said, "this administration according us, as we have obtained mercy, let us not fail. Let us cast away the secrets of shame, not walking in subtility and not corrupting the word of God" (that is, by evil example and flattery). And in that which follows, he discusses wicked teachers, saying "Such false apostles are deceitful workmen, transfiguring themselves into the apostles of Christ. And, no wonder, for Satan himself transfigured himself into an angel of light. It is not much wonder, therefore, if his ministers are transfigured into ministers of justice, whose ends will be according unto their works."

§102.

Hear likewise what he spoke to the Ephesians; and consider if you do not find your own consciences tainted as culpable of that which follows, when he denounced them thus: "I say and testify this before our Lord, that you now walk like the Gentiles. They, in their vanity, having their understanding obscured by darkness, are alienated from the way of God. Through their ignorance, regarding the blindness of their hearts, and despair, they have yielded to filth and avarice, and live an unclean life."

Which of you has willingly fulfilled that which next ensues? "Therefore, do not be made unwise, but understand what is the will of God. And, do not become drunk with wine, in which there is riotousness, but be fulfilled with the Holy Ghost."

§108.

Or that which he saidto the Thessalonians. "We have not, at any time, flattered ourselves, as you yourselves know. Nor have we shown avarice, or sought glory, neither from you nor any others, when we might have been honoured like other apostles of Christ. But we have appeared as little ones in your midst and, desiring you to be like the nurse who cherishes her small tender children, we very gladly deliver to you, not only the gospel, but also our lives." If in all things, you have retained this affection of the apostle, then might you be assured, likewise, that you lawfully possessed his chair.

Or how have you observed this that follows? "You know," said he, "what precepts I have given to you. It is the will of our Lord, your sanctification, that: you abstain from fornication; that everyone of you knows how to hold his own vessel in honour and sanctification, and not in the passion of desire, like the Gentiles who are ignorant of God; and that none of you encroach on or

circumvent your brother in his affairs; because our Lord will avenge of all these. God has not called us to uncleanness, but to sanctification. Therefore, whoever despises these, does not despise man, but God."

Which one among you has also. advisedly and warily. kept this that ensues: "Mortify therefore your members who are on the earth, against fornication, uncleanness of life, lust, and evil concupiscence, for which the wrath of God has fallen on the children of diffidence?" You perceive, therefore, against which offences the wrath of God chiefly rises.

§104.

In which respect hear, likewise, what the same holy apostle, with a prophetical spirit, foretold of you, and such as yourselves, writing plainly to Timothy: "Know this. In the final days there shall be dangerous times at hand. Men shall be self-lovers, covetous, puffed up, proud, blasphemous, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, wicked, without affection, incontinent, arrogant, without kindness, betrayers, aggressive, proud, lovers of sensual pleasures instead of God, who make a show of piety but neglect its virtue."

Avoid these men, just as the prophet said: "I have hated the congregation of the malicious, and I will not sit with the wicked." And a little after, he uttered that saying (which, in our age, we see to be increasing): "Always learning, but never attaining the knowledge of truth, these men, corrupted in mind and reprobate against faith, resist the truth like Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses. But, like them, they shall not prosper further and their folly shall be made manifest to all."

§105.

Evidently, he also declared how priests in their office ought to behave themselves, writing thus to Titus: "Show yourself to be an example of good works, in learning, in integrity, in gravity, making your word sound without offence, that he who stands against you may be afraid of having no evil to speak of us."

And moreover, he said to Timothy, "Labour as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. Noone fighting in God's quarrel entangles themself in worldly business, that he may please him whom he has approved himself. Whoever strives in the lists for mastery, does not receive the crown, unless he has lawfully contended." This was his exhortation to the good.

Another matter also which the same epistles contain, is a threatening advertisement to the wicked (such as you, in the Judgment of all understanding persons, appear to be). "If anyone," said he, "teaches otherwise, and does not peaceably assent to the sound sayings of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that doctrine which accords piety, then they are proud and have no knowledge. They languish over questions and contentions of words, out of which spring envy,

debates, blasphemy, evil suspicion, and conflicts of men corrupted in mind, who are deprived of truth and regard self-interest as piety."

§106.

But why, in using these testimonies, here and there dispersed, are we any longer, as it were, tossed up and down on the waves of sundry interpretations in the silly boat of our simple understanding? We have now therefore, at length, thought it necessary to have recourse to those lessons*, which are taken from the Holy Scriptures. These should not only be rehearsed, but also be assenting and assisting in the benediction, with which the hands of priests, and others of lower sacred orders, are first consecrated. Thereby, they may continually be warned never, by degenerating from their priestly dignity, to digress from the commandments, which are faithfully contained within. Then, it will be plain and apparent to all, that those who do not with their utmost power follow and fulfil the instructions and precepts, are not priests, or the servants of God, and that everlasting torments are reserved for them.

Let us hear what the prince of the apostles, Saint Peter, has told us about this weighty matter, saying "Blessed be God, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who through his mercy has regenerated us with the hope of eternal life, by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. This is an inheritance which can never corrupted, never wither, neither be defiled, and will be preserved in heaven for you, who are kept in the virtue of God." Why then, do you happily violate such an inheritance, which is not as an earthly one, which is transitory, but on which is immortal and eternal?

And somewhat afterwards, "Because of this, you are girded in the loins of your mind, sober, and anticipating that grace which is offered to you in the revelation of Jesus Christ?" Examine now the depths of your hearts, if you are sober and perfectly preserve the grace of priesthood, which shall be duly discussed and decided in the revelation of our Lord.

And again, he said "As children of the benediction, who do not shape yourselves by those former desires of your ignorance, but according to him who has called you holy, be also holy in all conversation. Because it is written, 'Be holy, because I am holy'." Which one of you, I pray, has with his whole mind so pursued sanctity, that he has earnestly driven, as much as in him lay, to fulfil the same?

But let us see what is contained in the second lesson of the same apostle: "My brothers," said he, "sanctify your souls for the obedience of faith, through the Spirit, in charity, in brotherhood, always loving one another from a true heart, as people born again, not of an corruptible seed, but of an incorruptible one, through the word of God which lives and remains forever."

* Gildas, in this and the following section, evidently alludes to the Ordination Ritual of the Ancient British Church.

§107.

These are truly the commandments of the apostle, read on the day of your ordination, to the end you should inviolably observe them. But are they not fulfilled by you in discretion and judgment? No, they are not so much as duly considered or understood.

And afterwards, “Laying therefore aside all malice, and all deceits, and dissemblings, envy, and detractions, as newly born infants, reasonable and without guile, you covet milkthat you may thereby grow to salvation, because our Lord is sweet.” Consider also in your minds, if these sayings, which have sounded in your deaf ears, have not often likewise been trodden underfoot by you.

And again: “You truly are the chosen lineage, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, the people for adoption, that you may declare the virtues of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” But truly, not only are the virtues of God not declared and made more glorious by you, but also through your wicked examples they are despised (by such as do not have perfect belief).

You have, perhaps, at the same time likewise heard, what is written in the lesson of the Acts: “Peter arising in the midst of the disciples said ‘Men and brethren, it is expedient that the Scripture, which the Holy Ghost has by the mouth of David, foretold about Judas be fulfilled’.” And a little after: “This man, therefore, purchased a field, with the rewards of iniquity.” This you have heard, with a careless or rather blockish heart, as though its reading contained nothing at all appertaining nto yourselves. Which one of you, I pray, does not seek the field from the rewards of iniquity? While Judas robbed and pillaged the purse, you spoil and waste the sacred gifts and treasures of the church, together with the souls of her children. He went made a market of God with the Jews, while you pass Him onto the tyrants (and their father the devil) that you may despise Christ. He sold the saviour of the world for thirty pence, but you do the same for not even one poor halfpenny.

§108.

Why do I need so many words? The example of Matthew, who was chosen for his position, not of his own will, but by the election of the holy apostles or rather the judgment of Christ, is apparently laid before you for your confusion. You, being blind, do not perceive how far you have run astray from his merits, while you fail wilfully, and headlong into the manners and affection of Judas the traitor. It is therefore manifest that, he who wittingly from his heart calls you priests is not, himself, a true and worthy Christian. And now I will, assuredly say what I think.

This reprehension might have been framed in a milder fashion, but what use is it to touch only with the hand, or dress with gentle ointment, that wound which has now grown so horrible, with imposthumation and stinking corruption, that it requires the searing iron or the ordinary help of the fire. If,

happily, it may be cured by any means, the diseased do not seek it, and the physician is a long way from choosing the rightful remedy? You are enemies of God, and not priests! You are traders of wickedness, and not bishops! You are the betrayers, and not the successors of the holy apostles! You are adversaries, and not servants of Christ!

You have certainly, at least, heard, sthe sound of the words, which are in the second lesson taken out of the apostle Saint Paul, although you have no way observed the admonitions and virtue of them, but stood as statues (that neither see nor hear) stood that day at the altar. Both then, and continually since, he has thundered in your ears, “Brethren, it is a faithful speech, and worthy of all acceptance.” He called it faithful and worthy, but you have despised it as unfaithful and unworthy.

“If any man desires a bishopric, he desires to do good work.” You mightily covet a bishopric because of your avarice, but not for the spiritual convenience and for the good work which is suitable to the position.

“Therefore, such a one must be free from all causes of reprehension.” At this saying we have more need to shed tears than to utter words. It is as much as if the apostle had said, he ought to be, of all others most free from occasion of rebuke.

“Husband of one wife”, which is likewise so condemned among us, as if those words had never proceeded from him.

“Sober and wise”. Yes, which of you has once desired to have these virtues grafted into themselves.

“Giving hospitality.” If this, perhaps, has been found among you, it has, nevertheless, rather been done to purchase the favour of the people, than to accomplish the commandment. It is of no avail, our Lord and Saviour saying thus: “Verily, I say to you that they have received their reward.”

Moreover, “A man adorned, not given to wine; not a fighter, but modest; not contentious; not covetous:” O lamentable change! O horrible contempt of the heavenly commandments! Do you not continually use the force of your words and actions, for the overthrowing or rather overwhelming of these, for whose defence and confirmation, you ought to have suffered pains, and even to have lost your very lives?

§109.

But let us see what follows. “Governing his house well,” he said, “his children are subjected to all chastity.” Therefore, the chastity of the parents is imperfect, if their children are not also endowed with the same. But how shall it be, when neither the father nor the son, depraved by the example of his evil parent, is found to be chaste? “But if any one does not know not how to rule over his own house, how shall he employ his care over the church of God?” These are the

words, that with apparent effects, should be approved and followed. “Deacons likewise should be chaste and hold the mystery of faith in their preconscience, and not be doubled-tongued, given over to drinking much wine, and followers of filthy gain. Let these also be approved first, and so let them administer, having no offence.”

And now, truly trembling to stay longer stay on these matters, I can, in conclusion, certainly affirm one thing which is, that all these have been turned into contrary actions, in so much that clerics (which, not without grief of heart, I here confess) are shameless and deceitful in their speeches, given to drinking, covetous of filthy lucre, and have faith (or to say more truly unfaithfulness) in an impure conscience. They minister, not after proof of their good works, but with foreknowledge of their evil actions and, notwithstanding being thus defiled with innumerable offences, they are admitted into holy office.

You have likewise heard on the same day (when you should, with far more right and reason, have been drawn to prison or punishment, and not preferred into priesthood) that, when our Lord asked who his disciples supposed him to be, how Peter answered “You are Christ, the Son of the living God.” Our Lord in reply to his confession, said to him “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonas, because you have not seen the flesh and blood, but my Father who is in heaven.” Peter therefore, instructed by God the Father, rightly confessed Christ, but you being taught by the devil your father, wickedly deny our Saviour with your lewd actions. It was said to the true priest, “You are Peter, and I will build my church on this rock”, but you are like “the foolish man, who has built his house on sand.”

And truly, it is to be noted, that God does not join in workmanship with the unwise, when they build their house upon the deceitful uncertainty of the sands, according to the saying “They have made kings for themselves, and not by me.” Similarly, that which follows speaks in the same manner, “And the gates of hell (by which infernal sins are to be understood) shall not prevail.” But what is said of your frail and deadly frame? “The floods came, and the winds blew and dashed on that house, and it fell, and was the ruined.”

To Peter and his successors, our Lord said, “I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of heaven.” But to you, he said “I do not know you, all you workers of iniquity. Leave me.” Being separated with the goats of the left hand, you may all go with them into eternal fire.

It is also promised to every good priest, “Whatever you release on earth, shall likewise released in heaven, but whatever you bind on earth, shall be bound in the same way in heaven.” But how shall you release anything that it may also be released in heaven, since you yourselves are severed from heaven by your sins, and hampered in the bands of your own heinous offences? As Solomon said “Everyone is tied with the cords of his sins”. How can you bind anything on this earth, that it may be likewise bound above this world, unless it is yourselves who, entangled in your iniquities, are so detained on this earth, that

you cannot ascend into heaven and, without your conversion to our Lord in this life, will fall down into the miserable prison of hell.

§110.

Also do not let any priest flatter himself on the knowledge of the particular cleanliness of his own body because, on the day of judgment, his hands will be shown to be those of the murderer of the souls (over whom he has government) who through his ignorance, sloth, or fawning adulation, have perished. The stroke of death is no less terrible, when it is given by a good man, than when it is inflicted by an evil person. Otherwise, the apostle would never have said that which he left as a fatherly legacy to his successors, “I am clear and clean from the blood of all, because I have not forborne to declare to you all the counsel of God.”

Being therefore mightily drunk with the use and custom of sins, and extremely overwhelmed with the waves (as it were) of increasing offences, seek forthwith the uttermost endeavours of your minds (after this, your shipwreck) that one plank of repentance which is left, by which you may escape and swim to the land of the living, and that from you may be turned away the wrath of our Lord, who said, “I do not wish for the death of a sinner, but hope that he may be converted and live.”

May the same Almighty God of all consolation and mercy preserve his few good pastors from all evil, and (the common enemy being overcome) make them free inhabitants of the heavenly city of Jerusalem, which is the congregation of all saints.

Grant this, O Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to whom be honour and glory, world without end.

Amen