

Agobard of Lyons

Book on divine statements, enumerated with very brief annotations, against the injurious opinion of those believing that the truth of divine judgment is revealed by fire or water or by battle of arms.

(ca. 817–822)

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I.

In the name of the Lord God and of our Savior Jesus Christ, who *is our peace, who hath made both one, and breaking down the middle wall of partition, the enmities in his flesh: Making void the law of commandments contained in decrees; that he might make the two in himself into one new man, making peace; And might reconcile both to God in one body by the cross, killing the enmities in himself. And coming, he preached peace to you that were afar off, and peace to them that were nigh. For by him we have access both in one Spirit to the Father.* (Eph. 2:14–18)

Here begin the divine testimonies from the writings of the Gospels, the apostles, and the prophets, in which are demonstrated in a very clear light that it is contrary to [both] the reconciliation of the human race and to Christ the reconciler of domestic quarrels and the conflict of those believing themselves brothers, that the secrets and ambiguities of deceptive things can be revealed, and the hidden truth can be shown, by things contrary to truth.

For if omnipotent God, leader and maker of the world, had wished, or permitted, that the truth of judgment regarding hidden things be found through mutual slaughter, then he would not have commanded judges or magistrates to have been set up in each city (cf. Esdr. 7:25), nor the corrupt to be convicted by witnesses (cf. Lev. 6:3–4), nor, where witnesses are lacking, disputes to be settled through an oath (cf. Hebr. 6:16). But he did not give that law between a man and wife that, if the spirit of jealousy should stir up the man, the woman should be proven to be an adulteress or be innocent by the most bitter waters (cf. Num. 5:14), or command that the princes of a neighboring city come together regarding the discovered corpse of a murdered man, and to wash [their] hands, and protesting say before God that their hands did not shed innocent blood. (cf. Deut. 21:1–7) Nor did the holy and innocent man David say to his persecutor Saul: *If the Lord stir thee up against me, let him accept of sacrifice* (I Reg. 26:19), et cetera, but rather he said, “Send one of your own who will fight in battle with me alone, and if he kills [me], it shall prove to you that I am guilty” (cf. I Reg. 17:8–10), or surely: “Order iron or water to be heated, which I might handle, unhurt, with my hands,” or “Form crosses, through which standing motionless I might persevere.”

II.

But since divine or even human law decrees nothing of this kind, and vain men call this sort of thing a “judgment of God,” how can it be proven that it is a judgment of God, which God never prescribed, never wanted, and never shows as included in the examples of the saints and of all the faithful? As if the Lord Almighty should serve in the animosities or devices of men, or act contrary to Himself, so that He who commanded in the Law and in the Gospel that man love his neighbor as himself (cf. Matt. 22:39), [or] again, as if He had changed his will, when men begin to quarrel with each other over insignificant things, namely, about a little part of a field, or an entire field, or a number of fields, or if the dispute were over animals, horses, or pigs, or about whatever things men quarrel, driven by greed – something without doubt relevant to lawyers and not those of religion – then God, having been invoked, makes manifest temporal justice, or rather most crudely, that which should not properly be called justice, since nothing from that may be reckoned just, and when one stands against another, namely a man against his neighbor, whom he certainly ought to love as himself, one falls before the other by the agency of God, and the one

whom He commanded through sacred law to be loved, through the law of cupidity He causes to be killed or laid low by the neighbor.

Truly, the apostle shows that there is the law of sin, and the law of the flesh, and the law of death, which are contrary to the law of the spirit and the law of life. (cf. Rom. 7–8) For those who are moved by the spirit of God, and therefore are the children of God (cf. Rom. 8:14), hear the teaching of the apostle: *Already indeed there is plainly a fault among you, that you have lawsuits one with another. Why do you not rather take wrong? Why do you not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?* (1 Cor. 6:7)

III.

We do not say this, as if judgments between men were not necessary. Indeed, not only are they necessary, but they are also good, about which the Lord spoke to Solomon: *Because thou hast asked this thing, he said, for thyself wisdom to discern judgment, behold I have done for thee according to thy words, and have given thee a wise and understanding heart.* (3 Reg. 3:11–12) And in another place, *Now the multitude of the wise is the welfare of the whole world: and a wise king is the upholding of the people.* (Sap. 6:26) And again, *Wisdom is better than strength, and a wise man is better than a strong man. Hear therefore, ye kings, and understand: learn, ye that are judges of the ends of the earth.* (Sap. 6:1–2) And the same, *For her sake – without doubt, in fact, wisdom’s sake – I shall have glory among the multitude, and honour with the ancients, though I be young: And I shall be found of a quick conceit in judgment.* (Sap. 8:10–11) About which the Blessed Job also acknowledged, saying, *If I have despised to abide judgment with my manservant, or my maidservant, when they had any controversy against me.* (Job 31:13) For Holy Job did not fight with his servants and maidservants with swords or clubs, since he knew that equity ought to be established not by means of murders, but by wisdom and mercy, which speaks for itself, saying, *Counsel and equity is mine, prudence is mine, strength is mine. By me kings reign, and lawgivers decree just things, By me princes rule, and the mighty decree justice.* (Prov. 8:14–16)

But this eternal wisdom of God should be sought after with unshakeable faith, [and] acquired by assiduous prayers and readings, according to the testimony of the apostle James: *But if any of you want wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men abundantly, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.* (Iac. 1:5–6) So God calling Joshua to witness explains to him that the

same wisdom should be sought with an unceasing recitation: *Take courage therefore, and be very valiant: that thou mayst observe and do all the law, which Moses my servant hath commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayst understand all things which thou dost. Let not the book of this law depart from thy mouth: but thou shalt meditate on it day and night, that thou mayst observe and do all things that are written in it.* (Jos. 1:7–8)

IV.

It should not be believed that man may fall either in these domestic wars, or in the plots of thieves, or in whatever kinds of civil or domestic disputes, unless by being delivered by God into the hands of his neighbor, just as He spoke through the prophet against wicked pastors, saying, *And their shepherds spared them not. And I will no more spare the inhabitants of the land, saith the Lord: behold I will deliver the men, every one into his neighbour's hand, and into the hand of his king: and they shall destroy the land, and I will not deliver it out of their hand. And I will feed the flock of slaughter for this, O ye poor of the flock.* (Zach. 11:5–7)

But it should be noted that in that passage the elect are called the sheep of slaughter, just as the apostle, invoking the testimony of the psalm, says: *For thy sake we are put to death all the day long. We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.* (Rom. 8:36; cf. Ps. 43:22) And it is commanded in the law, *He that striketh a man with a will to kill him, shall be put to death. But he that did not lie in wait for him, but God delivered him into his hands: I will appoint thee a place to which he must flee.* (Exod. 21:12–13)

V.

For we ought to believe with all faith that nothing happens in the world, unless through the dispensation or permission of God, since even all the hair on the head of the faithful are counted (cf. Matt. 10:30), and one out of two or five sparrows does not fall to the ground without God (cf. Matt. 10:29), and as one of the saints says, *Not even a leaf of a tree falls without God's consent.* (Tertullian, *De exhortatione castitatis* 1, 1.5, ed. Claudio Moreschini, *Sources Chrétiennes* 319, [Paris, 1985], p. 70)

Yet, it is very well known that good men are killed by evil men, but never evil by good, unless in public wars and legal judgments, [and] this pertains to the secret judgments of God, which are like a great abyss (cf. Ps. G 35:7), nor is it given to men to know why the Almighty lets things happen thus. David also

attests that usually the just are killed by the iniquitous, saying about the death of Abner: *Not as cowards are wont to die, hath Abner died. But as men fall before the children of iniquity, so didst thou fall.* (2 Reg. 3:33–34)

But, as we have said, no one has been allowed to investigate these things, since even Paul himself, who was taken away to the third heaven, and still marvelling of paradise (cf. 2 Cor. 12:2–4), cried out, saying that the judgments of God are incomprehensible and that His ways unfathomable (cf. Rom. 11:33): *For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor?* (Rom. 11:34)

VI.

To those who consider these aspects with devotion and humility, it is evident that hidden and secret facts cannot be discovered through killings, iron, or water. For if they could, where would be the secret judgments of God? Therefore, the truth between Catholics and heretics should be investigated by means of such an examination, just as the proud and foolish heretic Gundobad, king of the Burgundians, was trying to seek from the Blessed Avitus, admirable and orthodox preacher, who resisted and scolded [the king's] folly with the greatest wisdom and in so praiseworthy a manner. Because if such expedients, as we have often said, could enable hidden faults to be found, then not wisdom nor the wise, not judges nor teachers would be needed. But since it is most true what is said of God, *With him is strength and wisdom: he knoweth both the deceiver, and him that is deceived* (Job 12:16), from Him and through Him the truth of things and judgments should be sought.

Now these divine statements should be considered, and in them it should be perceived what their author wants them to mean, and what to do or how to act to reconcile the people of acquisition, the children of resurrection (cf. Rom. 5:10; 1 Petr. 2:9; Luc. 20:36), the sheep of the highest pastor (cf. Matt. 10:16), by turns both with respect to themselves and to the wolves and wild animals that threaten them.

Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will. (Luc. 2:14) When there are two people prepared on both sides for mutual killing, good will is not in them, and therefore the angels of peace do not assist them, providing eternal joys.

Much peace have they that love thy law, and to them there is no stumbling block. (Ps. G. 118:165) A great peace does not prevent a stumbling block to those who do not yet have the fullness of the law,

which is charity.

Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land. (Matt. 5:4) Perhaps the quarrelsome say that meekness is necessary to possess the land of the living, but fraternal conflict [is necessary] to defend the land of the dying. But listen to the apostle, who says, *We have no such custom, nor the church of God.* (1 Cor. 11:16)

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called children of God. (Matt. 5:7–9) Eternal mercy and the honor of the children of God are not offered to those who are merciless and who disrupt peace, but to those who are [merciful and make peace].

You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not kill. And whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you, that whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment. And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council. And whosoever shall say, Thou Fool, shall be in danger of hell fire (Matt. 5:21–22), et cetera. One sins in three ways: in thought, in word, and in action. Thus, it is clear that the root of evil is in thought, but the fruit is in action. And consequently for the people of the old [law] the fruits of evil were forbidden, but for those of the new [law] we are commanded to tear out the roots; and therefore with [the people of the old law] murder was a crime, with us [the crime] is rather the hidden anger and offensive speech. For this reason, one who does not purify the mind from rage, who does not restrain the hand from murder, is also neither subject to the old law, nor is granted the freedom of the evangelical grace with the new.

You have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you not to resist evil: but if one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other: And if a man will contend with thee in judgment, and take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him (Matt. 5:38–40), and so on. It was ordained to the ancient people that he who had inflicted one blemish would be obliged to receive a similar one, but to the new people [it is ordained] not to render any harm, but to bear the harm suffered peacefully.

Therefore, he who not only does not resist, but, surpassing the measure of retaliation, rather exceeds it, belongs neither to the ancient people nor to the new.

You have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thy enemy. But I say to you, Love your enemies: do good to them that hate you: and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you: That you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh his sun to rise upon the good, and bad,

and raineth upon the just and the unjust. For if you love them that love you, what reward shall you have? do not even the publicans this? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? do not also the heathens this? Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matt. 5:43–48) We are not allowed to do harm to those doing harm, whom we have been commanded to love. In no way can one be a child of God, unless he follows His example. Therefore the one who, by not following His example, is debased by such nobility, says not sincerely, but falsely: *Our Father who art in heaven. (Matt. 6:9)* And so he is condemned not only by cruelty, but also by falsehood. If we shall not enter the kingdom of heaven unless our justice surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, how much more [shall we not enter] unless it surpasses that of the publicans and pagans? One who rewards perfection reserves nothing for corruption but condemnation.

For if you will forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will forgive you also your offences. But if you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your offences. (Matt. 6:14–15) Consider, O lover of transient things, and neglecter of yourself, that you can forgive another who sins towards you, [but] you cannot forgive yourself, and that for such a serious evil no greater remedy can be found than that you forgive what you can, so that the sins that you commit and cannot abolish are forgiven to you.

All things therefore whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them. For this is the law and the prophets. (Matt. 7:12) Hurry to finish while you still have your hands and feet free, because the days will come of which you will say, *They please me not (Eccle. 12:1)*, when with feet and hands bound you will be sent into the outer darkness, that is, the freedom to run and to work will be taken away. (cf. Matt. 22:13)

He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. (Matt. 10:37) If he that loves [his] father or mother more than God is not worthy of Him, how much more unworthy will he be if he loves more [than God some] land or a pig? For the one who is not afraid to offend charity, which is God, will be convicted all the more for loving such things.

Amen I say to you, unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 18:3) A hopeless and endless torment will follow the neglect of this precept. He closes the door of the heavenly kingdom, which takes in the small, but shuts out the giant. Therefore, the

one who is ready for slaughter, since he is not humble with the simplicity of children, but wants to appear fearsome with tremendous ostentation, is utterly expelled from His entrance.

Lord, how often shall my brother offend against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith to him: I say not to thee, till seven times; but till seventy times seven times. (Matt. 18:21–22)

Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all the debt, because thou besoughtest me, up to: So also shall my heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts. (Matt. 18:32–35) For it is a great evil not to forgive the heart of a sinning brother. By which it happens that sins formerly forgiven through penance are recalled for revenge.

Put up again thy sword into its place: for all that take the sword shall perish with the sword. (Matt. 26:52) However much better is the soul to the body, so much worse is the sword, which kills the body temporarily, but kills the soul forever.

Have salt in you, and have peace among you. (Mark 9:49) As food is not suitable or useful without salt, so every virtue, even faith itself, is not effective for the salvation of men without peace.

Which of these three, in thy opinion, was neighbour to him that fell among the robbers? But he said: He that shewed mercy to him. (Luc. 10:36–37) If a priest and a Levite did not inflict the wounds of one wounded by robbers, but since they were not helpful [to the wounded man, they] were not neighbors, then how much more are those who inflict the wounds not neighbors? Therefore, he who, by not bestowing mercy to his neighbor, alienates himself from him, is also an alien to the medicine that the heavenly Samaritan administers to the one who lies wounded.

If you be the children of Abraham, do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill me, a man who have spoken the truth to you, which I have heard of God. This Abraham did not. You do the works of your father. (Ioh. 8:39–41) He who seeks to kill a servant of the faith is not the son of Abraham, because Abraham did not do this. But he does the works of his father, that is, the devil, who was a murderer from the beginning.

My sheep hear my voice: and I know them, and they follow me. (John 10:27) Those who follow utterly the Good Shepherd are the sheep; but those who pursue him only with their limbs are the wolves.

If any man minister to me, let him follow me; and where I am, there also shall my minister be. (John 12:26) He who ministers, follows; he who opposes, pursues.

A new commandment I give unto you: That you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love

one another. *By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another.* (John 13:34–35) If the Lord's disciples are known by love, the disciples of the devil are known by quarrels and disputes.

And not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in me; That they all may be one, as thou, Father, in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. (John 17:20–21) If unity draws the world to faith, conflict drives the world to perfidy.

And let every man be swift to hear, but slow to speak, and slow to anger. For the anger of man worketh not the justice of God. (Jac. 1:19–20) And the apostle Paul says, *Contend not in words, for it is to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.* (2 Tim. 2:14)

But if you have bitter zeal, and there be contentions in your hearts; glory not, and be not liars against the truth. For this is not wisdom, descending from above: but earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and contention is, there is inconstancy, and every evil work. But the wisdom, that is from above, first indeed is chaste, then peaceable, modest, easy to be persuaded, consenting to the good, full of mercy and good fruits, without judging, without dissimulation. And the fruit of justice is sown in peace, to them that make peace. (Jac. 3:14–18) If therefore the contention of hearts makes manifest liars against the truth, and a quarrel with words leads to the destruction of the hearers, how much more does the contention of the hands and arms [lead to destruction]? Regarding this wisdom, which is not heavenly, but earthly and devilish, it also happens what the blessed Paul says, *But shun profane and vain babblings: for they grow much towards ungodliness. And their speech spreadeth like a canker.* (2 Tim. 2:16–17) Not a single evil work or part of works, but every work, as Paul shows, *But to them that are contentious, and who obey not the truth, but give credit to iniquity, wrath and indignation. Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that worketh evil.* (Rom. 2:8–9) Weigh carefully, O judge, because the wisdom that judges without dissimulation, deceit, or fraud, is peaceful and full of mercy.

From whence are wars and contentions among you? Are they not hence? From your concupiscences, which war in your members? You covet, and have not: you kill, and envy, and can not obtain. You contend and war, and you have not, because you ask not. You ask, and receive not; because you ask amiss: that you may consume it on your concupiscences. Adulterers, know you not that the friendship of this world is the enemy of God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God. (Jac. 4:1–4) Here it is clearly shown from where wars and conflicts come. That he did not say *Whosoever is*, but *Whosoever will be a*

friend of this world, shows this clearly, since the Lord speaks in the Gospel about an adulterer in the same way, *whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart* (Matt. 5:28); even if he shall not attain the completion of the abominable work, whoever wants to be a friend of this world is already unfaithful, even if he shall not have attained the honors and riches of the world, just as the apostle Paul says not *Those that are*, but *They that will become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil* (1 Tim. 6:9), and by this are made enemies of God.

Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl in your miseries, which shall come upon you. (Iac. 5:1)

For it is better doing well (if such be the will of God) to suffer, than doing ill. (1 Pet. 3:17) This statement shows that even those who do good suffer the ills of this world, and not, as most think, only those who do evil.

Be prudent therefore, and watch in prayers. But before all things have a constant mutual charity among yourselves: for charity covereth a multitude of sins. (1 Pet. 4:7–8) He does not have constant charity, who rises up against his neighbor to fight. But it should also be noted, that, if charity covers a multitude of sins, brawls and disputes heap up an abundance of crimes.

And you, employing all care, minister in your faith, virtue; and in virtue, knowledge; And in knowledge, abstinence; and in abstinence, patience; and in patience, godliness; And in godliness, love of brotherhood; and in love of brotherhood, charity. For if these things be with you and abound, they will make you to be neither empty nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he that hath not these things with him, is blind, and groping, having forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. (2 Pet. 1:5–9) Here the apostle shows clearly that he who possesses these virtues is not fruitless and empty; but he who does not possess them is blind and walking in darkness.

In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. Whosoever is not just, is not of God, nor he that loveth not his brother. For this is the declaration, which you have heard from the beginning, that you should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of the wicked one, and killed his brother. And wherefore did he kill him? Because his own works were wicked: and his brother's just. Wonder not, brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not, abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer. And you know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in himself. In this we have known charity, because he hath laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the

brethren. (1 John 3:10–16)

Bless them that persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that rejoice; weep with them that weep. Being of one mind one towards another. Not minding high things, but consenting to the humble. Be not wise in your own conceits. To no man rendering evil for evil. Providing good things, not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as is in you, have peace with all men. Revenge not yourselves, my dearly beloved; but give place unto wrath, for it is written: Revenge is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord. But if thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat; if he thirst, give him to drink. For, doing this, thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good. (Rom. 12:14–21) Not only should we not persecute those who persecute, but [we should] not even curse them; on the contrary, we should bless them from the heart. Not only should we not cause tears, but on the contrary, when we see someone crying, we too should cry with him. *Woe to the world because of scandals! (Matt. 18:7)* What great blindness and profound misery! We do not yet know that our neighbor had done evil to us, and still we try to show that he, who is perhaps innocent, is the doer of that evil.

Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The love of our neighbour worketh no evil. Love therefore is the fulfilling of the law. (Rom. 13:9–10)

Now we that are stronger, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of you please his neighbour unto good, to edification. For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written: The reproaches of them that reproached thee, fell upon me. For what things soever were written, were written for our learning: that through patience and the comfort of the scriptures, we might have hope. Now the God of patience and of comfort grant you to be of one mind one towards another, according to Jesus Christ: That with one mind, and with one mouth, you may glorify God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive one another, as Christ also hath received you unto the honour of God. (Rom. 15:1–7) You cannot enjoy the good in the one against whom, by brandishing a sword or holding a spear, you are ready to slaughter with such ferocity—the one who, deprived of all strength, bows low to the ground and pleads guilty, even if he may not be. Where men dispute among themselves with speech, that is, in words, there cannot be harmony of souls, and God is not honored by such people through this, but is always insulted.

Charity is patient, is kind: charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely; is not puffed up; is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the

truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never falleth away. (1 Cor. 13:4–8) [Charity] is patient and kind, because through patience it tolerates them, and through kindness loves them. And if these, whom [charity] tolerates, nevertheless neither love, nor do the work of charity, how much more [will] those whom it does not tolerate [not do these things]? If charity is not incited, is not provoked to anger, does not rejoice in iniquity, then it should certainly be considered that they are far from charity who fight against one another for earthly greed. Charity does not fade, for it is always increasing, and never diminishes.

For whether we be transported in mind, it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for you. For the charity of Christ presseth us: judging this, that if one died for all, then all were dead. And Christ died for all; that they also who live, may not now live to themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again. (2 Cor. 5:13–15) If under the pressure of the charity of Christ we should be available and adaptable to our neighbor, then it ought to be thought of one who increases quarrels and disagreements: *But the servant of the Lord must not wrangle: but be mild towards all men, apt to teach, patient, with modesty admonishing them that resist.* (2 Tim. 2:24–25) Those for whom Christ died should not live for themselves, but for Christ. He who lives for Christ in no way wants to hurt his neighbor. For this reason, it should be inquired whether the one who is ready to do harm to his neighbor, killing or maiming by bloodshed, lives for himself or for the devil, since it is certain that he does not live for Christ.

Brethren, rejoice, be perfect, take exhortation, be of one mind, have peace; and the God of peace and of love shall be with you. (2 Cor. 13:11) To be one of the perfect is to have the same knowledge, not to think different or conflicting things, and therefore to have peace. But those who act differently, with fights and arguments, should consider whether the God of peace is with them. And since it is certain that he who has no God, Who is the life of souls, is dead, it should be concluded without doubt that he, who by killing is of the dead, wishes his neighbor not to live.

Let all bitterness, and anger, and indignation, and clamour, and blasphemy, be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another; merciful, forgiving one another, even as God hath forgiven you in Christ. Be ye therefore followers of God, as most dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us. (Eph. 4:31–32) This statement is the rule of Christians, and it is so clear that anyone could contemplate themselves in it, as in a mirror.

For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but against principalities and power, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places. (Eph. 6:12)

Brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever modest, whatsoever just, whatsoever holy, whatsoever lovely, whatsoever of good fame, if there be any virtue, if any praise of discipline, think on these things. The things which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, these do ye, and the God of peace shall be with you. (Phil. 4:8–9) Anyone who wants to have the God of peace with him, namely, to be his temple, does the things that this statement teaches, so that he may glorify God and bring Him inside his body. For he who does not admit God into his life, will admit the enemy—whether he wants to or not—to his death.

And we beseech you, brethren, rebuke the unquiet, comfort the feeble minded, support the weak, be patient towards all men. See that none render evil for evil to any man; but ever follow that which is good towards each other, and towards all men. Always rejoice. Pray without ceasing. In all things give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you all. (1 Thess. 5:14–18) This statement is also a rule of Christianity. But it should be noted carefully that it orders man to be patient to all, not only to his friends. Indeed, patience is necessary above all to [one's] enemies.

I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying: How long, O Lord (holy and true) dost thou not judge and revenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given to every one of them one; and it was said to them, that they should rest for a little time, till their fellow servants, and their brethren, who are to be slain, even as they, should be filled up. (Apoc. 6:9–11) This statement teaches that for the faithful the time for revenge is not in the present.

For, if the saints, who suffered for the faith, sought revenge from their persecutors (with respect to whom they were certainly deserving of being avenged), and did not procure it, then how can they (about whom we treat), as often as they become angry with neighbors and are quick to come to blows, think that God is subject to them and diligently serves their most repugnant actions?

Standing afar off for fear of her torments, saying: Alas! alas! that great city Babylon, that mighty city: for in one hour is thy judgment come. (Apoc. 18:10) If the judgment of Babylon will be in one hour, then why do its citizens so often think that God judges in their favor? This statement shows that the judgments of God

are secret and impenetrable. It follows that it is a foolish and arrogant presumption of those who believe they can make manifest unequivocally, through wars and massacres, the impenetrable judgments of God.

For I will require the blood of your lives at the hand of every beast, and at the hand of man, at the hand of every man, and of his brother, will I require the life of man. Whosoever shall shed man's blood, his blood shall be shed: for man was made to the image of God. (Gen. 9:5–6) This first law given by God to men very strongly prohibits spilling human blood. Not every one who has killed a man will be killed physically, but it should be understood according to what the Lord says in the Gospel: *For all that take the sword shall perish with the sword*, (Matt. 26:52), and the apostle said, *That no murderer hath eternal life abiding in himself.* (1 John 3:15) But why so great a penalty follows this crime is for this reason: because man was made in God's image.

The tabernacles of robbers abound, and they provoke God boldly; whereas it is he that hath given all into their hands (Job 12:6)

Why then do the wicked live, are they advanced, and strengthened with riches? Their seed continueth before them, a multitude of kinsmen, and of children's children in their sight. Their houses are secure and peaceable, and the rod of God is not upon them. Their cattle have conceived, and failed not: their cow has calved, and is not deprived of her fruit. Their little ones go out like a flock, and their children dance and play. They take the timbrel, and the harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down to hell. (Job 21:7–13) This statement indicates that the happiness of the wicked is [only] temporal. And therefore they are mistaken who believe that here is given to each what they deserve.

And hast thou an arm like God, and canst thou thunder with a voice like him? Clothe thyself with beauty, and set thyself up on high and be glorious, and put on goodly garments. Scatter the proud in thy indignation, and behold every arrogant man, and humble him. Look on all that are proud, and confound them, and crush the wicked in their place. Hide them in the dust together, and plunge their faces into the pit. Then I will confess that thy right hand is able to save thee. (Job 40:9–14) Those who believe they can discover the merits of men through disputes and fights [believe they] have an arm like God and thunder similarly with their voice, clothe themselves with beauty, and set themselves up on high and are glorious, and then can be saviors for themselves, but scatterers of the proud and the wicked, are humble, contrite, and who plunge [the proud and wicked] into the pit.

For I will not trust in my bow: neither shall my sword save me. But thou hast saved us from them that afflict us: and hast put them to shame that hate us. In God shall we glory all the day long: and in thy name we will give praise for ever. But now thou hast cast us off, and put us to shame: and thou, O God, wilt not go out with our armies. Thou hast made us turn our back to our enemies: and they that hated us plundered for themselves. Thou hast given us up like sheep to be eaten: thou hast scattered us among the nations. (Ps. H+G 43:7–12) This statement implies that no one is saved or is proven right or innocent through the armor on the body, but that God does not always repay in this life the good merits of justice. Hence also Paul, who certainly fought for good, completed his course, guarded the faith, and says that the crown of justice was set aside for him, and not received. (cf. 2 Tim. 4:7–8) For in the present life five times he received forty lashes save one, three times he was beaten with rods, once he was stoned, three times was shipwrecked, and all those dangers which he enumerates he endured. (cf. 2 Cor. 11:24–28)

God, the heathens are come into thy inheritance, they have defiled thy holy temple: they have made Jerusalem as a place to keep fruit. They have given the dead bodies of thy servants to be meat for the fowls of the air: the flesh of thy saints for the beasts of the earth. They have poured out their blood as water, round about Jerusalem and there was none to bury them. We are become a reproach to our neighbours: a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. (Ps. H 78:1–4) This statement shows the same things that have been said above.

Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord: or who shall stand in his holy place? The innocent in hands, and clean of heart. (Ps. 23:3–4) A warrior may seem brotherly, if he is innocent in hands and clean of heart, and does all the things that the following statement specifies.

He that walketh without blemish, and worketh justice: He that speaketh truth in his heart, who hath not used deceit in his tongue: Nor hath done evil to his neighbour: nor taken up a reproach against his neighbours. (Ps. H 14:2–3)

He that neglecteth a loss for the sake of a friend, is just: but the way of the wicked shall deceive them. (Prov. 12:26) He who fights with his neighbor over an animal does not want to neglect even a small loss for the sake of God.

The patient man is better than the valiant: and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh cities. (Prov. 16:32) He who does not rule his spirit through patience not only does not want to be better, but does

not [even] want to be good.

Arms and swords are in the way of the perverse: but he that keepeth his own soul departeth far from them. (Prov. 22:5)

When thy enemy shall fall, be not glad, and in his ruin let not thy heart rejoice: Lest the Lord see, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him. (Prov. 24:17–18)

Deliver them that are led to death: and those that are drawn to death forbear not to deliver. If thou say: I have not strength enough: he that seeth into the heart, he understandeth, and nothing deceiveth the keeper of thy soul, and he shall render to a man according to his works. (Prov. 24:11–12) Not only should you not lead to death, but you should also pull away those who are led, if you do not want God to render to you according to your actions.

I saw under the sun in the place of judgment wickedness, and in the place of justice iniquity. And I said in my heart: God shall judge both the just and the wicked, and then shall be the time of every thing. (Eccle. 3:16–17) When the Lord distinguishes between the just and the wicked, then will be a time for everything, not now. Longing for that time, the Church beseeches the Lord, saying, *Judge me, O God, and distinguish my cause from the nation that is not holy. (Ps. G 42:1)* For this reason, if men could at least act justly, there would be no evil, which the following statements enumerate.

I turned myself to other things, and I saw the oppressions that are done under the sun, and the tears of the innocent, and they had no comforter; and they were not able to resist their violence, being destitute of help from any. (Eccle. 4:1)

If thou shalt see the oppressions of the poor, and violent judgments, and justice perverted in the province, wonder not at this matter: for he that is high hath another higher, and there are others still higher than these (Eccle. 5:7) Indeed, *High above the highest, God looks at these things, [and] has set his angels over the judges and the kings of the earth; they can certainly prohibit injustice, and have more power on earth than the powers of any men. But since He reserves [these things] until the last judgment and the end of the world, when the harvest will be ripe and there will come harvesters, and it will be ordered that the wheat be separated and the chaff be burned, so now He awaits and delays the judgment, until the field of this world is fully cultivated. (Jerome, Comm. in Ecclesiasten, 5, 7–8, ed. Marc Adriaen, CCSL 72 [Turnhout, 1959], p. 294) (cf. Matt. 13:37–43)*

A just man perisheth in his justice, and a wicked man liveth a long time in his wickedness. (Eccle. 7:16)

The wisdom of God acts in secret, and now afflicts the holy, so that they receive evil in their life, and does not punish sinners for their sin, as if being held back for vengeance, so that eternal goods can be restored to the former, and perpetual evils inflicted on the latter. (Jerome, Comm. in Ecclesiasten, 7, 16, ed. Marc Adriaen, CCSL 72 [Turnhout, 1959], p. 307) According to the will of God it is best that a just man die in his justice, rather than that one kill a wicked man because of his malice. And since it happens in this way, therefore it comes to pass what it says in the following statement.

There are just men to whom evils happen, as though they had done the works of the wicked: and there are wicked men, who are as secure, as though they had the deeds of the just. (Eccle. 8:14) Among other vanities, which are said to exist in the world with various occurrence, this is observed: that to the just occur frequently those things that should happen to the wicked, and the wicked live so happily in this world that you would believe that they are the most just. (Jerome, Comm. in Ecclesiasten, 8, 14, ed. Marc Adriaen, CCSL 72 [Turnhout, 1959], p. 320)

Man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love, or hatred: But all things are kept uncertain for the time to come, because all things equally happen to the just and to the wicked, to the good and to the evil, to the clean and to the unclean, to him that offereth victims, and to him that despiseth sacrifices. As the good is, so also is the sinner: as the perjured, so he also that sweareth truth. This is a very great evil among all things that are done under the sun, that the same things happen to all men. (Eccle. 9:1–3) If all uncertain things are reserved for the future, then one marvels at the folly of some who believe that, by execrable fights, they make certain uncertain things.

I turned me to another thing, and I saw that under the sun, the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the learned, nor favour to the skillful: but time and chance in all. Man knoweth not his own end: but as fishes are taken with the hook, and as birds are caught with the snare, so men are taken in the evil time, when it shall suddenly come upon them. (Eccle. 9:11–12) This statement does not deny providence, but teaches that the consequences of things are uncertain to men. The Epistle to the Romans is congruent with this notion, because [it says] it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. (cf. Rom. 9:16) But the fact that he says: ‘There is not bread to the wise,’ is proven every day by the example of the many, who, despite being very wise, lack necessities, and a learned man in a dark corner suffers persecution, and not only can find no favor with the people, but wastes away by poverty and need.

These things happen because everything is subject to an uncertain status, and the reward of merit is not in the present but in the future. (Jerome, Comm. in Ecclesiasten, 9, 11, ed. Marc Adriaen, CCSL 72 [Turnhout, 1959], p. 329)

There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, as it were by an error proceeding from the face of the prince: A fool set in high dignity, and the rich sitting beneath. I have seen servants upon horses: and princes walking on the ground as servants. (Eccle. 10:5–7) And so he recounts that he [= Ecclesiastes, the son of David] has seen this wickedness in the world, because it seems that the judgment of God is unjust, and it happens [seemingly] either through ignorance, or without His will, that those either in positions of power in the world or at the head of the Church, those who often are rich in speech and in wisdom, or even rich in good deeds, sit down in obscurity, while any fool occupies a prominent place in the Church; but this happens from the face of him [i.e., the devil], who has the power in the world, since he oppresses all the powerful and learned, not allowing them to stand out among the people, but those whom he knows to be foolish he makes greater in the churches, so that the blind are led by the blind in the pit. (Jerome, Comm. in Ecclesiasten, 10, 5–7, ed. Marc Adriaen, CCSL 72 [Turnhout, 1959], p. 335) (cf. Matt. 15:14)

Why hast thou shewn me iniquity and grievance, to see rapine and injustice before me? and there is a judgment, but opposition is more powerful. Therefore the law is torn in pieces, and judgment cometh not to the end: because the wicked prevaleth against the just, therefore wrong judgment goeth forth. (Hab. 1:3–4) These statements say that there are those not knowing the unfathomable judgments of God and the depth of the riches of His wisdom and knowledge, because God does not see as man sees. Man sees only things present, [but] God knows the future and eternal things. (Jerome, Comm. in Abacuc, 1,1, 2–3, ed. Marc Adriaen, CCSL 76A [Turnhout, 1970], p. 581–82) It is the common complaint of the holy to God, why there is an unjust judgment against them, and [why] they shed [their] innocent blood in persecutions, and [why], if when they stand before a tribunal of secular judges, the judge, having received gifts, condemns the innocent and frees the offender. Indeed, this can be said not only about the judges of the world, but sometimes also about certain leaders of the Church, who on account of gifts tear up the law, and do not proceed to the final judgment, and the wicked prevail against the just, and in judgements the sin of the rich is defended more than the truth of the poor. This gives rise to the complaint that the judgment comes out perverted. We should not be troubled by the inequity of these things, seeing that even in the beginning of the world the just Abel was killed by the wicked Cain (cf. Gen. 4:8), and that

after Jacob went into exile, Esau reigned in his father's house. (cf. Gen. 28) The Egyptians, [with hard works] in clay and brick, afflicted the children of Israel. (cf. Exod. 1:13–14) (Jerome, *Comm. in Abacuc*, 1, 1, 4, ed. Marc Adriaen, CCSL 76A [Turnhout, 1970], p. 583)

*Why lookest thou upon them that do unjust things, and holdest thy peace when the wicked devoureth the man that is more just than himself? And thou wilt make men as the fishes of the sea, and as the creeping things that have no ruler. (Hab. 1:13–14) Our Lord, knowing the weights and measures of His clemency, meanwhile does not listen to him who cries out, in order that He might put him to the test, and provoke him to pray more, and, as if tempered by fire, make him more just and pure. About which the apostle understands, according as we have obtained mercy from the Lord, we faint not (cf. 2 Cor. 4:1), and he blesses God at all times, and knows that he who endures to the end shall be saved. (cf. Matt. 10:22; 24:13) (Jerome, *Comm. in Abacuc*, 1, 2–3, ed. Marc Adriaen, CCSL 76A [Turnhout, 1970], p. 582)*

For the law shall go forth out of Sion, and the word of the Lord out of Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off: and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into spades: nation shall not take sword against nation: neither shall they learn war any more. (Mich. 4:2–3) Alas, what misery! In many nations it now happens that, with the desire for war coming to an end, they devote themselves to agriculture, on account of which weapons are turned into tools; and yet, it is necessary for the Burgundians, because of continuous domestic wars, that scythes, hoes, and plowshares are beaten into swords.

Come and behold ye the works of the Lord: what wonders he hath done upon earth, Making wars to cease even to the end of the earth. He shall destroy the bow, and break the weapons: and the shield he shall burn in the fire. Be still and see that I am God. (Ps. G 45:9–11) The things that this statement says might be done even bodily to some extent, if the Burgundians were pacified.

But my feet were almost moved; my steps had well nigh slipped. Because I had a zeal on occasion of the wicked, seeing the prosperity of sinners. For there is no regard to their death, and their strength is firm. They are not in the labour of men: neither shall they be scourged like other men. Therefore pride hath held them fast: they are covered with their iniquity. Their eyes stand out with fatness; they have passed into the affection of the heart. They have thought and spoken wickedness: they have spoken iniquity on high. (Ps. 72:2–8)