

The Epistle of Consolation

From Juan Pérez de Pineda,
a Reformer of the Church in Spain,

To those Imprisoned by the Inquisition

*For there is no Jesus Christ without a cross,
nor a true and blessed cross without Jesus Christ.*

1560

Translated by

Charles F. Johnson

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AN EPISTLE
TO
CONSOLE THE FAITHFUL OF JESUS CHRIST
WHO SUFFER PERSECUTION FOR THE CONFESSION OF HIS NAME;

In which the purpose and good will
of God unto them is declared and they are confirmed
against the temptations and horror of death
and taught how they must walk at all times,
prosperous and adverse.

Mark 13

“And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake:
but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”

Charles F. Johnson earned a bachelor's degree in linguistics from the University of Illinois (2019) and has interests in historical theology and the Spanish language. Text in [brackets] is the editor's. This work was translated from the public domain, Spanish edition, *Epistola Consolatoria por Juan Perez Reformador in el Siglo XVI* (Madrid: Libreria Nacional y Extranjera, Jacometrezo 59, 1874) at [Google Books](#). This translation is licensed under the very sharing-friendly: [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#).

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Biographical Preface

Juan Pérez, the author of *The Consolatory Epistle*, was born in the city of Montilla, Andalucía, famous for its wines. He became undoubtedly notable because of his capacity and character in the court of his sovereign Charles V; and so at the beginning of the 1527 he was sent to Rome and placed in charge of various affairs. With this purpose, he obtained a brief pontifical in favor of the works of Erasmus, as can be gathered from a letter he sent the 26th of June of that year to the Emperor.

From another of his letters it can be inferred that Perez was residing in Rome when, in May of 1528, the city suffered the memorable assault and sacking by the army of Charles V, composed of Spanish and German troops acting under the orders of the Duke of Bourbon. Pérez also suffered from the effects of the sacking, in which no distinction of persons was made, even in spite of his nationality and official position.

Having returned to Spain, Pérez took the rank of Doctor of Theology, or perhaps Doctor of Canon Law. In Seville he was the director of the college called, *The College of Doctrine*, and from then on he dealt in great intimacy with the celebrated preacher and doctor of the Church, Juan Gil (more generally known by the name of Dr. Egidio), Dr. Constantino Ponce de la Fuente, Cipriano de Valera, and various other persons that embraced the reformation.

When Egidio fell under suspicion of heresy and was arrested by the Inquisition in 1551, various of his friends, uncovered, sought deliverance and refuge in going to Switzerland or Germany. Count among this lot Juan Pérez, Casiodoro de Reina, and Cipriano de Valera; all three were successively occupied during their productive exile in working to prepare and print a translation of the bible into their native tongue.

Juan Pérez departed from Spain directly to Geneva, and in the space of some five years' work, he concluded his translations of the New Testament and of the Psalms; the former, printed in the year 1556, and the latter in the following year. The dedicatory

note that precedes the New Testament is headed as follows: “To the all-powerful King of the Heavens and Earth, Jesus Christ, true God and man, who died for our sins and is risen again for our justification, glorified and seated at the right hand of his Majesty in the heavens, and made Judge of the living and the dead, Lord and Giver of Life, to Him be glory, honor and praise from century to century.”

The translation of the Psalms, printed in the year 1557, is dedicated to Archduchess María of Austria, Queen of Hungary and Bohemia, daughter¹ of Charles V and Regent of the Low Countries. Pérez followed the dedicatory note with an eloquent discourse by the title, *Declaration of the fruitfulness and usefulness of the Psalms for all Christians*. This book, now extremely rare, is composed of 118 pages (without the dedicatory and declaration, which take up fourteen).

At that time, he also printed two commentaries written by Juan de Valdés, a secretary formerly employed by the Viceroy of Naples Sir Pedro of Toledo, the first on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians; the other on the Epistle to the Romans, dedicated by the author to Julia de Gonzaga.

Preceding this Commentary is an address from Pérez to the reader in which he says, among other things, the following: “The original manuscript came into my possession in such a ruinous condition and so old, since so much time had passed since it was written by the same author, that it has cost much work to bring it to light.” Sixteen years before this commentary would be printed, that is, in the year 1540, Valdés had died in Naples, and Pérez thought “that it had come into his possession by means ordained by providence, so that such a book which is so pious and full of heavenly sweetness, a work of a wealthy and noble gentleman, be not totally lost”, a thought that honors at once both the editor and the author.

Having brought these diverse works to completion, there remained the great difficulty of introducing them into Spain because of the exceeding vigilance that there was in those times, in which the terrible tribunal of the inquisition ruled in all its power,

¹ [The original erroneously reads “sister”.]

except that there be a Spaniard daring enough to venture to bring the books to this side of the Pyrenees.

In the end a person was found who, with valor without equal, agreed to the business: Julian Hernández, a native of Villaverde, in the region of Campos, where he was commonly called 'Julianillo' because of his shortness of stature. Hernández possessed in his small body an elevated mind and soul. In Germany, from the beginning aware of the Reformed religion, he had contact with and later met the doctor Juan Pérez, who served there as a scribe and corrector of proofs.² Seeing that no means suited them for the carriage of the books, and motivated by a most ardent desire to spread the knowledge of the gospel in his homeland, and not being solicited by any others, he resolved himself to take a great quantity of manuscripts of the translation of the Scriptures into Spanish and various other Protestant books and to bring them with him into Spain.

He put the books into two pipes or barrels of wine, and taking the route through Flanders, he continued on with all shrewdness and level-headedness, such that he was able to elude the vigilance of the agents of the Inquisition at all points. He, healthy and safe, deposited his precious cargo in Seville, in the house of Dr. Juan Ponce de Leon (who died by burning on September 24, 1559); and this illustrious gentleman was the one who distributed the said books among his friends inside and outside the city.

But in his passage through Flanders, Julian had given a copy of the New Testament to a blacksmith. He showed it to a priest, and at the same time gave personally identifying information, all of which information the priest of course communicated to the Inquisitors in Spain. In consequence, Hernández was imprisoned near Palma and brought to the prisons of the Holy Office of Seville.

When they took his statement, he did not attempt in any way to hide his beliefs, and he even congratulated himself for having been the means of introducing the light of divine truth into darkened Spain. Submitted multiple times to diverse torments to the

² [That is, the initial product in the printing process after type-setting, from which any errata are detected and corrected before the final stage of printing.]

end of getting him to divulge the names of his co-religionists, all of the physical pains were not sufficient to pull out of his lips the slightest expression that could compromise his brothers in the faith.

Although without the advantages of a liberal education, he knew how to confound the friars with his knowledge of the Scriptures alone (who visited him in his cell with the task of convincing him) and the agents of the Inquisition in the audiences seated before the tribunal. With a fortitude that contrasted with the smallness of his body, he suffered incomparably from the cruelty of the torment and the dislocation of his members, returning to his cell as if he hadn't suffered anything on the rack. And when his jailers brought him through the corridors, where there were other cells on the way to his own, as if to enliven the spirits of the prisoners that must have been in them, and were destined to suffer the hard trial which he was just gone through, he would sing the following verse in a triumphant tone, indicative of his victory and the confounding of his enemies:

“Defeated go the friars, defeated they go,
Running away go the wolves, running they go.”

Nevertheless, the Inquisitors found out everything in the end. The superstitious fears of a weak member of the fledgling church and the betrayal of a hidden emissary of the Inquisition who had entered in among the persecuted believers, making them to believe that he was one of them, finally revealed the names of the secret professors of the new faith, and in such great number that the same Inquisitors were surprised. The activeness and zeal of their familiars³ to uncover the new church even to the most remote connections made prison the inevitable result for the Protestants in Seville, Valladolid, and the neighboring towns, with up to eight hundred locked up in the prisons.

³ [Lay officers of the inquisition]

Prisons, convents and even individual houses were filled with prisoners, and from the confusion emanating from the sheer number of them and the accompanying places to keep them, some were able to escape and bring news of the event outside of Spain.

Undoubtedly, Juan Pérez, in his refuge in Geneva, heard the news of the destruction of this congregation of reformers, the formation of which he had been instrumental in, with deep sorrow. The principal cause of its dissolution appeared to have been the circulation of the Scriptures in the vulgar tongue; the apparent motor of this calamity was his assistant Julian Hernández, and the victims his own and most intimate friends.

Such was the event that it gave occasion to Pérez to write the present *Consolatory Epistle*, abundant in arguments and consolation taken from the Scriptures. He composed this work in order to enliven the patience and faith of his countrymen and friends by it, who were afflicted with such cruel sufferings. He printed it in a very reduced size and without any name of place or publisher in the year 1560. We will ignore if in such circumstances the issue of the *Epistle* was able to reach the notice of those imprisoned in Spain, and if, in the case of having arrived, its content was effective.

Besides the "Act of Faith"⁴ realized in Seville on December 24, 1559, in which 21 people died by burning, and another 80 were sentenced to diverse punishments, there was in the same city another Act on the 22nd of December of 1560 in which fourteen people were burned, three in effigy, and 34 were received as penitent. Of the three effigies, one was of Dr. Egidio, another of Dr. Constantino, and the third of the doctor Juan Pérez, author of *The Epistle*.

The fourteen burned alive remained firm in their faith and did not retract, presenting themselves as eminent martyrs to a cruel death, passing by means of those bonfires into eternal bliss. Eight were women, and of them, some were very

⁴ [The name of the massive public trials of the Inquisition in which enemies of the Roman Church were required to either publicly recant or be burned.]

distinguished by class and education, and five were from the same family: María Gomez, three of her daughters, and her sister.

One of the fourteen people condemned to the fire was the aforementioned Julian Hernández, who, after suffering three years of imprisonment, gave proof in his martyrdom of his unbreakable firmness in his beliefs, of a vigor in the midst of all trials, and of an indomitable valor, laying down his life without wavering in the burnt offering of his faith. Upon leaving the prison to be brought to the bonfire, he directed the following words to his comrades, who were about to suffer the same punishment: "My comrades, remain firm in your resolve, for now is when it most suits us to show ourselves courageous soldiers of Jesus Christ. Let us give in the sight of men a faithful testimony of Him and his truth: that within a few short hours, as compensation, we shall receive from Him the proof of his approval, triumphing for an eternity together with Him in heaven."

And having been silenced with a gag, he continued to encourage his friends with his gazes, gestures, and expressions. When he arrived at the bonfire, he kneeled, kissed the stone where the log and ring he was going to be tied-to were, and was able by himself to put a bundle of wood above his head to burn earlier. The doctor Fernando Rodríguez, who was trying to get him to retract, asked that his gag be removed so that, Julian already having been put in the iron ring, he might confess; but the martyr, the moment he could speak, only did so to reproach Rodríguez, saying that he spoke as a hypocrite, contradicting what he saw, for fear of the Inquisition. The soldiers around him, impatient and irritated because of his indomitable valor, drove him through with their halberds. In order to make the other prisoners waiver in their firmness, it was told to them on purpose that he had retracted, but he remained firm in his belief, as Llorente reports; and to the end he demonstrated the falsity of his enemies by his conduct.

The persecutions arising from the introduction of the Scriptures, works composed by the doctor Juan Pérez, and by the imprisonment of Julian Hernández, lasted for fifteen years, their results being felt in almost all of Spain. The cities that most openly embraced the principles of the reformation were Seville and Valladolid.

Contributing to this were, in the one, the persuasive teaching of the doctor Juan Gil, and the writings, sermons and doctrine of the doctor Constantino Ponce de la Fuente, and in the other, the two brothers Agustín and Francisco, sons of the king's accountant Pedro de Cazalla and of Lady Leonor de Vibero. Very distinguished people suffered in both towns, and the houses that they were accustomed to meet in were torn down and their lots spread with salt as a sign of their perpetual desolation. Moreover, some ignominious columns or pillars were placed in them with signs referring to the cases. Alluding to these circumstances and speaking of the happenings in Valladolid, Fernando de Tejada (the true author of the *Carrascón*), says, "I, with my own eyes, saw this column." He must have seen it between the years of 1615 and 1620. And Llorente, in his history of the inquisition, chapter 20, paragraph 8, says, "I have seen the lot, the column and the inscription. They have told me that it doesn't exist anymore because a French general, in the year 1809, ordered that this testimony to human ferocity against the dead be removed." If this was done then (which isn't credible), they restored, in that case, the *same* old pillar and sign upon the return of Ferdinand VII. The owner of the manuscript that functions as an original for the present work did contemplate many times, not without pain, said infamous column in the years 1826-1827, when he was a student in the university of that city. Nevertheless, the pillar and sign disappeared under the regency of Espartero, and the site where they were, which was called *Street of the Sign of Cazalla*, was changed for the better by the city council at that time, which put *Dr. Cazalla Street*. Still, until a few years ago, to hurt the Vallisoletanos, the nearby villages would call them 'Cazalleros' and 'Cazallistas'.

As it is probable that the columns and signs raised in Seville and other places on such occasions were conceived of in the same terms, with the sole variation of the names of the persons; I put here that of Valladolid, as it existed in the year 1826, faithfully copied, without more variation than to put whole and legible all the letters half-erased by time, and so an example will be seen therein, not only of past intolerance and barbarity, but of the fanaticism of the generations that followed.

Presiding over
the Roman Church
Paul IV, and Reigning
In Spain, Phillip II

* * *

The Holy Office of the Inquisition
condemned these houses of Pedro de Cazalla
and Dr. Leonor de Vibero, his wife to be demolished and salted
because the Lutheran heretics met to engage in secret meetings
against our holy catholic faith and Roman Church
Year MDLIX on the XXI of May

The Spanish that a little before this event were able to escape from their country took refuge in Geneva. Juan Pérez joined a congregation there, where he for some time officiated as a minister. Later he filled the same post in the Protestant church of Blois, and later he was a chaplain of the widow duchess of Ferrara, daughter of Louis XII, dwelling in the castle of Montargis, where she retired to in the year 1559 upon the death of the Duke, her husband, where she continued to give shelter and protection to those destitute because of the Protestant cause, as she had already done in the court of Ferrara.

Juan Pérez died in Paris of kidney stones at a very advanced age, as a testimony leaving all his goods to finance the printing of a bible in Spanish.

Beza tells us that Juan Pérez was a person of great wisdom and piety, and that the Protestants that live in Seville and its region received by means of his writings great instruction in little time and great progress in the true knowledge of the gospel.

M'Críe⁵ declares that “the works composed by Pérez in the romance tongue are of the greatest value.”

The works of Pérez that are known are:

1. *The New Testament, etc.*, newly and faithfully translated from the original Greek into Spanish. In Venice, in the house of Juan Philadelpho. 1556.
2. *The Catechism*. In Venice by Pedro Daniel, 1556, according to Llorente. The expurgatory index of 1631 says this: “His catechism, that falsely speaks, was seen by the inquisitors of Spain.” And an edition without place in 1559.
3. *The Sum of Christian Doctrine*, in the house of Pedro Daniel, according to Llorente. We have not seen this work.
4. *The Psalms of David, etc.*, In Venice, in the house of Pedro Daniel, 1557.
5. *An Epistle to Console the Faithful of Jesus Christ*, 1560.

Pérez also printed:

6. *A brief and compendious commentary or declaration on the Epistle of Saint Paul the Apostle to the Romans, most helpful for all Christians*. Composed by Juan Valdés, a pious and sincere theologian. In Venice, in the house of Juan Philadelpho, 1556.
7. *A familiar and compendious commentary or declaration on the First Epistle of Saint Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, very useful for all lovers of Christian piety*. Composed by Juan Valdés, a pious and sincere theologian. In Venice, in the house of Juan Philadelpho, 1557.

⁵ [Rev. Thomas M'críe the elder is here referred to.]

If to these is added the “Sacred Bible”, which Llorente assures is prohibited in the index already cited, there would then be eight works which were published by Juan Pérez, or that are known under his name.

Pellicer, Rodríguez de Castro, M’Crie, and others, guided by the title pages of various of these works, assert that they were printed in Venice. However, according to the opinion of Thomas Rodd of London, and of the most learned biographers, they were probably printed by Crispin, a printer in Geneva, and a detailed persuasive discourse corroborates this opinion. The emblem of the printer, stamped on the cover page of the *New Testament*, and on both commentaries of Valdés, is a large ‘Y’, whose narrow arm presents the path to salvation or *the path of life*; and the wide one that of perdition. This emblem is that which can be seen, used by Crispin, on other books known to have been printed by him, above all on the English translation of the New Testament called *The Geneva Testament*, which is the first edition of the said translation, and on others. There exists a New Testament in Italian printed in 1556, the same year as the Spanish one, with the name of Crispin, although without the emblem; but it was the same capital letters, with the same adornments as the Spanish one. “Pedro Daniel” is unknown as a printer, and appears to have been adopted figuratively, like the other name of “Juan Philadelpho”.

Dr. Benjamin Wiffen, who reprinted this book for the first time in the year 1848, adds, “Though the clouds are gloomy and dismal that now form over Spain and obscure the greater part of the genius of that divided people, whose own fate couldn’t be of less interest to them, surely, the times returning, a more clear and calm era will shine through, in which the Spaniards will search out with longing those writings in their own tongue that their own reformers left them.

“Just as the seat of the true religion always accompanied tribulation, so will the example and counsel of those that before passed by the same path serve as real consolation to those that suffer for such principles, and maybe one of these will be able to gather strength and consolation from the scriptural pages of *The Consolatory Epistle*.

Dedicatory Epistle

To all the Faithful,
Beloved of God and Persecuted for his Gospel,
Juan Perez.

The grace of salvation be to you in the same Lord.

The grace and peace of God our Father, and of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all, who abide in his mercy and call upon him with a pure heart, and desire his coming and the manifestation of his glory, which things serve to console you and give you strength by the power of his Spirit against the common temptations⁶ which everyone who partakes of his atonement is afflicted with in this age, so that you do not grow faint because of them, but rather you be made constant to the end in the grace that has been worked for you in God having given you⁷ to know his Son, Jesus Christ, as the only author of your salvation and a constant advocate⁸ before His Majesty, so that by his righteousness alone you have a constant hope, rejoicing fully in the eternal inheritance promised⁹ to all those that are sanctified by the word of truth.

God is faithful, who will not let any touch you without his express willing, whose power is beyond description, as with his will, because he is able to do all that he desires, and he desires no thing that does not serve the purpose of his honor and glory

⁶ 1 Pet. 5

⁷ Jn. 14

⁸ 1 Jn. 2

⁹ Heb. 7

and salvation for his elect; and this means that all things, adverse though they may be, serve for their good and prosperity.¹⁰

God having by his mercy¹¹ given Jesus Christ his Son as Head and having made us all members of his holy body,¹² it is not possible that we stop feeling each other's shame and weariness, even though bodily, we be far apart, because the Spirit of Jesus Christ, by whom we all live, has us more conjoined and united to each other than the soul is to the body.

As such, my beloved brothers, as I am a partaker of the mercy that we all received in the name of and on the part of the Lord, who gave his life for ours, I have wanted to console you in your affliction with which you are oppressed by the world, and simply because you want to live faithfully in Jesus Christ, so that, you being enlivened by his word¹³, I also be a partaker of the joy of your consolation and the firmness of your faith. For I have hope in his goodness that he will perfect his work in all of us in such a way that in all circumstances He be glorified, if we live or if we die, because in life and in death He is our gain.¹⁴

The persecution we suffer is cruel and dangerous. For those that persecute us are not Turks or pagans by profession, but are baptized like us, and are said to have zeal for God, and that which they undertake in order to afflict us they do to serve Him and merit heaven. Because of this, we must obtain to be so much more certain of our calling, and of the good will that God had and has for us, and not doubt because of any circumstance the immutability and firmness of his divine counsel, with which He determined before the foundation of the world to make us saved in Jesus Christ, in the knowledge of whom all our well-being and consolation consist.¹⁵

¹⁰ 1 Cor. 10; Mt. 10; Ps. 114; Rom. 8

¹¹ ['clemencia', mercy in the pardoning of wrongdoing]

¹² Col. 1; Eph. 1

¹³ 2 Tim. 3

¹⁴ Rom. 14; Phil. 1

¹⁵ Eph. 1; Col. 1; Jn. 13

Doubt and a lack of awareness of these things tends to create great dismay in the hearts of the faithful. It makes them thin, fearful, cowardly, sad, mistrusting, and puts in them a great forgetfulness of the blessings that they have received from God. Also from here are born those deep moans and sighs with which many, seeing themselves afflicted for the truth, repent of having given ear to and [in having] believed the voice of the Lord. For seeing the hardships that come upon them for confessing the name of Jesus Christ, they lead themselves into deception and return to the wallow of errors and superstitions that they were in before being called, and make themselves greater enemies of God and more cruelly against the truth, and in this way their last years come to be much worse than their early ones.¹⁶

On the other hand, to know them well and have them impressed upon the heart makes the Christian strong against all adversity and powerful to battle bravely against the forces and power of hell, and to never turn the back to the enemy, and to come to be day-by-day more enriched by the gifts of heaven, with which he is made more pleasing to God. Everything that is against Jesus Christ in the world contradicts and makes war upon him, but he emerges victorious by the power and strength of that knowledge. And in this way, the greater and more deeply rooted it be in our hearts, the more will our consolation in afflictions be more fully grown, our constancy in adversity firmer and stronger, our desire to see ourselves with God more enlivened, and greater our lack of regard for the world and for all the pleasures that reign in it. And we will better be able to sanctify the name of the Lord and to plead to Him with a more fervent desire that his kingdom come, so that that [kingdom] of his enemies be totally destroyed, and He alone be obeyed and reign in the consciences of those He redeemed.¹⁷

¹⁶ 2 Pet. 2; Mt. 12

¹⁷ Mt. 7; Lk. 6

1. OUR STATE BEFORE CONVERSION

If we understand that sin against God left us in such a state after it once took control of us, we will also come to understand how great his love and goodness was in removing us from it and in freeing us from condemnation so just that it was owed to us by Him. The devil, by sin, corrupted and destroyed all that God had put in us, all that made us clearly known as the work and craftsmanship of his hands. He erased the image of God that was carved in our soul,¹⁸ that we were created in. We remained without all holiness and righteousness, alien to all purity and truth. He left us without the righteousness and freedom that we had in order to conform ourselves to the divine will. Finally, we remained empty of all those gifts and graces that God had honored and enriched us with so that we would serve Him with them, and have Him always as our God, and be known as his creatures¹⁹ and the perfection of his works in the world.

All the good in us that God had given being destroyed, we remained full of all evil, abhorrent and contrary to Him. For the devil, in place of the image and likeness of God which had been in us, put his own, and in this way, we became full of all unrighteousness, lies, hypocrisy, fornication, malice, avarice, evil, full of envy, hatred, deceit, detestable, detesters of God and of all truth, arrogant, vainglorious, disobedient, disloyal, without understanding, completely blind and without mercy, finally made into a copy of the devil, whose captives we were.²⁰ In his letter to the Ephesians, St. Paul declares this same thing to us, teaching us that such was our condition before God called us.²¹ “And you has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of

¹⁸ Gen. 3

¹⁹ [‘creature’ means ‘created thing’ throughout]

²⁰ Rom. 1; Tit. 3

²¹ Eph. 2; Col. 2

wrath", from which he concludes that not only was there not any trace of goodness or righteousness in us, but that we were all subject to the devil and that all our being was characterized by wickedness and faithlessness, so that all our works were of the flesh, corrupt and cursed. For if "the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be"²², all the works that proceed from it are enmity against God and demonstrations of the hatred of truth that possesses the heart. And if all the thoughts of man from birth are evil²³, all the works that result from them are of the same quality: wicked, condemned, and fallen, and provoking of the indignation of God, so that all of our evil is natural to us. Before, we were sons of God, but now after sin we are sons of his wrath²⁴, which is to be totally lost, exiled, and disinherited from his wealth, above measure placed at enmity with all that pleases Him. "They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that does good, no, not one."²⁵

He being then in everything corrupted and being of corrupt flesh, what can he put out of himself but odors which are of great efficiency to corrupt all which should pass by? For this reason, we are compared by the same prophet²⁶ to an open grave, where there is nothing but putrid corpses, and to being full of worms, from which nothing can come but stench that infect and kill. He says that our throat is the mouth of this grave and that we carry the venom of asps beneath our lips, because all that comes out of them kills with its force. Our mouth was full²⁷ of curses and of bitterness. We had swift feet, but to shed blood.²⁸ Our paths and ways of life were mortal, called such because they killed, as there was nothing in them but calamity and misfortune, which were a testimony of our damnation and the miserable servitude to sin that we

²² Rom. 8

²³ Gen. 6

²⁴ Eph. 2

²⁵ Ps. 14; Ps. 53

²⁶ Ps. 5, 140

²⁷ Ps. 10

²⁸ Prov. 1

were held in.²⁹ We didn't know the way of peace and therefore we didn't know anything that would please God by which we could be brought into friendship with Him. Destitute of fear of the judgments of God, we ran like headless horses through all sorts of evil. We were impeded by fear of men from publicly committing the vices that were dammed up in our hearts.

A man, after his soul has separated from his flesh, does not rest without his body being buried so that it be eaten by worms. We being dead in sins and trespasses, and God separated from our souls, there was nothing left to us but to be buried in hell, to be made fodder for eternal death, which we rightfully deserved. Therefore, if He would have desired to give a definite sentence against us and seal the process to us, we would have been constrained by our own consciences to approve it and to admit ourselves to be well-condemned, because our works, our thoughts, our desires, and our hearts, and all that was in us, condemned us, and thus compelled God not to suffer so many injustices nor to tolerate such great, monstrous slanderers of his truth and of the beauty of his works; and this is how miserable we were in that state. All that was in us was material for just condemnation, which awakened the wrath and judgment of God with which we were to be entirely consumed. For everything was darkness³⁰ and curse, sin and the fruit of sin, distorted and contrary to the extreme to that which God required of us, so that we neither had nor could do any good. For we were a bad tree, corrupt and rotten; and "a bad tree cannot bear good fruit."³¹ For this reason we were entirely subject to all the punishment and curse that was owed to us; there was nothing left but to be completely cut off and put in the company of the devil and of those that are already condemned for such crimes.

For the works which we considered good, in which we in those times employed ourselves, with which we thought ourselves to do service to God, were of such a quality that because of them God was the more offended and we the more deeply sunken into

²⁹ Ps. 10, Rom. 3

³⁰ Jn. 1

³¹ Mt. 7

the flames of our damnation. In those times we fasted,³² we made use of disciplines, we made others to say Mass and we heard it many times; we established chaplaincies, we prayed through candles³³ and rosaries, we were devotees of the souls of purgatory, we chose some dead saints to have them as advocates in order to escape from divine wrath and condemnation through them, we made faithless and insane religious vows, we received papal bulls, we prayed in stations,³⁴ we earned pardons, we attended confession, we received communion often to be holier and merit more, and we had those that lent or sold us merits; for death was not to catch us unprepared, but rather, we were to have to present these things to God to satisfy for our sins. These and other such things were what we did to serve Him with them and to reach grace and glory. But having all of them, though they were seen, praised, and approved by men, heaven was closed to us and hell open. “For that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God,”³⁵ who does not approve of and is neither pleased by other things than those which He commanded, and which are not done such as one pleases, but with his spirit³⁶ and breath. Those things that we did to serve Him could not please Him, for He condemns all of them by his word as sin, for they proceeded from our opinion and that of those that taught us, and not from knowledge and love of his holy will. And all that does not proceed from this root is sin, as the apostle teaches.³⁷

The sum of what the divine law asks of us is: to love God with all one’s heart and our neighbor as ourselves, to do justice and love mercy, and to have faith.³⁸ The works that we did under the title of holiness are not comprehended in the law; they did not proceed from judgment, mercy, and faith, without which it is impossible to please

³² Mt. 15; Isa. 58

³³ [*pabulo*, “wick”. While not defined as such, the author likely refers to votive candles.]

³⁴ [Refers to a number of related Roman Catholic rituals involving walking and reciting prayers.]

³⁵ Lk. 16; Dt. 12; Isa. 1

³⁶ [Not capitalized in the original; refers to man worshipping in a right spirit.]

³⁷ Rom. 14

³⁸ Mt. 22, 23

God,³⁹ and because of this, He had them justly reckoned as evil, and us as more evil with them than without them. For if He rejects as evil the works and sacrifices that He commanded in his law, for not being done with the end that He commanded, and says that they are provoking of his anger and that they have made Him irritated and tired, so much that He cannot suffer them, how much more evil and angering to Him are those that He never commanded more than those that He expressly upholds by his word?⁴⁰ And so all our holiness was a testament of greater condemnation and greater blindness, and of being seated⁴¹ as the wrath of God rested above us.⁴² For everything was idolatry with which we paid service, not to the true God, who we did not know, but to those that are by nature not gods, which is what we pretended they were in our opinions and the expected ends of our worship.⁴³ And in this way we betrayed the mark of being sons of God, which is holy baptism, a sign of faithfulness and of not having any God but Him, and of not serving Him according to any rule but his word, and we were traitors, unfaithful, idolaters, allied and confederated with his enemies, and given to all unrighteousness and evil, so much so that we may say with Isaiah that we owe it only to the mercy of the Lord that we were not totally consumed and did not perish entirely.

2. THE ORIGIN OF OUR SALVATION

Remaining then in such a state as was ours at that time, which was to be “without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world”, it pleased Him, who is “rich in mercy”, “for his great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were

³⁹ Heb. 11

⁴⁰ Isa. 1; Jer. 6; Mt. 15

⁴¹ [To be seated at the judgment is a biblical metaphor for condemnation, as in Ps. 1.]

⁴² Jn. 3

⁴³ Gal. 4

dead in sins”, to show this mercy in calling us into the knowledge of Him and taking us out of the abyss of our condemnation; He “has quickened us together with Christ”, and we having been “far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.”⁴⁴

And such says St. Paul elsewhere: “But God commends his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”⁴⁵ to reconcile us to God by his death and make us partakers of his righteousness and sanctification. Therefore, in the business of our damnation we contributed everything, because from us it had its origin, for we voluntarily gave ourselves⁴⁶ into the hands of Him that damned us and stripped us of all our wellbeing; but in the business of our receiving life it was necessary that God contribute everything so that we could reach it; and before, the ills that we were found in having been real, it was necessary that the salvation by the virtue of which we be delivered be real. The Holy Spirit testifies such to us by the prophet Hosea, saying “O Israel, you have destroyed yourself; but in Me is your help.”⁴⁷ And by the apostle He says that “after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared”, He saved us, not by works which we were to have done (which would have to have been done in perfect righteousness), “but according to his mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”⁴⁸

From this it appears that that call with which God, taking pity on us, calls us to Himself, precedes all our well-being and salvation. For as in the beginning we did not contribute anything on our part that God would form us and give us being as men, but rather, He did it all, and we were purely his own workmanship, such it is that He calls us, and having called us forms us again and sanctifies us; we do not contribute

⁴⁴ Eph. 2

⁴⁵ Rom. 5:8

⁴⁶ Gen. 3

⁴⁷ Hos. 13:5

⁴⁸ [As was often his practice, Perez here freely synthesized Titus 3:4-7 and Ephesians 2:8-9 into a single quotation; in keeping with modern stylistic norms, the translator chose to distinguish them.]

anything. For what could Lazarus, dead four days, buried, and putrid, contribute so that Jesus Christ might revive him and give him new life?⁴⁹ Much less could we contribute to being free from the power of death which held us captive. For much deader, more entombed, and more putrid were we before God because of sin than Lazarus was bodily in men's eyes. By the power of the voice that Jesus Christ called him with, he became free from death's prisons, purified from corruption, and restored to new life. And likewise, by the power of the voice of the same Lord we were revived to new life. For God calls to the things that are not as if they were, and, by the efficacy of the voice that He calls them with, He gives them new being.⁵⁰ The wicked state of the sinner is to have no being before God; but by calling him to Himself, He gives him a divine being⁵¹ which has partaken of the same word as He called him with, before which calling, as a dead man has no sufficiency to do the works of a living man, likewise could he not in any way do anything pleasing to God, but was asleep and possessed by death, without any sense of life. We did not call upon or seek God, for we were of the number of those that David, quoted earlier, said do not seek God. For how will the dead call out to him who lives? How will they seek Him who they never knew?⁵²

Because of this, He says the same thing by Isaiah: "I am sought of them that asked not for Me; I am found of them that sought Me not,"⁵³ so that we thus understand that He alone sought us, called us, and gave it to us to know Him, we meanwhile being entombed in forgetfulness, in sin, and in all the other evils that were born of it, and wholly possessed by the devil, who we obeyed, whose works and advices we had as the model of our lives.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Jn. 11

⁵⁰ Rom. 4; Eze. 37

⁵¹ ['Divine' here means 'having its origin with God', not 'of the essence of God'.]

⁵² Rom. 10

⁵³ Isa. 65:1

⁵⁴ Jn. 8

3. CHRIST, THE CAUSE OF OUR ELECTION

The reason, therefore, that God had to call us out of the darkness that we were in into his glorious light was Jesus Christ alone, in whom and by whose love He determined to save us.⁵⁵ Because of and through Jesus Christ, says St. Paul, we are called into his inheritance,⁵⁶ “predestinated according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of his own will, that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.” The purpose and counsel with which He before the centuries ordained that we be partakers of his salvation is that by which he brought it about that we know his Son, by whose merits we are made pleasing to Him. St. Peter says this same thing,⁵⁷ that we were chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and the washing of the blood of Jesus Christ. St. Paul, considering the greatness of this blessing, so undeserved and unimagined by men, gives thanks to God for himself and for all the faithful that have been called to partake of it. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the beloved.”⁵⁸

Therefore, God having chosen us from eternity in Jesus Christ is the foundation which our calling is built upon, by which God called us in time⁵⁹ that we be partakers of and rejoice in those benefits which He called us into, from which it is manifest that the

⁵⁵ Hos. 2; 1 Pet. 2

⁵⁶ Col. 1; Eph. 1:11

⁵⁷ 1 Pet. 1

⁵⁸ Eph. 1:3-6

⁵⁹ Mt. 20

foundation of our benefits is so firm, our calling is so true, and the righteousness and holiness of heaven so firm which through our calling is communicated to us.

We could not give anything to God so that He would choose us because we were not when He called us, and the full cause of our election was in Jesus Christ. And neither could we give Him anything for Him to call us or justify us. For, as was said, by reason of being possessed by the devil and by sin, our state was more poor and miserable than can be thought. Thus, we conclude that all is grace which God has had with us in calling us to Himself by the gospel. For not even having been called could we come to have Jesus Christ, if the Father had not brought us to Him and given us ears to hear his voice and understand what his will is. For, just as the same one says, "No man can come to Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him":⁶⁰ he brought us to Him so that we be pardoned by his righteousness and so that the obligation which obliged us to eternal death be erased.⁶¹ For by Him, says the apostle, we have redemption by his blood, which is the remission of sins, according to the riches of his grace.⁶² And He of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.⁶³ For it was Him that committed no sin who God made a sacrifice for our sins, that we might be made the righteousness of God through Him.⁶⁴ And in this way He is our whole righteousness and completed satisfaction before divine justice.

For the eternal Father, says Isaiah, put all our sins upon Him,⁶⁵ who by the power of his death destroyed them all and wholly satisfied the justice of God for us, and gave us a complete deliverance from all of them, and by Him⁶⁶ we are truly righteous and approved by God.

For if sin and the devil were powerful to place us under such condemnation, for which we had no remedy in us, much more powerful and beyond comparison is the

⁶⁰ Jn. 6:44

⁶¹ Col. 2.

⁶² Eph. 1.

⁶³ 1 Cor. 1:30

⁶⁴ 2 Cor. 5:21

⁶⁵ Isa. 53

⁶⁶ Rom. 4

righteousness of Jesus Christ to give us true and perfect deliverance from all the evils which the devil plunged us into. For, as St. Paul says,⁶⁷ if by the sin of one man death reigned through one, how much more will those that receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through Jesus Christ alone. And as through the sin of one man came condemnation upon all men, so also the righteousness of one is come upon men in the justification of life. For just as the sin of Adam condemned to eternal death all men descended from him, likewise the righteousness of Christ is the cause by which all believers are justified and made with Him heirs of the kingdom.⁶⁸

4. FAITH AND WORKS

God did not only call us and give us his word, but also by it, through the acting of the Holy Spirit, birthed faith in our hearts, which is like arms and hands with which we embrace Jesus Christ, with all of his benefits, and in this way He brought us to Him, which St. Paul confirms, saying, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us... that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” For all having sinned, and not being clothed⁶⁹ with the glory of God, they are graciously justified by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, who God put forth as a propitiation in his blood, by faith, to the end that He be found just and the justifier of him that has faith in Jesus. “By grace are ye saved through faith (he says to the Ephesians); and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus...”⁷⁰ from which it appears that our justification is a new creation and a work of God alone, who, as He created us in the beginning by the power of his word, so now, by the same virtue and power, forms us and makes us new creatures in Jesus Christ. “To them He gave,”

⁶⁷ Rom. 5

⁶⁸ Rom. 8

⁶⁹ Rom. 3

⁷⁰ Eph. 2:8-9

says St. John, “power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”⁷¹ From which we see that being righteous does not come to us by nature,⁷² nor by human industry, but by the gracious gift of the Lord, who “of his own will begat He us with the word of truth”⁷³, as St. James writes. For, as the apostle says, you are all sons of God because you have believed in Jesus Christ. And, “We know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.”⁷⁴ And so he concludes that the blessing of Jesus Christ which was promised to Abraham and to his descendants belongs only to those that receive it by faith, believing the divine promises and applying to themselves what is contained in them. “So those who rely,” he says, “on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse.” It therefore is manifest that all those that do not with the hands of faith receive Jesus Christ and remission of sins and the reconciliation which is won by Him cannot take or receive them by any works that they do; but rather, they are still in their sins and subject to an eternal curse.

We cannot have peace with God by anything else than by that faith, that we be pleasing to Him. By faith we are admitted into his grace, and therefore by it He is appeased with us and we have righteousness before Him. It is as the apostle teaches, saying, “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.”⁷⁵ In this he declares that Jesus Christ is the author of our righteousness and that we are partakers of his salvation by the faith that we have in Him, by which we find ourselves certain that God is already reconciled and at peace

⁷¹ Jn. 1:12-13

⁷² Rom. 1, 3

⁷³ James 1:18

⁷⁴ Gal. 2:15-16

⁷⁵ Rom. 5:1-2

with us, and for this reason assured that we possess and must forever possess eternal life. The Holy Scriptures teach us this with an unrivaled harmony. "All the prophets," says St. Peter, "testify about Him that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."⁷⁶ Also St. Paul, in Acts, speaking of Christ, says, "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."⁷⁷ From which it appears that pardon from sins and all the benefits promised by God through Christ we receive from Him by faith in his gospel. David, teaching by the Holy Spirit, having seen that all that he had in himself and could do was cause to be condemned by God if dealt with and examined with the rigor and justice that the law demands, has his recourse to divine mercy and takes it as a patron in the judgment and asks God with great vehemence that He not judge him in keeping with what his law demands: "And enter", he says, "not into judgment with your servant: for in your sight shall no man living be justified."⁷⁸ In this he confesses that by grace and mercy alone are the faithful justified through the mercy that God has for them, seeing them in Jesus Christ and calling them to himself because of his love; putting all the evils and sins that they have committed in his account and giving them his obedience and satisfaction as their own, not more or less than if they themselves had earned it.

In order to remove us from all doubt and finish delivering us from all deceits and errors in which we have until now lived, the Lord says by Isaiah, "I, even I, am he that blots out your transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember your sins."⁷⁹ And in this way He alone pardons us, without finding in us anything because of which He must do it; and it is because of Himself, of his pure liberality, that he works such mercies for us.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Acts 10:43

⁷⁷ Acts 13:38-39

⁷⁸ Ps. 143:2

⁷⁹ Isa. 43:25

⁸⁰ Eze. 16; Jer. 2

Because of this, all that men invent and do so that God would pardon them is excluded as evil and abhorrent. For there is not more than one Jesus Christ, pardoner, and neither is there any reason outside of himself for which God might pardon sin. We therefore are the sinners, and He alone the pardoner, we the unrighteous, and He alone the author of righteousness; in us there is reason to most justly condemn us, and in Him alone reason that He might save us. St. Peter says this same thing: “there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved [but Jesus Christ].”⁸¹ “Neither our fathers nor we were able to bear [the yoke of the law]”, he says, “but we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.”⁸² For by faith God purified their hearts, just as he purifies ours. Such said the Lord to his followers, that they were clean by the word that they had heard from Him and believed, by which He had cleansed them of all their sins and paid their debt to God. Therefore, we have divine righteousness and holiness⁸³ through the faith that we give to the promises of God and the confidence that we have in his mercy and in the truth with which he promises to always be a merciful Father to us for love of Jesus Christ. Because of this, the prophet David, knowing that there is not more than one righteousness that is valid before God, and that can appear in his court of judgment and emerge victorious, says: “My tongue also shall talk of your righteousness all the day long.”⁸⁴ And in this he renounces and declares to be unrighteous all human forms of holiness and righteousness because they are dirty and stained,⁸⁵ for not only can men not gain anything by them, nor be helped to satisfy divine justice all or in part, but by necessity, if these things are put before Him, they must emerge condemned because of them. For what does the purity that is demanded from us by the law have to do with the worldliness and ugliness of our works?

⁸¹ Acts 4:12

⁸² Acts 15:10-11

⁸³ [‘Divine’ meaning ‘having its origin with God’; our imputed righteousness is the righteousness of Christ in fulfilling the law, not God’s essential righteousness that is an attribute of his divine person, as Osiander taught. See footnote 128.]

⁸⁴ Ps. 71:24

⁸⁵ Isa. 64

From this, my brothers and sisters, we already see how, just as there is not more than one Jesus Christ, redeemer of the world, neither is there, nor can there be, another righteousness than his by which we be saved; and there is no other way to reach a general pardon of our sins and reconciliation with God than by the faith and confidence with which we believe his divine promises and assure ourselves of all that he has declared to us by them, by which we also have free passage to call upon him as Father. The Holy Spirit teaches this catholic truth in his Church, and with all of her we embrace it and continue to be taught and guided by the same Spirit, by whose word we have received this revelation and understanding. For this reason, Jesus Christ our Savior gives thanks to the Father in the name of all his faithful and declares together with them what has been the cause of this so-supreme blessing: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in your sight." The cause, therefore, of this blessing and of all those that accompany it is the good will of God toward us and the good pleasure that he has in his Son, as is above said and is here declared by the same Lord. Therefore, since we know it to be so, let us consider ourselves to be among the number of those babes that Jesus gives thanks for and not let ourselves "be carried about with diverse and strange doctrines,"⁸⁶ whose end is to separate those who believe from the unity of the faith that was taught to us by the prophets and apostles, and by Jesus Christ, Lord and Redeemer of us all.⁸⁷

Having therefore been made partakers of the fruit of the Lord's redemption through gospel-faith,⁸⁸ we should know well what it is that we must do in order to persevere and grow in the righteousness and holiness that he has communicated to us. Before being called or having received the pardon of our guilt, we were such as before described. But now, having been reconciled with God through Jesus Christ, we are

⁸⁶ Heb. 13:9

⁸⁷ [This could be translated as either 'all' or 'us all' depending on the context. Either could be appropriate here as long as one does not understand by it a sort of indefinite redemption like that taught by Arminius or Amyraut, an idea earlier contradicted by Pérez.]

⁸⁸ Eph. 3

removed from the empire of the Devil, and having received the Spirit of God, we are by his power engrafted into Christ and made his members, from whom, as from our head, we derive spirit and life, because of which we must engage in acts of life, so that they be a clear testimony that Jesus Christ, who rescued and pardoned us, now lives in us, and that he alone is the foundation of our hope, and that in Him and through Him we are loved by God as sons. This is what St. Peter teaches us when he says that Jesus Christ is “a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious.” “Ye also,” he says, “as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”⁸⁹ And a little later: “[Ye] which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.”⁹⁰ “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”⁹¹ In this he makes us to understand that our entire life must be a perpetual sacrifice of praise to the Lord for having mercy on us, and that all our works proclaim his glory and his virtues. In order to do this, St. Paul says that, “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.”⁹² We must therefore depart from all superstitions and false religion, from all fleshly and worldly lusts and desires, and follow in everything the piety and will of God which is declared to us by his word. For since we are bought with inestimable price of the blood of Christ⁹³ and are made servants of God, we must not serve Him in any other way nor with any other devices than those that he commanded through his law. “To be holy and without blame”⁹⁴ the Lord called and chose us. We are not holy but profane before

⁸⁹ 1 Pet. 2:4-5

⁹⁰ 1 Pet. 2:10

⁹¹ 1 Pet. 2:9

⁹² Tit. 2:12

⁹³ 1 Pet. 1

⁹⁴ Eph. 1:4

Him because of what we do in his service when governed by another rule than that of his commandments.

“For we are his workmanship,” says St. Paul, “created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.”⁹⁵ Only those works are good which He has commanded by his word, and we should fully employ ourselves in the study of them. For this is the end to which we were redeemed, as the apostle teaches: “[Jesus Christ] gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”⁹⁶ All true believers, says the prophet Isaiah, are trees of righteousness, planted by the Lord so that He be glorified by them.⁹⁷ Therefore, we must make straight all our affections, our desires, and our thoughts to glorify Him with those things that we are certain He approves of. For since he has opened our eyes to see his light, it is not right that we yet walk in darkness, thinking falsely that He will content Himself with what we content ourselves with or with what men without his Spirit command and approve of.

God has given Jesus Christ alone as our teacher and instructor,⁹⁸ and He commands us to hear Him, for He is the interpreter and declarer of his will and powerful to straighten us in the fulfilment of it.

In this way, those that hear it and have his holy word as a rule for all their works testify in the same that they are trees of righteousness, loved and approved by Him, and that his Spirit resides in them. But of those that teach and do that which is contrary to his law, He says the same thing by St. Matthew, that they are plants that the Father did not plant⁹⁹ and that even though they are notable for some amount of time, in the end they must be plucked up and wither. Therefore, since Jesus Christ testifies that those that serve him according to the commandments of men are not his plants, we must flee

⁹⁵ Eph. 2:10

⁹⁶ Tit. 2:14

⁹⁷ Isa. 61

⁹⁸ Mt. 17; Mk. 9; Lk. 9

⁹⁹ Mt. 15

from and abhor such service, since those that do it by it make known that they are still subject to the condemnation that they were born into.

The hatred of such false service and love of all the things that God upholds, and obedience to the divine commandments, are among those fruits that we must always bear as his plants with constant study, which is the way of those the prophet speaks of, who place all their delight in the law of the Lord and meditate upon it night and day.¹⁰⁰ So that we might be able to bear fruit in this way, God planted us in his Son,¹⁰¹ giving Him to us a Redeemer and as an example, whom we follow and who, with his righteousness, covers the many insufficiencies that we have in our service.

And therefore, we must believe Him to be such for us, which we confess in the symbol,¹⁰² being content to have Him as our perpetual Savior, King, and Priest, who lives eternally to intercede for us,¹⁰³ in whom we have the fulfilment of all that God asks of us. For in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.¹⁰⁴

This is the faith that must be in our hearts, by which we are rooted into Christ and know the sufficiency that we have in Him of all his benefits, of whose goodness we must always await. And not as in the time of our blindness, in which we confessed that we believed in Him, but lying and falsely. For confessing him with our mouths, we denied him with our works.¹⁰⁵ We said that we believed in Him as Savior, and it was a lie, since we searched for salvation in vain things that He did not command or approve of, which are those things which we have lived in until now. We confessed Him as Christ, that is, as King and Priest, but we did not give place to his word in our hearts that He reign in them; but rather, we were in truth enemies of Him and of it. We said that he was a Priest, but we didn't have Him as our own, since we sought forgiveness of sins in other things and by other means than by the sacrifice of his death alone. His

¹⁰⁰ Ps. 1

¹⁰¹ [Pérez seems to be following Calvin's reading of John 15 here. See the corresponding section in *Calvin's Commentaries*.]

¹⁰² The Apostles' Creed.

¹⁰³ Heb. 7

¹⁰⁴ Col. 2

¹⁰⁵ Tit. 1

satisfaction being so rich and complete, and the justice of God being entirely satisfied by it, we thought to offer Him satisfaction for our guilt with our own strange inventions. His merits being of infinite value for the salvation of his believers, we sought shelter in our merits and the merits of men, full of unrighteousness, thinking ourselves to be helped by them in the divine judgment, where none can endure but his own. He was given to us as an eternal Advocate to deal with God, with the commandment¹⁰⁶ that we ask the Father in his name for all the things that we need; but scorning him and his commandment, we searched for other mediators before God. This was nothing but to deny by all our works the faith that we confessed to have, and to be Christians in profession, but impious and condemned in heart.¹⁰⁷ For we made a profession of knowing and serving Christ, but the truth of all our studies and works was that we served the Antichrist and we walked astray, each one by his own path, as Isaiah says.¹⁰⁸

But now, since by the singular blessing of God we truly believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord, and because, having been brought to Him, we desire to conform our lives to the piety and truth that He has taught us by his word and Spirit, and because He has indicated that we are his by the mark that all his elect have, those that persecute us do not recognize us and consider us strangers and pilgrims, and the world cannot bear us, just as it also cannot bear the Lord Jesus Christ, who has given us a mercy so fitting of who He is.

5. THE CAUSE OF THE AFFLICTION OF THE FAITHFUL

And so we must be certain that the reason why we suffer so many troubles, and why we are so raged against and persecuted, is, as St. Paul says, because we hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and principally of the faithful,¹⁰⁹ in spite of the

¹⁰⁶ Jn. 14 & 16

¹⁰⁷ Jer. 2

¹⁰⁸ Isa. 53

¹⁰⁹ 1 Tim. 4

false colors which those who make war upon us cover themselves with. Therefore, let us be assured that we have God as our defender against all of them.¹¹⁰ For because this cause is his, He will not let it fall out poorly. Let us not waver in this truth that God has revealed to us, for since it is his power¹¹¹ to save all believers, we will necessarily be delivered by it and removed from all affliction and danger.

It is the prophecy of holy Simeon that Jesus Christ is given for the falling and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against, and that by Him the thoughts of many hearts are revealed.¹¹² Now we see in our days the fulfilment of this prophecy, since as soon as the word of the gospel was announced among us, by which Jesus Christ is revealed, these effects were seen.¹¹³ For some, their condemnation is worsened because of how much they furiously resist, persecute, and condemn it. Others, who are all those who believe, are built up and saved by Him, for love of whom they are crucified and considered abhorrent by the world. And the thoughts of others, who were held to be saints and sanctifiers of men, are discovered to be of such a sort as that they cannot suffer the holiness of Jesus Christ, against which they reveal themselves to be such as would even cast it out of the world if they could.

And since our lot has been so good and tell-worthy, the Lord desiring it to be so, that by his mercy we be among the number of those who believe and are built up in Christ Jesus, let us not doubt that He is the reason for our affliction. For before He gave us light to believe in and know Him, the devil had us in peace and we had a close friendship with the world. But He who is stronger having come,¹¹⁴ He has plundered him, and because of this he has become enraged, and in order to recover his wealth again, he arms men with such great hatred and cruelty as we have seen; therefore, our persecution does not come for the reason that those that are ministers of it say, but

¹¹⁰ Ps. 37

¹¹¹ Rom. 1

¹¹² Lk. 2

¹¹³ 1 Pet. 1

¹¹⁴ Lk. 11

because of the word, as Jesus Christ shows,¹¹⁵ because He has preached Himself to and received those that He has called to Himself. Having been made certain of this truth, we will be able to endure the weight of the cross¹¹⁶ that is laid upon us by the hand of God and never dismay.¹¹⁷ For even though we are weak in ourselves, we will be strengthened by it. Being now united with Jesus Christ by having received Him, with his strength, our weakness will be strengthened; with his wisdom, our ignorance will be overcome; with his righteousness, our evil will be exhausted, with his light, our darkness will be illuminated;¹¹⁸ with his blessing, our curse will be undone; with his power, our hell will be destroyed; we will be sanctified with his holiness, and finally, enriched with his mercy, and in such a way that we be others in Him than we were in ourselves, so that our well-being is not only not impeded by the cross we suffer, but is perfected and elucidated.

Unto this end the apostle shows us¹¹⁹ that such is our condition after being called. “Now therefore ye are no more”, he says, “strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone; In whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto a holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.” From this we see that all the strength, both for the good that we might do, as well as to suffer the ills and afflictions which we are subject to, comes from the foundation. And both suit us in order to be clean from all contamination of the flesh and of the spirit and to perfect the sanctification of our souls in the fear of God,¹²⁰ and to thereby come not to

¹¹⁵ Mt. 13, Mk. 4

¹¹⁶ [English writers refer to the trials of believers as “crosses”, but Pérez, in light of the connection between the suffering of believers and of Christ, simply refers to the sufferings of believers as “the cross”.]

¹¹⁷ [Not meaning that believers never become dismayed, but that this truth is a means of encouragement, so that those who are fully assured of it and understand its import will not become dismayed.]

¹¹⁸ Ps. 52

¹¹⁹ Eph. 2.

¹²⁰ 2 Cor. 7.

have anything that can offend the eyes of the majesty of Him that dwells in us.¹²¹

Therefore, already being such, we have free entrance to deal with God as family,¹²² and to ask of Him all that is necessary to us to follow Jesus Christ and to be entirely holy, as He has commanded us by his prophet, saying: “Be ye holy; for I am holy.”¹²³

Regarding all the elect, St. Paul the apostle says that God knew and predestined them in order to conform them to the image of his Son so that he be the firstborn among many brothers, and so, to the end of conforming us, he called and justified us.¹²⁴ When he pardoned our sins and made us partakers of his redemption, he began to form this image of his Son in us again. But it is not more than begun,¹²⁵ and it is from day to day being continued until we come to be entirely such as Him and in the end we be a living and perfect copy of his.¹²⁶ And as the Father is known by Jesus Christ, so will the Son be known by us,¹²⁷ and all that is in us will come to be of divine origin¹²⁸ until we be in everything heavenly; and just as we bore the image of the earthly Adam, so we will bear the image of the second Adam who came from Heaven.¹²⁹ It is unto this end that all that God does in us is directed, and to this Jesus Christ admonishes us, saying, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”¹³⁰ It is notorious how far we are from this holiness and perfection which we are called to. For each one feels a great opposition in themselves to arriving here, seeing how much resistance the

¹²¹ [Pérez here teaches that the Christian life is a journey towards sinless perfection and glory, but he does not intend to communicate that such is ever achieved in this life. This emphasis in his teaching likely came from the influence of Juan de Valdés.]

¹²² 2 Cor. 6; Heb. 3

¹²³ Lev. 20:7; 1 Pet. 1:16

¹²⁴ Rom. 8

¹²⁵ Eph. 4

¹²⁶ [Perfect here means “without flaw”, not “exact,” since we are made in the likeness of Christ in his spiritual knowledge, righteousness, and holiness which He possesses in his humanity; we do not resemble him in his deity.]

¹²⁷ [Of course, these words only make sense if we understand that he is referring to Christ’s knowledge of God according to his humanity, not his eternal and omniscient divinity. This subject is treated well in Franciscus Junius’s *True Theology (De Vera Theologia)*.]

¹²⁸ [Perez uses the word ‘divine’, but he means it in the sense of “being of God or pertaining to God”, not “being of the nature of God in the proper sense.” By this he communicates that we, being glorified, will have our origin entirely from God, rather than of the world, and not that we are in any sense deified.]

¹²⁹ 1 Cor. 15

¹³⁰ Mt. 5:48

world and all that reigns in it puts up. Because of this, God has taken charge of us to perfect his work in us.

What thing could there be that is more lovely and desirable than to have the image of the Son of God formed again in oneself? No happier thing can be thought of than to appear like Him who loves God so much and by whom God has worked such plentiful mercies. If we love riches and honors, these are those which are true. If we desire to be safe against all evils, this is what safety consists in, for however much more we appear like Him, that much more powerful we will be against them.¹³¹ If we want to rejoice in the blessings that God has stored up for his own, this is the way by which we must travel to possess them. Therefore, we must not refuse or reject those things by means of which God wants to do such for us. For since He has given us Jesus Christ as head, it is fitting that those that are his members appear like Him in every way, and that they travel together and pass through where He did so that they arrive at the destination that He arrived at. For it was to the end that we go down the same path and have the same destination that God united us with Him.

Therefore, we must understand the purpose of God well and always keep our destination in view so that we do not grow faint from the intensity of the trials and afflictions which He leads us through. For considering their end, we have reason rather to embrace them than to cast them aside.

6. THE CROSS OF CHRIST AND OF THOSE THAT ARE HIS: ORDAINED BY GOD

Our condition in this world is the same as that of Jesus Christ; for the reason why He suffered is the same as why we suffer. The so-cruel treatment that the world gave Him was because He was the Son of God, and was faithful to the Father that sent Him,

¹³¹ [Speaking of course of moral evils.]

and taught men the holiness and righteousness that God approves of. We, then, also suffer for this reason, for having been made the sons of God by Him,¹³² we approve no work, holiness, or righteousness but his own; and according to the strength that He communicates to us, we seek his glory in all things. We have those things that He abhors as the objects of our hatred and we condemn by his word that which He declares condemned. This is the reason why He commands his own to rejoice,¹³³ assuring them that the Kingdom of Heaven is for them. This, then, is what we must remind ourselves of in our afflictions, being assured by the commonality of their cause with those of Christ: that as great as they are, they cannot hinder the Kingdom that is promised to us from being ours, for by them God makes us ready to enter into it.

Jesus Christ is the elder brother among the sons of God, his brothers, and so He is the first and greatest in everything. The afflictions that He suffered in his person were to the utmost degree greater than those of all others. Greater was his dishonor, deeper was his poverty, fiercer and more fully-developed the hatred that was had against him, more violent the persecutions, greater the weight of the wrath of God that weighed upon Him, even to the point of making Him sweat blood; He was not only considered evil with the evil, but to be the president and captain of all the unrighteous.¹³⁴ Even though He is the wisdom of God and Him in whom the fullness of the Godhead dwells,¹³⁵ He was treated as ignorant and demon-possessed. He being Him alone who completely carried out the law of God and who made peace between Him and men,¹³⁶ He was condemned as a breaker of the law and an agitator among the people. Being the firstborn Son of God, the most loved, and the Lord of all,¹³⁷ He was considered a stranger by his people, so much so that He says of Himself,¹³⁸ "I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people," and St. Paul says

¹³² Jn. 1; Rom. 8

¹³³ Mt. 5; Lk. 6

¹³⁴ Lk. 22; Is. 53; Mk. 15

¹³⁵ Col. 2

¹³⁶ Mt. 5; Eph. 2.

¹³⁷ Ps. 2, 68

¹³⁸ Ps. 22:6

about Him that He “made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”¹³⁹ So great was his humiliation as to descend even into the abyss of the ills and punishments owed for our offenses. “He has no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.”¹⁴⁰ Weighed with all the ills of men, wounded and punished for them, as if He and He alone had committed all the offenses, and as if none other but Him had offended the majesty of God. Behold Him, greater in his sufferings, by which, as by degrees, God raised Him up to be greater in glory, in whose fullness all believers share.¹⁴¹

Therefore, He having been greater in his sufferings for our sake, it is right that we do not desire to be in a better state than Him in this world; He having been so abused and insulted, it would not be fitting for us to be honored. And since He was so poor that He had nowhere to lay his head,¹⁴² but rather, had it crowned with thorns, it is not suitable that we abound in perishing riches or that we go about in fine clothing. For seeking the glory of the Father, He was condemned and rejected of men; we should therefore not seek their approval. Let us be content that God approves of us, and that He regards as good and favors the righteousness of our cause. Let us not corrupt God’s arrangement of things: He gave Him to us as an elder brother in sufferings so that we might be his imitators. For to procure what the world approves of, setting aside the imitation of Him, would be nothing but to, being servants, try to be superior to Him,¹⁴³ and while being his disciples, to want to be greater and more favored than the teacher. We cannot have any greater honor or a more firm and certain assurance of our salvation

¹³⁹ Phil. 2:7

¹⁴⁰ Is. 53:2-3

¹⁴¹ Jn. 1

¹⁴² Mt. 6, Lk. 9, Mt. 27

¹⁴³ Mt. 10, Lk. 6, Jn. 13

than by walking down the path He traveled. For, although in both our judgment and that of the world, nothing is seen in this path but cliffs and crags, more suitable to dash in pieces those that go by it than for them to walk and arrive at the end of the day's journey; in truth, there is nothing safer than it,¹⁴⁴ nor anything for which the desired end is more certain. For Jesus Christ goes ahead and levels it in such a way that we can walk by it without danger. Let us consider that the cross and its bitterness will be concluded swiftly, and that the departure from it is glorious, as the Lord promised, and He is in the habit of fulfilling this daily for those that are persecuted and killed for the confession of his holy name.

It is necessary that what God has ordained be fulfilled in us, like how what was determined in the divine counsel was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and all this before it took place, as was foretold by the prophets. God ordained that Jesus Christ be glorified and raised up above all creation. But it was fitting that He suffer before entering into glory or taking possession of the Kingdom. He Himself declared this to his disciples, saying, "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day."¹⁴⁵ And to those that went to Emmaus, he said, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?"¹⁴⁶ All the Church by the Holy Spirit gave testimony of this when it prayed when afflicted and said, "Lord, you are God, which has made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: Who by the mouth of your servant David has said, "Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ." For of a truth against your holy child Jesus, whom you have anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together for to do whatsoever your hand and your counsel determined before to be done."¹⁴⁷ Therefore, what Jesus Christ suffered was by the appointment of God. And in the same

¹⁴⁴ Jn. 10

¹⁴⁵ Lk. 9:22

¹⁴⁶ Lk. 24:26

¹⁴⁷ Acts 4:24-28; Ps. 2

way, He ordained that all his members be like Him in all that they can be. Just as He, before He reigned, suffered so many tribulations, so God ordained that we be crucified and afflicted with Him before being glorified.¹⁴⁸ For He predestined us to have a likeness to Him; and if we were to reign without the cross and tribulations, we would not have this likeness and there would be a great disconformity between the members and the head. But first suffering with Him and being made like Him by the cross, we will certainly be like Him in glory. For those that accompany Him in suffering cannot be separated from his company in reigning.¹⁴⁹ For both are the purpose of God which cannot be stopped from being fulfilled, as He Himself says by the prophet Isaiah, “My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.”¹⁵⁰ “For the Lord of hosts has purposed, and who shall disannul it?”¹⁵¹

7. THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD FOR HIS PERSECUTED PEOPLE

There is nothing that could be more beneficial for us than to willingly subject ourselves to this counsel of God with which He determined to make us partakers of his Kingdom. And since He ordained that we travel by this path, we must believe that there is not anything in this world that He pays more attention to than his believers. He cares for all the things He created, but much more and without comparison does he care for us who are called to the knowledge of Him and who trust in his mercy alone. The Lord declares this same thing to all his faithful, saying that their Heavenly Father has

¹⁴⁸ [Before in terms of causation, not order of time: Christ’s kingship over all things as mediator is a consequence of his office as mediator between God and man, and so it comes from the atonement that he made by suffering, but he began this work as mediator when the gospel was first promised to Adam in the garden, and it was then that he began to reign as mediatorial king. Also note that this is distinct from the eternal kingship of God which Christ shares with the Father and the Spirit, since as he has every divine attribute in common with them.]

¹⁴⁹ 2 Tim. 2

¹⁵⁰ Isa. 46:10

¹⁵¹ Isa. 14:27

such great care for them that He even has the hairs of their head accounted for¹⁵² in such a way that not one of them will perish, and neither will anyone be able to pull them out without his permission. “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.” “Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.”¹⁵³ If the preparations of hunters are to no end if God does not put the game in their hands, how much less can those that persecute the gospel do us harm, but that God has ordained it to be so for his glory and our salvation? In the general government of the world, nothing can be done, except that it first be determined in the Council of God and pass through the consent of his will; much less can anyone touch his called and chosen ones except that He desire and command it.

“Your providence, Father,” says *The Wisdom of Solomon*, “governs all things from the beginning.”¹⁵⁴ “Prosperity and adversity, life and death, poverty and riches, come of the Lord.”¹⁵⁵ And through Isaiah, He Himself says, “I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.”¹⁵⁶ And by the prophet He says, “See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive.”¹⁵⁷ “In the day of prosperity be joyful”, says the wise one, “but in the day of adversity consider: God also has set the one over against the other.”¹⁵⁸ In this, the Holy Spirit teaches us that all that comes upon us, the good as well as the bad, comes only by the providence and will of God, and that without his ordination and command nothing can have effect, for in all things He does everything according to the counsel of his will.

¹⁵² Mt. 10; Acts 27

¹⁵³ Mt. 10:29, 31

¹⁵⁴ [From the apocryphal book *The Wisdom of Solomon* 14:3. As was the habit of other reformers, Pérez quotes this as providing insight into the issues at hand, but not as if it were in any way inspired or authoritative. His lower regard for the apocryphal literature is made evident by the style with which he introduces it. When presenting Scripture, he very often says, “as the Holy Spirit said” or “as the apostle”, or “as the prophet said,” but he never uses these phrases with the apocrypha. Moreover, he takes much greater liberties in paraphrasing the apocrypha than he ever does with Scripture; at times it is unclear exactly what section of text he is referencing because the paraphrase is so loose.]

¹⁵⁵ Sirach 11:14 (apocryphal)

¹⁵⁶ Isa. 45:6-7

¹⁵⁷ Dt. 32:39

¹⁵⁸ Eccl. 7:14. The Spanish reads, “For as God made the one, he also made the other.”

And since He is the author of all and nothing is done without Him having first ordained it,¹⁵⁹ and his providence toward us is so vigilant, it remains, so that everything be for our blessing and his good will be brought about in us, that we must receive from his hand all that happens to us, not as if it were from the hand of an enemy and tyrant, but as it is from the true Father who most tenderly loves us. When we see ourselves oppressed by diverse afflictions, let us be certain that He Himself afflicts us; He imprisons us and makes us poor; He deprives us of honor; He makes us sick and gives us health; He Himself kills us and gives us life; and that nothing so adverse can come upon us that it not be sent by his good will and for the sake of leading us by it to great happiness. Therefore, let us not detain ourselves or fix our eyes on those who afflict us, for they are nothing but the instruments that God uses, measures and ministers of his will; but let us see that He afflicts and punishes us as sons by means of them, and that the thoughts of God are very different from their own; for that which He does with us is for good and that which they intend is for evil. He disciplines us because He loves us and they afflict us because they hate us and want to totally destroy us.

Great were the losses that came upon holy Job and diverse the afflictions that he suffered, of which the devil and his servants were ministers, but the holy man did not receive them as from his hands, or as from theirs, but as from those of God, because He knew well that all proceeds from Him. "Shall we receive," he says, "good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"¹⁶⁰ "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."¹⁶¹ And in this way He concludes by giving Him thanks, for it is no less owed to Him for ills and trials than for good things and prosperity, for all of them are his blessings, given for the same end to those who are called to the knowledge of Him.

Jesus Christ our Redeemer recognized the Father as the author of the trials and cross that He suffered, and He received it as from his hands and not from those of his

¹⁵⁹ Col. 1; Eph. 1

¹⁶⁰ Job 2:10

¹⁶¹ Job 1:21

enemies. To St. Peter, who wanted to keep Him from suffering, He said, “the cup which my Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?”¹⁶² He drank it content and with great longing because it had been given by the Father’s hand. It is because of this that He did not consider any other thing but what the Father desired and what was appointed by Him, and He did it. In this way, He did not become angry, He did not persecute, He did not curse, He did not insult those that treated Him with such impiety and crucified Him; but rather, He suffered at their hands, for He loved them, though they were evil, and He pleaded with great affection to God for them.¹⁶³

Because He received the cup from the hand of the Father, He did not do or say anything contrary to his will or to the salvation of those whom He died for. Behold my dearly beloved brothers what a divine example is put forth for us. Let us consider what our head did and suffered and we will come to understand what we his members must do. This is the path we must go down to be conformed with Him our head. We are now afflicted as evildoers; they condemn us as troublemakers; they curse us, and they hate us; and must we curse and hate? No, not even in thought. They desire for us all manner of evil as for their enemies; must we desire other such evils for them? No, by no means! but rather, because we are sons of God, we have a commandment to do the opposite. “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”¹⁶⁴ Let us consider what blessings Jesus Christ responds with to such evil deeds and to such obstinate souls. How truly does He love those who do evil to Him!¹⁶⁵ How though they be so guilty, He excuses them before the Father! “Then said Jesus, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know

¹⁶² Jn. 18:11; Mt. 16

¹⁶³ Lk. 23

¹⁶⁴ Mt. 5:44-45; Lk. 6

¹⁶⁵ Lk. 23

not what they do.'"¹⁶⁶ Oh, the immense mercy of God! Oh, what a heavenly example, worthy of imitation!

8. THE UNION OF THE FAITHFUL WITH CHRIST IN PERSECUTION

If we attentively consider the calling with which the Lord brought us to the knowledge of Himself, it teaches us these things. God called us and placed us in the sheepfold, which is his holy Church, so that we be his sheep and have Jesus Christ as shepherd.¹⁶⁷ We were wolves before being called; after being called, we must be sheep. The sheep neither knows nor can do bad, but it is exposed, receiving it. It doesn't have a tongue to curse, nor teeth to bite, nor needle-sharp nails to claw, nor ire to become angry, nor hatred to abhor. It has nothing to do bad with, and it has many things to do good with. Such must we be, for the name that we have of 'Christian' means all of this. Men persecute us with the ferocity of lions, they afflict us with the cruelty and rage of wolves, they dash us to pieces like tigers, they stalk us with the cunning of foxes; there is no skill or cruelty which they leave aside and do not use against us. Must we appear like them in repaying them in the same currency? No, no.

For God did not call us in order to be such as them, since in calling us He made us unlike them. He called us to be his sons; therefore, we must be conformed to Jesus Christ.¹⁶⁸ He is our head; God has joined us to Him as an example so that we learn from Him and follow Him. "Christ", St. Peter says, "also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps."¹⁶⁹ In what must we follow his steps? In suffering evils and responding with good to our enemies.¹⁷⁰ This is our calling. This is what Jesus Christ, our shepherd, teaches us by word and deed.

¹⁶⁶ Lk. 23:34

¹⁶⁷ Jn. 10; 1 Pet. 3

¹⁶⁸ Jn. 1; 1 Jn. 3; Mt. 9

¹⁶⁹ 1 Pet. 2:21

¹⁷⁰ 1 Pet. 4; Heb. 12

Let us not keep account of the evils that those who persecute us do, and let us keep a very great account of what Jesus Christ does and commands. In imitation of Him, let us not hate them: let us not condemn them nor curse them; but on contrary, let us rather love them and do works of love for them. Of all the evils that they do and desire, the Lord has declared the cause to us. "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time comes, that whosoever kills you will think that He does God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor Me."¹⁷¹ They cannot have greater misfortune than that which they are in.

For not to know the Father, nor Jesus Christ, is to be possessed of the devil, to be servants of sin and heirs of hell, and to wage capital war on God, from which their damnation follows. They bring their hell with them, for their conscience condemns them and is the cruel prosecutor that night and day accuses them. The judgment of God drags them about in a state of oppression and the law curses them, and the works they do in persecuting the faithful give evident testimony of this.

For the faithful are not actually those persecuted, those befallen with calamity, those condemned, those made to wear the *sanbenito*,¹⁷² jailed, and burned, but [it is] Jesus Christ in them. It is Him who suffers all these disgraces and sufferings. As He Himself declared to St. Paul before he was converted, "Saul, Saul," (he said it to him in a terrible voice) "why do you persecute me?" What greater evil can be thought of than to persecute Jesus Christ? What greater wrath of God can there be than to let men arrive at such a state, that after having committed such horrendous crimes, they be assured in such a way that, as in the day of a solemn feast, they have banquets of pleasure, thinking themselves to have done a great service to God? They are certainly worthy of sympathy and of others having shame for them. For they do not know the truth of what they do. Sin holds them so blind and captive that the light appears to them to be darkness, the truth of God error and deceit, and the righteousness of heaven

¹⁷¹ Jn. 16:2-3

¹⁷² ['ensabenido'; that is, made to wear the *sanbenito*, the robe which those convicted by the Inquisition were made to wear.]

iniquity.¹⁷³ Therefore, we should plead with bowels of compassion to God for them, asking Him that He be pleased to take them out of such a lethal captivity, so full of condemnation. In this way, since God is the author of our afflictions and cross, if we receive them from his hand, they must be beneficial for us,¹⁷⁴ and we will come to truly be imitators of Christ, and not only will we not become outraged with our enemies, nor repay them evil for evil, but we must desire to see them placed on his heart and brought to the path of salvation.

We are drawn to anger and indignation against them because we think that with their hatred, their slander, their false testimonies, and their burning desire to spill our blood, they do us or can do us some harm. But if we understand the counsel of God, and do not part our eyes from his word, we will know how impossible it is that they harm us with it all, as much as they may imagine so. Let us give ear, then, to what the Holy Spirit says by his prophet, and we will see how they harm us in nothing. “He that dwells in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.”¹⁷⁵

The secret that our safety consists in is the confidence that the Lord has given us to have in Him, by which we are made partakers of his omnipotence. And as his omnipotence is safe from all evils, so are we by it. For He alone is our hope, our fortress, and our God, who we trust in. For this reason, He promises that He will deliver us and that his truth will be a shield and buckler to us. Therefore, He says, “Because you have made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, your habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh your dwelling.”¹⁷⁶ From this, it is clearly seen how in vain they labor who are enemies to us, and persecute us, and battle so furiously against the truth. For just as they cannot

¹⁷³ Isa. 5; 2 Thess. 2

¹⁷⁴ Ps. 115

¹⁷⁵ Ps. 91:1

¹⁷⁶ Ps. 91:9-10

prevail against it,¹⁷⁷ neither can they against those who follow it, since they have its author as their defense.

In this the Lord promises and makes certain that no harm will come upon them, and neither will any plague come to the dwelling of those that fear and know Him. It follows that the evils that their adversaries do to them do not reach them, and neither can they hurt them. For the faithful, whose tutor is God, are not the estate, not the honor, not the dignity, not the quality of life, not health, or bodily life, or any of those things over which God gives power to those who are evil. Rather, they are living members of Jesus Christ, united most closely to Him, and that in this part which is invisible to those of this world, just as the same Lord is. Therefore, not seeing them, how can they do them harm in that which is their true being? To this end, God favors them and joined them to the body of Jesus Christ, so that just as He is secure, and none can cast Him from the throne of his majesty, so they be, without ever being able to be separated from Him.

9. THE RICHES OF THE FAITHFUL

All that which can be taken away by those who persecute and kill them is only lent to them. But that which God has given them as their own cannot be taken away, though his enemies may want to, and even though in what they do against them, they are attempting no other thing. He has given it to them as his own, with irrevocable privilege, that they be his sons and heirs of his kingdom, that they be partakers of all his gracious gifts, that they be his inheritance, that He dwell and reign in them forever, that they live eternally in Him, and that they have Him as their Father and God. St. Peter rejoices in considering this and gives thanks, saying, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again

¹⁷⁷ Mt. 16

unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation..."¹⁷⁸ They being therefore kept in the power of God as a strong castle, what evil can reach them? "You shall hide them in the secret of your presence from the pride of man," David says; "you shall keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues."¹⁷⁹ Therefore, as much as their enemies rage and devastate themselves, they cannot hurt them in anything; for neither their malignant boastings and actions, nor their slanders, nor their plottings and counsels can touch them, and neither can the hatred and rage of the devil penetrate to where God has them hidden. That which befell Jesus Christ, that same thing befalls them. For just as, after being stripped, flogged, bloodied, nailed to the cross, insulted, and blasphemed, He was still the Son of God, and however much his enemies did against Him, they could not take from Him to call upon and know Him as his Father and God, and to be the Lord and Redeemer of the world; so for the faithful, as much as they dishonor and dispossess them, condemn and curse them, and perform all sorts of mistreatment upon them, always remain sons of God and his Spirit always lives in them, by which they call upon Him and know Him as Father,¹⁸⁰ so that the neither the world, nor its great ones, who deprive them of all they would wish, can even do them the evil that they would desire.

In order to further confirm us and give us strength, the divine Spirit declares by the prophet that all that our adversaries endeavor to do against the gospel is in vain, that it saves us, and that they will never achieve their ends. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed."¹⁸¹ It is in vain, and all that they afflict us with internally and externally will never have an effect. For

¹⁷⁸ 1 Pet. 1:3-5

¹⁷⁹ Ps. 31:20

¹⁸⁰ Rom. 8; Gal. 4; Heb. 3

¹⁸¹ Ps. 2:1-2

the Lord has all our enemies beaten,¹⁸² those we see and those that are invisible alike, and subjected in such a way that they will never again rise up. From this it follows that it is in vain that they do all they can against him who defeated them, for they will not be able to prevail.

Therefore, the judgment and condemnation that these rebels can make against the faithful are in vain. For if the judgment of God does not prevail against them because they are in Christ Jesus, as the apostle says,¹⁸³ how will that of his enemies prevail? In vain are their sentences and excommunications against them, for God has absolved them and brought them into communion with himself in Christ and has made them partakers of all his benefits. They confiscate and rob their estates, but in vain, for Jesus Christ is their true and proper estate, and they cannot confiscate or steal Him. They lend them their bodies, but Jesus remains at liberty to give joy to and renew their hearts. In vain do they burn them or the give them other sorts of death, for their lives remain saved and no longer capable of death. "Your life," the apostle says to them, "is hid with Christ in God."¹⁸⁴ Finally, all the arms and all the instruments which they in their cruelty use against them are in vain, for, "He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision."¹⁸⁵ At such boundless insanity the Lord laughs. For they think that they will succeed in spite of the odds, and that the more of the faithful that they imprison and kill, the closer they must be to destroying his kingdom and taking it from his hands, as if their power were greater than that of God. Wouldn't it be laughable to see an ant fighting against an elephant? Wouldn't you say that that's insane? And wouldn't you mock him who battles against the shadow of a man, thinking it to be a man?

This same thing is what those do who the prophet speaks about. God has put his faithful in his state of salvation, where no one can touch them, and where they cannot in

¹⁸² Jn. 16; Rev. 17

¹⁸³ Rom. 5

¹⁸⁴ Col. 3:3

¹⁸⁵ Ps. 2:4

any way perish. And his enemies do nothing but break and wound his shadow.¹⁸⁶ And against it the kings, princes, wise ones, learned, and saints of the world, some unveil their wisdom, craftiness, and cunning, and others their valiancy and power. And all of them, the ones and the others, affirm that they do so with Christian zeal. But it is such a zeal as that Him who inhabits the heavens laughs at and mocks them, and threatens that in payment for it, He will speak to them in wrath, and confound them in his displeasure,¹⁸⁷ bringing horrible punishment upon them, as He has done from the beginning and as we have seen by experience in our days. Therefore, since everything is in vain that they do against us who know Jesus Christ, and He sees it, and is laughing and mocking them, let us not fear their insanity and their plotting to separate us from the truth of God by it.

And since these people cannot harm us, since we are so safe in God, so that we are not drawn to them by our natural weakness to follow in their vanity, ending up subject to divine wrath and fury together with them, let us also be certain of the love that God has for us, and let us know well where the reasons they afflict us proceed from.

God loves us as his true sons for love of Jesus Christ, with the same love that He loves Him with. Concerning all that were and should be his disciples, the Lord Jesus said to the Father the night before he suffered, “[Father, You] have loved them, as You have loved Me.”¹⁸⁸ The love which He loved Him with is constant, and we are loved by Him with the same love. He says such to us by the prophet Jeremiah: “Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love.”¹⁸⁹ All things changing, this love does not change, but remains always on a person. It is because of this that He loves us in prosperity and adversity and knows us as his own. The prophet testifies by experience that, while he was in a supreme tribulation, God knew him.¹⁹⁰ And having been made safe in Him, he

¹⁸⁶ 1 Cor. 7

¹⁸⁷ Ps. 2:5

¹⁸⁸ Jn. 17:23

¹⁸⁹ Jer. 31:3

¹⁹⁰ Ps. 31

says, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up."¹⁹¹ When Jesus Christ had been burdened with all the punishments of human kind, abandoned by friends, harassed by enemies, and humiliated to the extreme, God loved Him very deeply, and was always by his side, and heard Him in his greatest anguishes.¹⁹² "Ye shall be scattered," He Himself said to his disciples, "every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me."¹⁹³ And in his name, the prophet says, "because [the Lord] is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." God loves his own in this way and is at their right hand when they are in great agony and humiliation. And how does Jesus Christ love us? He Himself says how: "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you."¹⁹⁴ He profoundly loved me on the cross, and in such a way will I love you. He loves us as He loves Himself, for all of us believers are "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourishes and cherishes it, even as the Lord the church."¹⁹⁵ For when some part of the body is afflicted and sick, the love is then greater, and the care that the head has for it; and it treats it with greater tenderness, without being able to forget it. In this way, in the greater afflictions we are more loved of Him and He cannot forget about us. By the prophet Isaiah, he says, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget you."¹⁹⁶ Why, Lord? "Behold, I have graven you upon the palms of my hands."¹⁹⁷ Oh, words worthy of his Majesty who says them! Let us not then be unbelieving of them, for God speaks with us, and he directs them to us; therefore, when, because we are cast aside by all, profoundly

¹⁹¹ Ps. 27:10

¹⁹² Ps. 22; [of course, as Christ's own words tell us, there was a sense in which he was forsaken by the Father. David Dickson in his *Commentary on the Epistles*, Heb. 4:15, calls this a "desertion to sense; yea, of the wrath and curse of God; the feeling whereof may justly be called a *descending to Hell*"; other divines concur.]

¹⁹³ Jn. 16:32

¹⁹⁴ Jn. 15:9

¹⁹⁵ Eph. 5:30, 29

¹⁹⁶ Isa. 49:15

¹⁹⁷ Isa. 42:16

humiliated, and considered abhorrent, we think that He has abandoned us, He says that He wrote us on his hands, as in order to not forget us as the object of his love. For, as the hands are something that we always see, and no one can forget their own hands, so by this he makes us to understand that He always looks upon those who are his and that he cannot lose them in forgetfulness because He loves them with an affection much more tender than that of a compassionate mother. This is what he declared to his disciples¹⁹⁸ when He intended to depart from them by death, giving them many and very loving gifts and promises to console them in the great sadness that they were then in because of his departure. Let us, then, be certain of this constant love and mercy that the Lord has for us, and let us not give place to anything contrary to it, for our firmness and perseverance consists in this.

The conformity with Christ that God intends for his own to have through the cross and afflictions is a manifest sign of this great love that He loves them with. For, this affection being so admirable, it cannot proceed from any other but so high a beginning - our election and the calling with which God called us to Himself proceeded from the love that He has for us in Christ.¹⁹⁹ In this way, all the means that He uses with us in order to come to the desired end of our election, which is to be glorified with Him, by necessity proceed from the same origin. When He opened our eyes to see the damnation that we were in and gave us the virtue of his Spirit to embrace his salvation with,²⁰⁰ it was a certain sign that He loved us, and we did not doubt that He desired good for us in having performed so great a mercy to us. We do not therefore now have reason to doubt what we did not doubt then. For those things which we presently suffer for the Lord are the fruit and confirmation of that calling. For, for being loved and called by Him, we are so greatly persecuted and harassed by the world. Let us not therefore waver in this truth. For that which the Holy Spirit testifies concerning all the members of the holy body of Christ, He testifies and says of each one of them. And

¹⁹⁸ Jn. 13

¹⁹⁹ Col. 1; Eph. 1

²⁰⁰ That is, faith.

therefore, each one in particular must apply it to themselves and assure themselves of it in no other way than as if it were said of and for them alone. For as it is written by the apostle, St. Paul, "Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God,"²⁰¹ and not for us to ignore and doubt them.

10. WHY THE FAITHFUL ARE THE MOST AFFLICTED

Because the faithful are such a particular work of God, He in his goodness does not want there to be anything in them that He holds in contempt, but that they be wholly pure, and that by holiness and purity they declare that they are his sons. By this He wants to destroy the works of the devil in them, which are so contrary to Him, as are evil inclinations and all that which in any way impedes the complete obedience to his holy will in them.²⁰² In order to finish consuming these evils, He lays upon them the cross and sufferings, that they be to them like a purgatory in this world, so that they be purified by them; and He wants them to experience them together with Him as a testimony of his love and of being his family members and very dear to Him. I reprimand and discipline, says the Lord, all those I love.²⁰³ It is because of this that the more He loves them, the more He hates the evil that is in them, and the more He reprimands and disciplines them. And as there are none whom He loves more than those than He has called and joined to the body of Christ, for this reason no others are more afflicted and tried than them in the world.

God deals with us and with all his faithful like a father that has many children, and among them one more loved than the others whom he wants to leave as an heir. With this one, just as He loves him more, so also is he more vigilant over him, and the

²⁰¹ 1 Cor. 2:12

²⁰² 1 Jn. 3

²⁰³ 1 Jn. 3 [paraphrase]

more does He discipline him so that there not be any vice in him by which he could be deprived of the inheritance. Nevertheless, the son, given the pain and feeling of the punishment, considers it to have proceeded from anger, and through his failure to understand what the father does and intends by such a course of action, it happens that He grows impatient, flees, and considers that which is a testimony of love to be a sign of hatred. Such happens to us, who, by not understanding the intent of God in the reprimands that He gives us (which is, because He loves us supremely as sons, to ready us for the inheritance by them and to destroy the vices that would be able to keep us from it), we are impatient and we do not hold them in the esteem that we should as instruments of such great well-being.

Therefore, let us hear what the Holy Spirit says to each one of us by the mouth of his apostle: "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked of Him: For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives. If ye endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is He whom the father chastens not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons."²⁰⁴ From which we see how, because He loves us, He wants to assure us that we are his sons and to distinguish us by the cross from those that actually are not. For if we were outside of this fatherly correction and discipline, the inheritance would not belong to us, for in that same action it would be manifested to us that we were not legitimate sons, to whom it is owed,²⁰⁵ but bastards. But, since by his supreme mercy we are legitimate sons, let us, having cast away all faintheartedness and cowardliness, subject ourselves willingly to the decree and will of the eternal Father, and let us understand what St. Paul tells us: "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, 'Abba, Father'. The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with

²⁰⁴ Heb. 12:5-8

²⁰⁵ [Not that the inheritance is owed to us considered in ourselves, but it is owed to Christ because of his perfect obedience and it is due to us as his members.]

Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.”²⁰⁶ Therefore, let us know the benefit of the loving correction of God, and let us suffer as his sons and heirs in imitation of the firstborn, who, being the most loved, suffered exceedingly. And as the greatness of his sufferings was a testimony of the greatness of the love with which He loved and was loved by the Father, so, as great as ours may be, let us consider them a testimony of the greatness of his love and of his favor toward us. For the cross, as it is written,²⁰⁷ is a mercy; therefore, when it is greater and more difficult, it is a clear demonstration of God loving us more deeply and having greater mercy for us, and of his being supremely angry with the devil and his works.²⁰⁸ From this it follows that the more we are oppressed and anguished, the closer the evil that is in us, against which the Lord fights, is being totally consumed. And for this reason, in the greatest tribulations we should have the greatest joy and contentment, because in them the completion of our deliverance draws closer, along with the clear knowledge of God with which we will see Him face to face, and we will know Him as we are known by Him.²⁰⁹ Let us not therefore be fixated like children on the present evils and tribulations, but rather let us pass on to the consideration of what God intends to do by them, which is to make us in all things righteous, without any residue of unrighteousness or corruption remaining in us; and to rather be without blemish or wrinkle, and in this way to come to rejoice in the gentle fruits of righteousness that they rejoice in who have been exercised by such trials.²¹⁰

God also wants by this for us to understand what a great evil sin is and how unmeasured the punishment must be that He must exact upon those faithless sinners that have not known Him, so that we therefore further distance ourselves from it and come to hate it more. For, if God, loving us so much, and having already pardoned us

²⁰⁶ Rom. 8:15-17

²⁰⁷ Eccl. 2

²⁰⁸ [To say that it is a sign of God’s greater love and mercy for us implies no change in God, since the love of God here spoken of is simply the manifestation to his creatures of his eternal and unchangeable goodness.]

²⁰⁹ [In the original text this verse is in quotations, but it is a synthesis of 1 Cor. 13:12 and 1 Jn. 3:2.]

²¹⁰ Col., Eph., Rev., Heb.

and reconciled us to Himself, treats us with such severity because of the remnants of sin that remain in us that it is necessary that we live and die crucified,²¹¹ what a frightful punishment do you think He will carry out on those in whom sin has its kingdom, and who are wholly servants of the devil and enemies of all righteousness?

With respect to us, God does not punish us for sin, for Christ was already punished for it. But He punishes the sin that still remains in us, not because of some hatred He has for us, but because of the hatred he has for *it*. And if, we being sons, He puts us in such hardships and anguishes that we are judged by the world to be strangers and aliens from God, what will He do when, for them that do not believe the gospel and are enemies to Him, He punishes not only the sin, but also them for their sin?²¹² They will certainly be consumed by Him, for they will not be able to suffer such a severe judgment. "For the time is come," says St. Peter, "that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"²¹³ And if He begins by punishing us, who are his house where He dwells, with such rigor, what will He do when his wrath has been universally inflamed and He begins to take vengeance on those that are the house and temple of the devil, where he is obeyed and all his will is done? "For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and He pours out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them,"²¹⁴ for all are sinners. But the sons drink the first and clearest of the cup so that they understand what great enmity they must have with sin, since God hates it in them so much that He begins his punishment with them and gives a sign to the rest that they will not be able to escape or flee from his wrath, even though it may be seen that for a time they walk freely. For it cannot be any other way than that, the sons drinking first, the enemies come to drink and suck up the dregs. For the sons, the cup is healthy; for the Lord (with what He does) wants to give them some taste of his wrath in order to further

²¹¹ Rom. 5

²¹² Ps. 44

²¹³ 1 Pet. 4:17, Heb. 3.

²¹⁴ Ps. 75:8

humble them; and they having been humbled in this way, He wants them to embrace the blessing with greater longing that He has already worked for them, and He wants to open their eyes to see how greatly they are loved and favored by Him, since in this way He makes them more ready for his blessings, as David says.²¹⁵ For, seeing as how He brings them down and humbles them so deeply, it is not to leave them in that humiliation, but to raise them up in glory, for it is in his nature to raise up the humble and broken-hearted and to lift up the needy out of the dunghill.²¹⁶

Since such is the intent of the Lord, let us joyfully drink what He gives us of the cup. For if He owed a supreme and comprehensive punishment to us, whom He has called to his knowledge, for our ingratitude and the other vices that are in us, and to be separated from Him and placed in the company of those that are already damned, we must consider it a supreme blessing to drink the little bit of bitterness of the troubles we suffer. We deserved to be put in irons in a never-ending prison with torments without end, and God gives us a very brief and light sentence to fulfill, suffering a small number of trials and insults - and will we avoid completing it? How much more, Jesus Christ having called us to the cross,²¹⁷ must it not do us any ill to bear it, when we accept being his with such a condition? And if we desired to further investigate, we would find out that we are not the ones who bear it; but *He* bears it and us. For, as Isaiah says, it is Him who "bears the kingdom upon his shoulders."²¹⁸ Who is comprehended in his kingdom, if not those who are persecuted, imprisoned, detested, condemned, and killed for his name? Therefore, even though He gives us to drink of his cup, He gives it to us with such mildness and pleasantness that all comes to be lain upon *his* shoulders and we are borne by *Him*. And therefore, we should give Him thanks, for, though we had deserved to drink the sludge and filth of it, He gives us the most clear and easy [part] to drink from. But the dregs of it, which is all the intensity of his wrath, of his indignation, of all his fury, of his condemnation, of his eternal curse, and of his irrevocable sentence,

²¹⁵ Ps. 119; Is. 28

²¹⁶ Lk. 4:18; Ps. 145:6; 113:7

²¹⁷ Mt. 16; Lk. 9

²¹⁸ Is. 9:6; [English bibles read "government" instead of "kingdom".]

are saved for the drinking of those that do not believe the gospel, but in place of obeying its truth and worshiping, they trample and persecute it, which actions will have their effect, as St. Paul says, “when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe...”²¹⁹

In this way, even though God is now silent and does not therefore show the vengeance that He has stored up for those that reject his righteousness, He does not by this approve of what they say and do against it. His great patience and long-suffering is not a sign that He approves of wickedness or of the condemnation that men give to what He most loves in the world, but rather, He is merciful, even toward those that make themselves unworthy of his mercy, and He hopes for penitence from them.²²⁰ All appears to result prosperously for them,²²¹ while sin yet has its dwelling and dominion in them. But all their prosperity and good outcomes are a heaping-up of wrath for the day of wrath,²²² and a being lifted-up very high in order to be brought down without remedy. The Holy Spirit therefore commands each one of his faithful that they do not separate themselves from the truth because of any adversities or because of the prosperity that their persecutors enjoy. “Fret not yourself because of evildoers,” He says, “neither be envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass and wither as the green herb.”²²³ “Rest in the Lord, and wait

²¹⁹ 1 Thess. 2:7-10

²²⁰ [God’s desire to see the wicked reprobate repent is manifest in the proclamation of his law and gospel, which is his revealed will commanding all to repent and believe in Christ. Pérez is not claiming that there is any inconsistency between God’s secret will, which is his eternal decree of everything that comes to pass, and the actions of his enemies, because he is not claiming that God, who is omniscient, has any expectation of gospel repentance from the reprobate. This hope he speaks of refers to God’s actions, not to passions or expectations, just as God is said to repent, but such is true only in an analogical sense.]

²²¹ Jer. 12

²²² Rom. 2; Ps. 73

²²³ Ps. 37:1-2

patiently for Him..."²²⁴ "But the meek shall inherit the earth and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace."²²⁵ Let us then be constant in righteousness and fear, as the Spirit of God commands us. For since we do not escape from being afflicted and so mistreated, much less will those who persecute us escape. For our temporary tribulations are the eve of the eternal ones which must come upon the impious, who do not believe the gospel and are persecutors of the righteous, as St. Peter says.²²⁶ Let us learn to be silent toward all that God does, for everything comes to pass having been done with great wisdom. And, in this way, we will be strengthened and will lose our fear of the present evils. "In quietness and in confidence", says the prophet, "shall be your strength."²²⁷ The more we will be silent, and hope with greater patience, the more strengthened, and with higher spirits will we drink of the clear part of the cup that the Father gives us, and it will come to pass in no other way than what He has told us by his word.

The apostle, St. Paul, in the epistle that he wrote to the Corinthians, says, "when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."²²⁸ In this the Spirit of God testifies to us that by means of the tribulations we suffer, we are free from the general condemnation of the world, which will necessarily be condemned. Therefore, God does not send the troubles and the other evils that we suffer upon us in order to damn us and separate us from Himself, as is thought by our flesh and the world, but rather, to correct us and to refine us from all that is in us that hinders us from having the likeness that we should with his Son, our Lord and Redeemer; and so that, being afflicted, we with greater confidence implore and receive his mercy as sons of mercy, and so that in this way we do not come to share in the condemnation of the world.

²²⁴ Ps. 37:9

²²⁵ Ps. 37:11

²²⁶ 1 Pet. 4

²²⁷ Is. 30:15

²²⁸ 1 Cor. 11:32

This is the effect of the prayer that the Lord Jesus made in his last supper, when He pleaded to the Father only for those that should believe in Him by his word,²²⁹ and He was heard. And since He did not pray for the world, we should not marvel at its perverseness, for, with what it does, it walks with calculated steps toward the precipice of its damnation. He pleaded to Him to deliver us from evil; look! He now delivers us by afflictions from the condemnation of sin and from all the other evils that are reserved for the unbelievers! Because of this, the prophet says, "Blessed is the man whom you chasten, O Lord, and teach him out of your law, that you may give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be dug for the wicked."²³⁰ By this we are made certain of our blessedness in the evils we suffer, for we are corrected by the Lord through them in order to not be cast away and in order to rejoice in his salvation. This is why holy Judith said, "let us believe that we are like servants that the Lord corrects, not in order to damn us, but to mend us."²³¹ And Esdras, a man of God, says, "the hunger, the plagues, the tribulation, and the anguishes are the lashes of the Lord, sent to purge and correct us."²³² Therefore, the apostle says to us, "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness." "But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."²³³ The same apostle also says to us, "[The persecutions and tribulations ye suffer are] a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer, seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled to recompense rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels taking vengeance on them that know not God."²³⁴ Therefore, it

²²⁹ Jn. 17

²³⁰ Ps. 94:12-13

²³¹ Judith 8:27 [apocrypha]

²³² 4 Esdras 16:19 [apocrypha]

²³³ 1 Thes. 5:5, 8-9

²³⁴ 2 Thes. 1:5-7

may be seen that the persecutions that we suffer are like a seal to us of the salvation that we have through Christ, and of being delivered from the final condemnation, and a testimony of rest which we shall have with the Lord after them. And because of this, we should suffer them with a joyful spirit,²³⁵ for it is a privilege that is not given to all.

11. THE PRIVILEGED ONES: THOSE THAT SUFFER FOR THE GOSPEL

For this reason, the apostle says to the Philippians, “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for his sake.”²³⁶ For just as faith, according to what the same apostle says, does not belong to all, so neither does it belong to all to suffer for it.²³⁷ From this it can be seen that those that suffer for its sake are supremely privileged by God, and that in this way they have their deliverance in Christ secure. It is for this reason that He gives to them to suffer for Him and allows them to be temporally so mistreated and condemned: so that before his judgment they be absolved from eternal condemnation. Just as all fathers give to their children what they know to be best and what will be most helpful to them, so God, in giving afflictions and troubles to his own sons, gives them what He knows is best for them and will be the most advantageous for them.

The times of tribulation are much better and more useful than the prosperous times, for the tribulations because of the word are particular to the righteous, but the times of prosperity are common to all, to friends and enemies alike. What things could be more useful and healthy for us than those by which we are made certain of the love that God has for us, and that we will certainly be free from the condemnation that must be declared against the world? What better thing could we have than, while we live in this exile, to walk in the company of Jesus Christ, dressed in his own livery? What

²³⁵ 1 Pet. 1

²³⁶ Phil. 1:29

²³⁷ 2 Thess. 3; Acts 13

greater prosperity can be imagined than to be saved with an eternal salvation, and to have a letter of surety to enter into the full possession of the riches won by the Lord's atonement? God, in giving us his tribulations, and to be persecuted for his name, gives us confirmation of all these things and assures us that we will certainly arrive at where his son arrived. For this reason St. Peter admonishes us, saying, "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you."²³⁸ And St. James, having considered what great benefits God communicates to his own through afflictions, says, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into diverse temptations, knowing this, that the trying of your faith works patience."²³⁹ And St. Paul says, "[We] rejoice in hope of the glory of God; and not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation works patience, and patience, experience, and experience, hope: and hope makes not ashamed."²⁴⁰

Now see how much God loves us, since he has given us a thing accompanied with such great benefits. There is nothing which we have more need of in this life than patience to bear the fruits of the gospel, which we are called to the obedience of. For of the many that hear it, none others bear fruit but those that, armed with patience, bear the hand of the Lord.²⁴¹ This is why the apostle says, "For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise."²⁴² Therefore, without it, we do not do it as we must, and neither can the promised blessings be reached. And in this way, so that we come to have patience, God tries us; for patience tends to be born of tribulation in those who are his sons, who, having known the goodwill and love with which they are loved, persuade themselves that nothing can

²³⁸ 1 Pet. 4:13-14

²³⁹ Jam. 1:2-3

²⁴⁰ Rom. 5:2-5; [Pérez's translation reads 'let us rejoice', which is compatible with the Greek original but is an unlikely reading.]

²⁴¹ Lk. 8

²⁴² Heb. 10:36; [The Spanish reads, "receive the promised blessings".]

come from his hand, adverse though it may be, that is not a good providence to them and that doesn't serve in a great way for their glory (as was said before), and who, because they perceive that they are loved, love Him, joyfully accepting all that He does with them, considering it all good and just, even as it is. God reveals this his good will to us by the gospel, for by it He gives this knowledge and certainty to all those that receive it, to some more and to some less, according to his good pleasure and what is suitable for each one.

From this patience, proof by experience is produced,²⁴³ which is the touchstone where our faith is tested and examined and it is seen if it is sound. "Beloved," says St. Peter, "think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you."²⁴⁴ Therefore, by the patience that the Lord gives us, He proves of what sort the faith that we have in Him is, if it is true or pretend.

For He desires that, since we are children of the light, we do not walk blindly, but that we have experience showing that we love Him and that He loves us. In such a way God tested Abraham and found him faithful, and Abraham understood that the faith that He had in God, by which He had been made righteous before Him, was true, since He put forth all that He most loved to fulfill his command.²⁴⁵ Of the four sorts of people that heard the word, all of which thought themselves to have believed it, it was found, when the tribulation came because of it and all had been tested by it, that only the one part had truly received it, for they passed through it with patience and bore fruit abundantly.²⁴⁶ And in this way the Lord distinguishes the true believers from those who pretend to be such by tribulation, as when the unthreshed grain is winnowed and the wheat is separated from the chaff by the force of the wind, by which is by it revealed and made known.

²⁴³ [This is a reference to the afore-cited Romans 5:2-5, which in the English reads, "patience works *experience*," but in the Spanish, "patience works *proof by experience*."

²⁴⁴ 1 Pet. 4:12

²⁴⁵ Gen. 15; Rom. 4; Jam. 2

²⁴⁶ Mt. 13; Mk. 4

Without passing through cross and persecutions, the Christian is not known and neither is he certain of himself.²⁴⁷ For this reason, the Churchman says, “What does he know who was never tempted? And he who has not been tried, what things can he understand?”²⁴⁸ Before the trial, he is asleep and does not know or esteem his Christianity. For before God places us upon the cross, which it is useful for us to suffer, each one can presume the same of themselves that St. Peter presumed of himself before finding himself alone and in danger of being imprisoned or killed by the enemies of his Master. But when God has sent us tribulations and anguishes and worked the mercy of giving us perseverance, with which we have confessed the faith by the gospel before our adversaries, and when, to follow Jesus Christ, we have risked all and regarded our lives as nothing and passed through all the troubles and harms that they had to offer us, it is at that time that we emerge proven and we know by experience that our faith is true and valuable before God, since He had us so united with Christ that neither prisons, nor torments, nor threats, nor dishonors, nor losses, nor even death could separate us from Him.

This experience and firm knowledge that we have that our faith is good and firm and that we can glory in God because of it, comes from the constant patience that God gave us to endure tribulations,²⁴⁹ which He has placed us in for the sake of the confession of his name. Patience therefore causes us to experience the goodness and truth of our faith and assures us that we are neither deceived, nor do we live by imagination, but by the word of God, by which He gave to us to know his salvation and revealed Christ to us. By this, what St. Peter says is found true: “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”²⁵⁰

²⁴⁷ [Unless ‘cross’ is taken in a very broad sense, Pérez will seem to have overstated his case here.]

²⁴⁸ [Perez cites “2. Ecles. 34”; the source is unknown.]

²⁴⁹ Jer. 9

²⁵⁰ 1 Pet. 1:6-7

The proof by experience that comes through patience produces hope. From having experienced the power of God in us we come to hope in Him. And the greater the trial has been, the more firm and certain the hope, just as happened with David and Daniel and many other holy men, who, being tested with severe tribulations, emerged with great hope because they had felt the power and presence of God in them by which they understood that He would always look upon them favorably and that they would not be abandoned in any further trials. David, moved by the perception of this favor, full of hope in the goodness of the Lord that sustained him against his enemies and brought him out in victory, says, "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me. In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: He heard my voice out of his temple."²⁵¹ It takes place in the same way for all of us faithful who have been called. For after our faith has been tested and found good because of the patience and endurance that God has given us, our hope then grows out of measure and we conceive a most firm sureness and certainty of our eternal salvation, so much so that we begin in this way to feel and know without doubt that that we will never be able to be lost, but we will most certainly leave through the door of salvation. From this comes what St. James says: "Blessed is the man that endures temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love Him."²⁵² This hope is firm and unchanging, for it has Jesus Christ as its cause and foundation and the word of his promise, which says, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."²⁵³ "Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their

²⁵¹ Ps. 18:1-6

²⁵² Jam. 1:12

²⁵³ Mt. 5:4

company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake."²⁵⁴ "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake."²⁵⁵

Our hope having been founded on these and other such promises, the apostle says that it will never make us ashamed. For we who believe such and resolutely await the fulfillment of the promises of God will never be cheated of the fruits of our hope, nor be made ashamed before the sons of this world, nor be ashamed of having believed the divine promises. For we will truly reach what God has given us to hope for, which is the fulfillment of them; and those men who are without God will never have occasion to shame us for our hope, for we will certainly be saved.

David confirms this to us according to his own experience, saying, "In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed."²⁵⁶ Blessed is the man whose hope is in the Lord, for he saves those who hope in Him.²⁵⁷ "Blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is."²⁵⁸ And Isaiah: "He that believes shall not make haste." And St. Paul, "For we are saved by hope."²⁵⁹ Finally, there is what the Holy Spirit intends to bring us to an understanding of, that as much as we hope in God, we will be saved and delivered by Jesus Christ from all tribulations, temporal and eternal. Therefore, being enlivened by this hope, we can glory in them and say with St. Paul, "If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril,

²⁵⁴ Lk. 6:22

²⁵⁵ Mt. 5:11; Lk. 6

²⁵⁶ Ps. 31:1; [The Spanish reads, "I will never be made ashamed."]

²⁵⁷ [It is very unclear what is being quoted here; this may be a synthesis of Ps. 37:40 and 146:5.]

²⁵⁸ Jer. 17:7

²⁵⁹ Rom. 8:24; [Pérez's translation reads, "For by hope we are *already* saved."]

or sword? As it is written, For your sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."²⁶⁰ Therefore, because our hope is so well-founded, we are sure that we will not be brought to shame and certain that no created thing "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."²⁶¹ For what the Holy Spirit says must certainly be completed in us: that if we suffer with Christ, we will also reign with Him, and if we are dead with Him, we will live together with Him.²⁶² Therefore, since we share in his act of suffering by suffering and being dead together with Him, we must consider it certain that we will live for eternity with Him. And in this way, to be tried because of Him is to be confirmed in and assured of the hope of the eternal Kingdom which He has already taken possession of for us; and He is glorified, reigning in our name.

We have already seen how all that God does is to assure us of the security of his salvation that He has given us in Christ and to effect his counsel in us that He determined before the centuries. As greatly immutable as this counsel is, equally great is the rage of his enemies and of the devil their captain, who is the primary minister of the tribulations that the faithful suffer; he does as much as he can to try to reach victory by them, dealing internal and external temptations to them with which he would, by one way or another, separate them from the path of righteousness. When he must come to combat, he is so alert and diligent that he couldn't be more so. All his armies are armed and made ready to topple Christians from the constancy that they have in Christ. He brandishes his greatness and his instruments so that they become weak and dismayed when they have considered such strength. They are then like sheep in the mouth of the wolf. They are left by friends and acquaintances, hated and denied by family, cast away and without aid from any of them that were near to them; everyone, because they see them in such a state, approves of the sentences given by their

²⁶⁰ Rom. 8:31-37

²⁶¹ Rom. 8:39

²⁶² [A Paraphrase of] 2 Tim. 2:12

condemners as if they were spoken by the very mouth of God. In these things, the griefs and anguishes that they suffer in their souls are great. It appears that heaven and earth are enraged against them and that God and his creatures make war on them to destroy them. They see the kings and princes, who rightly should be defenders of the cause of God which they suffer for, risen up against them as against the worst enemies that they could have in their kingdoms. They consider the great ones and the little ones and the men of all sorts that are armed with an infernal fury against them and are all saying together, "May they die, may they die, the traitorous enemies of God," and they see on the other side the torments that are set aside for them: the humiliation, the infamy, and the shame that they must receive before the people, before friends and enemies. They see the sad and frightful face of death and the executioner waiting to light the fire and tighten the garrote,²⁶³ and they see that in such straights there isn't anyone who consoles them; but rather, in place of consolation, they encourage them to deny and blaspheme the redemption of Jesus Christ. In this the anguishes are great, but yet they grow even more, from one degree to another, for it appears to them that in the midst of it all God is sleeping and that He has forgotten them.²⁶⁴ Therefore, the devil prods more so that they come to be dismayed from it all. He succeeds in persuading them that God hates them, since He lets them treat them in such a way and He doesn't then give them any comfort. This anguish is harsher than death itself.

All these things are strains of darkness which the devil casts in and of himself and by means of the unbelieving; and they cannot be undone and cast aside except by the presence of the light of the promises of God. This first thing that we must do, being placed into such troubles, is not to stop or be absorbed in what we see, but to pass beyond to what is unseen by the eyes of the body, and then we will undoubtedly be comforted in the midst of such anguishes. God says by the prophet, "I will be with [the afflicted] in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him."²⁶⁵ Therefore God is not him

²⁶³ [An instrument of death by strangulation; certain circumstances dictated that one should be strangled before being burned, including turning penitent or being of a high social class.]

²⁶⁴ Ps. 44

²⁶⁵ Ps. 91:15; [the Spanish reads, "and *he* will glorify *Me*."]

who appears to make war on us, but Him who is with us in aiding us, giving us a hidden virtue with which He will in the end deliver us. To his disciples, and to us through them, He said, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."²⁶⁶ Therefore none of the evils of all those you see and feel within and outside of yourselves, nor all that which Satan can do, will hinder you from entering into it. We will never feel abandoned, but we will always find God with us if we resort to the divine promise that cannot be found lacking, where it is written, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."²⁶⁷

12. THE WORD OF PROMISE IS THE REFUGE OF THE FAITHFUL

Let us hear what He commands us by his prophet to do in tribulation: "Come, my people, enter into your chambers, and shut your doors about thee: hide yourself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast."²⁶⁸ The inner room and chamber of the faithful is the promise of God in which He promises us that He will constantly love and favor us.²⁶⁹ To close the door is to renounce our perceptions in affliction and not to judge by what is then felt and seen around us, nor to doubt the truth of God, but to believe that He will always fulfill what He has promised, since Jesus Christ by whom He promised it lives eternally. In that moment we see nothing but darkness, sadness, and a wrathful God, and judge Him to be against us. But, since He recognizes us as his people and commands us to hide ourselves while his indignation passes, it is clear that this is so that it does not include us; being wrathful, He continues loving us; and his indignation is not against us, but against our adversaries and condemners, upon which He at that time takes vengeance for their unbelief by letting them carry out the sentence of his wrath. He confirms this to us by

²⁶⁶ Lk. 12:32

²⁶⁷ Josh. 1:5

²⁶⁸ Isa. 26:20

²⁶⁹ Mt. 6

the same prophet: "Fury is not in Me," He says. "Who would set the briers and thorns against Me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together."²⁷⁰ St. Paul was supremely afflicted and assailed by Satan, but he was therein loved and favored by God, as he heard from his own mouth when He responded to him, saying, "My grace is sufficient for you."²⁷¹ David, perceiving such favor, says, "O love the Lord, all ye his saints: for the Lord preserves the faithful, and plentifully rewards the proud doer."²⁷² Through confidence in the promise we find this light and consolation in the midst of the darkness of tribulation. But when in the darkness we follow our own reason, we necessarily make false judgments. For, because we do not feel divine favor, we think that God is distant and asleep, and because we do not clearly see the deliverance that we desire, we judge that He also does not see it. It is as happened to the prophet, who having been severely tried, judged according to the judgement of his flesh that God had abandoned him; but by the word he later teaches the falseness of his judgment: "For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before your eyes: nevertheless you heard the voice of my supplications when I cried unto you."²⁷³ He considered himself cut off and cast aside, but God had heard him and delivered him when he thought himself least free.

In this very way, according to our judgment, our tribulations always appear to us to be too long and as if they must never end. But here the Lord tells us that they remain for only a little while. For in commanding us to take shelter for a moment, He makes us to understand that these tribulations are momentary and finish very soon. As David also says, "his anger endures but a moment."²⁷⁴ Our affliction, the apostle says, is of very little length and exceedingly light.²⁷⁵ And therefore, we must suffer it unwaveringly, not considering the things that we see, but the invisible things that are

²⁷⁰ Isa. 27:4

²⁷¹ 2 Cor. 12

²⁷² Ps. 31:23

²⁷³ Ps. 31:22

²⁷⁴ Ps. 30:5

²⁷⁵ 2 Cor. 4:17

eternal. For since we are sons of Abraham because we have believed like him, we must appear like him in that, as he, being tempted to the extreme, resigned himself entirely to God and did not doubt of his promise, but was strengthened in the faith and gave glory to God, being persuaded that, even though he did not see any reason to hope, God, who had made a promise to him, was likewise powerful to fulfill the promise for him.²⁷⁶ In such a way, when our tribulation appears most severe, and when we least see any reason to expect to emerge from it, let us believe that it is not for more than a moment and let us therefore hope with greater firmness, having been made certain that God in his power will fulfill his promise by means that we do not understand and that are not reached by our faculty of reason. Let us, therefore, even though we do not see deliverance, consider ourselves delivered.

Though it appears that God hates us and his creatures make war on us, let us believe that He is on our side, and that though He shows Himself to be enraged, that He is not enraged against us, since He cannot strip Himself of the fatherly affection that He has for us.²⁷⁷ Let us enter into the inner room that He commands; and even though from out here He appears very formidable, from within we will find Him to be what He has shown Himself to us to be in Christ, that is to say: our most-merciful Father, whose bowels are inflamed with love for us. We do not therefore have any reason to dismay because of the greater war and opposition that the world wages against us or because of the greater frightfulness of bodily death to us, since God does not stop watching and being with us, even though we do not see Him because of the cloudiness of our vision in the midst of confusion.

To all the faithful that labor and have fainted under the cross, the Holy Spirit gives the following counsel by Isaiah: "Say to them that are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; He will come and save you.'"²⁷⁸ This is as much as if He were to say to them: "Hear, my

²⁷⁶ Gen. 15; Rom. 4

²⁷⁷ Jn. 3

²⁷⁸ Isa. 35:4

friends and beloved: the trials that you suffer have that you are mine as their cause, and that you are governed by my word and have cast aside the yoke of impiety and false religion to take on my own yoke. Do not look only upon the external things, according to which your flesh judges, but know that as there is nothing that the world hates more or that it persecutes with more rage and fury than you, so, contrarywise, there is nothing in the world that I more love than you. Therefore, my sons, trust; for I have already defeated all that torments you.²⁷⁹ And since the enemies do not cease to make war on you, neither do you cease to receive consolation in the blessings of my promise, which are yours and are for you. You are considered cursed and abhorrent; pray and do not grow weary. Do not be limp-handed, but grip the sword of your defense, which is my word. Be of good spirit, console yourselves, and do not fear. In everything your enemies lie to you. I am not absent as they say, but present and in your defense, as I have promised you. I do not hate you, nor have I cast you aside; but rather, I love you so much that those that touch you touch the apple of my eye.²⁸⁰ I, I myself will take vengeance on those that afflict you. I will in person deliver you: persevere constantly in my love, for your adversaries fight against Me, though they do not think so. Place the eyes of your heart upon Me. And even though your sense is hindered by the cloud of smoke, the dust, and the flames, do not because of this believe that I have departed and left you alone: I am with you, even though you do not see Me. I myself am He who fights for you, even though you do not perceive it. Do not fear that your enemies might accomplish what they desire, for it is you who will emerge victorious. For I, I myself am He who delivers you, and I fulfill in you what I promised you.” God speaks such sweet and loving words with his own who are afflicted in the fire before going to Him.

Since God is so very present with us when we think Him most far away, and loves us so much when we consider ourselves to be hated, and does not forget us when we most imagine ourselves to be cast away, let us place all our confidence in Him, for He alone is sufficient for us against all adversity; and let us say with St. Job, “Though

²⁷⁹ Jn. 16

²⁸⁰ Zech. 2

He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.”²⁸¹ Our flesh, as it is the greatest enemy that we have, is that which most makes war on us.²⁸² For not only does it not believe in this presence and favor of God, but it does not cease to battle against it and to cling to vain things in order to defend itself with their help from the ills that it perceives; and in this way, it is not only not defended, but it comes to grow worse. Therefore, we must guard ourselves to keep from putting God to the test by fixing our eyes upon and trusting in men, good or bad, faithful or unfaithful, in the business of our salvation. For evil men by their evil make us blind, and good men by their weakness make us dismay. For, since we are all of a sinful and fragile lump, subject to all misery, let us look to what the Holy Spirit commands by the prophet: “Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man in whom there is no help.”²⁸³ Miserable things happen to those that trust in them; for, as Jeremiah says, “cursed be the man that trusts in man.”²⁸⁴ Let us therefore set our hearts on God alone and let us depend on Him, and let us be certain that He will help us and fight for us as the prophet says.²⁸⁵ If we believe this word, we already have the victory in hand, for, as St. John says, “This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.”²⁸⁶

St. Stephen, being armed with this faith, that is the victory communicated by the gospel, had victory over his enemies, who could not resist the wisdom and spirit which he spoke with. David, a young man of little age – with what arms did he fight against Goliath, a very powerful captain? He was not helped of Saul, nor could he bear his arms; he was not favored with his advice and his own wisdom, nor with his forces, being so unequal to those of his enemy; but, being armed with only his confidence in God, he toppled him and cut off his head and gave deliverance to the chosen people. The fulfilment of the promise of God that says, “Because he has set his love upon Me,

²⁸¹ Job 13:15

²⁸² Rom. 8

²⁸³ Ps. 146:3

²⁸⁴ Jer. 17:5

²⁸⁵ Isa. 32; Jos. 1

²⁸⁶ 1 Jn. 5:4

therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he has known my name,"²⁸⁷ was realized in him and is always realized in all true believers.

And since "greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world,"²⁸⁸ let us depart from all human effort, industry, prudence, wisdom, and counsel. For the more isolated we are and less dependent upon them, and the more things appear hopeless to us according to the judgment of reason, the more powerful we are and the greater the marvels and admirable works of God are that we see, worked by his power in and through us. For, in that hour, God in our weakness reveals the greatness of his power for our well-being and salvation. But when it appears to us that our affairs are going better and are more certain because we have the help and favor of men, then we dismay and all that we thought ourselves to have slips through our hands, and being dissipated in our thoughts, we remain without God and without men. For, the things that we trust in, as few as they may be, we make gods, and in this we depart from the true God. We trust in the things of the world because they have a more beautiful appearance, they are more flattering, they are showier and are more in number. In this way we divide the hope that should be in God alone and we place a portion in them. Our flesh always clings to created things and depends upon them in place of depending upon God alone. For, since it's shrewd and cunning, it almost always deceives us, and continuously deceives itself, for it has a custom of covering its unfaithfulness and hypocrisy with some other color so that it cannot easily be known to be such. And we being for this reason deceived by it when we consider ourselves stronger for having more of the devices of human favor, we therefore find ourselves more faint and without strength. Therefore, these fleshly weapons which we trust in, by which we hope to be relieved, not only do not serve for our help, but they hinder and harm us to the extreme. Therefore, in this battle, let us imitate David, who never armed himself against his enemies except with confidence in God alone and by it had victory over and subjugated all of them.

²⁸⁷ Ps. 91:14

²⁸⁸ 1 Jn. 4:4

God teaches us by his apostles how we should face our enemies, bodily as well as spiritual. All the most wise, holy, and powerful of the world were against them, all human wealth, dignity, authority, excellence, greatness, and strength, so that they appeared to be invincible. There were neither princes nor lords, kings nor kingdoms that were not against them and that did not wage a most cruel war on them. But they, armed only with the word of the gospel and with patience, laid low all the strength and patience of the world and of its prince. And with having truly believed the gospel, they brought to earth everything high and lofty that exalts itself against God and brought men captive to the obedience of faith, by the strength of which they made the world tremble and worked great and memorable deeds. The world was not so strong, nor Satan so powerful, nor his own so skillful as to be able to hinder the smallest mustard seed, the faith of the gospel, from sprouting and growing into the likeness of a great tree, extending its branches throughout the world, so that the birds of the air make their nests in it.²⁸⁹

The devil and all his subjects are being combated this very day and defeated with these same weapons with which God has armed his faithful. If those that serve the prince of darkness and are marked with the branding of the beast that St. John speaks of²⁹⁰ can make the sun not to rise each day and spread its rays throughout the world and make itself known by its heat and clarity, so also will they be able to make the sun of the gospel not to radiate, and not to rise each day and give light to the blind by its clarity and radiance, not to remove the captives from the power of captivity by its power, not to open the doors of the prisons for the inmates, and the contrite of heart not to receive full liberty by it.²⁹¹ Let them ascend into the heavens if they can and cast down the sun, if they would want to do away with the gospel of glory to keep it from radiating and keep it from being manifested by it that God alone is Lord, and that according to his word He is to be worshipped and served by men. All that they do is

²⁸⁹ Mt. 13, Mk. 4

²⁹⁰ Rev. 13 & 14

²⁹¹ Isa. 9, 61; Lk. 4; Ps. 51

just to spit toward heaven so that it falls upon their faces. Let us be armed with the weaponry of the apostles and let us cast aside all human confidence, and let us assure ourselves that with our afflictions and death the enemies and opponents of the gospel are destroyed. For God now brings them down the same path that He brought those who opposed and persecuted the apostles and prophets, for we have the same gospel of life that they taught. By it we live and for the love of it we suffer; but it, and not them, must always be the victor, as it has been from the beginning of the world. So in order to be certain of this victory, let us not put God to the test, but let us trust entirely in Him and despise all human help and favor.

What is the reason why many grow faint and remain frightened, having lost the strength to persevere in the good that God has worked for them? And that others are tepid and cold when the clarity of the gospel that gives them light is so great, and the works of God that He manifests by it so laudable? It is undoubtedly nothing else but that they trust in others and take men as their help, having lain their eyes upon the favor that could come to them through them. Some set themselves upon being rich, others on being honored, others in having the friendship of the great, others in being generous and of noble blood, and others on other such prerogatives. What is this but to trust in smoke and shadow that fade away before one's very eyes? When, while carrying on the cause of God for which we are afflicted, we trust in the help and favor of men, it is like trusting in Egypt and leaning upon a broken reed, which, rather than supporting him who leans upon it, instead pierces and cripples his hand.²⁹² To be Christian and faithful is to be founded upon the rock which is Christ.²⁹³ Being so well-founded, unto what end do we seek human help and relief, which causes us to lose our firmness? For, against this rock, the winds of trials, tempests, storms, and floods of evils cannot prevail or make it to move or shake.²⁹⁴ Let us then assure ourselves that, having such a firm foundation, which is Jesus Christ, there will be nothing that can

²⁹² Isa. 36

²⁹³ Mt. 9

²⁹⁴ Mt. 7

move us, as the Holy Spirit testifies to us, saying, "They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever."

God desires that we believe and trust in Him because of his word alone and not because of the authority of the holy men and faithful ministers that He sends. For if we trust because of them, and if we believe in God because of the holiness and goodness that is in them, it must be to our weakening; and we cannot drink anything but fainting from them, making our weakness to be weaker and our sickness sicker. But if we look to Jesus Christ alone, we will certainly be strengthened by Him to not dismay and to be constant against all evil.

13. THE TRUTH OF GOD DOES NOT DEPEND ON MEN

The ministers of God that you have heard taught such, directing men in everything to Jesus Christ as to the author and defender of all truth and righteousness. Their intention was nothing else but to be faithful to the Lord that sent them, making ready the way, showing men through the law the condemnation they were in because of sin and how severe the judgment of God must be against the unbelieving and superstitious authors and followers of deceits contrary to his religion, and then bringing them to Jesus Christ by the gospel as Him in whom alone is the remedy for all evils, so that they might receive it from Him and know God as a father through Him. They did not sell themselves to us as gods, but as men, subject to all human weaknesses and no less in need of Jesus Christ than those whom they were proclaiming Him to. May this which is our duty therefore serve us well now in that, as our faith is not of men, so our assurance does not come through men; because of this, let us not look to or rest in men, but in God who gives life to the dead.

Simply because men may be weak and stumble, the word of God that they have taught is not therefore weak.²⁹⁵ Though they become dismayed, it does not become dismayed, nor is it found lacking. All of the disciples were missing during the death of the Redeemer of the world,²⁹⁶ but He was not because of this missing, nor did He stop being who He was, nor did his truth lose any of its value. So true, so good, so righteous and sanctifying,²⁹⁷ so unchangeable and powerful was He after, that in denying Him, they were scandalized in Him even before they stumbled: for the truth of God depends on men in nothing. And though they were scandalized by Him with the dishonor and insults of the cross, He did not because of this disown them; He did not hate or deny them, but rather, He Himself brought them back to Himself. There were He is now seated at the right hand of the Father, his nature has not changed, nor his love for those who are weak and given to fall, who under the weight of the cross fall to their knees and faint in the way; but He makes them partakers of his mercy by pardoning them and giving them strength, defeating in them all their weakness. And since, He being who He is, He loves the weak,²⁹⁸ and does not cast them aside or disown them because of their weaknesses, we also, being in his likeness, must love them and not disown them, but rather wait for Him to do for them what He did with his first disciples who had the first fruits of the Spirit.²⁹⁹

Let us not be of the number of those that have enmity with God and take all of his works as an opportunity to distance themselves more from Him and to grow cold in the love that they owe to Him and to blaspheme his holy name in the company of his adversaries; but as obedient and faithful sons, let us understand the intent of our heavenly Father and let us yield the fruits that He intends from his works, which are to know Him more and to further humble ourselves, and not only not to distance

²⁹⁵ Rom. 4

²⁹⁶ Mt. 25; Lk. 22

²⁹⁷ ['justificador', meaning either "justifying" or "sanctifying"]

²⁹⁸ Rom. 14

²⁹⁹ Rom. 8

ourselves from Him, as the evil do, but to draw nearer to Him, and, gathering our strength, to persevere in the path of truth.

If there has now been weakness in many that we did not expect, the weakness is not in the truth, but in the man. Let us not consider it a strange thing to see weakness in men. For in so far as they are men, all their substance is made of weakness and fainting. Let us understand and gather from this how supreme everyone's needfulness is, both of those that are standing and those that are fallen down, of the power of Christ, without which we cannot in anyway endure. Therefore, in the falls and weaknesses of others, let us look as in a mirror in order to know our own weakness through them, and let us humble ourselves before the Lord, for in and of ourselves we are nothing but fainting toward what is good. And since we are called to the cross and to battle against the pride and presumption that is in us, being busy in this, let none judge perversely of those who have fallen down, but "let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."³⁰⁰ For God is mighty to lift up the downfallen and raise up the humbled, to stitch up and mend their lesions. For He does not despise them for being fallen, since they are his sons; but rather, He desires to work his most glorious work by such means so that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" and his mercy and goodness towards them be made clearer.³⁰¹

The world cannot suffer any to disregard its judgments or to approve what it condemns; since the sons of God have the judgment of Christ, by it they approve of what God commands and reject the judgments of the world as odious.³⁰² For this reason, those of the world work as much ill against them as they can for the sake of removing this sense of the truth from them, and by consequence change God from who He is. But by this same road God further estranges them from the world and teaches them to completely reject its judgment, and makes them to depart from it.

³⁰⁰ 1 Cor. 10:12; Rom. 14

³⁰¹ Rom. 5

³⁰² 1 Cor. 2; 1 Jn. 5

And if it comes to pass that they stumble and fall under the weight of the cross and judge falsely, rejecting the truth that they should have accepted and approve of the lie that they should have rejected, this will serve for their greater good, to be enriched in true humility and confidence in God alone, whose goodness draws exceedingly great blessings from great evils.³⁰³ For those who love God, He Himself makes all things into blessings; even from sin He produces great blessings for them,³⁰⁴ as He did for Noah, David, and St. Peter after their falls, when taking occasion from their falls, He worked great mercies for them and commanded the light to shine in the darkness.³⁰⁵ Having already departed from and been crucified to the world in this way, and it to them, they come to know by experience that neither honors, nor wealth, nor the nobility of the flesh, nor human favor, nor the knowledge or esteem of men are worth anything in this battle, but only faith and trust in the Lord; and having been pruned in this way and made humble and small, they remain united with the vine that is Christ and emerge more suited than before to receive his gracious gifts. For in such a way the Father cleanses and cleans them so that they bear more true and plentiful fruits.³⁰⁶ Therefore Christ thus wins and the Antichrist³⁰⁷ loses. For where he thought himself to already have those sheep as his own and to have snatched them from the hands of God, therein Christ more powerfully possesses them and unites them with Himself with a closer and greater connection of love. For the truth of his promise does not vary, in which He says, "neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."³⁰⁸ Therefore, neither hell, nor the devil, nor sin, nor the Antichrist, nor all that are his can do as much to remove them as He does to defend and preserve them in the eternal life that He has already given them, since the day that He called them to Himself.³⁰⁹

³⁰³ Ps. 33

³⁰⁴ Rom. 8

³⁰⁵ Gen. 9; Ps. 51; Jn. 21; 2 Cor. 2; Gal. 6

³⁰⁶ Jn. 15

³⁰⁷ [Which here has special reference to the Pope, whose servants tortured and delivered up Christians to be killed in the Inquisition.]

³⁰⁸ Jn. 10:28

³⁰⁹ Jn. 3, 8

It is known to God that those that He receives are not impeccable,³¹⁰ but subject to all sin and most capable of all evil; nevertheless, He accepts them as his own, knowing that they must fall down,³¹¹ but He does not cast them away because of their falls. Jesus Christ knew well that all his disciples would deny Him,³¹² scandalized by Him as He had beforehand said; but in spite of knowing this, in his last supper He made promises of great favors and eternal life to them and declared what He was going to do for them, which was to offer Himself in sacrifice for the destruction of sin;³¹³ it was because of and for them, so that in their falls they might receive life and pardon through Him; and afterward all of them fell and denied Him.³¹⁴ But He, because He had taken charge of them and promised them pardon, did not cast them away, even though they cast Him away: He did not deny them, even though they denied Him; He did not let them perish, even though they had willfully put themselves in perdition; but He pardoned them, restored them, and healed them from all their falls.

So now, even though, being overcome with weakness, we have fallen under the cross, God will not cast us away, for He has accepted us as his own and made a promise of life;³¹⁵ and him who his mercy once receives, He does not receive him in order to let him perish and not to help him in his needs and heal his wounds, but to glorify Himself in him and give him eternal life.³¹⁶ For when He receives us, He does not receive us with the condition that we do good, be faithful, and persevere in goodness, for this cannot happen according to our so-corrupted nature; but rather, He receives us with the condition that He will be our life, our pardon, our constancy and perseverance, our doctor and medicine, our teacher, and our salvation and perpetual Redeemer.^{317, 318}

³¹⁰ [Meaning "incapable of sin".]

³¹¹ Rom. 14

³¹² Mt. 26; Lk. 22; Jn. 14-17

³¹³ Heb. 9

³¹⁴ Mt. 26; Mk. 14

³¹⁵ Jn. 15

³¹⁶ Jn. 6

³¹⁷ 1 Cor. 1; Jn. 10; 2 Cor. 5; Heb. 9; Isa. 61

³¹⁸ [Perez does not here mean that obedience is not required of Christians, but that it is not required in such a way that those who believe will upon occasion of their disobedience be cast away; but rather, Christ promises to freely fulfill all the conditions of obedience and holiness in us that He requires.]

14. THE TRUE RELIGION

The crime of having denied the truth of God and having turned away from Him to accept the lie, and having stopped worshipping Him by adoring the Beast is most severe.³¹⁹ It is a testimony of being ungrateful and strangers to the Lord, from whose generosity we have received such a great number of mercies. God says by Jeremiah, "For pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing. Has a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit."³²⁰ God called us that we might have Him as Father, love Him, and worship Him as such. He removed us from a most thick darkness of lies and deceit and striking errors. He manifested to us that Jesus Christ alone is our gracious salvation.³²¹ When we were wandering about lost, worshipping sticks and stones, He brought us to his path. We were possessed by sin and the devil and He freed us from his tyranny. When we were a lost people, He made us his people and treated us as his own people, giving us the sustenance of his word.³²² While He alone was our God, and He alone our Lord and Father, we denied it with idols: the glory that he had given us of being his people, we exchanged it for vanity in accepting false doctrines, true doctrine having been cast aside. We have left our legitimate husband, Jesus Christ, with whom we covenanted in marriage by faith in Him, as Hosea says,³²³ and we have fornicating by separating ourselves from Him, denying the faith that we gave Him. The Turks and the Moors do not deny their religion; the Indians and the servants of the Antichrist do not deny theirs, even though their religions are false and lying; and we who by divine blessing have that

³¹⁹ Rev. 13

³²⁰ Jer. 2:10-11

³²¹ Acts 14, 17

³²² Dt. 4; Ps. 147

³²³ Hosea

religion which alone is holy and true, having come from heaven, that of which the Lord of heaven is the author, should we deny it because of a senseless fear of losing our lives?

And what is our life without this religion of God but the life of brute animals? What is there to distinguish us from all the other peoples and nations that are under heaven, if not that we know Jesus Christ by the revelation of the Father, and that we have eternal life by Him, and that while they all walk in darkness, we have the word which He created all things by the power of in order to be guided and preserved by it?³²⁴ If God had been our enemy for some time, if He had been tyrannical and cruel to us, and if He kept us deceived, we would have reason to leave Him—in order to depart from the deceits and tyranny. But He always having been a God to us, and a God to save us,³²⁵ and Him who has restrained the devil so that he does not finish devouring us, Him who commanded his creatures to sustain us while we were yet his enemies, Him who has delivered us from great deathly perils and has always been a tutor and protector to us, we deny Him with so little shame. Our guilt is great. Because of it, we fully deserve for Him to leave and condemn us along with those who are still set under the tyranny of the devil and the Antichrist. For how light the ills are that we suffer for his name? To forget so many and so undeserved blessings as He has worked for us is a thing worthy of most severe punishment.

If Jesus Christ had not first been crucified and made a curse for us, and had not called us to follow Him with our cross laid upon us,³²⁶ we would have cause to deceive ourselves. But He called us to the cross, not to gifts, or honors, or the pleasures of this life. What is it then, let us see, to have denied Him, and where does such supreme misery proceed from, except from not having understood the end unto which He called us, which was to transform us into his likeness through afflictions? Therefore, to have cast away the truth in order to avoid the cross is to have cast Him away. For there is no

³²⁴ Mt. 16; Mt. 11; Is. 53, 45; Gen. 3; 2 Pt. 1; Isa. 8

³²⁵ Ps. 67

³²⁶ Mt. 10 ; Lk. 12 ; Gal. 3

Jesus Christ without a cross, nor a true and blessed cross without Jesus Christ.

Therefore, it remains to us to have great pain, regret, and repentance for having in such a way left and denied Him, and for the life that remains to us to be constant penitence.

Let us therefore turn within ourselves and look with attention to see that the offended one is not our enemy that desires or procures our damnation, but our God and Father who desires our salvation. "As surely as I live, declares the Lord God, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked should turn from their ways and live."³²⁷ Him who we offend and deny is our Father. We moved in denying him, but He did not because of this move. He is still a father to us, and as a father He loves us and will rejoice in our conversion. To search for us, He goes out in order to place us in his house again. We imitate the apostles in being scandalized like them by the baseness and cross of Christ, and in denying Him as they denied Him because of their senseless fears of death; let us also imitate them in turning to Christ as they did. For He will no less receive us than He did them, nor with any less love pick us up than He picked them up. And God, who through Him is our Father, loves us no less after our falls than before we fell.

For the nature or heart of love of parents is not altered by the sickness and weakness of their children. The prodigal son, after the goods of the father were lost and squandered, having repented of his sin, turned to him, confessing himself unworthy to be called his son. But the father seeing him come from afar, comes out to meet him on the way, and he has barely opened his mouth to confess his sin and disobedience to him when he embraces and kisses him and orders that he be dressed in new and expensive clothing and makes a great feast for him. Behold how another did not find him after he turned to him, having repented: he was his father before he left the house. He was always a father to him, before and after he had fallen. The falls and distancing of the son did not alter the love of the father or his inner sentiments, or his heart, or his nature. He does not reprimand him for his failures even though they had been great,

³²⁷ Eze. 33:11

but rather he rejoices so much in his return that in his joy he does not give him an opportunity to confess them, for he had already forgiven all of them and had no memory of them; and he wants himself and all others with him in his house to rejoice in his good providence in having recovered his lost son.

To us, my brothers and sisters, who have been like the prodigal son in having squandered the blessings of God, the Holy Spirit speaks, putting forth to us the example that we must follow after falls so that according to our experience we feel the bowels of love that God has for us even now; yes, I say 'now,' when we are lesioned, full of shame and confusion. In this He assures us of pardon from all of our falls, as great as they have been, no less than if we had already reached it. For if our hearts are wounded with true pain for having committed them, He has already pardoned us for all of them even before confessing them. He shall embrace us and shall give us a kiss of peace as one does to his children, by which He manifests Himself to us as a Father no less than before, and the account that He will keep of our wrongdoings will be as if we had never committed them, considering the happiness of our salvation.³²⁸ The truth is that we have lost his goods, but in his house He has more than enough to enrich us once again. Therefore, let us remove our eyes from our own misery and nakedness, and let us not exaggerate them to ourselves, and let us place them on Him alone; for our salvation, our life, and our remedy is in Him and not in ourselves.

You will be severely tried when you consider how many you scandalized by your denial (many who were still young in the knowledge of Jesus Christ) because of you condemning the truth that they had before approved of. This will wound you greatly, and through this Satan will make war on you. In this, that which happened to the apostles that denied the Master and scandalized many has happened to you. But if, like those weak and unpracticed in war, you fell and the enemy brought you to your knees, it is fitting that you gather your strength, confessing the truth that you denied, disposing your lives for it with constancy of spirit in the pattern of those who died for

³²⁸ Eze. 18

the confession of the truth that they had before denied and came by their deaths to build up and restore again what they had before destroyed with their denial.

In Jesus Christ we have strength for this and a complete remedy. For reason, the Holy Spirit commands us to go to Him, saying by the apostle, “we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who was tempted in every way that we are, yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”³²⁹ “They that be whole”, He Himself says, “need not a physician, but they that are sick.”³³⁰ For this reason He calls them thus, saying, “Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”³³¹ Therefore, to be very sick and oppressed in conscience not only does not keep us from coming to Him, but, because we are such, we are closer to being remedied, for we are those whom He calls in order to ease our burden and heal us. If those who hate Him have taken your honor, stripped you of your property, locked you up in prisons, and condemned you as heretics, this in no way hinders you from going to Him and receiving other blessings and honors, exceedingly and without comparison greater than those that are visible. For even though men have condemned you as enemies, God loves you and affirms you as sons, and for this reason commands that you go and be renewed by his Son, who, if He were not to love you, would not be so diligent about the business of your restoration. Your sins cannot be as great as the salvation that He offers you. He already has them destroyed and defeated; He desires for you to rejoice in his victory. If you consider yourselves unworthy of so much blessing, your unworthiness is also not a hindrance, since He is worthy by whom it is worked for you.³³² Our ears therefore being closed to the voices and reason of the world and of our flesh, let us open them to this voice with which God so lovingly calls us to Himself.

³²⁹ Heb. 4:15-16

³³⁰ Mt. 9:12; Mk. 2:17

³³¹ Mt. 11:28

³³² 1 Cor. 1

15. GOD, THE SOURCE OF ALL GOOD

Since in God alone (who is the source of all good) is there mercy, let us not think of finding it in any other than in Him and in those that have his Spirit and are members of Christ. It is proper to mercy to deliver the miserable from their maladies, and in place of them to communicate true blessings to them. And the greater the evils and miseries that it delivers them from are, the more the mercy of Him who is worthy of greater praise is made clear and shown forth.

How then shall we call that 'mercy' which deprives us of exceedingly great blessings and places us in very deep evils? This cannot be anything but the most unusual cruelty cloaked in the name of 'mercy', and neither can it have any as its author but the devil. The persecutors of the gospel call the coercion of men to deny God and Jesus Christ 'mercy', even though it is the same as, they being stripped of the fruit of their redemption, to give them into the hands of the devil. What else is this but to deprive them of infinite blessings and to place them into innumerable evils in exchange for bodily life, a thing which so readily ends? How can there be mercy where the righteousness and truth of God is condemned? How can they be pious who condemn the innocent and consider it a crime worthy of a most outrageous death to confess Jesus Christ and to know no other as Redeemer, or as head and giver of life to the Church?³³³ In such tribunals none other presides but him who is a murderer from the beginning, and therefore there cannot be anything in them but injustice and cruelty, and the greater and more ferocious they are, the purer, more heavenly and divine is the truth that is opposed in them and the more in conformity with its original, which is Jesus Christ.³³⁴ Therefore let not another of the faithful be deceived in thinking that

³³³ 1 Cor. 1; 2 Cor. 5; Col. 1; Eph. 1; 1 Jn. 8

³³⁴ [That is, the theology of Jesus Christ in his humanity is the archetype of all divine truth manifested to his creatures. See Franciscus Junius's *True Theology* for a full discussion of this topic.]

they give him mercy in leaving him bodily life, since in the same act they strip him of the life of the soul, which is faith in the gospel of Christ.³³⁵

Such is the sign they give of the mercy they give: they give them a sanbenito,³³⁶ which is a sign of having denied Christ and of being added to the number of the Antichrist, of having been unfaithful to God and faithful to the devil, of having traded eternal blessings for those that perish, and of having returned to one's vomit and wallow,³³⁷ so that the sign differs in nothing from that which it signifies.³³⁸ It was fitting therefore that by the sign it be known who are the merciful, and what great strangers they are to the mercy of God, and what great enemies they are of those to whom He has given mercy. We must not then seek mercy or hope for it from any other than from God alone, nor exchange his mercy for the cruelty of men and of the devil, disguised with a cloak of mercy. Let us understand that the mercy that God gives us is great when for his name those take our lives who were appointed to preserve us in them.

Let us consider it a certain sign and verification that we belong to the kingdom of God when for love of Him we are mistreated and condemned by men.³³⁹ Let us not so much flee death that to live eight days more we would desire to lose that which is true life. What else is the life that they concede to us by their mercy (as they say), but a continuous death, full of grief and anguish, which is often brought to an end at the least occasion? So why, for something of so brief and momentaneous an existence, would we wager eternal life and blessings which cannot end? That is to say, our fate is, in a word, wagered by dying such a dishonorable death as that of our killers and condemners.³⁴⁰ For our death is a testimony of the life that we have in Christ, which is our eternal

³³⁵ [Which faith they had, not in truth, but according to their own profession, as the apostles also at times spoke, since none may have true and saving faith and yet later be found without it. See Matthew Poole, Alexander Nisbet, and other commentators on 2 Peter 2:1.]

³³⁶ [The aforementioned inquisitorial cloak; see footnote 166.]

³³⁷ Prov. 26; Mt. 12; 2 Pet. 2

³³⁸ [That is, they dressed them in an outfit with devils painted on it; and for those who reconverted to Romanism, they were returning to the service of the devil.]

³³⁹ Mt. 5; Lk. 6

³⁴⁰ [That is, to die at peace with the world and the devil.]

resurrection.³⁴¹ And their killing and condemning us is a proven testimony that they are outside of Christ and have no part in Him. “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord,”³⁴² says St. John. The prophet David testifies, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.”³⁴³ It being something that the Lord loves and a testimony of blessedness, we should by no means cast it aside, since we are his sons; but rather, we should glorify Him with it in imitation of the apostles.³⁴⁴

Let us give our attention to what Jesus says to all who want to follow Him: “He that loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that takes not his cross and follows after Me, is not worthy of me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged if he gain the whole world, and lose himself or be cast away? For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he shall come in his own glory and in his Father's, and of the holy angels’.”³⁴⁵

Therefore, the way that Jesus Christ teaches us to save our lives is to lose them for love of Him and for the confession of his name. And therefore, we save it when they take it from us, because in this way we put it in the hands of God. Let us not be ashamed of Jesus Christ or of his words because men more dishonor us; for we should rather consider ourselves honored when they dishonor us for these things.³⁴⁶

For even up to the insignia with which they accompany the deaths of the faithful, they are insignia of honor and of the eternal kingdom which they travel to by their death. Jesus Christ was (and is) Son of God and King of All Creation, and such was foretold by the prophets.³⁴⁷ But his crucifiers, in a sign of derision, stripped Him naked

³⁴¹ Mt. 5; Lk. 6; Jn. 11; 2 Thess. 1

³⁴² Rev. 14:13

³⁴³ Ps. 116:15

³⁴⁴ Jn. 21

³⁴⁵ Mt. 10:37-38; Lk. 9:24-27; c.f. Mk. 8:34-38

³⁴⁶ Rom. 1

³⁴⁷ Is. 35, 61; Ps. 71, 44

of his own clothing and dressed Him in the clothing of others and put a cane in his hand and a crown of sharp spines on his head and they wounded Him, deriding Him, not considering Him by such to be that which He truly was, but that which they imagined Him to be, a king in mockery, deceived and a deceiver and not the Son of God. They treat his faithful, members of his holy body, in the same way this very day.

16. THE FAITHFUL, KNOWN BY GOD AND STRANGERS TO THE WORLD

For because they call themselves sons of God, as they truly are, they strip them and give them death.³⁴⁸ And because they are not of the world, they do not dress them in the vestments of honor that those of the world use, but in the dishonorable ones of Jesus Christ with which they are covered up and hidden to the world as He was. They dress them in a sanbenito and put a crown on them, with devils painted on both. With the sanbenito their chests and backs are covered with a sign that God alone knows and approves of them, even though the world rejects and estranges them; that He loves them as sons, in spite of being hated by the world as deceived and deceivers. The crown is a sign of the kingdom that Jesus Christ won for them by his crown of spines and by the affronts of his cross. By the painted devils, God makes us understand that sin, death, hell, and the devil are already dead to them, and that they have no more power against them and can do them no more harm than those senseless drawings. For just as Jesus Christ lived, dressed in those insignias of dishonor, so He Himself lives and reigns under those dishonors and those vestments in those who are insulted and crucified for love of Him. Therefore, since He lives in them, all the works of the devil are destroyed by Him in them; for the Son of God came into the world for this very reason, as St. John says;³⁴⁹ wherein it is manifested that those things because of which their persecutors think God will estrange them, since they estrange them, are certain

³⁴⁸ Wisdom of Solomon, ch. 2 [apocryphal]

³⁴⁹ 1 Jn. 3

signs of his approval and of possession of the blessed Kingdom into which in a few hours they will enter, triumphing in glory.

The judgment, therefore, that the faithful make in accepting the cruelty of men, having renounced the mercy of God, is perverse. Repent, therefore, of having left the banner of Christ and passed on to that of his enemies. Do not have shame before men in turning to the right path, and neither think that all is lost because you fell down under the cross and were scandalized by Christ. Remember that you were not impeccable, but subject to the evils that you experience and to others that you do not see, and that God made you a promise of constant mercy. If you are humbled and repentant, consider yourselves pardoned. For, "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust."³⁵⁰ And since God, as Father, has always had mercy for us, let us be certain that He no less has it now. Therefore, let us cast aside such a cursed and execrable mercy as that of the condemners of the gospel. For with any other way than being such great enemies and so opposed to their mercy we would have no part in the mercy of God.

Let us from here on be no more scandalized by Jesus Christ crucified, nor believe like those that are yet blind that among the Christian people the condition of Christ and his gospel is now any different than it was when He Himself walked among men. For as He now brings and teaches the same righteousness and truth that the world always hates, He is treated as He was then. By those that are given to superstitions and to the holiness that the world approves of, He is condemned as scandalous, and by those that are inflated with human wisdom, He is condemned as insane; and by both, because of the hatred that they have for Him, He is considered a heretic.³⁵¹ It is because of this that, just as the saints of the world, the wise, the doctors of the law, the learned, the overseers, their servants, and the Pharisees and religious judges³⁵² condemned Jesus

³⁵⁰ Ps. 103:13-14

³⁵¹ 1 Cor. 1

³⁵² [Most of the words that Pérez uses here to describe the persecutors of Christ are also used to denote offices in the Roman Church, including pontiff, bishop, provisor, and doctor.]

Christ then, so now other such figures condemn Him and his gospel together, and as much as it is in them to do so, they kill the heir and cast Him out of the vineyard; and being those that should build up, they reject the first and principal stone of the building and those that are built upon it.³⁵³ For the gospel was never without its Ananiases, Caiphases, Pilates, Judases, High Priests, and Pharisees that oppose and persecute it. For this reason, those that are true disciples of Jesus Christ even now go about intimidated, pursued, and locked up for being about the business of the truth of their Master; for the Judases of the gospel lie in wait for them to hand them over and give them death because of how much they hate the Master and for their own interests and profit. And when they have been found and imprisoned, they become cruel, not only against them, but also against the walls of the houses where Jesus Christ has been announced, even to the point of demolishing and leveling them. In this it is seen how the church of the faithful is of the same nature now as it always has been in the world. Because of this, Isaiah calls it afflicted and tossed with tempest, and without any consolation,³⁵⁴ as things were for the church of the apostles for a time in Jerusalem.

And therefore, when it comes to pass that its members are imprisoned and presented in these peoples' tribunals, let them not hope to find another mercy in them but that which Jesus Christ found in his condemners when He was attacked before them. But rather, let them remember the word which the Lord spoke to his disciples when He sent them throughout the world: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves."³⁵⁵ The wolf has no mercy for the sheep, and if it seems to show any, it is to take it captive and rip it to pieces according to its liking. Remember also that, as was repeated before, they are called to be conformed to Jesus Christ. And as He, imprisoned until He breathed his last on the cross, found neither humanity nor mercy, neither compassion nor pity in men, no more than if they were most ferocious wild animals, alike must it happen to them in their prisons and cross.

³⁵³ Mt. 21; Mk. 12; Ps. 118; 1 Pet. 2

³⁵⁴ Is. 54:11

³⁵⁵ Mt. 10:16

This is the reason why thieves, highwaymen, renegades, sodomites, simoniacs, manslayers, the sacrilegious, fornicators, adulterers, and all such persons, when they are imprisoned, will have some who freely plead for them and perform acts of charity for them, visiting them in the prisons, helping them in their work, and giving them consolation and encouragement. But if the sons of God are imprisoned, they put them in prisons where they neither see nor are seen by men. There are none who console them, who encourage them, or even speak to them humanely and use some of the common kindness with them with which some men naturally take pity on others that are in misery. But rather they keep them always alone, separated each from another, treated with a greater cruelty than comes from the Turks. And for what crimes? For none others than because they are righteous and have all their faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone and expect to be saved by his mercy and by the blood that He spilled for them.

For if they appear before judges, they find them extremely ferocious like fierce lions, full of guile and cunning to take them in their words and lay upon them more severe charges for that for which they are accused. And they forbid to visit them or give them mercy, a thing so greatly commanded by God. And if those that have not yet lost all their humanity speak to or visit them, they would be for that very act suspected of the things that they were condemned for. And if some, moved by compassion, were to plead for them, they would be considered an accomplice and co-defendant in the same crime, which is to believe in and confess Jesus Christ and to not be ashamed of Him being crucified in them.³⁵⁶ And as Christ was covered in sadness in the cross, so would they be naked of all human consolation. And as, when He had great thirst during the agony of death, they gave Him gall and vinegar to drink, so to them, all that they would give them to drink in their thirst and anguish would be bitterness and gall to further anguish them. For they are sheep among wolves, which cannot give them anything else because the enmity that they have for them and their Shepherd is so great.

³⁵⁶ [That is, not to be ashamed of suffering for Christ, in which sufferings He also suffers as head of the body, so that when they are crucified, He is in that sense also crucified. See Col. 1:24.]

And since, as we said, as much as is done against the faithful is first recorded in the counsel of divine providence, which is neither changed nor altered, let us humbly make recourse to the Lord. For even though we may be so alone, He will make this so-pagan bitterness and cruelty which they use against us to tend towards our increase in grace. Let us imitate the sons of Israel when they were captive in Egypt, which, treated with such tyranny and cruelty without having on their side king, prince, lord, or magistrate, being abandoned by all human favor, had their recourse to God alone and with many tears and groanings confessed their guilt to Him and asked Him for help by his promise. Their tears and groanings were of such great force that they arrived even to the throne of God and they received what they desired from Him. And when the tyranny and cruelty of the Egyptians had already reached its peak and everything was without remedy, then God extended his arm from heaven and without the help of human strength freed them with great power. For no tyranny can last long. The more it is excessive and unmeasured, the closer its destruction is. The higher that of Pharaoh and of his people reached against God and his beloved people, the more readily it perished.

There is nothing that more destroys the cruelty and violence of tyrants than the patience and humility of the saints, and submitting themselves in heart to the will of God and asking Him for relief, trusting in his promise. There is no other way to dull the edge of the cruel sword of tyrants, nor water which more readily extinguishes the flames of the fire they light, than faith and trust in the Lord. Therefore, let us not place our eyes in our weakness and solitude, nor consider ourselves apart from Christ. For as all the enemies that afflict and torment us are dead to Him, so He has them dead to us, assuming we do not view them with these eyes of the flesh. They appear to be alive now, but because of the hatred they have of the truth, before the Lord they are dead. And the greater their madness and fury is, it is a certain sign of how much more readily they shall perish.

The people of God went fleeing by means of the sea; they all already had the taste of death in their mouths; they went hounded by armies of armed men, conjured in

order to kill them all. But when the people of God had left the sea and turned their heads to look upon those that had come so fiercely, so thirsty for their blood, they saw nothing but corpses upon the waters.³⁵⁷ While they were in the midst of the sea they could not see those that came so ferociously to kill them, and in their hearts, they considered themselves already dead. But once outside of the sea God manifested to his people that those that had appeared to be so many, so strong, and so full of vigor to kill them were nothing but corpses, and that therefore they should not have feared when they seemed to them to be alive. In the same way now, those that with such cruelty persecute us and would like to wipe the name of God from the earth, to the extent that there would be none who know and confess Him,³⁵⁸ God already considers them dead, even though at present we do not see it. There is therefore no reason to fear them or to abandon the confession of our faith because of the evils that they threaten us with and can do to us. When we have left the sea of anguish which we are now in by the way which it will please the Lord to bring us out, He will show us then that these who now appear alive and treat us so mercilessly, blaspheming the name of Christ and his holy gospel, are in truth nothing but corpses which cannot in anything harm us.

If it would be greatly delusional to fear the statues and idols of the temples as if they could work good or evil, much more and without comparison would it be so to leave the friendship of God and renounce the obedience and faith of Him who is a constant fount of all blessing and happiness to us for fear of these corpses that can neither do us good nor evil. For if there were reason to fear them, the Holy Spirit would not warn each and every one of the faithful, saying, "be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts."³⁵⁹ Therefore, as when by the faith and confidence that the people had in our God and by their humble prayers with which they called upon Him in their anguish and need and Egypt then perished, Pharaoh was drowned and all of his armies with Him, and the people came out of it

³⁵⁷ Ex. 14

³⁵⁸ Ps. 82

³⁵⁹ 1 Pet. 3:14-15

free, celebrating the goodness of the Lord with hymns and songs of praise,³⁶⁰ so now, by the same faith and confidence which we are to have in his mercy, all those that persecute us because of the gospel will perish by the same power, for they are no less opposed and rebellious to God, nor less enemies of his people than Pharaoh was to his vassals. Let us therefore have a firm constancy in the truth, and let none abandon our gathering and communion of the holy Church,³⁶¹ since we, because we believe in Christ, do not perish in the evils, as the people of God did not then perish, but those that persecute us, God bringing down upon their heads all the evil that they do and desire for us, as the Holy Spirit has said by the prophet David.³⁶²

17. THE FAITHFUL, GLORIFIED IN CHRIST

Let us consider what the destination is that the evils and the so-bitter cross that the faithful suffer lead to and we will have great reason to suffer and pass through them with joy. St. Paul declares to us what the destination is. "Those whom He justified," he says, "them He also glorified."³⁶³ Therefore all is to the end of being glorified, as Jesus Christ was. Where did God lead Him through in bringing Him to the Kingdom and making Him Lord of all his enemies? Through the afflictions and cross in which He placed Him. Therefore, the path to being glorified of Jesus Christ was suffering, and [in] suffering He went to take possession of the Kingdom. Likewise, that which we now suffer is the path to being glorified, and in a certain way we are already so, since He is who is our head. This path is so direct and so without-detours that it is impossible that those that go by it stop entering into the Kingdom. For just as outside of it men are lost, so those that walk by it, suffering with Christ, cannot keep from being glorified by persevering in his religion and truth.

³⁶⁰ Ex. 14, 15

³⁶¹ Heb. 10

³⁶² Ps. 7, 9

³⁶³ Rom. 8:30

Therefore, may those that suffer and die for such a righteous cause rejoice and be more certain of their glorification with Christ than they are certain of being men and women. For the truth of God cannot be found lacking, nor “may men separate what God has joined together.”³⁶⁴ The Holy Spirit says, “[those] whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son,” and that “moreover [those] whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.”³⁶⁵ Therefore, those whom He predestined, He glorified; and the means that He ordained to come into this glory are to have called and justified them and to conform them to the image of his Son through sufferings and the cross. These two things are therefore so joined and united that the one is comprehended in the other. For in suffering with Christ and being conformed to Him, being glorified together with Him is comprehended. And in this way the sufferings and cross are most certain tokens of glory in the crucified.

My brothers, you have already been called by God through the gospel, and having formerly been lost, you have been washed and you are sanctified and justified by the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.³⁶⁶ This is a testimony that we all have of our secret and eternal election in Christ, by which we know it and are made sure of it. That we have been called by divine mercy and justified is manifested by the persecution that the world does to us and the hatred that it has for us. For it cannot love or tolerate what is not its own. When we were of the world, it gave us gifts and caresses; it treated us like sons and like its own; but now that we do not belong to it, since God has separated us from it in giving us his holy light, it hates us so much that it will not rest until it casts us out of itself with all sorts of cruelty. The Lord confirms this to us by St. John: “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

³⁶⁴ Mt. 19

³⁶⁵ Rom. 8:29-30

³⁶⁶ 1 Cor. 6

Remember the word that I said unto you, 'The servant is not greater than his lord.' If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you."³⁶⁷

From this it is made clear that being persecuted by, hated by, and dead to the world is a clear sign that God has already removed and separated us from the world and has washed and purified us with the blood of Christ. Therefore, in suffering in such a way, we should consider ourselves glorified. And since we have such signs and testimonies of being eternally elected in Jesus Christ and of being called and made partakers of his righteousness, we will necessarily arrive at the end of the election of God, however much the world and its false religion may bellow and rage.

When men without God and without Christ burn us or give us other sorts of death, let us understand that such is the conclusion of all our troubles and afflictions, and that therefore the gates of the glory of God are wide open to enter in and rejoice always with Him in all his blessings. When the enemies of the gospel stoned St. Stephen and he was at the point of breathing his last, He then saw that the heavens were opened and Jesus Christ was seated at the right hand of the Father to receive and crown his martyr and faithful witness. And since upon the hardest torments and the cruelest deaths heaven is opened to us, we should therefore run with greater courage, without looking back, in order to learn the resurrection of Jesus Christ, even as we are through Him comprehended in it.³⁶⁸ Our enemies would not want this, but God wants it and has ordained it to be so. No one can hinder his election and eternal counsel from being carried out, with which He loved us and desired that, having been conformed to the death of his Son, we also be partakers with Him in his glorious resurrection.³⁶⁹ All the evil that men commit against the faithful is in order to hinder the determination and counsel of God, thinking that it must come to pass because of what they do that He would approve or condemn in keeping with their opinion of them; but no! God does not choose their way. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways

³⁶⁷ John 15:18-20

³⁶⁸ Lk. 9; Phil. 3

³⁶⁹ Rom. 6

my ways, says the Lord."³⁷⁰ God bears no relation to evil men; but rather, he utilizes them as vessels of wrath for the well-being and salvation of his faithful. For in that in which they intend to wipe their names from the memory of God and for them to be heard no more in the land of the living, therein God makes them memorable in his house, raises them up and glorifies them, and enriches them with great, gracious gifts, and his glory emerges more illustrated and his truth more brought to light.³⁷¹

What did the brothers of holy Joseph not do to hinder the counsel of God, in which He had determined to raise up and glorify his servant? They persecute him, insult him, mock him, throw him in a well, and sell him as a slave, and he is brought to strange lands and treated most harshly.³⁷² And when they thought that Joseph was no more, behold him appear, raised up by the hand of God and made the savior of Egypt, lord and superior over his sellers!³⁷³ They intended in all they did against him that he not come to such glory, but they could not impede the will of God or make Him not to love Joseph and guide him as a sheep through all those troubles and bring him out through the gate of such great honor and glory,³⁷⁴ so that by the steps by which they brought him down, God went about raising him up, even to the point of fulfilling what He had determined for him. Today those that persecute the gospel by laying low the faithful in all the ways they can, attempt this same thing that Joseph's brothers attempted against him. But by that very way that they lay them low, God with a word goes about raising them up, even to the point of glorifying them with Christ.

The hypocrites and enemies of God wanted Jesus Christ not to be known or glorified.³⁷⁵ And in order to achieve this, they persecuted Him with so much fury and condemned Him to death, believing that after He had died there would be no more Jesus Christ; and that his memory would completely perish and that they could then

³⁷⁰ Isa. 55:8

³⁷¹ Ps. 44

³⁷² Gen. 37, 45.

³⁷³ Gen. 41

³⁷⁴ Ps. 80

³⁷⁵ Jn. 11

have his kingdom without opposition, as well as the men subject to his tyranny. But God had other very contrary ideas. For by that very way in which they laid Him low, He raised Him up in such a way that in the heavens and earth there is not anyone or anything more highly exalted than Him. Through that way in which they thought to obscure his glory, God made it clear and spread it throughout the whole world. They crucified Him in order to, by such a sort of death, render Him more infamous, so that thereby men would estrange Him and would not have Him as their salvation. But by the same action, what Isaiah had said about Him, was fulfilled and the Father brought Him innumerable disciples that neither love nor seek another holiness or righteousness than his own.³⁷⁶ And God made Him, by having died on a cross, to have an empire over all and to alone be Lord over his enemies (a thought which never occurred to them); and that by them having so much tried for there not to be any Jesus Christ, He made something so much the opposite to come about – that now there is no other besides Him in the world before whom all creation kneels, so that in the way in which they wanted to strip Him of all his honor and dignity, He came to be supremely glorified and to have a name above all names.³⁷⁷ As He had said by St. John, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”³⁷⁸ For by his death He has them under his hand. So, as his enemies could not in any way hinder his glorification, neither will those who persecute and kill us be able to hinder ours, for it depends upon and is part of his. For the glorification of the head is common to the members that are joined and united with it.³⁷⁹

Just as unto this day the cross and sufferings of the Lord announce his glory and power to us, so yours and those of all his people are and will always be heralds of the same glory. The enemies of the gospel, advised by the spirit of Satan, when they take

³⁷⁶ Is. 53; Ps. 21, 45, 71; Isa. 61; Heb. 2

³⁷⁷ Phil. 2; Jn. 12; Isa. 53

³⁷⁸ Jn. 12:32 [Pérez's version reads, “If I am raised up from the earth, I will bring all *things* to myself.” Thus, he interprets the passage as a statement regarding Christ's universal kingship of power which follows from his atoning work.]

³⁷⁹ 1 Cor. 12

you away to put you to death, tie your tongues (a thing extremely unsuited for even the cruelest pagans that were in the world) so that you do not speak the praises of Jesus Christ our Lord and they hear. But the same gags will be tongues against them, as against the enemies and those envious of the glory of God, and will speak a new language,³⁸⁰ by which those that He has ordained for salvation will understand and know the strength and power of God. It is necessary that what the Lord said to his enemies be fulfilled: "I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out."³⁸¹ Now this is being carried out in you and in all his believers; for because the adversaries hinder you from speaking the praises and virtues of Christ, your Justifier, with your own tongues, He Himself, in place of the tongues that they tie, lets loose many that do not cease to glorify Him and invite all to glorify and know Him.

Your long and tangled beards, your clothes, filthy and torn from the filth of the prisons, the scraps that they cast to you, the ropes and cords that they bind you with, and the garrotes with which they press you – God makes all these things into tongues that with a great harmony sing the praises of Jesus Christ and manifest that He alone is Lord and Redeemer and that you are faithful witnesses of his truth and of his righteousness. They do not hear this so-sensible, heavenly music because their impiety keeps them deaf. But those that are made holy by Jesus Christ and those that shall be so, hear it and they are awakened by it to the desire to be partners and companions in the insults you suffer in order to be instruments of such great good and witnesses of such a divine and beautiful righteousness and sanctification, which is that which the Lord has given to you to have.

Your deaths will not be fruitless, as neither was that of Jesus Christ, in whose steps you follow.³⁸² God will make the ashes of your bodies bear fruit and be the material of many faithful sons, so that your firmness in the faith of the gospel having been heard of,³⁸³ your deaths seen, and the constancy with which you are strengthened

³⁸⁰ Ps. 9

³⁸¹ Lk. 19:40 [Pérez adds "and announce my glory".]

³⁸² 1 Pet. 2

³⁸³ Acts 1

from on-high in order to suffer them understood, many open their eyes to see Him and know Him as Father and to enter into his obedience, renouncing the service of idols, having abandoned the false religion of the Antichrist. For what the Lord Jesus Christ said must certainly be found true: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone: but if it die, it brings forth much fruit."³⁸⁴ The wheat being planted and rotting in the earth, it comes to bear fruit; but if it remains in the seedbed or the granary, it does not bring forth fruit. Suffering and death is like planting the grain of wheat. According to the judgment of our flesh and of the world, when we are dead, we perish; but in truth, we die in order to rise again and bring forth most copious fruits and glorify God in imitation of Christ, who gave more copious fruits by his death than by his life.³⁸⁵

In this way what the Holy Spirit speaks concerning the faithful is fulfilled: that for those that have been called and justified, it is fitting that they also be glorified. For with their deaths they bear fruit in glorifying God, and they are glorified together.³⁸⁶ God has ordained to exalt them in such a way that not only are their persons living instruments for his glory, but also their sufferings serve the same end. And in this way what the apostle said of himself is found to be true for each one of them: "I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church."³⁸⁷ By the sufferings and death that each one of the members suffers for the confirmation of the body, which is the church, they go about filling up their part of the conformity that all the body must have with the head. And in this way each one, when they are dead for the truth, with his death finishes their part of filling up the measure of conformity and they emerge wholly conformed to Christ, the body of sin completely

³⁸⁴ Jn. 12:24

³⁸⁵ [Although his life of suffering was for our forgiveness and his fulfilment of the law therein for our righteousness, none of this would have been brought to completion and the atonement received except by his sacrificial death. And now, for the faithful, though their deaths have no atoning value, yet they are a sort of final seal of their perseverance in faith; for, whereas before, the certainty to their perseverance was known to God in his decree, and to them in proportion to their assurance, yet after their deaths this perseverance is more greatly manifested to all.]

³⁸⁶ Jn. 21

³⁸⁷ Col. 1:24

destroyed³⁸⁸ and they leave the others confirmed by their constancy and patience so that they go by the same path after Christ and come to be glorified together with Him. From this it appears how dignified our sufferings are, since by reason of the communication that there is between the members and the head, the Holy Spirit calls them the sufferings and afflictions of Christ.³⁸⁹ Just as God was glorified and Christ raised up through those sufferings and afflictions that He suffered in his own person, so also does this take place through those of us his faithful: for they are his own sufferings; He is glorified and we together with Him.

Therefore, God honoring us to such a degree that He makes us witnesses of his truth and of the salvation that his Son brought to the world,³⁹⁰ and exalting our sufferings in such a way that, because He has consecrated them in his own person, He calls them his own and desires to be glorified by them;³⁹¹ and our deaths being so precious and valuable before Him that He brings forth from them so many living instruments of his glory, there is no reason why we should refuse to confess his truth and joyfully lay down our lives for it, it being so worthy of being loved and served. Others wager their lives and estates for the vain things of the world and in the end come to lose them; and will we not lose it for the truth of God? So much more than being lost well, it is not lost at all, but stored up so that it is never lost.³⁹² Why would we flee from being glorified with Christ, since He is our glory in our afflictions and deaths no less certainly than their very existence?³⁹³ He loved and served us so much that He did not rest even unto death, lacerated with wounds for love of us; and will we be ungrateful to Him by wanting to save our lives and not love and honor Him by them? Will we be such strangers to the God who knew us before all ages to work such mercies for us³⁹⁴ as not to accept them? And what purpose do our lives serve, if not to

³⁸⁸ Rom. 6, 7

³⁸⁹ Acts 9

³⁹⁰ Acts 10

³⁹¹ Ps. 115

³⁹² Jn. 12

³⁹³ Mt. 20; Rom. 6

³⁹⁴ Rom. 8; Col. 1; Eph. 1

glorify Him? Did we not promise to Him to venture everything for his glory and honor?³⁹⁵ Why then will we keep back anything, to the loss and detriment of his honor and glory? He goes ahead and passes first through all the troubles, and will we refuse to follow Him who is given to us as our head and captain?

Whose is the property that we have? Whose are our lives?³⁹⁶ Who gave us our honor? Do we not have it all from Him? Did He not give us everything so that with everything we might glorify Him as his chosen and beloved ones? Then why do we not glorify Him with everything? Have we not said that with everything and in everything Jesus Christ glorified the Father, and that we were chosen to be conformed to Him? Why, let us see, would we content ourselves with glorifying Him in part? Our conformity must be whole and our imitation true so that we appear thoroughly like Him. Should we perhaps stop serving and glorifying Him as is fitting because we think that if we glorify Him with everything we lose everything, and it is as if one were to cast it all into the sea? No; but on the contrary, all that does not serve for his glory is lost, and we can never lose that with which we honor and glorify Him. For He loves us; and so that nothing be lost to us, He asks everything of us, for He is and desires to always be our guardian. He asks us for our honor, property, health, and life because nothing that is in his hands is lost and nothing of that which is in ours can be safe. Why do the unbelieving lose their lives, if not because they do not entrust God with them? They would rather preserve them themselves, and in preserving them they just lose them.

³⁹⁵ Jer. 2

³⁹⁶ Col. 1; Heb. 12

18. THE FAITHFUL, HEIRS OF THE WORLD

Because of the righteousness of faith, St. Paul says that we are made heirs of the world in the likeness of our father Abraham;³⁹⁷ the world being ours, why are we afraid to place all that we have in the hands of God, since we will certainly receive it back improved with so many advantages? "He that overcomes (says the same Lord) shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."³⁹⁸ If we die for love of Him, we overcome; and when we overcome, we enter into possession of all things, we have God as our God, and are his true sons,³⁹⁹ and if sons, also heirs of all the blessings of heaven and earth. Why, then, do we question making such a great trade, since in giving nothing we come out with everything? We give nothing to God since we have nothing that is ours;⁴⁰⁰ all we have is his, and in this way when we give Him everything, we do not give Him anything. Let us not therefore be stingy in giving Him that which is not our own, since He is so liberal and excellent in giving us all that is his, even giving us Himself. Jesus Christ loved our salvation and reconciliation more than his life; we must therefore love his glory and honor more than all the things of the world.

How many heathens have there been that with great enthusiasm offered themselves up to die, or took their lives by their own hands in order to free themselves from the shames and troubles of this life, or for some vain glory and to enjoy the immortality that they expected; and they did this because of insane opinions! And not only were they not made free of troubles and did not reach immortality, but they entered anew into eternal ills. God does not command such things for us, since He forbids them, but rather that, we being enlivened by faith in the truth, we believe that our lives are his and that when our hour is come and He calls us to give them up again, we freely obey and show the faith and hope that we have in Him, and that by our joyful obedience we declare, like a proclamation in the world, that we are truly his, and that as

³⁹⁷ Rom. 4

³⁹⁸ Rev. 21:7

³⁹⁹ Rom. 8; Gal. 4

⁴⁰⁰ 1 Cor. 4

such, we hold his glory and the fulfilling of his holy will in greater esteem than our lives.

He does not want us to fearfully put ourselves in danger to procure death, and neither does He want us to blaspheme Him in order to avoid it and escape from them, but rather, that we gird our loins like faithful servants so that as soon as He calls us we might go after Him.⁴⁰¹ Let us be assured that He has our days numbered and He has set the destination, which we will not be able to wander past. He placed our souls in our bodies as in a tabernacle so that they be kept in them until He Himself who placed them comes to call them. When He calls them, they must not refuse to leave the inn in order to be better lodged than they have been in the world. It is not right for us to deprive ourselves of our lives or to desire death because of any of the ills and troubles that we might have. It belongs to God alone to give us life and take it away when it be his will. He made us; He will undo us and He will remake us again when it pleases Him. He wants us to be anxious only for his glory and honor, and that we desire and procure it by the means that his word proclaims to us, if necessary, at the loss of all else, so that in this way we may be truly called his disciples.⁴⁰²

Why do we so-greatly fear death for such a holy and righteous cause, except because we falsely think that it has lordship over us and that we are swallowed up by it when they kill us? If we trust to the word of the Lord, we will clearly see how we not only do not die, but we cannot die. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that hears my word, and believes on Him that sent Me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."⁴⁰³ He also says, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever lives and believes in Me shall never die."⁴⁰⁴ This is a word from the truth of God, by which we are made certain that there is no longer death for all of us who believe in Jesus Christ and that, because we are his, dying is no longer for us, since

⁴⁰¹ Lk. 12, 22; Mt. 24

⁴⁰² Lk. 14

⁴⁰³ Jn. 5:24

⁴⁰⁴ Jn. 11:25-26

death is already finished and destroyed to us – which is death but in name only: “A rest from their labors” is what St. John calls the death of the faithful.⁴⁰⁵ Therefore dying is resting and reposing in the Lord.

The life we live is full of so many dangers and miseries that it can barely be called ‘life,’ but through death we are as by a hand plucked from all of them and placed in eternal rest. Because of this, St. Paul desired to be freed from the body and to be with Christ in order to rejoice in this complete freedom.⁴⁰⁶ Jesus Christ slaughtered and ransacked death, and as it does not have power over Him, neither does it have power over his members; for it was for them that He overcame it. Concerning it, He Himself says by Hosea: “Death, I will be your plagues.”⁴⁰⁷ And St. Paul: “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”⁴⁰⁸ Death no longer has any way to wound the faithful, for that with which it wounds and kills is sin, which is being destroyed in them by Christ, so death is also destroyed to them and so the life that they have is eternal, so that they can no longer die; and because of this, the death that they do die is a representation of death and not true death. For through Jesus Christ they already possess victory over it and all that accompanies it. There is therefore no reason to leave the business of the truth of God in order to flee from it, for this would in a way be to flee from that which is dead, as if it were alive.

Jesus Christ feared death, but He went about it to show that he was true man and that He had taken upon Him the sins of men, and also to remove the frights and terrors of it from his faithful. Therefore, because He has died, we do not: and because He so feared death, we have no reason to fear it. From this we see that many servants of God, animated by faith in this truth, went through it with great joy and contentment, like one who goes to banquets of honor or who brings the bride by the hand with great honor to

⁴⁰⁵ Rev. 14:13

⁴⁰⁶ Phil. 1

⁴⁰⁷ Hos. 13:14; [the Spanish reads, “Death, I will be your death.”]

⁴⁰⁸ 1 Cor. 15:54-57

seat her at the altar with her bridegroom.⁴⁰⁹ St. Agatha, when she was brought to the prison to suffer death for the truth that she had believed, said that she was then going to very joyful weddings. St. Vincent, being placed above hot coals, made a mockery of those who burned him and said that the afflictions and death of Christians are parties and things of great happiness for them. St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, in the persecution that Trajan carried out against the Christians, being condemned by the faithless to be cast to ferocious beasts in order to be dashed to pieces by them, hearing the roaring of the lions, they having been prepared to execute the sentence, said with an unusual joy: "I am Jesus Christ's wheat: I will now be ground between the teeth of the lions in order to be made pure and smooth bread for the Lord."

This virtue from Jesus Christ, communicated by faith in his gospel, still continues on in his faithful. In our times we have seen admirable things with our own eyes that the Lord has worked in his sons in the midst of the fire. We have seen men that, when they were brought to the fire to sign and seal the truth of the gospel that they had received, went with great contentment and joy as if they were going to parties. We have seen holy women and maidens like angels go so joyfully into martyrdom, singing songs of joy, as if they were bringing them to be married to the greatest princes and lords on earth. We have seen others, in the midst of the fire, their eyes fixed upon heaven, singing psalms of praise to the Lord for having counted them worthy of suffering for his name.⁴¹⁰ What is this but the fruits of having believed the word of God and of each and every one being certain because of the Holy Spirit that they were going to be glorified and to enjoy the complete fulfilment of the divine promises? They are the effects of having it impressed upon the heart that Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life and that because they had believed in Him, they could no longer die. From this we see that the word of God is not of lesser efficacy to bring about such effects as it does

⁴⁰⁹ [Pérez uses the word 'tálamo', which like 'altar' refers to the place in the church building where weddings were performed, but in contrast to 'altar', it has no sacerdotal significance.]

⁴¹⁰ Acts 5

this very day in those that receive it than it was of old, for it is the same now as it was then. There is therefore not any reason to fear where there is no reason for fear.

19. THE TYRANNICAL POWER IS PITIFUL

Because of this the Lord commands all of us his disciples, saying, “fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.”⁴¹¹ The power of the tyrants is so pitiful and so short that it can reach no further than the body, which is intrinsically mortal and must die in one way or another. With all their power, they do nothing but accelerate death a little, and this only according to our own judgment, but not according to God’s, who, as was said before, has all our days numbered and the end of our lives marked. Jesus Christ assures us that they cannot kill the soul, so what does it matter that they kill the body? For to separate it for a little bit of time from the soul is just for it to receive it again as immortal and not subject to the troubles and dangers that it is now in. When we have a piece of jewelry of silver or gold which is now old and broken, we gladly give it to the tradesman who made it to found it in the crucible and make us another one, now new. Likewise, with our bodies, already old and subject to the corruption of sin, worm-eaten and falling apart bit-by-bit, why would we hesitate to give them to God to found them again and form them anew and bring them out beautiful, immortal, alien to all corruption, and resplendent like the sun?⁴¹² Concerning the soul, the truth of heaven tells us that it is saved, that it cannot perish or die, and neither can they in all their fury and cruelty kill it; for as God cannot die and neither can his enemies kill Him, neither can they kill it, for the life that it has is in Him and through Him. When righteous Abel had died by the tyranny of Cain, his soul was alive in God through the faith and confidence that he had in Him. Likewise, at present, the descendants of Abel having died because of the cruelty of those of the generation of

⁴¹¹ Mt. 10:28

⁴¹² Mt. 13; Dan. 12

Cain, they are alive to God, their souls awaiting the redemption and glorification of their bodies.⁴¹³ Therefore, since our souls neither can nor do die, we must not fear those who kill the body. God alone gave us life and He takes it away when it pleases Him. For He is the Lord of life and of death. Without his will and permission, our enemies, though they might want to, cannot kill us except to the degree that God loosens the reins with which He has them restrained.⁴¹⁴ For He has said, "I kill, and I make alive."⁴¹⁵ And as we have life because of Him, so death comes to us by his hand. Therefore, let us fear Him alone and not them. For even if they should violently explode against us, they cannot do what they would want. The devil, that ancient dragon, wants and desires to totally destroy and spread salt on the church of Christ;⁴¹⁶ but he cannot, because God with the hand of his power pulls back the reins and makes him recoil so that he reaches no further than to where God desires and he can go no further.

How many times did the adversaries of Jesus Christ want to kill Him? How many civil and ecclesiastical councils did they enter into unto this end? But they never could until his hour came and God let loose the power of darkness.⁴¹⁷ "I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on Me," He Himself said to them.⁴¹⁸ They did not lack the desire to do so, given the hatred that they had for Him and his doctrine, but they lacked the power. "Do you not know," Pilate said to Him, "that I have power to crucify you and have power to release you?" But He responded to him, "You could have no power at all against me, except it were given you from above."⁴¹⁹ Likewise, neither do the persecutors now have power over the faithful his members, not only not to kill them, but not even to touch them with a finger. For God does not hold their bodily lives in so little regard as to submit them to the appetite and will of his

⁴¹³ Jn. 6; Rom. 6; Col. 3; Gen. 4; Heb. 11; Rom. 8; Rev. 6

⁴¹⁴ Dan. 3

⁴¹⁵ Dt. 32:39

⁴¹⁶ Rev. 12

⁴¹⁷ Lk. 22

⁴¹⁸ Mt. 26:55

⁴¹⁹ Jn. 19:10-11

enemies. From the moment Jesus Christ began to preach and manifest Himself to the world, He was hated by those who condemned Him and gave Him death. Their will to kill Him was not new when they crucified Him; but the execution of it was new, something which they could not arrive at without the desire of God for it.

In this way, from the hour that the light of the gospel entered into our Spain and began to shine, those hated it unto death who now persecute and kill the faithful who are enlightened and made alive by it. They always wanted what they now do, for they have always been enemies and opponents to Him; but they have not been able to fulfill their desire until now, when God has loosed his restraint on the power of darkness, so that thereby the faithful be examined and purified and brought into the eternal glory that is reserved for them, and so that those that persecute and kill them fill up the measure of the sins and impiety of their fathers and all the blood that has been spilled from that of Abel the just up to faithful witnesses of the righteousness of God that are martyred in our days comes upon them.⁴²⁰

Therefore, since men can do nothing, and neither are they anything by nature and the power that they have, God gave them only to execute his will, let us have no fear of them; for, God commanding us that we do not fear men who kill the body, we cannot fear them without incurring guilt. And for this reason let us hear that which the Lord by Isaiah assures each one of his people, saying to them, "You are my servant; I have chosen you, and not cast you away. Fear not; for I am with you: be not dismayed; for I am your God: I will strengthen you."⁴²¹ So that we see that there is no reason to fear human power, He makes us certain that we are his servants that He chose and that He is our God. We therefore insult Him (considering that He is so in our favor) in fearing the ministers of bodily death. What is it to fear them, but to honor them by dishonoring God who forbids us from it? Let us therefore believe this promise and let us say with the prophet, "Are you not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? We shall not die. O Lord, you have ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty

⁴²⁰ Mt. 23; Lk. 13

⁴²¹ Isa. 41:9-10

God, you have established them for correction."⁴²² Let us put on this faith as a shield⁴²³ and let us not wander from the righteous path for fear of death or of the men that give it to us. For in it is fulfilled that which is told to us by the Lord through St. John, that all our sadness shall be turned to joy.⁴²⁴ Through death, our cryings and sadness stop consuming us and such a joy results that none will be able to take it away.

Therefore, when the world considers us to have lost everything for having died and been cast out of it and has raised the ensigns of our dishonor, the Holy Spirit says by his prophet that God will clean the tears from our faces and from all of his people and will remove all their dishonors.⁴²⁵ Therefore, the dishonors and insults will remain with the dishonorers, the disrepute with the disreputers, and the haters will remain in possession of their hatred; the condemnation will remain with the condemners, and the wrath, curses, and death with the killers. But the faithful, delivered from all adversity, the veil of their holiness and righteousness destroyed, and they entirely removed from the power of their enemies,⁴²⁶ will be placed where there will be no more death and no more sobs or cries or pain, where the throne of God and of the Lamb will be and "his servants shall serve Him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads." "The Lord God gives them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever," as is written by St. John.⁴²⁷

And since this is so, what loss is there in departing from this dark prison of the body and leaving this world where all is corruptible? Will we fear those that give us death, seeing as how in it such exchanges are made, as that corruption changes into the incorruptible, mortality into immortality, poverty into riches, dishonor into honor, prison into freedom, confusion into glory, sadness into joy, and solitude into being perpetually in the company of God? Why would we refuse to be separated from this

⁴²² Habakkuk 1:12; [Perez's version reads, "Lord, you are our God; we will not die, though the killers do us much ill."]

⁴²³ Eph. 6

⁴²⁴ Jn. 16

⁴²⁵ Isa. 24; Rev. 7, 13

⁴²⁶ 1 Jn. 3; Isa. 25

⁴²⁷ Rev. 22:3-5

so-odious age in order to go “unto mount Zion and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn which are written in heaven,”⁴²⁸ where the will of God is done without opposition? Do we fear to enter into this happiness for which we were born and redeemed, where we will be perfect and wholly like unto the Lord that redeemed us? Let us cast aside, then, all our vain fears of the present evils and of their ministers and let us assure ourselves in Christ Jesus that He, ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of His Majesty⁴²⁹ and his hand is extended to receive us unto Himself.

We consider it impossible to bear the fire when we have further seen the supreme cruelty which the persecutors of the gospel use today, burning the faithful little by little in order to more torment and take vengeance upon them. “How can it be”, says our blind flesh, “that with such cruelty all patience is not overcome?” What else is this but blasphemy with which the infinite power and supreme goodness of God for his own people is denied and a way of separating ourselves from the cross which the eternal Father lovingly calls us to in order to glorify us with Christ? Let us therefore not hear nor give credit to such blasphemies.

Men readily endure that from which no harm comes upon them. From the torment of fire, which we have such terror of, no harm can come to us and [rather] many benefits come to us [by it]. Should we not therefore believe that He shall supply the patience to endure it? “He shall deliver you in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch you.”⁴³⁰ The seventh is the final one: death.⁴³¹ There where it appears that all the evils are joined together and that the enemies have reached the height of their power and all judge that they have emerged victorious and that we are defeated and

⁴²⁸ Heb. 12:22-23

⁴²⁹ Heb. 1, 12

⁴³⁰ Job 5:19

⁴³¹ [Pérez seems to be following Aquinas in understanding the seven troubles of Job 5:19 as being delineated in the following verses, though he differs from him in the identity of the seventh, finding it in v. 26, “you shall come to your grave in a full age.”]

swallowed up by those evils, the Holy Spirit assures us that no ill touches us. Therefore, what occasion is there to have such weak and spiritless patience that it cannot endure them? All things are possible for him who believes, says the Lord.⁴³² Therefore, it is also possible for him to have patience amidst the fire and to bear it with great endurance, just as the saints did of old and also do today. For that which the apostle says is always true: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."⁴³³

In this it is manifest that Christian patience not only overcomes death by fire, but also all the most-cruel sorts of death that the tyrants can give. For God does not change his word because of the cruelty that they practice in order to not administer a hidden strength to his people with which to overcome deaths, tyrants, infernos, demons, and all their other enemies. Jesus Christ our High Priest is compassionate, and because of what He faced in being tempted, He is also powerfully able to help those that are tempted, as the apostle says.⁴³⁴ So if Jesus Christ, who we believe in, and for whom we suffer, knows our pains and anguishes by experience, and is not only powerful and benevolent to help us, but He suffers together with us as the head with his members, will He be so weak that He cannot bear the fire and that He does not help us in the midst of it, He being principally the one who suffers when we suffer?⁴³⁵

Do we perhaps fear that God should leave us when, for the confession of his holy name, men without pity have cast us in the midst of the fire? How could this be? Is God among the number of forgetful lovers and of those that love in word only, and not in truth and deed? We certainly greatly insult his goodness and his love by thinking that He should leave us in our greatest need. This is not thinking good of God, as his Holy Spirit teaches us to do by Isaiah, saying, "thus says the Lord that created you, O Jacob, and He that formed you, O Israel, 'Fear not: for I have redeemed you, I have

⁴³² Mark 9

⁴³³ 1 Cor. 10:13.

⁴³⁴ Heb. 2, 4

⁴³⁵ Acts 9

called you by your name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.”⁴³⁶ God always remembers the blessing that He worked for us in calling us and having made us partakers in his redemption and having adopted us as sons. And in this way, He never leaves us, and when it most seems that He leaves us according to the judgment of the world, which is when we are in the middle of the fire,⁴³⁷ then is He most present with us, tempering the raging of the fire so that it does us no harm. For God is on the side of his people and He keeps them in all tribulation. For if the gates of hell cannot prevail against them,⁴³⁸ how will the bodily fire be able to prevail? If eternal death has nothing in them, how will that which is temporal and momentous have anything? Is there any chance that God frees them from great evils in order to let them perish in small ones?

The fire and all created things serve for the wellbeing of the sons of God and are consenting unto the destruction of his enemies, as the Book of Wisdom says.⁴³⁹ “So that the righteous be sustained, the fire forgot their virtue. For, the created thing serving you, who are its Maker, it is inflamed in order to torment the unrighteous and is mitigated in order to do good to those who trust in You.” From this it may be seen that the righteous do not receive harm and neither are burned in the fire, as God says,⁴⁴⁰ and that by virtue of the confidence that they have in Him, the created things are made to work together⁴⁴¹ so that all of them with one accord are ministers to them of their salvation and behave meekly and lovingly toward them. For since they are so beloved and favored by God, the created things cannot stop working blessings for them. Gold is not burned in the fire; but rather it is refined and purified from all that which made it of

⁴³⁶ Is. 43:1-3

⁴³⁷ Ps. 33, 91

⁴³⁸ Mt. 16

⁴³⁹ Wisdom of Solomon 5, 16 [apocryphal]

⁴⁴⁰ [This “as God says” is a reference to Is. 42, cited previously.]

⁴⁴¹ Hos. 2

less value, and it is made by it to be of greater karats and a higher price; likewise, the Christian is not burned in the fire; but rather, all that affected their Christianity is burnt up and consumed and they emerge more beautiful and higher in karats. Therefore, the flame that is seen in the fire when the sons of God suffer does not act on them, but on that which is against them, and they remain without being burned. For they are like the bush that Moses saw, which burned and was not burnt up because God was in it.⁴⁴²

The fire has power to burn and entirely consume, but over who? The impious, the unrighteous, those that light it. These appear to men to be alive and without wound, but in truth, they are burned and consumed by that very fire before God even though they do not believe it or consider themselves to be such. As for the prophet Daniel, when he was cast into the den of hungry lions,⁴⁴³ because he had been faithful to his God, they did not touch him or do him any ill; but rather, he was flattered and a feast was prepared for him, because God, whom he called upon and in whom he hoped, delivered him. But those that had been agents of his condemnation and torment, which were cast to the same lions, had just barely arrived down to where they were when they were broken in pieces by them. The three youths, servants of the Lord, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who did not want to worship the statue of the impious Nebuchadnezzar, and having been threatened by him with a cruel death by fire, said to him, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer you in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up." Having been cast for this reason into the furnace, not only did they not receive any wounds, nor did the flame or the smoke do them any harm, but they were renewed in it and received refreshment from heaven by the hands of the Son of God who was to be found with them in the burning furnace, and the fire with its strength burned those that had been agents in lighting it; and the servants of God emerged more purified, like very

⁴⁴² Ex. 3

⁴⁴³ Dan. 6

fine gold, confessing and singing his praises in the midst of the burning furnace. Since neither fire nor all the other elements can do anything against the sons of God, but all that the sons of God can do is because of them, there is no reason to fear it or to flee the holy cross of the Lord with which He desires to examine and purify us in the midst of the fire so that all the dross of our corruption be consumed in it and God be glorified and we enriched from his glory.

20. AN ADMONISHMENT FROM THE SCRIPTURES

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope.”⁴⁴⁴ Let us understand that what happened then with the servants of God, as with their enemies,⁴⁴⁵ likewise happens this very day with each group. For, for that trust in God, nothing can harm them, but rather everything serves for their wellbeing;⁴⁴⁶ but for those that are enemies of the gospel, everything serves for their ill, which persons always perish in the same dangers in which they place the righteous. Therefore, let us be imitators of these young saints that, scorning all the torments, threats, and deaths, and the command of the impious king, did not turn back or do anything against the religion of God; and just as they honored Him by being faithful to Him, so He honored them by being at their side in consoling them and powerfully delivering them, performing these things in such a way that they were not frustrated in their hope. God does and will do likewise with all those that will be faithful to Him. Let us therefore not fear the power of kings,⁴⁴⁷ nor the cruelties and tyrannies of inquisitors or judges, not the torments of executioners, not the infamy of men, nor any other evil, to the end of renouncing our faith⁴⁴⁸ or the

⁴⁴⁴ Rom. 15:4

⁴⁴⁵ [Or “his enemies”]

⁴⁴⁶ Job 5; Hos. 2; Rom. 8

⁴⁴⁷ Mt. 11

⁴⁴⁸ Mt. 11

knowledge of the Son of God; but let us fear God alone, who can deliver us from the hands of the tyrants and from all their torments.

And if we do not see the deliverance with our bodily eyes, let us not therefore agree with them, nor follow their impiety, nor worship the creatures, nor trust in any other than in the Creator, nor accept another rule for serving Him than that of his word,⁴⁴⁹ nor have any other for the service of God but those that are crafted by his Spirit and by his word. Let us not fear the creatures; let us fear their Creator. Let us not set our eyes upon visible things,⁴⁵⁰ but on those that are invisible. Let not the cruelty of men frighten us, but let us fall in love with the goodness and mercy of our God. Since He is in all things true, let us in all things be faithful to Him and lovers of his will. Let it not be forgotten by us that He knew us and chose us to be conformed to the image of his Son.⁴⁵¹ Let us always remember how He called us by his singular mercy that He had for us, leaving others in the condemnation which we were in, and how, when we were unrighteous,⁴⁵² He graciously justified us and washed us with the blood of Christ so that we be holy in his sight. Let us remember how He loved us in Christ even when we were enemies to Him, and how He did not pardon Him to pardon us: but He submitted Him to death, so that, the sin that kept us dead, having been destroyed by Him, we might have life in Him, and how, loving us while we were his enemies, He loves us much more now, we being already reconciled with Him⁴⁵³ and made sons of his mercy; and how, because He loves us so deeply, He wants to glorify us with Christ, and how all that He does is unto this end; it is for this He desires for us to suffer while we live and be partakers of the cross and death of Christ so that we also be partakers of his resurrection and glorification,⁴⁵⁴ and how being such as Him in suffering, we also be

⁴⁴⁹ Dt. 12; Mt. 15

⁴⁵⁰ 2 Cor. 4

⁴⁵¹ Rom. 8

⁴⁵² Rom. 3; 1 Cor. 6; Eph. 1

⁴⁵³ Rom. 5, 8

⁴⁵⁴ Rom. 6

so in reigning, since “we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”⁴⁵⁵

Therefore, our eyes being closed to all the hindrances to our glorification, and giving no ear to the reasoning of our flesh and of the world, “let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God,”⁴⁵⁶ so that, considering “Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself,” let us not be wearied or faint in our souls;⁴⁵⁷ but let us with great strength not rest until we receive the jewel of blessedness that is set aside as a reward, not for those that only begin, but for those that persevere in the knowledge and obedience of the truth until the end.⁴⁵⁸

Let us therefore always keep the admonishment of Jesus Christ our Lord before our eyes in which He exhorts all his people, saying, “In your patience possess ye your souls,” and “be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.”⁴⁵⁹ Let us be wise in such a way as to lay aside all things for the glory and honor of Christ our Redeemer. Let our wisdom, caution, cunning, and malice not be like that of the world, but to know the will of God⁴⁶⁰ and to be guided by his Spirit in all that we do or suffer. Let us be simple in such a way that we lack gall, bitterness, hatred, and enmity with the men that are our enemies, and let us not be ignorant of what we owe as Christians, for this would be coarseness, savagery, and not evangelical simplicity.

Let us not be lukewarm⁴⁶¹ or cold in the work of the Lord, but with fervent zeal for God, with wisdom and Christian modesty, let us continue forward in our holy calling,⁴⁶² being all of one mind in Christ.

⁴⁵⁵ Acts 14:22; 2 Tim. 2

⁴⁵⁶ Heb. 12:1-2

⁴⁵⁷ Heb. 12:3

⁴⁵⁸ Mk. 13

⁴⁵⁹ Lk. 21:19; Mt. 10:16

⁴⁶⁰ Rom. 12

⁴⁶¹ Rev. 3

⁴⁶² Phil. 2

Let each and every one of us confess Christ Jesus everywhere, but for building-up, not casting our pearls before swine nor giving holy things to dogs.⁴⁶³ Let our conversations have the flavor of salt, of knowledge,⁴⁶⁴ of faith, and of the word of God, so that they be full of grace and agreeable to those who hear them.⁴⁶⁵ Let them not be to mock and murmur about the ignorant and blind that are still placed in the darkness of errors and captive to the empire of the devil,⁴⁶⁶ but to, with gravity and Christian honesty, in fear of the Lord, treat the word with all honor and reverence, so that we stop the mouths of ill-speakers and slanderers and so that they be constrained to confess that God has his dwelling in us.⁴⁶⁷ Look at what St. Peter says: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God."⁴⁶⁸ And let it not be pronounced with the mouth only, but let it come from the heart, so that when we speak it, we speak it for having believed it and not for having only heard it.⁴⁶⁹ For God is not pleased that we have his word on our tongues, but with it being impressed onto our hearts and coming from there to our tongues, so that that which has befallen many does not befall us, that because they have it on their tongues only, having come the point of confessing Jesus Christ before his enemies, they readily deny Him and it is removed from them and they emerge scandalized in Him and are an occasion for the scandalizing of others.

Let it be known to us that the religion that we profess, having come from heaven, is not the religion of men who content themselves with the fulfilment of words; but is of God who firstly and principally asks for the heart⁴⁷⁰ and then all the rest. Let us hear what the apostle tells us: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked."⁴⁷¹ If it is ordained of God that we publicly confess Jesus Christ and that we suffer for his righteousness, let us conduct ourselves in such a way that the admonishment that St. Peter gives finds a

⁴⁶³ Mt. 7

⁴⁶⁴ ['ciencia' (lat. scientia)]

⁴⁶⁵ Col 4; Eph. 4

⁴⁶⁶ 2 Tim. 2

⁴⁶⁷ 1 Cor. 6

⁴⁶⁸ 1 Pet. 4:11

⁴⁶⁹ Ps. 115; 2 Cor. 4

⁴⁷⁰ Prov. 28

⁴⁷¹ Gal. 6:7

place in us: "let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters."⁴⁷² Carefully consider it, so that no one gives just occasion to our adversaries to afflict us. For if we suffer for having committed any of these crimes, we dishonor and do great injury to our Father who is in Heaven. For, we being his children, He is dishonored and blasphemed because of us when He should be honored and sanctified in us, since He called us so that we sanctify his holy name.⁴⁷³

Let us govern ourselves in such a way that those who are evil have no occasion to persecute us except that we despise what is evil and love virtue, we seek and desire the light which they flee from, and we flee from the darkness that they desire. Let us make it so that they have no other reason to hate us than because we do not walk in dissolution,⁴⁷⁴ in lusts, in drunkenness, in gluttony, in drinks, and in abominable idolatries, and because we do not run with them in the same unleashing of dissolution, and neither do we desire to appear like them in anything, and because they cannot stand the light of God⁴⁷⁵ that is in us because it uncovers all their evils and vices, like how the sun uncovers and drives away the darkness and obscurity of night. In the same way, let us guard ourselves from being like the many who are so wise and prudent that the whole of their effort is toward not suffering anything for Jesus Christ or for his Church, and being full of carnal wisdom, they consider themselves Christians and spiritual men, as if God does not know how to take the wise in their wisdom and as if Jesus Christ approves of them having the gospel like a palace and burying the talents that He has given to each one in order to profit with them and increase the estate of their Lord.⁴⁷⁶

And while this is so, we see many who use the knowledge that God has given them perversely, they satisfy themselves with serving God in such a way that they be

⁴⁷² 1 Pet. 4:15; [Pérez has "let us live a life so holy and so worthy of the Lord who called us that none of us be afflicted as a murderer, or a thief, or a blasphemer, adulterer, profaner, slanderer, evil-doer, or as covetous of the goods of another."]

⁴⁷³ 1 Thess; 4, Mt. 6

⁴⁷⁴ [Meaning 'increasing moral laxity'.]

⁴⁷⁵ 1 Jn. 3

⁴⁷⁶ Ps. 94; 1 Cor. 3; Mt. 25; Lk. 19; Mk. 13

forced each day to bow the knee before Baal and openly deny Jesus Christ because they are ashamed of Him and of his gospel. And not being content with this evil that they do, with the dishonor that the gospel receives because of them, with the scandal that they give to the simple and to those who know little, they with great recklessness and obstinacy judge and condemn the innocent who are firm and constant by maintaining the faith that they have in Jesus Christ, who lay down their lives with great readiness for it. Therefore, let us flee from such men: let us not approve of their counsel and wisdom, nor follow in their works, for in everything they secretly attempt to separate us from the cross of Christ and from being glorified with Him. Let them go down their own path, and let us go by that of Christ to which we are called. Let us not misuse the grace and goodness of God, nor take it as a covering for iniquity to cover our vices and give license to our lusts, which He commands us to restrain by his Spirit, to mortify these earthly members and strip ourselves of the old and corrupt Adam.⁴⁷⁷

And, as how in times of tribulation, when we are tempted to the left hand,⁴⁷⁸ it is fitting for us to call always upon God and to gather strength in order not to fall under the burden of afflictions and faint in the work of the Lord, likewise must we appreciate that we do not have less need of such remedies, but much greater, in the time of prosperity. For it is much more difficult to have fitting resilience in the hour of prosperity than in the hour of adversity and to overcome the temptations that come from the right side than those from the left.⁴⁷⁹ Among the people of Israel, who are put forth to us as a mirror of human life, we have plentiful examples of this; foremost in David, who when he was in prosperity was then disloyal to God and committed the severe crimes of adultery and homicide.⁴⁸⁰ If it comes to pass that we be at rest and at our pleasure, without having tribulation, adversity, or persecution, let us guard

⁴⁷⁷ 1 Pet. 2; Rom. 12; Col. 3

⁴⁷⁸ [The word used for left, 'siniestra', corresponds to the English 'sinister' and is inextricably linked to ideas of clumsiness, unhappiness, inclination to evil (which is here intended), and loss of goods and property; right-handedness has opposite connotations.]

⁴⁷⁹ [That is, temptation associated with prosperity rather than that caused by deprivation.]

⁴⁸⁰ 2 Kings 11, 12

ourselves from placing the Lord in disregard; rather, let us remember the words of the wise one.⁴⁸¹ In that hour let us remember the days of anguish and of adversity, and in the land of Canaan let us bear the memory of the captivity of Egypt.⁴⁸²

In that hour, let us watch and pray with greater diligence than in any other time.⁴⁸³ Let us not take any license nor be assured in ourselves, nor sleep in Egypt, promising ourselves rest. Let us always be as those who sail the sea. If the winds do not blow and there is no tempest for some time, let us not because of this leave off from being always at watch, and let us prepare ourselves for the tribulations and tempests that must certainly come so that they do not catch us unprepared with the word, with the promise, and with trust in God by it,⁴⁸⁴ “because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith.”⁴⁸⁵ Let us remember the days of Noah and of Lot’s wife and let us fear that when they should say to us ‘peace and security,’ then sudden destruction assault us, as the travail of a woman who is with child, and we fall like birds in the net.⁴⁸⁶ For when we least expect it, some terrible storm can brew up that disturbs and consumes everything. Let us be like soldiers that are wise and experienced in war that do not let down their guard during the campaign; but rather, they are always in order, waiting for when they will have to take up their arms because they know that their enemies will do all they can to take them by surprise when they consider themselves most safe.

Therefore, let us sleep with one eye open, relying always on the Lord. And in the persecutions that rise up against us when we are oppressed by poverty, misery, infamy, and other calamities, let us know firstly that we deserve to be oppressed with much greater evils than we could ever suffer; and secondly, that the greatest remedy that we have is to be brought to true penitence and confession of our sins which we committed

⁴⁸¹ Ecclesiasticus 18 [apocryphal]

⁴⁸² Dt. 5, 16

⁴⁸³ Mt. 26:41

⁴⁸⁴ Mt. 7

⁴⁸⁵ 1 Pet. 5:8-9; Mt. 24, Lk. 7

⁴⁸⁶ 1 Thess. 5:3

against the Lord, and in this, to pray with a true confidence in asking Him for pardon of them. Let us be firm and let us not waiver in the true faith because of what appears without; for as many enemies as the gospel has had from the beginning have been miserably lost.⁴⁸⁷ There is no longer any memory of the evils that they did to the faithful. But those that persevered as the faithful and did not separate themselves from the Lord are remembered eternally before Him. What became of Cain, Nimrod, Saul, Sennacherib, and so many Roman emperors? What end did Herod, Antiochus, Ahaz, Zedekiah, Ahab, and other such persecutors and killers of God's faithful come to?⁴⁸⁸ Their memory has perished and they with it. For by the strength of the word that they persecuted they were all destroyed.

Therefore, let us not be weak in spirit; for as great and powerful as those that persecute us may be, God is greater and more powerful who defends us, and the powerful will be powerfully tormented by Him.⁴⁸⁹

Let us follow in all meekness and harmlessness in the example of Jesus Christ. And if we are to be dead like sheep by the rage of the wolves, let us not become distressed, since we are certain that we will rise again in immortality with the Prince of Shepherds, Jesus Christ.⁴⁹⁰ For "He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwells in you."⁴⁹¹

Even though in that hour we are so mistreated and persecuted by evil men, let us not think like them that God is asleep⁴⁹² and that He does not see things here below; but let us believe that He is watchful for our sake and that He that keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.⁴⁹³ Even though the tribunals where the faithful are insulted and condemned because they follow the truth that came down from heaven are unjust, let us be certain there is another tribunal where it is God who judges justly, who will undo

⁴⁸⁷ Ps. 9; [obviously excepting those who truly repented and believed in Christ.]

⁴⁸⁸ Ps. 112; Gen. 4; 1 Chron. 1; Isa. 36; 2 Kings 15; 1 Kings 22; 2 Kings 21, 24, 25

⁴⁸⁹ Wisdom 6 [apocryphal]

⁴⁹⁰ 1 Pet. 5

⁴⁹¹ Rom. 8:11

⁴⁹² Ps. 94; Eze. 7

⁴⁹³ Ps. 121

all our insults and condemn our condemners and will give them their portion with the hypocrites.⁴⁹⁴ God has established all his faithful as judges of the impious that now condemn them, as is written by St. Matthew.⁴⁹⁵ Therefore, let us suffer the condemnation that they now give with patience, since in the future we shall be their judges, so that by the truth that they condemn in us they come to be forever condemned and the condemnation that they now give is annulled as unjust and cruel.

Let neither seeing how greatly multiplied those that afflict us are, nor how great the number of those that rise up against us is, frighten us; and neither let us become dismayed through seeing that we are so small and so alone. Let us be content that we are pleasing God and that He has seen us in Christ and that for love of Him we have found grace before Him, and that the saints that have gone before us have gone down the same path that we go down. All the faithful, says holy Judith, that have brought pleasure to God have passed through many tribulations.⁴⁹⁶ Righteous Abel was persecuted and died by the hand of his brother;⁴⁹⁷ Noah was hated and mocked by his son Ham;⁴⁹⁸ Shem, how afflicted was he!⁴⁹⁹ How many and how great of tribulations did holy Abraham suffer, father of those who believe! How tormented and afflicted was Lot in Sodom! How anguished did Isaac suffer when he was to be sacrificed by his father at the command of God! How persecuted was Jacob by Esau, his brother!⁵⁰⁰ How greatly did Moses suffer in tribulations without number for being faithful to God!⁵⁰¹ How much did the Philistines torment Samson, even tearing out his eyes!⁵⁰² What did holy Job not suffer, persecuted by friends and enemies!⁵⁰³ How afflicted and

⁴⁹⁴ Mt. 23

⁴⁹⁵ Mt. 19

⁴⁹⁶ Judith 8 [apocryphal]

⁴⁹⁷ Gen. 4

⁴⁹⁸ Gen. 9

⁴⁹⁹ Gen. 11

⁵⁰⁰ Gen. 12, 14, 19, 24, 27

⁵⁰¹ Num. 16

⁵⁰² Jud. 16

⁵⁰³ Job 2, 3, 4

accosted was Elijah by cursed Jezebel and by King Ahab her impious husband!⁵⁰⁴ What evils and afflictions was David, so beloved of God, not subject to!⁵⁰⁵

How much did the apostles suffer! How persecuted and martyred were the prophets! How greatly did the devil and the world exhaust themselves against Jesus Christ, even to the point of taking his life! But He did not remain possessed by death,⁵⁰⁶ but having triumphed over it, He now reigns in glory, and all those who followed Him in the cross are now glorified together with Him and reign with Him.⁵⁰⁷ Therefore, even though we are few, let us be constant, since Jesus Christ is our victory.

21. VAIN IS THE PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED

And even though those that persecute us are such and are so many in number, it is certain that in the end they will perish, like how their forefathers, persecutors of the apostles and prophets and of all the servants of God, perished.⁵⁰⁸ At present, they do not see any of this: they do not see our glory, nor do they know their damnation, but we see both in the word of God that we have believed, and we consider our glory and their damnation also, if they continue in evil, as certain as our afflictions are. They themselves, the judgment of God having power in them, being already subject to eternal condemnation, when they see our blessedness that is now veiled by weeping and they perceive their damnation which at present is veiled by laughter and pleasure, will be constrained to confess both and to give public testimony of the truth which we suffer for, but to the end of their increase in desolation.

Let us therefore hear what is written about them in the Book of Wisdom: "Then shall the righteous man stand in great boldness before the face of such as have afflicted

⁵⁰⁴ 1 Kings 17, 19

⁵⁰⁵ 1 Sam. 19, 22

⁵⁰⁶ Hos. 13

⁵⁰⁷ Rom. 8

⁵⁰⁸ Mt. 23

him and made no account of his labors. When they see it, they shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the strangeness of his salvation, so far beyond all that they looked for. And they, repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit, shall say within themselves, 'This was he whom we had sometimes in derision and a proverb of reproach: We fools accounted his life madness and his end to be without honor: How is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints! Therefore have we erred from the way of truth, and the light of righteousness has not shined unto us and the sun of righteousness rose not upon us. We wearied ourselves in the way of wickedness and destruction: yea, we have gone through deserts where there lay no way: but as for the way of the Lord, we have not known it. What has pride profited us? or what good has riches with our vaunting brought us? All those things are passed away like a shadow and as a post that hasted by, and as a ship that passes over the waves of the water, which when it is gone by, the trace thereof cannot be found, neither the pathway of the keel in the waves.'"⁵⁰⁹ Therefore, in this way, we also, in being born, fainted and could not show any sign of strength, for we were consumed in our evilness. For the hope of the wicked is like dust driven by the wind and like the memory of the grass that existed not for more than a day.⁵¹⁰

22. THE RIGHTEOUS LIVE AND REIGN FOREVER

But the righteous will live forever and ever and their reward is in the Lord, and the Most High cares for them. Therefore they will receive the crown of honor⁵¹¹ and the diadem of beauty from the hand of the Lord, for He will cover them with his right hand and will defend them with his holy arm as with a shield.

⁵⁰⁹ Wisdom 5:1-10 [apocryphal]

⁵¹⁰ Ps. 1

⁵¹¹ [lit. 'kingdom of honor']

We have already seen how those that now persecute us for the truth will be forced to confess themselves to be senseless and lost and to approve of the cause for which we suffer; and since our enemies will approve of our righteousness and condemn themselves as unrighteous, this is manifest testimony that our cause is now such as they will confess it to be in that hour and that we are currently such by Christ Jesus as they will then see that we are, and that our lot is the same as that of the saints that are already in the company of God.

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, beloved in the Lord, let us persevere always in Christ Jesus and let us not faint, even unto having taken hold of the eternal kingdom. For our brothers and sisters, the saints that have preceded us,⁵¹² are waiting for us to rejoice with them in the blessings of heaven that they already possess. Jesus Christ, our Righteousness, waits for us to crown us with glory. By their own testimony, the prosperity of our adversaries is brief – how much briefer are our adversities and persecutions, since they do not last for more than a moment according to the testimony of the Holy Spirit, who says by Isaiah to the congregation of the faithful that are on the cross, “For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, says the Lord your Redeemer... For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you.”⁵¹³ Here God affirms to us that our tribulations are for a moment, and that his mercy for us and peace with us are eternal, and that though everything should pass away, this blessing that He promises us will have no end, nor could it.

Therefore, let us not trade the eternal mercy and peace of God for the so-brief prosperity of the wicked. Let us leave them to reign and flourish, for the higher they raise themselves up against God, the greater their fall will be.⁵¹⁴ For, “the wicked

⁵¹² Rev. 6

⁵¹³ Isa. 54:7-10

⁵¹⁴ [Not that we should fail to love our enemies, or to pray for those who persecute us; but there are certain situations in which believers are to no longer expend themselves in the pursuit of particular

spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed forever.”⁵¹⁵ The prosperity that they now have is sleep; in awaking from the dream they will find themselves lost and without hands and arms. Let us suffer in moments of adversity, which is fitting for us,⁵¹⁶ with firm hope in God, who, as He has sworn, will never grow angry with us nor take his mercy from us.⁵¹⁷ And since through Jesus Christ He is constantly our Father, let us be faithful sons to Him in all times and places. For when the conquest has finished and our lives have been lost for love of Him, we will find them in Him, healthy and saved and free from all danger, and we will hear these words from his holy mouth with which He receives all his people, saying to each one, “Well done, you good and faithful servant: you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things: enter into the joy of your lord.”⁵¹⁸

“The God of all grace, who has called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”⁵¹⁹

The End

unbelievers after it becomes clear that they have thoroughly rejected the gospel; Christ taught this when He said that we should not cast our pearls before pigs, and if a people does not receive us, we should shake the dust from our feet when we depart from them, and that there is a sin, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, respecting which we should not pray for those who have committed it.]

⁵¹⁵ Ps. 92:7

⁵¹⁶ Isa. 29; Ps. 75

⁵¹⁷ Isa. 54

⁵¹⁸ Mt. 25:21

⁵¹⁹ 1 Pet. 5:10-11