

# THE CREATION OF THE WORLD

by BASIL (AD 329-379)

*The earth was without form and void.* —Gen. 1:2.

In the few words which have occupied us this morning we have found such a depth of thought that we despair of penetrating farther. If such is the forecourt of the sanctuary, if the portico of the temple is so grand and magnificent, if the splendor of its beauty thus dazzles the eyes of the soul, what will be the holy of holies? Who will dare to try to gain access to the innermost shrine? Who will look into its secrets? To gaze into it is indeed forbidden us, and language is powerless to express what the mind conceives.

However, since there are rewards, and most desirable ones, reserved by the just Judge for the intention alone of doing good, do not let us hesitate to continue our researches. Although we may not attain to the truth, if, with the help of the Spirit, we do not fall away from the meaning of Holy Scripture, we shall not deserve to be rejected, and with the help of grace, we shall contribute to the edification of the Church of God.

“The earth,” says Holy Scripture, “was without form and void”—*i.e.*, invisible and unfinished. The heavens and the earth were created together. How, then, is it that the heavens are perfect whilst the earth is still unformed and incomplete? In one word, what was the unfinished condition of the earth and for what reason was it invisible? The fertility of the earth is its perfect finishing; growth of all kinds of plants, the up-springing of tall trees, both productive and unfruitful, flowers’ sweet scents and fair colors, and all that which, a little later, at the voice of God came forth from the earth to beautify her, their universal mother.

As nothing of all this yet existed, Scripture is right in calling the earth “without form.” We could also say of the heavens that they were still imperfect and had not received their natural adornment, since at that time they did not shine with the glory of the sun and of the moon, and were not crowned by the choirs of the stars. These bodies were not yet created. Thus you will not diverge from the truth in saying that the heavens also were “without form.” The earth was invisible for two reasons: it may be because man, the spectator, did not yet exist, or because, being submerged under the waters which overflowed the surface, it could not be seen, since the waters had not yet been gathered together into their own places, where God afterward collected them and gave them the name of sea.

What is invisible? First of all, that which our fleshly eye can not perceive—our mind, for example; then that which, visible in its nature, is hidden by some body which conceals it, like iron in the depths of the earth. It is in this sense that the earth, in that it was hidden under the waters, was still invisible. However, as light did not yet exist, and as the earth lay in darkness because of the obscurity of the air above it, it should not astonish us that for this reason Scripture calls it “invisible.”

But the corrupters of the truth, who, incapable of submitting their reason to Holy Scripture, distort at will the meaning of the Holy Scriptures, pretend that these words mean matter. For it is matter, they say, which from its nature is without form and invisible—being by the conditions of its existence without quality and without form and figure. The Artificer submitting it to the

working of His wisdom clothed it with a form, organized it, and thus gave being to the visible world.

If the matter is uncreated, it has a claim to the same honors as God, since it must be of equal rank with Him. Is this not the summit of wickedness that utter chaos, without quality, without form or shape, ugliness without configuration, to use their own expression, should enjoy the same prerogatives as He who is wisdom, power, and beauty itself, the Creator and the Demiurge of the universe enjoys? This is not all. If the matter is so great as to be capable of being acted on by the whole wisdom of God, it would in a way raise its hypostasis to an equality with the inaccessible power of God, since it would be able to measure by itself all the extent of the divine intelligence. If it is insufficient for the operations of God, then we fall into a more absurd blasphemy, since we condemn God for not being able, on account of the want of matter, to finish His own works. The resourcelessness of human nature has deceived these reasoners. Each of our crafts is exercised upon some special matter—the art of the smith upon iron, that of the carpenter on wood. In all there is the subject, the form and the work which results from the form. Matter is taken from without—art gives the form—and the work is composed at the same time of form and of matter. Such is the idea that they make for themselves of the divine work. The form of the world is due to the wisdom of the supreme Artificer; matter came to the Creator from without; and thus the world results from a double origin. It has received from outside its matter and its essence, and from God its form and figure. They thus come to deny that the mighty God has presided at the formation of the universe, and pretend that he has only brought a crowning contribution to a common work; that he has only contributed some small portion to the genesis of beings; they are incapable, from the debasement of their reasonings, of raising their glances to the height of truth. Here, below, arts are subsequent to matter—introduced into life by the indispensable need of them. Wool existed before weaving made it supply one of nature's imperfections. Wood existed before carpentering took possession of it, and transformed it each day to supply new wants and made us see all the advantages derived from it, giving the oar to the sailor, the winnowing-fan to the laborer, the lance to the soldier.

But God, before all those things which now attract our notice existed, after casting about in His mind and determining to bring into being that which had no being, imagined the world such as it ought to be, and created matter in harmony with the form which He wished to give it. He assigned to the heavens the nature adapted for the heavens, and gave to the earth an essence in accordance with its form. He formed, as he wished, fire, air, and water, and gave to each the essence which the object of its existence required.

Finally he welded all the diverse parts of the universe by links of indissoluble attachment and established between them so perfect a fellowship and harmony that the most distant, in spite of their distance, appeared united in one universal sympathy. Let those men, therefore, renounce their fabulous imaginations, who in spite of the weakness of their argument, pretend to measure a power as incomprehensible to man's reason as it is unutterable by man's voice.

God created the heavens and the earth, but not only one-half of each; He created all the heavens and all the earth, creating the essence with the form. For He is not an inventor of figures, but the Creator even of the essence of beings. Further, let them tell us how the efficient power of God could deal with the passive nature of matter, the latter furnishing the matter without form, the former possessing the science of the form without matter, both being in need of each other; the Creator in order to display his art, matter in order to cease to be without form and to receive a form. But let us stop here and return to our subject.

“The earth was invisible and unfinished.” In saying “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” the sacred writer passed over many things in silence—water, air, fire, and the results from them, which, all forming in reality the true complement of the world, were, without doubt made at the same time as the universe. By this silence history wishes to train the activity of our intelligence, giving it a weak point for starting, to impel it to the discovery of the truth. Thus, we are told of the creation of water; but, as we are told that the earth was invisible, ask yourself what could have covered it and prevented it from being seen? Fire could not conceal it. Fire brightens all about it, and spreads light rather than darkness around. No more was it air that enveloped the earth. Air by nature is of little density and transparent. It receives all kinds of visible objects and transmits them to the spectators. Only one supposition remains: that which floated on the surface of the earth was water, the fluid essence which had not yet been confined to its own place.

Thus the earth was not only invisible; it was still incomplete. Even to-day excessive damp is a hindrance to the productiveness of the earth. The same cause at the same time prevents it from being seen and from being complete, for the proper and natural adornment of the earth is its completion: corn waving in the valleys, meadows green with grass and rich with many-colored flowers, fertile glades and hilltops shaded by forests. Of all this nothing was yet produced; the earth was in travail with it in virtue of the power that she had received from the Creator. But she was waiting for the appointed time and the divine order to bring forth.

“Darkness was upon the face of the deep.” A new source for fables and most impious imaginations may be found by distorting the sense of these words at the will of one’s fancies. By “darkness” these wicked men do not understand what is meant in reality—air not illumined, the shadow produced by the interposition of a body, or finally a place for some reason deprived of light. For them “darkness” is an evil power, or rather the personification of evil, having his origin in himself in opposition to, and in perpetual struggle with, the goodness of God. If God is light, they say, without any doubt the power which struggles against Him must be darkness, “darkness” not owing its existence to a foreign origin, but an evil existing by itself. “Darkness” is the enemy of souls, the primary cause of death, the adversary of virtue. The words of the prophet, they say in their error, show that it exists and that it does not proceed from God. From this what perverse and impious dogmas have been imagined! What grievous wolves, tearing the flock of the Lord, have sprung from these words to cast themselves upon souls! Is it not from hence that have come forth Marcions and Valentinuses and the detestable heresy of the Manicheans which you may, without going far wrong, call the putrid humor of the churches?

O man, why wander thus from the truth and imagine for thyself that which will cause thy perdition? The word is simple and within the comprehension of all. “The earth was invisible.” Why? Because the “deep” was spread over its surface. What is “the deep?” A mass of water of extreme depth. But we know that we can see many bodies through clear and transparent water. How, then, was it that no part of the earth appeared through the water? Because the air which surrounded it was still without light and in darkness. The rays of the sun, penetrating the water, often allow us to see the pebbles which form the bed of the river, but in a dark night it is impossible for our glance to penetrate under the water. Thus, these words, “the earth was invisible,” are explained by those that follow; “the deep” covered it and itself was in darkness. Thus the deep is not a multitude of hostile powers, as has been imagined; nor “darkness” an evil sovereign force in enmity with good. In reality two rival principles of equal power, if engaged without ceasing in a war of mutual attacks, will end in self-destruction.

But if one should gain the mastery it would completely annihilate the conquered. Thus, to maintain the balance in the struggle between good and evil is to represent them as engaged in a war without end and in perpetual destruction, where the opponents are at the same time conquerors and conquered. If good is the stronger, what is there to prevent evil from being completely annihilated? But if that be the case, the very utterance of which is impious, I ask myself how it is that they themselves are not filled with horror to think that they have imagined such abominable blasphemies.

It is equally impious to say that evil has its origin from God; because the contrary can not proceed from its contrary. Life does not engender death; darkness is not the origin of light; sickness is not the maker of health. In the changes of conditions there are transitions from one condition to the contrary; but in genesis each being proceeds from its like and from its contrary. If, then, evil is neither uncreated nor created by God, from whence comes its nature? Certainly, that evil exists no one living in the world will deny. What shall we say, then? Evil is not a living animated essence: it is the condition of the soul opposed to virtue, developed in the careless on account of their falling away from good.

Do not, then, go beyond yourself to seek for evil, and imagine that there is an original nature of wickedness. Each of us—let us acknowledge it—is the first author of his own vice.

Among the ordinary events of life, some come naturally, like old age and sickness; others by chance, like unforeseen occurrences, of which the origin is beyond ourselves, often sad, sometimes fortunate—as, for instance, the discovery of a treasure when digging a well, or the meeting of a mad dog when going to the market-place.

Others depend upon ourselves; such as ruling one's passions, or not putting a bridle on one's pleasures; the mastery of anger, or resistance against him who irritates us; truth-telling or lying, the maintenance of a sweet and well-regulated disposition, or of a mood fierce and swollen and exalted with pride. Here you are the master of your actions. Do not look for the guiding cause beyond yourself, but recognize that evil, rightly so called, has no other origin than our voluntary falls. If it were involuntary, and did not depend upon ourselves, the laws would not have so much terror for the guilty, and the tribunals would not be so pitiless when they condemn wretches according to the measure of their crimes.

But enough concerning evil rightly so called. Sickness, poverty, obscurity, death, finally all human afflictions, ought not to be ranked as evils, since we do not count among the greatest boons things which are their opposites. Among these afflictions some are the effect of nature, others have obviously been for many a source of advantage. Let us be silent for the moment about these metaphors and allegories, and, simply following without vain curiosity the words of Holy Scripture, let us take from darkness the idea which it gives us.

But reason asks, Was darkness created with the world? Is it older than light? Why, in spite of its inferiority, has it preceded it? Darkness, we reply, did not exist in essence; it is a condition produced in the air by the withdrawal of light. What, then, is that light which disappeared suddenly from the world so that darkness should cover the face of the deep? If anything had existed before the formation of this sensible and perishable world, no doubt we conclude it would have been in the light. The orders of angels, the heavenly hosts, all intellectual natures named or unnamed, all the ministering spirits, did not live in darkness, but enjoyed a condition fitted for them in light and spiritual joy.

No one will contradict this, least of all he who looks for celestial light as one of the rewards promised to virtue—the light which, as Solomon says, is always a light to the righteous, the light which made the apostle say, “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be

partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” Finally, if the condemned are sent into outer darkness, evidently those who are made worthy of God’s approval are at rest in heavenly light. When, then, according to the order of God, the heaven appeared, enveloping all that its circumference included, a vast and unbroken body separating outer things from those which it enclosed, it necessarily kept the space inside in darkness for want of communication with the outer light.

Three things are, indeed, needed to form a shadow: light, a body, a dark place. The shadow of heaven forms the darkness of the world. Understand, I pray you, what I mean, by a simple example—by raising for yourself at midday a tent of some compact and impenetrable material, you shut yourself up in sudden darkness. Suppose that original darkness was like this, not subsisting directly by itself, but resulting from some external causes. If it is said that it rested upon the deep, it is because the extremity of air naturally touches the surface of bodies; and as at that time the water covered everything, we are obliged to say that darkness was upon the face of the deep.

“And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters?” Does this Spirit mean the diffusion of air? The sacred writer wishes to enumerate to you the elements of the world, to tell you that God created the heavens, the earth, water and air, and that the last was now diffused and in motion; or rather, that which is truer and confirmed by the authority of the ancients, by the Spirit of God he means the Holy Spirit. It is, as has been remarked, the special name, the name above all others that Scripture delights to give to the Holy Spirit, and by the Spirit of God the Holy Spirit is meant, the Spirit, namely, which completes the divine and blessed Trinity. You will always find it better, therefore, to take it in this sense. How, then, did the Spirit of God move upon the waters? The explanation that I am about to give you is not an original one, but that of a Syrian who was as ignorant in the wisdom of this world as he was versed in the knowledge of the truth.

He said, then, that the Syriac word was more expressive, and that, being more analogous to the Hebrew term, it was a nearer approach to the Scriptural sense. This is the meaning of the word: by “moved” the Syrians, he says, understand brooded over. The Spirit cherished the nature of the waters as one sees a bird cover the eggs with her body and impart to them vital force from her own warmth. Such is, as nearly as possible, the meaning of these words—the Spirit moved: that is, prepared the nature of water to produce living beings: a sufficient proof for those who ask if the Holy Spirit took an active part in the creation of the world.

“And God said, Let there be light.” The first word uttered by God created the nature of light; it made darkness vanish, dispelled gloom, illuminated the world, and gave to all being at the same time a sweet and gracious aspect. The heavens, until then enveloped in darkness, appeared with that beauty which they still present to our eyes. The air was lighted up, or rather made the light circulate mixed with its substance, and, distributing its splendor rapidly in every direction, so dispersed itself to its extreme limits. Up it sprang to the very ether and heaven. In an instant it lighted up the whole extent of the world, the north and the south, the east and the west. For the ether also is such a subtle substance and so transparent that it needs not the space of a moment for light to pass through it. Just as it carries our sight instantaneously to the object of vision, so without the least interval, with a rapidity that thought can not conceive, it receives these rays of light in its uttermost limits. With light the ether becomes more pleasing and the waters more limpid. These last, not content with receiving its splendor, return it by the reflection of light and in all directions send forth quivering flashes. The divine word gives every object a more cheerful and a more attractive appearance, just as when men pour in oil into the deep sea they make the

place about them smooth. So, with a single word and in one instant the Creator of all things gave the boon of light to the world.

“Let there be light.” The order was itself an operation, and a state of things was brought into being than which man’s mind can not even imagine a pleasanter one for our enjoyment. It must be well understood that when we speak of the voice, of the word, of the command of God, this divine language does not mean to us a sound which escapes from the organs of speech, a collision of air struck by the tongue; it is a simple sign of the will of God, and, if we give it the form of an order, it is only the better to impress the souls whom we instruct.

“And God saw the light, that it was good.” How can we worthily praise light after the testimony given by the Creator to its goodness? The word, even among us, refers the judgment to the eyes, incapable of raising itself to the idea that the senses have already received. But if beauty in bodies results from symmetry of parts and the harmonious appearance of colors how, in a simple and homogeneous essence like light, can this idea of beauty be preserved? Would not the symmetry in light be less shown in its parts than in the pleasure and delight at the sight of it? Such is also the beauty of gold, which it owes, not to the happy mingling of its parts, but only to its beautiful color, which has a charm attractive to the eyes.

Thus, again, the evening star is the most beautiful of the stars: not that the parts of which it is composed form a harmonious whole, but thanks to the unalloyed and beautiful brightness which meets our eyes. And further, when God proclaimed the goodness of light, it was not in regard to the charm of the eye, but as a provision for future advantage, because at that time there were as yet no eyes to judge of its beauty.

“And God divided the light from the darkness.” That is to say, God gave them natures incapable of mixing, perpetually in opposition to each other, and put between them the widest space and distance.

“And God called the light day, and the darkness he called night.” Since the birth of the sun, the light that it diffuses in the air when shining on our hemisphere is day, and the shadow produced by its disappearance is night. But at that time it was not after the movement of the sun, but following this primitive light spread abroad in the air or withdrawn in a measure determined by God, that day came and was followed by night.

“And the evening and the morning were the first day.” Evening is then the boundary common to day and night; and in the same way morning constitutes the approach of night to day. It was to give day the privileges of seniority that Scripture put the end of the first day before that of the first night, because night follows day: for, before the creation of light, the world was not in night, but in darkness. It is the opposite of day which was called night, and it did not receive its name until after day. Thus were created the evening and the morning. Scripture means the space of a day and a night, and afterward no more says day and night, but calls them both under the name of the more important: a custom which you will find throughout Scripture. Everywhere the measure of time is counted by days without mention of nights. “The days of our years,” says the Psalmist; “few and evil have the days of the years of my life been,” said Jacob; and elsewhere “all the days of my life.”

“And the evening and the morning were the first day,” or, rather, one day.—(*Revised Vers*). Why does Scripture say “one day,” not “the first day?” Before speaking to us of the second, the third, and the fourth days, would it not have been more natural to call that one the first which began the series? If it, therefore, says “one day,” it is from a wish to determine the measure of day and night and to combine the time that they contain. Now, twenty-four hours fill up the space of one day—we mean of a day and of a night; and if, at the time of the solstices, they have not both an

equal length, the time marked by Scripture does not the less circumscribe their duration. It is as tho it said: Twenty-four hours measure the space of a day, or a day is in reality the time that the heavens, starting from one point, take to return thither. Thus, every time that, in the revolution of the sun, evening and morning occupy the world, their periodical succession never exceeds the space of one day.

But we must believe that there is a mysterious reason for this? God, who made the nature of time, measured it out and determined it by intervals of days; and, wishing to give it a week as a measure, he ordered the week to resolve from period to period upon itself, to count the movement of time, forming the week of one day revolving seven times upon itself: a proper circle begins and ends with itself. Such is also the character of eternity, to revolve upon itself and to end nowhere. If, then, the beginning of time is called “one day” rather than “the first day,” it is because Scripture wishes to establish its relationship with eternity. It was, in reality, fit and natural to call “one” the day whose character is to be one wholly separated and isolated from all others. If Scripture speaks to us of many ages, saying everywhere “age of age, and ages of ages,” we do not see it enumerate them as first, second, and third. It follows that we are hereby shown, not so much limits, ends, and succession of ages as distinctions between various states and modes of action. “The day of the Lord,” Scripture says, “is great and very terrible,” and elsewhere, “Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord: to what end is it for you? The day of the Lord is darkness and not light.” A day of darkness for those who are worthy of darkness. No; this day without evening, without succession, and without end is not unknown to Scripture, and it is the day that the Psalmist calls the eighth day, because it is outside this time of weeks. Thus, whether you call it day or whether you call it eternity, you express the same idea. Give this state the name of day; there are not several, but only one. If you call it eternity still it is unique and not manifold. Thus it is in order that you may carry your thoughts forward toward a future life that Scripture marks by the word “one” the day which is the type of eternity, the first-fruits of days, the contemporary of light, the holy Lord’s day.

But while I am conversing with you about the first evening of the world, evening takes me by surprize and puts an end to my discourse. May the Father of the true light, who has adorned day with celestial light, who has made to shine the fires which illuminate us during the night, who reserves for us in the peace of a future age a spiritual and everlasting light, enlighten your hearts in the knowledge of truth, keep you from stumbling, and grant that “you may walk honestly as in the day.” Thus shall you shine as the sun in the midst of the glory of the saints, and I shall glory in you in the day of Christ, to whom belong all glory and power for ever and ever. Amen.

## **EXCESSIVE GRIEF AT THE DEATH OF FRIENDS**

by JOHN CHRYSOSTOM (AD 347-407)

*But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not. — 1 Thess. 4:13.*

We have occupied four days in explaining to you the parable of Lazarus, bringing out the treasure that we found in a body covered with sores; a treasure, not of gold and silver and

precious stones, but of wisdom and fortitude, of patience and endurance. For as in regard to visible treasures, while the surface of the ground shows only thorns and briars, and rough earth, yet, let a person dig deep into it, abundant wealth discovers itself; so it has proved in respect to Lazarus. Outwardly, wounds; but underneath these, unspeakable wealth; a body pining away, but a spirit noble and wakeful. We have also seen an illustration of that remark of the apostle's—in proportion as the outward man perishes, the inward man is renewed.

It would, indeed, be proper to address you to-day, also, on this same parable, and to enter the lists with those heretics who censure the Old Testament, bringing accusations against the patriarchs, and whetting their tongues against God, the Creator of the universe. But to avoid wearying you and reserving this controversy for another time, let us direct the discourse to another subject; for a table with only one sort of food produces satiety, while variety provokes the appetite. That it may be so in regard to our preaching, let us now, after a long period, turn to the blest Paul; for very opportunely has a passage from the apostle been read to-day, and the things which are to be spoken concerning it are in harmony with those that have lately been presented. Hear, then, Paul this day proclaiming—"I would not have you to be ignorant concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope." The parable of Lazarus is the evangelical chord; this passage is the apostolic note. And there is concord between them; for we have, on that parable, said much concerning the resurrection and the future judgment, and our discourse now recurs to that theme; so that, tho it is on apostolic ground we are now toiling, we shall here find the same treasure. For in treating the parable, our aim was to teach the hearers this lesson, that they should regard all the splendors of the present life as nothing, but should look forward in their hopes, and daily reflect on the decisions which will be hereafter pronounced, and on that fearful judgment, and that Judge who can not be deceived. On these things Paul has counseled us to-day in the passages which have been read to us. Attend, however, to his own words—"I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."—I Thess. iv., 13, 14.

We ought here, at the outset, to inquire why, when he is speaking concerning Christ, he employs the word death; but when he is speaking of our decease he calls it sleep, and not death. For he did not say, Concerning them that are dead: but what did he say? "Concerning them that are asleep." And again—"Even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." He did not say, Them that have died. Still again—"We who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them that sleep." Here, too, he did not say—Them that are dead; but a third time, bringing the subject to their remembrance, for the third time called death a sleep.

Concerning Christ, however, he did not speak thus; but how? "For if we believe that Jesus died." He did not say, Jesus slept, but He died. Why now did he use the term death in reference to Christ, but in reference to us the term sleep? For it was not casually, or negligently, that he employed this expression, but he had a wise and great purpose in so doing. In speaking of Christ, he said death, so as to confirm the fact that Christ had actually suffered death; in speaking of us, he said sleep, in order to impart consolation. For where resurrection had already taken place, he mentions death with plainness; but where the resurrection is still a matter of hope, he says sleep, consoling us by this very expression, and cherishing our valuable hopes. For he who is only asleep will surely awake; and death is no more than a long sleep.

Say not a dead man hears not, nor speaks, nor sees, nor is conscious. It is just so with a sleeping person. If I may speak somewhat paradoxically, even the soul of a sleeping person is in some sort asleep; but not so the soul of a dead man; that is awake.

But, you say, a dead man experiences corruption, and becomes dust and ashes. And what then, beloved hearers? For this very reason we ought to rejoice. For when a man is about to rebuild an old and tottering house, he first sends out its occupants, then tears it down, and rebuilds anew a more splendid one. This occasions no grief to the occupants, but rather joy; for they do not think of the demolition which they see, but of the house which is to come, tho not yet seen. When God is about to do a similar work, he destroys our body, and removes the soul which was dwelling in it as from some house, that he may build it anew and more splendidly, and again bring the soul into it with greater glory. Let us not, therefore, regard the tearing down, but the splendor which is to succeed.

If, again, a man has a statue decayed by rust and age, and mutilated in many of its parts, he breaks it up and casts it into a furnace, and after the melting he receives it again in a more beautiful form. As then the dissolving in the furnace was not a destruction but a renewing of the statue, so the death of our bodies is not a destruction but a renovation. When, therefore, you see as in a furnace our flesh flowing away to corruption, dwell not on that sight, but wait for the recasting. And be not satisfied with the extent of this illustration, but advance in your thoughts to a still higher point; for the statuary, casting into the furnace a brazen image, does not furnish you in its place a golden and undecaying statue, but again makes a brazen one. God does not thus; but casting in a mortal body formed of clay, he returns to you a golden and immortal statue; for the earth, receiving a corruptible and decaying body gives back the same, incorruptible and undecaying. Look not, therefore, on the corpse, lying with closed eyes and speechless lips, but on the man that is risen, that has received glory unspeakable and amazing, and direct your thoughts from the present sight to the future hope.

But do you miss his society, and therefore lament and mourn? Now is it not unreasonable, that, if you should have given your daughter in marriage, and her husband should take her to a distant country and should there enjoy prosperity, you would not think the circumstance a calamity, but the intelligence of their prosperity would console the sorrow occasioned by her absence; and yet here, while it is not a man, nor a fellow servant, but the Lord Himself who has taken your relative, that you should grieve and lament?

And how is it possible, you ask, not to grieve, since I am only a man? Nor do I say that you should not grieve: I do not condemn dejection, but the intensity of it. To be dejected is natural; but to be overcome by dejection is madness, and folly, and unmanly weakness. You may grieve and weep; but give not way to despondency, nor indulge in complaints. Give thanks to God, who has taken your friend, that you have the opportunity of honoring the departed one, and of dismissing him with becoming obsequies. If you sink under depression, you withhold honor from the departed, you displease God who has taken him, and you injure yourself; but if you are grateful, you pay respect to him, you glorify God, and you benefit yourself. Weep, as wept your Master over Lazarus, observing the just limits of sorrow, which it is not proper to pass. Thus also said Paul—"I would not have you to be ignorant concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not as others who have no hope. Grieve," says he; "but not as the Greek, who has no hope of a resurrection, who despairs of a future life."

Believe me, I am ashamed and blush to see unbecoming groups of women pass along the mart, tearing their hair, cutting their arms and cheeks—and all this under the eyes of the Greeks. For what will they not say? What will they not declare concerning us? Are these the men who reason about a resurrection? Indeed! How poorly their actions agree with their opinions! In words, they reason about a resurrection: but they act just like those who do not acknowledge a resurrection. If they fully believed in a resurrection, they would not act thus; if they had really persuaded

themselves that a deceased friend had departed to a better state, they would not thus mourn. These things, and more than these, the unbelievers say when they hear those lamentations. Let us then be ashamed, and be more moderate, and not occasion so much harm to ourselves and to those who are looking on us.

For on what account, tell me, do you thus weep for one departed? Because he was a bad man? You ought on that very account to be thankful, since the occasions of wickedness are now cut off. Because he was good and kind? If so, you ought to rejoice; since he has been soon removed, before wickedness had corrupted him, and he has gone away to a world where he stands even secure, and there is no reason even to mistrust a change. Because he was a youth? For that, too, praise Him that has taken him, because he has speedily called him to a better lot. Because he was an aged man? On this account, also, give thanks and glorify Him that has taken him. Be ashamed of your behavior at a burial. The singing of psalms, the prayers, the assembling of the (spiritual) fathers and brethren—all this is not that you may weep, and lament, and afflict yourselves, but that you may render thanks to Him who has taken the departed. For as when men are called to some high office, multitudes with praises on their lips assemble to escort them at their departure to their stations, so do all with abundant praise join to send forward, as to greater honor, those of the pious who have departed. Death is rest, a deliverance from the exhausting labors and cares of this world. When, then, thou seest a relative departing, yield not to despondency; give thyself to reflection; examine thy conscience; cherish the thought that after a little while this end awaits thee also. Be more considerate; let another's death excite thee to salutary fear; shake off all indolence; examine your past deeds; quit your sins, and commence a happy change.

We differ from unbelievers in our estimate of things. The unbeliever surveys the heavens and worships them, because he thinks them a divinity; he looks to the earth and makes himself a servant to it, and longs for the things of sense. But not so with us. We survey the heavens and admire Him that made them; for we do not believe them to be a god, but a work of God. I look on the whole creation, and am led by it to the Creator. He looks on wealth, and longs for it with earnest desire; I look on wealth, and condemn it. He sees poverty, and laments; I see poverty, and rejoice. I see things in one light; he in another. Just so in regard to death. He sees a corpse, and thinks of it as a corpse; I see a corpse, and behold sleep rather than death. And as in regard to books, both learned persons and unlearned see them with the same eyes, but not with the same understanding—for to the unlearned the mere shapes of letters appear, while the learned discover the sense that lies within those letters—so in respect to affairs in general, we all see what takes place with the same eyes, but not with the same understanding and judgment. Since, therefore, in all other things we differ from them, shall we agree with them in our sentiments respecting death?

Consider to whom the departed has gone, and take comfort. He has gone where Paul is, and Peter, and the whole company of the saints. Consider how he shall arise, with what glory and splendor. Consider that by mourning and lamenting thou canst not alter the event which has occurred, and thou wilt in the end injure thyself. Consider whom you imitate by so doing, and shun this companionship in sin. For whom do you imitate and emulate? The unbelieving, those who have no hope; as Paul has said—”That ye sorrow not, even as others who have no hope.” And observe how carefully he expresses himself; for he does not say, Those who have not the hope of a resurrection, but simply, Those who have no hope. He that has no hope of a future retribution has no hope at all, nor does he know that there is a God, nor that God exercises a providential care over present occurrences, nor that divine justice looks on all things. But he that is thus ignorant and inconsiderate is more unwise than a beast, and separates his soul from all

good; for he that does not expect to render an account of his deeds cuts himself loose from all virtue, and attaches himself to all vice. Considering these things, therefore, and reflecting on the folly and stupidity of the heathen, whose associates we become by our lamentations for the dead, let us avoid this conformity to them. For the apostle mentions them for this very purpose, that by considering the dishonor into which thou fallest, thou mightest recover thyself from this conformity, and return to thy proper dignity.

And not only here, but everywhere and frequently, the blest Paul does the same. For when he would dissuade from sin, he shows with whom we become associated by our sins, that, being touched by the character of the persons, thou shouldest avoid such companionship. To the Thessalonians, accordingly, he says, Let every one “possess his vessel in sanctification and honor, not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God.” And again — “Walk not as the other Gentiles in the vanity of their mind.” Thus also here — “I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others who have no hope.” For it is not the nature of things, but our own disposition, which makes us grieve; not the death of the departed, but the weakness of those who mourn.

We ought, therefore, to thank God not only for the resurrection, but also for the hope of it; which can comfort the afflicted soul, and bid us be of good cheer concerning the departed, for they will again rise and be with us. If we must have anguish, we should mourn and lament over those who are living in sin, not over those who have died righteously. Thus did Paul; for he says to the Corinthians — “Lest when I come to you God shall humble me among you and that I shall bewail many.” He was not speaking of those who had died, but of those who had sinned and had not repented of the lasciviousness and uncleanness which they had committed; over these it was proper to mourn. So likewise another writer admonishes, saying — “Weep over the dead, for the light has failed; and weep over the fool, for understanding has failed” (Eccles. xxii., 10). Weep a little for the dead; for he has gone to his rest; but the fool’s life is a greater calamity than death. And surely if one devoid of understanding is always a proper object of lamentation, much more he that is devoid of righteousness and that has fallen from hope toward God. These, then, let us bewail; for such bewailing may be useful. For often while lamenting these, we amend our own faults; but to bewail the departed is senseless and hurtful. Let us not, then, reverse the order, but bewail only sin; and all other things, whether poverty, or sickness, or untimely death, or calumny, or false accusation, or whatever human evil befalls us, let us resolutely bear them all. For these calamities, if we are watchful, will be the occasions of adding to our crowns.

But how is it possible, you ask, that a bereaved person, being a man, should not grieve? On the contrary, I ask, how is it that being a man he should grieve, since he is honored with reason and with hopes of future good? Who is there, you ask again, that has not been subdued by this weakness? Many, I reply, and in many places, both among us and among those who have died before us. Job, for instance; the whole circle of his children being taken away, hear what he says — “The Lord gave; the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” A wonderful saying, even when merely heard; but if you examine it closely, your wonder will greatly increase. For consider; Satan did not take merely half and leave half, or take the larger number and leave the rest; but he gathered all the fruit, and yet did not prevail in uprooting the tree; he covered the whole sea with waves, and yet did not overwhelm the bark; he despoiled the tower of its strength, and yet could not batter it down. Job stood firm, tho assailed from every quarter; showers of arrows fell, but they did not wound him. Consider how great a thing it was, to see so many children perish. Was it not enough to pierce him to the quick that they should all be snatched away? — altogether and in one day; in the flower of life; having shown so much virtue;

expiring as by a stroke of vengeance; that after so many sorrows this last should be inflicted; that the father was fond of them, and that the deceased were worthy of his affection. When a man loses vicious children, he does indeed suffer grief, but not intense grief; for the wickedness of the departed does not allow the sorrow to be poignant. But when children are virtuous, an abiding wound is inflicted, the remembrance is indelible, the calamity is inconsolable; there is a double sting, from nature, and from the virtuous character of the departed.

That Job's children were virtuous, appears from the fact that their father was particularly solicitous in regard to them, and rising up offered sacrifices in their behalf, fearing lest they might have committed secret sins; and no consideration was more important in his esteem than this. Not only the virtue of the children is thus shown, but also the affectionate spirit of the father. Since, therefore, the father was so affectionate, showing not only a love for them which proceeded from nature, but that also which came from their piety, and since the departed were thus virtuous, the anguish had a threefold intensity. Still further; when children are torn away separately, the suffering has some consolation; for those that are left alleviate the sorrow over the departed; but when the whole circle is gone, to what one of all his numerous children can the childless man now look?

Besides these causes of sorrow, there was a fifth stroke. What was that? That they were all snatched away at once. For if in the case of those who die after three or five days of sickness, the women and all the relatives bewail this most of all, that the deceased was taken away from their sight speedily and suddenly, much more might he have been distressed, when thus deprived of all, not in three days, or two, or one, but in one hour! For a calamity long contemplated, even if it be hard to bear, may fall more lightly through this anticipation; but that which happens contrary to expectation and suddenly is intolerable.

Would you hear of a sixth stroke? He lost them all in the very flower of their age. You know how very overwhelming are untimely bereavements, and productive of grief on many scores. The instance we are contemplating was not only untimely, but also violent; so that here was a seventh stroke. For their father did not see them expire on a bed, but they are all overwhelmed by the falling habitation. Consider then; a man was digging in that pile of ruins, and now he drew up a stone, and now a limb of a deceased one; he saw a hand still holding a cup, and another right hand placed on the table, and the mutilated form of a body, the nose torn away, the head crushed, the eyes put out, the brain scattered, the whole frame marred, and the variety of wounds not permitting the father to recognize the beloved countenances. You suffer emotions and shed tears at merely hearing of these things: what must he have endured at the sight of them? For if we, so long after the event, can not bear to hear of this tragedy, tho it was another man's calamity, what an adamant was he to look on these things, and contemplate them, not as another's, but his own afflictions! He did not give way to dejection, nor ask, "What does this mean? Is this the recompense for my kindness? Was it for this that I opened my house, that I might see it made the grave of my children? Did I for this exhibit every parental virtue, that they should endure such a death?" No such things did he speak, or even think; but steadily bore all, tho bereaved of them after bestowing on them so much care. For as an accomplished statuary framing golden images adorns them with great care, so he sought properly to mold and adorn their souls. And as a husbandman assiduously waters his palm-trees, or olives, inclosing them and cultivating them in every suitable way; so he perpetually sought to enrich each one's soul, as a fruitful olive, with increasing virtue. But he saw the trees overthrown by the assault of the evil spirit, and exposed on the earth, and enduring that miserable kind of death; yet he uttered no reviling word, but rather blest God, thus giving a deadly blow to the devil.

Should you say that Job had many sons, but that others have frequently lost their only sons, and that his cause of sorrow was not equal to theirs, you say well; but I reply, that Job's cause of sorrow was not only equal, but far greater. For of what advantage was it to him that he had many children? It was a severer calamity and a more bitter grief to receive the wound in many bodies. Still, if you wish to see another holy man having an only son, and showing the same and even greater fortitude, call to mind the patriarch Abraham, who did not indeed see Isaac die, but, what was much more painful, was himself commanded to slay him, and did not question the command, nor repine at it, nor say, "Is it for this thou hast made me a father, that thou shouldest make me the slayer of my son? Better it would have been not to give him at all, than having given him thus to take him away. And if thou chooseth to take him, why dost thou command me to slay him and to pollute my right hand? Didst thou not promise me that from this son thou wouldst fill the earth with my descendants? How wilt thou give the fruits, then, if thou pluck up the root? How dost thou promise me a posterity, and yet order me to slay my son? Who ever saw such things, or heard of the like? I am deceived; I have been deluded." No such thing did he say, or even think; he said nothing against the command, he did not ask the reasons; but hearing the Word—"Take thy son, thine only son whom thou lovest, and carry him up to one of the mountains which I shall show thee," he complied so readily as even to do more than was commanded. For he concealed the matter from his wife, and he left the servants at the foot of the Mount in ignorance of what was to be done, and ascended, taking only the victim. Thus not unwillingly, but with promptness, he obeyed the command. Think now what it was, to be conversing alone with his son, apart from all others, when the affections are the more fervently excited, and attachment becomes stronger; and this not for one, or two, but for several days. To obey the command speedily would have been wonderful; but not so wonderful as, while his heart was burdened and agitated for many days, to avoid indulging in human tenderness toward his son. On this account God appointed for him a more extended arena, and a longer racecourse, that thou mightest the more carefully observe his combatant. A combatant he was indeed, contending not against a man, but against the force of nature. What language can describe his fortitude? He brought forward his son, bound him, placed him on the wood, seized the sacrificial knife, was just on the point of dealing the stroke. In what manner to express myself properly, I know not; he only would know, who did these things. For no language can describe how it happened that his hand did not become torpid, that the strength of his nerves did not relax, that the affecting sight of his son did not overpower him.

It is proper here, too, to admire Isaac. For as the one obeyed God, so did the other obey his father; and as the one, at God's bidding him to sacrifice, did not demand an account of the matter, so the other, when his father was binding him and leading him to the altar, did not say, "Why art thou doing this?"—but surrendered himself to his father's hand. And then was to be seen a man uniting in his own person the father and the sacrificing priest; and a sacrifice offered without blood, a whole burnt offering without fire, an altar representing a type of death and the resurrection. For he both sacrificed his son and he did not sacrifice him. He did not sacrifice him with his hand, but in his purpose. For God gave the command, not through desire to see the flowing of the blood, but to give you a specimen of steady purpose, to make known throughout the world this worthy man, and to instruct all in coming time that it is necessary to prefer the command of God before children and nature, before all things, and even life itself. And so Abraham descended from the Mount, bringing alive the martyr Isaac. How can we be pardoned then, tell me, or what apology can we have, if we see that noble man obeying God with so much promptness and submitting to Him in all things, and yet we murmur at His dispensations? Tell

me not of grief, nor of the intolerable nature of your calamity; rather consider how in the midst of bitter sorrow you may yet rise superior to it. That which was commanded to Abraham was enough to stagger his reason, to throw him into perplexity, and to undermine his faith in the past. For who would not have then thought that the promise which had been made him of a numerous posterity was all a deception? But not so Abraham. And not less ought we to admire Job's wisdom in calamity; and particularly, that after so much virtue, after his alms and various acts of kindness to men, and tho aware of no wrong either in himself or his children, yet experiencing so much affliction, affliction so singular, such as had never happened even to the most desperately wicked, still he was not affected by it as most men would have been, nor did he regard his virtue as profitless, nor form any ill-advised opinion concerning the past.

By these two examples, then, we ought not only to admire virtue, but to emulate and imitate it. And let no one say these were wonderful men. True, they were wonderful and great men. But we are now required to have more wisdom than they, and than all who lived under the Old Testament. For "except your righteousness exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Gathering wisdom, then, from all quarters, and considering what we are told concerning a resurrection and concerning these holy men, let us frequently recite it to our souls, not only when we are actually in sorrow, but also while we are free from distress. For I have now address you on this subject, tho no one is in particular affliction, that when we shall fall into any such calamity, we may, from the remembrance of what has been said, obtain requisite consolation. As soldiers, even in peace, perform warlike exercises, so that when actually called to battle and the occasion makes a demand for skill, they may avail themselves of the art which they have cultivated in peace; so let us, in time of peace, furnish ourselves with weapons and remedies, that whenever there shall burst on us a war of unreasonable passions, or grief, or pain, or any such thing, we may, well armed and secure on all sides, repel the assaults of the evil one with all skill, and wall ourselves round with right contemplations, with the declarations of God, with the examples of good men, and with every possible defense. For so shall we be able to pass the present life with happiness, and to attain to the kingdom of heaven, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and dominion, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen.

## **THE RECOVERY OF SIGHT BY THE BLIND**

by AUGUSTINE (AD 354-430)

*Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David.* —Matt. 20:30.

I. Ye know, holy brethren, full well as we do, that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is the physician of our eternal health; and that to this end we task the weakness of our natures, that our weakness might not last forever. For He assumed a mortal body, wherein to kill death. And, "though He was crucified through weakness," as the apostle saith, yet He "liveth by the power of God." They are the words, too, of the same apostle: "He dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over Him." These things, I say, are well known to your faith. And there is also this which follows from them, that we should know that all the miracles which He did on the body

avail to our instruction, that we may from them perceive that which is not to pass away, nor to have any end. He restored to the blind those eyes which death was sure some time to close; He raised Lazarus to life who was to die again. And whatever He did for the health of bodies, He did it not to this end that they should be forever; whereas, at the last, He will give eternal health even to the body itself. But because those things which were not seen were not believed; by means of those temporal things which were seen, He built up faith in those things which were not seen.

II. Let no one then, brethren, say that our Lord Jesus Christ doeth not those things now, and on this account prefer the former to the present ages of the Church. In a certain place, indeed, the same Lord prefers those who do not see and yet believe to them who see and therefore believe. For even at that time so irresolute was the infirmity of His disciples that they thought that He whom they saw to have risen again must be handled, in order that they might believe. It was not enough for their eyes that they had seen Him, unless their hands also were applied to His limbs, and the scars of His recent wounds were touched: that this disciple, who was in doubt, might cry suddenly when he had touched and recognized the scars, "My Lord and my God." The scars manifested Him who had healed all wounds in others. Could not the Lord have risen again without scars? Yes, but He knew the wounds which were in the hearts of His disciples, and to heal them He had preserved the scars on His own body. And what said the Lord to him who now confest and said, "My lord, and my God?" "Because thou hast seen," He said, "thou hast believed; blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed." Of whom spake He, brethren, but of us? Not that He spoke only of us, but of those also who shall come after us. For a little while when He had departed from the sight of men, that faith might be established in their hearts, whosoever believed, believed tho they saw Him not, and great has been the merit of their faith; for the procuring of which faith they brought only the movement of a pious heart, and not the touching of their hands.

III. These things, then, the Lord did to invite us to the faith. This faith reigneth now in the Church, which is spread throughout the whole world. And now, He worketh greater cures, on account of which He disdained not then to exhibit those lesser ones. For as the soul is better than the body, so is the saving health of the soul better than the health of the body. The blind body doth not now open its eyes by a miracle of the Lord, but the blinded heart openeth its eyes to the word of the Lord. The mortal corpse doth not now rise again, but the soul doth rise again which lay dead in a living body. The deaf ears of the body are not now opened; but how many have the ears of their heart closed, which yet fly open at the penetrating word of God, so that they believe who did not believe, and they live well who did live evilly, and they obey who did not obey; and we say, "such a man is become a believer," and we wonder when we hear of them whom once we had known as hardened. Why, then, dost thou marvel at one who now believes, who is living innocently, and serving God, but because thou dost behold him seeing, whom thou hadst known to be blind; dost behold him living whom thou hast known to be dead; dost behold him hearing whom thou hadst known to be deaf? For consider that there are those who are dead in another than the ordinary sense, of whom the Lord spoke to a certain man who delayed to follow the Lord, because he wished to bury his father; "Let the dead," said He, "bury their dead." Surely these dead buriers are not dead in body; for if this were so, they could not bury dead bodies. Yet doth He call them dead; where but in the soul within? For as we may often see in a household, itself sound and well, the master of the same house lying dead; so in a sound body do many carry a dead soul within; and these the apostle arouses thus, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." It is the same who giveth sight to the blind that awakeneth the dead. For it is with His voice that the cry is made by the apostle to the dead.

“Awake thou that sleepest.” And the blind will be enlightened with light, when he shall have risen again. And how many deaf men did the Lord see before His eyes, when He said, “He that hath ears to hear let him hear.” For who was standing before Him without his bodily ears? What other ears, then, did He seek for, but those of the inner man?

IV. Again, what eyes did He look for when He spake to those who saw indeed, but who saw only with the eyes of the flesh? For when Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us”: he understood, indeed, that if the Father were shown him, it might well suffice him; when He that was equal to the Father had sufficed not? And why did He not suffice? Because He was not seen. And why was He not seen? Because the eye whereby He might be seen was not yet whole. For this, namely, that the Lord was seen in the flesh with the outward eyes, not only the disciples who honored Him saw, but also the Jews who crucified Him. He, then, who wished to be seen in another way, sought for other eyes. And, therefore, it was that to him who said, “Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us,” He answered, “Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He who hath seen Me hath seen the Father also.” And that He might in the meanwhile heal the eyes of faith, He has first of all given him instructions regarding faith, that so he might attain to sight. And lest Philip should think that he was to conceive of God under the same form in which he then saw the Lord Jesus Christ in the body, he immediately subjoined, “Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?” He had already said, “He who hath seen me hath seen the Father also.” But Philip’s eye was not yet sound enough to see the Father, nor, consequently, to see the Son, who is Himself coequal with the Father. And so Jesus Christ took in hand to cure, and with the medicine and salve of faith to strengthen the eyes of his mind, which as yet were weak and unable to behold so great a light, and He said, “Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?” Let not him, then, who can not yet see what the Lord will one day show him, seek first to see what he is to believe; but let him first believe that the eye by which he is to see may be healed. For it was only the form of the servant which was exhibited to the eyes of servants; because if “He who thought it not robbery to be equal with God” could have been now seen as equal with God by those whom He wished to be healed, He would not have needed to empty Himself and to take the form of a servant. But because there was no way whereby God could be seen, but whereby man could be seen there was; therefore, He who was God was made man, that that which was seen might heal that whereby He was not seen. For He saith Himself in another place, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Philip might, of course, have answered and said, Lord, do I see Thee? Is the Father such as I see Thee to be? Forasmuch as Thou hast said, “He who hath seen Me hath seen the Father also?” But before Philip answered thus, or perhaps before he so much as thought it, when the Lord had said, “He who hath seen Me hath seen the Father also,” He immediately added, “Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?” For with that eye he could not yet see either the Father, or the Son who is equal with the Father; but that his eye might be healed for seeing, he was anointed unto believing. So, then, before thou seest what thou canst not now see, believe what as yet thou seest not. “Walk by faith,” that thou mayest attain to sight. Sight will not gladden him in his home whom faith consoleth not by the way. For, so says the apostle, “As long as we are in the body we are absent from the Lord.” And he subjoins immediately why we are still “absent or in pilgrimage,” tho we have now believed; “For we walk by faith,” he says; “not by sight.”

V. Our whole business, then, brethren, in this life is to heal this eye of the heart whereby God may be seen. To this end are celebrated the Holy Mysteries; to this end is preached the Word of God; to this end are the moral exhortations of the Church, those, that is, that relate to the

corrections of manners, to the amendment of carnal lusts, to the renouncing the world, not in word only, but in a change of life: to this end is directed the whole aim of the Divine and Holy Scriptures, that that inner man may be purged of that which hinders us from the sight of God. For as the eye which is formed to see this temporal light, a light tho heavenly yet corporeal, and manifest, not to men only, but even to the meanest animals (for this the eye is formed to this light); if anything be thrown or falls into it, whereby it is disordered, is shut out from this light; and tho it encompasses the eye with its presence, yet the eye turns itself away from, and is absent from it; and tho its disordered condition is not only rendered absent from the light which is present, but the light to see which it was formed is even painful to it, so the eye of the heart too, when it is disordered and wounded, turns away from the light of righteousness, and dares not and can not contemplate it.

VI. And what is it that disorders the eye of the heart? Evil desire, covetousness, injustice, worldly concupiscence; these disorder, close, blind the eye of the heart. And yet, when the eye of the body is out of order, how is the physician sought out, what an absence of all delay to open and cleanse it, that they may be healed whereby this outward light is seen! There is running to and fro, no one is still, no one loiters, if even the smallest straw fall into the eye. And God, it must be allowed, made the sun which we desire to see with sound eyes. Much brighter, assuredly, is He who made it; nor is the light with which the eye of the mind is concerned of this kind at all. That light is eternal wisdom. God made thee, O man, after His own image. Would He give thee wherewithal to see the sun which He made, and not give thee wherewithal to see Him who made thee, when He made thee after His own image? He hath given thee this also; both hath He given thee. But much thou dost love these outward eyes, and despisest much that interior eye; it thou dost carry about bruised and wounded. Yea, it would be a punishment to, if thy Maker should wish to manifest Himself unto thee, it would be a punishment to thine eye, before that it is cured and healed. For so Adam in Paradise sinned, and hid himself from the face of God. As long, then, as he had the sound heart of a pure conscience, he rejoiced at the presence of God; when that eye was wounded by sin, he began to dread the divine light, he fled back into the darkness, and the thick covert of trees, flying from the truth, and anxious for the shade.

VII. Therefore, my brethren, since we too are born of him, and as the apostle says, "In Adam all die"; for we were all at first two persons; if we were loath to obey the physician, that we might not be sick; let us obey Him now, that we may be delivered from sickness. The Physician gave us precepts, when we were whole; He gave us precepts that we might not need a physician. "They that are whole," He saith, "need not a physician, but they that are sick." When whole, we despised these precepts, and by experience have felt how to our own destruction we despised His precepts. Now we are sick, we are in distress, we are on the bed of weakness; yet let us not despair. For because we could not come to the Physician, He hath vouchsafed to come Himself to us. Tho despised by man when he was whole, He did not despise him when he was stricken. He did not leave off to give other precepts to the weak, who would not keep the first precepts, that he might not be weak; as tho He would say, "Assuredly thou hast by experience felt that I spoke the truth when I said, Touch not this. Be healed then now, at length, and recover the life thou hast lost. Lo, I am bearing thine infirmity; drink then the bitter cup. For thou hast of thine own self made those my so sweet precepts, which were given to thee when whole, so toilsome. They were despised, and so thy distress began; cured thou canst not be, except thou drink the bitter cup, the cup of temptations, wherein this life abounds, the cup of tribulation, anguish, and suffering. Drink then," He says, "drink, that thou mayest live." And that the sick man may not make answer, "I can not, I can not bear it, I will not drink"; the Physician, all whole tho He be,

drinketh first, that the sick man may not hesitate to drink. For what bitterness is there in this cup which He hath not drunk? If it be contumely, He heard it first when He drove out the devils. "He hath a devil, and by Beelzebub He casteth out devils." Whereupon, in order to comfort the sick, He saith, "If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of His household?" If pains are this bitter cup, He was bound, and scourged, and crucified. If death be this bitter cup, He died also. If infirmity shrink with horror from any particular kind of death, none was at that time more ignominious than the death of the cross. For it was not in vain, that the apostle, when setting forth His obedience, added, "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

VIII. But because He designed to honor His faithful ones at the end of the world, He hath first honored the cross in this world; in such wise that the princes of the earth who believe in Him have prohibited any criminal from being crucified; and that cross which the Jewish persecutors with great mockery prepared for the Lord, even kings, His servants, at this day, bear with great confidence on their foreheads. Only the shameful nature of the death which our Lord vouchsafed to undergo for us is not now so apparent, Who, as the apostle says, "Was made a curse for us." And when, as He hung, the blindness of the Jews mocked Him, surely He could have come down from the cross, who, if He had not so willed, had not been on the cross; but it was a greater thing to rise from the grave than to come down from the cross. Our Lord, then, in doing these divine and in suffering these human things, instructs us by His bodily miracles and bodily patience, that we may believe and be made whole to behold those things invisible which the eye of the body hath no knowledge of. With this intent, then, He cured those blind men of whom the account has just now been read in the Gospel. And consider what instruction He has by this cure conveyed to the man who is sick within.

IX. Consider the issue of the thing, and the order of the circumstances. Those two blind men sitting by the wayside cried out, as the Lord passed by, that He would have mercy upon them. But they were restrained from crying out by the multitude which was with the Lord. Now do not suppose that this circumstance is left without a mysterious meaning. But they overcame the crowd who kept them back by the great perseverance of their cry, that their voice might reach the Lord's ears; as tho he had not already anticipated their thoughts. So then the two blind men cried out that they might be heard by the Lord, and could not be restrained by the multitude. The Lord "was passing by," and they cried out. The Lord "stood still," and they were healed. "For the Lord Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What wilt ye that I shall do unto you? They say unto Him, That our eyes may be opened." The Lord did according to their faith, He recovered their eyes. If we have now understood by the sick, the deaf, the dead, the sick, and deaf, and dead within; let us look out in this place also for the blind within. The eyes of the heart are closed; Jesus passeth by that we may cry out. What is meant by "Jesus passeth by?" Jesus is doing things which last but for a time. What is meant by "Jesus passeth by?" Jesus doth things which pass by. Mark and see how many things of His have passed by. He was born of the Virgin Mary; is He being born always? As an infant He was suckled; is He suckled always? He ran through the successive ages of life until man's full estate; doth He grow in body always? Boyhood succeeded to infancy, to boyhood youth, to youth man's full stature in several passing successions. Even the very miracles which He did are passed by; they are read and believed. For because these miracles are written that so they might be read, they passed by when they were being done. In a word, not to dwell long on this, He was crucified; is He hanging on the cross always? He was buried, He rose again, He ascended into heaven, now He dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over Him. And His divinity abideth ever, yea, the immortality of His body now shall never fail. But

nevertheless all those things which were wrought by Him in time have passed by; and they are written to be read, and they are preached to be believed. In all these things, then, Jesus passeth by.

X. And what are the two blind men by the wayside but the two people to cure whom Jesus came? Let us show these two people in the Holy Scriptures. It is written in the Gospel, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also must I bring, that there may be one fold and one Shepherd." Who then are the two people? One the people of the Jews, and the other of the Gentiles. "I am not sent," He saith, "but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." To whom did He say this? To the disciples; when that woman of Canaan, who confest herself to be a dog, cried out that she might be found worthy of the crumbs from the Master's table. And because she was found worthy, now were the two people to whom He had come made manifest, the Jewish people, to wit, of whom He said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel"; and the people of the Gentiles, whose type this woman exhibited, whom He had first rejected, saying, "It is not meet to cast the children's bread to the dogs"; and to whom, when she said, "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table," He answered, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." For of this people also was that centurion of whom the same Lord saith, "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel," because he had said, "I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof, but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." So then the Lord even before His passion and glorification pointed out two people, the one to whom He had come because of the promises to the Fathers, and the other whom for His mercy's sake He did not reject; that it might be fulfilled which had been promised to Abraham, "In thy seed shall all the nations be blessed."

XI. Attend, now, dearly beloved. The Lord was passing by, and the blind men cried out. What is this "passing by?" As we have already said, He was doing works which passed by. Now upon these passing works is our faith built up. For we believe on the Son of God, not only in that He is the Word of God, by whom all things were made; for if He had always continued in the form of God, equal with God, and had not emptied Himself in taking the form of a servant, the blind men would not even have perceived Him, that they might be able to cry out. But when he wrought passing works, that is, when He humbled Himself, having become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, the two blind men cried out, Have mercy on us, thou Son of David. For this very thing that He, David's Lord and Creator, willed also to be David's son, He wrought in time, He wrought passing by.

XII. Now what is it, brethren, to cry out unto Christ, but to correspond to the grace of Christ by good works? This I say, brethren, lest haply we cry aloud with our voices, and in our lives be dumb. Who is he that crieth out to Christ, that his inward blindness may be driven away by Christ as He is passing by, that is, as He is dispensing to us those temporal sacraments, whereby we are instructed to receive the things which are eternal? Who is he that crieth out unto Christ? Whoso despiseth the world, crieth out unto Christ. Whoso despiseth the pleasures of the world, crieth out unto Christ. Whoso saith, not with his tongue but with his life, the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world, crieth out unto Christ. Whoso disperseth abroad and giveth to the poor, that his righteousness may endure forever, crieth out unto Christ. For let him that hears, and is not deaf to the sound, sell that ye have, and give to the poor; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not; let him as he hears the sound as it were of Christ's footsteps passing by cry out in response to this in his blindness; that is, let him do these things. Let his voice be in his actions. Let him begin to despise the world, to distribute to the poor his goods, to esteem as nothing worth what other men love, let him disregard injuries, not

seek to be avenged, let him give his cheek to the smiter, let him pray for his enemies; if any one who have taken away his goods, let him not ask for them again; if he have taken anything from any man, let him restore fourfold.

XIII. When he shall begin to do all this, all his kinsmen, relations, and friends will be in commotion. They who love the world will oppose him. What madness this! You are too extreme! What! Are not other men Christians? This is folly, this is madness. And other such like things do the multitude; cry out to prevent the blind from crying out. The multitude rebuked them as they cried out; but did not overcome their cries. Let them who wish to be healed understand what they have to do. Jesus is now also passing by; let them who are by the wayside cry out. These are they, who know God with their lips, but their heart is far from Him. These are by the wayside, to whom, as blinded in heart, Jesus gave His precepts. For when those passing things which Jesus did are recounted, Jesus is always represented to us as passing by. For even unto the end of the world there will not be wanting blind men sitting by the wayside. Need then there is that they who sit by the wayside should cry out. The multitude that was with the Lord would repress the crying of those who were seeking for recovery. Brethren, do you see my meaning? For I know not how to speak, but still less do I know how to be silent. I will speak then, and speak plainly. For I fear Jesus passing by and Jesus standing still; and therefore I can not keep silence. Evil and unknown Christians hinder good Christians who are truly earnest and wish to do the commandments of God, which are written in the Gospel. This multitude which is with the Lord hinders those who are crying out, hinders those, that is, who are doing well, that they may not by perseverance be healed. But let them cry out, and not faint; let them not be led away as if by the authority of numbers; let them not imitate those who become Christians before them, who live evil lives themselves, and are jealous of the good deeds of others. Let them not say, "Let us live as these so many live." Why not rather as the Gospel ordains? Why dost thou wish to live according to the remonstrances of the multitude who would hinder them, and not after the steps of the Lord who passeth by? They will mock, and abuse, and call thee back; do thou cry out till thou reach the ears of Jesus. For they who shall persevere in doing such things as Christ hath enjoined, and regard not the multitude that hinder them, nor think much of their appearing to follow Christ, that is of their being called Christians; but who love the light which Christ is about to restore to them more than they fear the uproar of those who are hindering them; they shall on no account be separated from Him, and Jesus will stand still, and make them whole.

XIV. For how are our eyes made whole? That as by faith we perceive Christ passing by in the temporal economy, so we may attain to the knowledge of Him as standing still in His unchangeable eternity. For there is the eye made whole when the knowledge of Christ's divinity is attained. Let your love apprehend this; attend ye to the great mystery which I am to speak of. All the things which were done by our Lord Jesus Christ, in time, graft faith in us. We believe on the Son of God, not on the word only, by whom all things were made; but on this very word, "made flesh that He might dwell among us"; who was born of the Virgin Mary; and the rest which the Faith contains, and which are represented to us that Christ might pass by, and that the blind, hearing His footsteps as He passeth by, might by their works cry out, by their life exemplifying the profession of their faith. But now in order that they who cry out may be made whole, Jesus standeth still. For he saw Jesus now standing still, who says, "Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more." For he saw Christ's divinity as far as in this life is possible. There is then in Christ the divinity, and the humanity. The divinity standeth still, the humanity passeth by. What means "the divinity standeth still?" It changeth not, is not shaken, doth not depart away. For He did not so come to us as to depart from

the Father; nor did He so ascend as to change His place. When He assumed flesh, it changed place; but God assuming flesh, seeing He is not in place, doth not change His place. Let us then be touched by Christ standing still, and so our eyes be made whole. But whose eyes? The eyes of those who cry out when He is passing by; that is, who do good works through that faith which hath been dispersed in time, to instruct in our infancy.

XV. Now what thing more precious can we have than the eye made whole? They rejoice who see this created light which shines from heaven, or even that which is given out from a lamp. And how wretched do they seem who can not see this light? But wherefore do I speak, and talk of all these things, but to exhort you all to cry out, when Jesus passeth by. I hold up this light which perhaps ye do not see as an object of love to you, holy brethren. Believe, while as yet ye see it not; and cry out that ye may see. How great is thought to be the unhappiness of men who do not see this bodily light? Does any one become blind; immediately it is said: "God is angry with him, he has committed some wicked deed." So said Tobias's wife to her husband. He cried out because of the kid, lest it had come of theft; he did not like to hear the sound of any stolen thing in his house; and she, maintaining what she had done, reproached her husband; and when he said, "Restore it if it be stolen"; she answered insultingly, "Where are thy righteous deeds?" How great was her blindness who maintaineth the theft; and how clear a light he saw, who commanded the stolen thing to be restored! She rejoiced outwardly in the light of the sun; he inwardly in the light of righteousness. Which of them was in the better light?

XVI. It is to the love of this light that I would exhort you, beloved; that ye would cry out by your works, when the Lord passeth by; let the voice of faith sound out, that Jesus was standing still, that is, the unchangeable, abiding wisdom of God, and the majesty of the Word of God, by which all things were made, may open your eyes. The same Tobias, in giving advice to his son, instructed him to this, to cry out; that is, he instructed him to good works. He told him to give to the poor, charged him to give alms to the needy, and taught him, saying, "My son, alms suffereth not to come into darkness." The blind gave counsel for receiving and gaining sight. "Alms," saith he, "suffereth not to come into darkness." Had his son in astonishment answered him, "What then, father, hast thou not given alms, that thou speakest to me in blindness; art not thou in darkness, and yet thou dost say to me, Alms suffereth not to come into darkness?" But no, he knew well what the light was concerning which he gave his son instruction, he knew well what he saw in the inner man. The son held out his hand to his father, to enable him to dwell in heaven.

XVII. To be brief; that I may conclude this sermon, brethren, with a matter which touches me very nearly, and gives me much pain, see what crowds there are which rebuke the blind as they cry out. But let them not deter you. Whosoever among this crowd desire to be healed; for there are many Christians in name, and in works ungodly; let them not deter you from good works. Cry out amid the crowds that are restraining you, and calling you back, and insulting you, whose lives are evil. For not only by their voices, but by evil works, do wicked Christians repress the good. A good Christian has no wish to attend the public shows. In this very thing, that he bridles his desire of going to the theater, he cries out after Christ, cries out to be healed. Others run together thither, but perhaps they are heathens or Jews? Ah! indeed, if Christians went not to the theaters, there would be so few people there that they would go away for very shame. So then Christians run thither also, bearing the Holy Name only to their condemnation. Cry out then by abstaining from going, by repressing in thy heart this worldly concupiscence; hold on with a strong and persevering cry unto the ears of the Savior, that Jesus may stand still and heal thee. Cry out amid the very crowds, despair not of reaching the ears of the Lord. For the blind man in

the Gospel did not cry out in that quarter where no crowd was, that so they might be heard in that direction, where there was no impediment from persons hindering them. Amid the very crowds they cried out; and yet the Lord heard them. And so also do ye even amid sinners, and sensual men, amid the lovers of the vanities of the world, there cry out that the Lord may heal you. Go not to another quarter to cry out unto the Lord, go not to heretics and cry out unto Him there. Consider, brethren, how in that crowd which was hindering them from crying out, even there they who cried out were made whole.