

## **Gregory the Great, Pope (c. 540-604):**

### ***On Pastoral Care (Book II) (591 A.D.)***

#### **Of the Life of the Pastor.**

##### **Chapter 1**

##### **How one who has in due order arrived at a place of rule ought to demean himself in it.**

The conduct of a prelate ought so far to transcend the conduct of the people as the life of a shepherd is wont to exalt him above the flock. For one whose estimation is such that the people are called his flock is bound anxiously to consider what great necessity is laid upon him to maintain rectitude. It is necessary, then, that in thought he should be pure, in action chief; discreet in keeping silence, profitable in speech; a near neighbour to every one in sympathy, exalted above all in contemplation; a familiar friend of good livers through humility, unbending against the vices of evil-doers through zeal for righteousness; not relaxing in his care for what is inward from being occupied in outward things, nor neglecting to provide for outward things in his solicitude for what is inward. But the things which we have thus briefly touched on let us now unfold and discuss more at length.

##### **Chapter 2**

##### **That the ruler should be pure in thought.**

The ruler should always be pure in thought, inasmuch as no impurity ought to pollute him who has undertaken the office of wiping away the stains of pollution in the hearts of others also; for the hand that would cleanse from dirt must needs be clean, lest, being itself sordid with clinging mire, it soil whatever it touches all the more. For on this account it is said through the prophet, Be clean that bear the vessels of the Lord Isaiah 52:11. For they bear the vessels of the Lord who undertake, on the surety of their own conversation, to conduct the souls of their neighbours to the eternal sanctuary. Let them therefore perceive within themselves how purified they ought to be who carry in the bosom of their own personal responsibility living vessels to the temple of eternity. Hence by the divine voice it is enjoined Exodus 28:15, that on the breast of Aaron the breastplate of judgment should be closely pressed by binding fillets; seeing that lax cogitations should by no means possess the priestly heart, but reason alone constrain it; nor should he cogitate anything indiscreet or unprofitable, who, constituted as he is for example to others, ought to show in the gravity of his life what store of reason he carries in his breast. And on this breastplate it is further carefully prescribed that the names of the twelve patriarchs should be engraved.

For to carry always the fathers registered on the breast is to think without intermission on the lives of the ancients. For the priest then walks blamelessly when he pores continually on the examples of the fathers that went before him, when he considers without cease the footsteps of the Saints, and keeps down unlawful thoughts, lest he advance the foot of his conduct beyond the limit of order. And it is also well called the breastplate of judgment, because the ruler ought ever with subtle scrutiny to discern between good and evil, and studiously consider what things are suitable for what, and when and how; nor should he seek anything for himself, but esteem his neighbours' good as his own advantage. Hence in the same place it is written, But you shall put in the breastplate of Aaron doctrine and truth, which shall be upon Aaron's breast, when he goes in before the Lord, and he shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his breast in the sight of the Lord continually Exodus 18:30. For the priest's bearing the judgment of the children of Israel on his breast before the face of the Lord means his examining the causes of his subjects with regard only to the mind of the judge within, so that no admixture of humanity cleave to him in what he dispenses as standing in God's stead, lest private vexation should exasperate the keenness of his censure. And while he shows himself zealous against the vices of others, let him get rid of his own lest either latent grudge vitiate the calmness of his judgment, or headlong anger disturb it. But when the terror of Him who presides over all things is considered (that is to say of the judge within), not without great fear may subjects be governed. And such fear indeed purges, while it humiliates, the mind of the ruler, guarding it against being either lifted up by presumption of spirit, or defiled by delight of the flesh, or obscured by importunity of dusty thought through lust for earthly things. These things, however, cannot but knock at the ruler's mind: but it is necessary to make haste to overcome them by resistance, lest the vice which tempts by suggestion should subdue by the softness of delight, and, this being tardily expelled from the mind, should slay with the sword of consent.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **That the ruler should be always chief in action.**

The ruler should always be chief in action, that by his living he may point out the way of life to those that are put under him, and that the flock, which follows the voice and manners of the shepherd, may learn how to walk better through example than through words. For he who is required by the necessity of his position to speak the highest things is compelled by the same necessity to exhibit the highest things. For that voice more readily penetrates the hearer's heart, which the speaker's life commends, since what he commands by speaking he helps the doing of by showing. Hence it is said through the prophet, Get you up into the high mountain, you that bringest good tidings to Sion Isaiah 40:9: which means that he who is engaged in heavenly preaching should already have forsaken the low level of earthly works, and appear as standing on the summit of things, and by so much the more easily should draw those who are under him to better things as by the merit of his life he cries aloud from heights above. Hence under the divine law the priest receives the shoulder for sacrifice, and this the right one and separate Exodus 29:22; to signify that his action should be not only profitable, but even singular; and that he should not merely do what is right among bad men, but transcend even the well-doers among those that are under him in the virtue of his conduct, as he surpasses them in the dignity of his order. The breast also together with the shoulder is assigned to him for eating, that he may learn to immolate to the Giver of all that of himself which he is

enjoined to take of the Sacrifice; that he may not only in his breast entertain right thoughts, but with the shoulder of work invite those who behold him to things on high; that he may covet no prosperity of the present life, and fear no adversity; that, having regard to the fear within him, he may despise the charm of the world, but considering the charm of inward sweetness, may despise its terrors. Wherefore by command of the supernal voice Exodus 29:5 the priest is braced on each shoulder with the robe of the ephod, that he may be always guarded against prosperity and adversity by the ornament of virtues; so that walking, as S. Paul says 2 Corinthians 6:7, in the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, while he strives only after those things which are before, he may decline on neither side to low delight. Him let neither prosperity elate nor adversity perturb; let neither smooth things coax him to the surrender of his will, nor rough things press him down to despair; so that, while he humbles the bent of his mind to no passions, he may show with how great beauty of the ephod he is covered on each shoulder. Which ephod is also rightly ordered to be made of gold, blue, purple, twice dyed scarlet, and flue twined linen Exodus 28:8, that it may be shown by how great diversity of virtues the priest ought to be distinguished. Thus in the priest's robe before all things gold glitters, to show that he should shine forth principally in the understanding of wisdom. And with it blue, which is resplendent with aerial color, is conjoined, to show that through all that he penetrates with his understanding he should rise above earthly favours to the love of celestial things; lest, while caught unawares by his own praises, he be emptied of his very understanding of the truth. With gold and blue, purple also is mingled: which means, that the priest's heart, while hoping for the high things which he preaches, should repress in itself even the suggestions of vice, and as it were in virtue of a royal power, rebut them, in that he has regard ever to the nobility of inward regeneration, and by his manners guards his right to the robe of the heavenly kingdom. For it is of this nobility of the spirit that it is said through Peter, You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood 1 Peter 2:9. With respect also to this power, whereby we subdue vices, we are fortified by the voice of John, who says, As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God John 1:12. This dignity of fortitude the Psalmist has in view when he says, But with me greatly honoured have been Your friends, O God; greatly strengthened has been their principality Psalm 138:17. For truly the mind of saints is exalted to princely eminence while outwardly they are seen to suffer abasement. But with gold, blue, and purple, twice dyed scarlet is conjoined, to show that all excellences of virtue should be adorned with charity in the eyes of the judge within; and that whatever glitters before men may be lighted up in sight of the hidden arbiter with the flame of inward love. And, further, this charity, since it consists in love at once of God and of our neighbour, has, as it were, the lustre of a double dye. He then who so pants after the beauty of his Maker as to neglect the care of his neighbours, or so attends to the care of his neighbours as to grow languid in divine love, whichever of these two things it may be that he neglects, knows not what it is to have twice dyed scarlet in the adornment of his ephod. But, while the mind is intent on the precepts of charity, it undoubtedly remains that the flesh be macerated through abstinence. Hence with twice dyed scarlet fine twined linen is conjoined. For fine linen (byssus) springs from the earth with glittering show: and what is designated by fine linen but bodily chastity shining white in the comeliness of purity? And it is also twisted for being interwoven into the beauty of the ephod, since the habit of chastity then attains to the perfect whiteness of purity when the flesh is worn by abstinence. And, since the merit of affliction of the flesh profits among the other virtues, fine twined linen shows white, as it were, in the diverse beauty of the ephod.

## Chapter 4

## **That the ruler should be discreet in keeping silence, profitable in speech.**

The ruler should be discreet in keeping silence, profitable in speech; lest he either utter what ought to be suppressed or suppress what he ought to utter. For, as incautious speaking leads into error, so indiscreet silence leaves in error those who might have been instructed. For often improvident rulers, fearing to lose human favour, shrink timidly from speaking freely the things that are right; and, according to the voice of the Truth John 10:12, serve unto the custody of the flock by no means with the zeal of shepherds, but in the way of hirelings; since they fly when the wolf comes if they hide themselves under silence. For hence it is that the Lord through the prophet upbraids them, saying, Dumb dogs, that cannot bark Isaiah 56:10. Hence again He complains, saying, You have not gone up against the enemy, neither opposed a wall for the house of Israel, to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord Ezekiel 13:5. Now to go up against the enemy is to go with free voice against the powers of this world for defense of the flock; and to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord is out of love of justice to resist bad men when they contend against us. For, for a shepherd to have feared to say what is right, what else is it but to have turned his back in keeping silence? But surely, if he puts himself in front for the flock, he opposes a wall against the enemy for the house of Israel. Hence again to the sinful people it is said, Your prophets have seen false and foolish things for you: neither did they discover your iniquity, to provoke you to repentance Lamentations 2:14. For in sacred language teachers are sometimes called prophets, in that, by pointing out how fleeting are present things, they make manifest the things that are to come. And such the divine discourse convinces of seeing false things, because, while fearing to reprove faults, they vainly flatter evil doers by promising security: neither do they at all discover the iniquity of sinners, since they refrain their voice from chiding. For the language of reproof is the key of discovery, because by chiding it discloses the fault of which even he who has committed it is often himself unaware. Hence Paul says, That he may be able by sound doctrine even to convince the gainsayers Titus 1:9. Hence through Malachi it is said, The priest's lips keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth Malachi 2:7. Hence through Isaiah the Lord admonishes, saying, Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet Isaiah 58:1. For it is true that whosoever enters on the priesthood undertakes the office of a herald, so as to walk, himself crying aloud, before the coming of the judge who follows terribly. Wherefore, if the priest knows not how to preach, what voice of a loud cry shall the mute herald utter? For hence it is that the Holy Spirit sat upon the first pastors under the appearance of tongues Acts 2:3; because whomsoever He has filled, He himself at once makes eloquent. Hence it is enjoined on Moses that when the priest goes into the tabernacle he shall be encompassed with bells Exodus 28:33; that is, that he shall have about him the sounds of preaching, lest he provoke by his silence the judgment of Him Who beholds him from above. For it is written, That his sound may be heard when he goes in unto the holy place before the Lord and when he comes out, that he die not Exodus 28:35. For the priest, when he goes in or comes out, dies if a sound is not heard from him, because he provokes the wrath of the hidden judge, if he goes without the sound of preaching. Aptly also are the bells described as inserted in his vestments. For what else ought we to take the vestments of the priest to be but righteous works; as the prophet attests when he says, Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness Psalm 131:9? The bells, therefore, are inherent in his vestments to signify that the very works of the priest should also proclaim the way of life together with the sound of his tongue. But, when the ruler prepares himself for speaking, let him bear in mind with what studious caution he ought to speak, lest, if he be hurried inordinately into speaking, the hearts of hearers be smitten with the wound of error and, while he perchance desires to seem wise he unwisely sever the bond of

unity. For on this account the Truth says, Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another Mark 9:49. Now by salt is denoted the word of wisdom. Let him, therefore, who strives to speak wisely fear greatly, lest by his eloquence the unity of his hearers be disturbed. Hence Paul says, Not to be more wise than behooves to be wise, but to be wise unto sobriety Romans 12:3. Hence in the priest's vestment, according to Divine precept, to bells are added pomegranates Exodus 28:34. For what is signified by pomegranates but the unity of the faith? For, as within a pomegranate many seeds are protected by one outer rind, so the unity of the faith comprehends the innumerable peoples of holy Church, whom a diversity of merits retains within her. Lest then a ruler should be unadvisedly hurried into speaking, the Truth in person proclaims to His disciples this which we have already cited, Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another Mark 9:49. It is as though He should say in a figure through the dress of the priest: Join pomegranates to bells, that in all you say you may with cautious watchfulness keep the unity of the faith. Rulers ought also to guard with anxious thought not only against saying in any way what is wrong, but against uttering even what is right overmuch and inordinately; since the good effect of things spoken is often lost, when enfeebled to the hearts of hearers by the incautious importunity of loquacity; and this same loquacity, which knows not how to serve for the profit of the hearers, also defiles the speaker. Hence it is well said through Moses, The man that has a flux of seed shall be unclean Leviticus 15:2. For the quality of the speech that is heard is the seed of the thought which follows, since, while speech is conceived through the ear, thought is engendered in the mind. Whence also by the wise of this world the excellent preacher was called a sower of words (seminiverbius) Acts 17:18. Wherefore, he that suffers from a flux of seed is pronounced unclean, because, being addicted to much speaking, he defiles himself by that which, had it been orderly issued, might have produced the offspring of right thought in the hearts of hearers; and, while he incautiously spends himself in loquacity, he sheds his seed not so as to serve for generation, but unto uncleanness. Hence Paul also, in admonishing his disciple to be instant in preaching, when he says, I charge you before God and Christ Jesus, Who shall judge the quick and the dead by His appearing and His kingdom, preach the word, be instant opportunely, importunely 2 Timothy 4:1, being about to say importunely, premises opportunely, because in truth importunity mars itself to the mind of the hearer by its own very cheapness, if it knows not how to observe opportunity.

## **Chapter 5**

That the ruler should be a near neighbour to every one in compassion, and exalted above all in contemplation.

The ruler should be a near neighbour to every one in sympathy, and exalted above all in contemplation, so that through the bowels of loving-kindness he may transfer the infirmities of others to himself, and by loftiness of speculation transcend even himself in his aspiration after the invisible; lest either in seeking high things he despise the weak things of his neighbours, or in suiting himself to the weak things of his neighbours he relinquish his aspiration after high things. For hence it is that Paul is caught up into Paradise 2 Corinthians 12:3 and explores the secrets of the third heaven, and, yet, though borne aloft in that contemplation of things invisible, recalls the vision of his mind to the bed of the carnal, and directs how they should have intercourse with each other in their hidden privacy, saying, But on account of fornication let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the

husband render unto the wife her due, and likewise the wife unto the husband 1 Corinthians 7:2. And a little after 1 Corinthians 5:5, Defraud not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to prayer, and come together again, that Satan tempt you not. Lo, he is already initiated into heavenly secrets, and yet through the bowels of condescension he searches into the bed of the carnal; and the same eye of the heart which in his elevation he lifts to the invisible, he bends in his compassion upon the secrets of those who are subject to infirmity. In contemplation he transcends heaven, and yet in his anxious care deserts not the couch of the carnal; because, being joined at once to the highest and to the lowest by the bond of charity, though in himself mightily caught up in the power of the spirit into the heights above, yet among others, in his loving-kindness, he is content to become weak. Hence, therefore, he says, Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not? 2 Corinthians 11:29. Hence again he says, Unto the Jews I became as a Jew 1 Corinthians 9:20. Now he exhibited this behaviour not by losing hold of his faith, but by extending his loving-kindness; so as, by transferring in a figure the person of unbelievers to himself, to learn from himself how they ought to have compassion shown them; to the end that he might bestow on them what he would have rightly wished to have had bestowed upon himself, had he been as they. Hence again he says, Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for you 2 Corinthians 5:13. For he had known how both to transcend himself in contemplation, and to accommodate himself to his hearers in condescension. Hence Jacob, the Lord looking down from above, and oil being poured down on the stone, saw angels ascending and descending Genesis 28:12; to signify, that true preachers not only aspire in contemplation to the holy head of the Church, that is to the Lord, above, but also descend in commiseration downward to His members. Hence Moses goes frequently in and out of the tabernacle, and he who is wrapped into contemplation within is busied outside with the affairs of those who are subject to infirmity. Within he considers the secret things of God; without he carries the burdens of the carnal. And also concerning doubtful matters he always recurs to the tabernacle, to consult the Lord before the Ark of the Covenant; affording without doubt an example to rulers; that, when in the outside world they are uncertain how to order things, they should return to their own soul as though to the tabernacle, and, as before the Ark of the Covenant, consult the Lord, if so, they may search within themselves the pages of sacred utterance concerning that whereof they doubt. Hence the Truth itself, manifested to us through susception of our humanity, continues in prayer on the mountain, but works miracles in the cities Luke 6:12, thus laying down the way to be followed by good rulers; that, though already in contemplation aspiring to the highest things, they should mingle in sympathy with the necessities of the infirm; since charity then rises wonderfully to high things when it is compassionately drawn to the low things of neighbours; and the more kindly it descends to the weak things of this world, the more vigorously it recurs to the things on high. But those who are over others should show themselves to be such that their subjects may not blush to disclose even their secrets to them; that the little ones, vexed with the waves of temptation, may have recourse to their pastor's heart as to a mother's breast, and wash away the defilement they foresee to themselves from the filth of the sin that buffets them in the solace of his exhortation and in the tears of prayer. Hence also it is that before the doors of the temple the brazen sea for washing the hands of those who enter, that is the laver, is supported by twelve oxen 1 Kings 7:23, seq, whose faces indeed stand out to view, but whose hinder parts are hidden. For what is signified by the twelve oxen but the whole order of pastors, of whom the law says, as explained by Paul, You shall not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treads out the grain (1 Corinthians 9:9; ex Deuteronomy 25:4)? Their open works indeed we see; but what remains to them behind in the hidden retribution of the strict judge we know not. Yet, when they prepare the patience of their condescension for cleansing the sins of their neighbours in confession, they support, as it were, the laver before the doors of

the temple; that whosoever is striving to enter the gate of eternity may show his temptations to his pastor's heart, and, as it were, wash the hands of his thought and of his deed in the laver of the oxen. And for the most part it comes to pass that, while the ruler's mind becomes aware, through condescension, of the trials of others, it is itself also attacked by the temptations whereof it hears; since the same water of the laver in which a multitude of people is cleansed is undoubtedly itself defiled. For, in receiving the pollutions of those who wash, it loses, as it were, the calmness of its own purity. But of this the pastor ought by no means to be afraid, since, under God, who nicely balances all things, he is the more easily rescued from his own temptations as he is more compassionately distressed by those of others.

## Chapter 6

**That the ruler should be, through humility, a companion of good livers, but, through the zeal of righteousness, rigid against the vices of evildoers.**

The ruler should be, through humility, a companion of good livers, and, through the zeal of righteousness, rigid against the vices of evil-doers; so that in nothing he prefer himself to the good, and yet, when the fault of the bad requires it, he be at once conscious of the power of his priority; to the end that, while among his subordinates who live well he waives his rank and accounts them as his equals, he may not fear to execute the laws of rectitude towards the perverse. For, as I remember to have said in my book on morals (Lib. xxi., Moral, cap. 10, nunc. n. 22), it is clear that nature produced all men equal; but, through variation in the order of their merits, guilt puts some below others. But the very diversity which has accrued from vice is ordered by divine judgment, so that, since all men cannot stand on an equal footing, one should be ruled by another. Hence all who are over others ought to consider in themselves not the authority of their rank, but the equality of their condition and rejoice not to be over men, but to do them good. For indeed our ancient fathers are said to have been not kings of men, but shepherds of flocks. And, when the Lord said to Noe and his children, Increase and multiply, and replenish the earth Genesis 9:1, He at once added, And let the fear of you and the dread of you be upon all the beasts of the earth. Thus it appears that, whereas it is ordered that the fear and the dread should be upon the beasts of the earth, it is forbidden that it should be upon men. For man is by nature preferred to the brute beasts, but not to other men; and therefore it is said to him that he should be feared by the beasts, but not by men; since to wish to be feared by one's equal is to be proud against nature. And yet it is necessary that rulers should be feared by their subjects, when they find that God is not feared by them; so that those who have no dread of divine judgments may at any rate, through human dread, be afraid to sin. For superiors by no means show themselves proud in seeking to inspire this fear, in which they seek not their own glory, but the righteousness of their subordinates. For in exacting fear of themselves from such as live perversely, they lord it, as it were, not over men, but over beasts, inasmuch as, so far as their subordinates are bestial, they ought also to lie subdued to dread.

But commonly a ruler, from the very fact of his being pre-eminent over others, is puffed up with elation of thought; and, while all things serve his need, while his commands are quickly executed after his desire,

while all his subjects extol with praises what he has done well, but have no authority to speak against what he has done amiss, and while they commonly praise even what they ought to have reprov'd, his mind, seduced by what is offer'd in abundance from below, is lifted up above itself; and, while outwardly surrounded by unbounded favour, he loses his inward sense of truth; and, forgetful of himself, he scatters himself on the voices of other men, and believes himself to be such as outwardly he hears himself called rather than such as he ought inwardly to have judg'd himself to be. He looks down on those who are under him, nor does he acknowledge them as in the order of nature his equals; and those whom he has surpass'd in the accident of power he believes himself to have transcend'd also in the merits of his life; he esteems himself wiser than all whom he sees himself to excel in power. For indeed he establishes himself in his own mind on a certain lofty eminence, and, though bound together in the same condition of nature with others, he disdains to regard others from the same level; and so he comes to be even like him of whom it is written, He beholds all high things: he is a king over all the children of pride Job 41:25. Nay, aspiring to a singular eminence, and despising the social life of the angels, he says, I will place my seat in the north, and I will be like the Most High Isaiah 14:13. Wherefore through a marvellous judgment he finds a pit of downfall within himself, while outwardly he exalts himself on the summit of power. For he is indeed made like the apostate angel, when, being a man, he disdains to be like men. Thus Saul, after merit of humility, became swollen with pride, when in the height of power: for his humility he was preferred, for his pride rejected; as the Lord attests, Who says, When you were little in your own sight, did I not make you the head of the tribes of Israel 1 Samuel 15:17? He had before seen himself little in his own eyes, but, when propped up by temporal power, he no longer saw himself little. For, preferring himself in comparison with others because he had more power than all, he esteem'd himself great above all. Yet in a wonderful way, when he was little with himself, he was great with God; but, when he appear'd great with himself, he was little with God. Thus commonly, while the mind is inflated from an affluence of subordinates, it becomes corrupted to a flux of pride, the very summit of power being pander to desire. And in truth he orders this power well who knows how both to maintain it and to combat it. He orders it well who knows how through it to tower above delinquencies, and knows how with it to match himself with others in equality. For the human mind commonly is exalted even when supported by no authority: how much more does it lift itself on high when authority lends itself to its support! Nevertheless he dispenses this authority aright, who knows how, with anxious care, both to take of it what is helpful, and also to reject what tempts, and with it to perceive himself to be on a par with others, and yet to put himself above those that sin in his avenging zeal.

But we shall more fully understand this distinction, if we look at the examples given by the first pastor. For Peter, who had received from God the principality of Holy Church, from Cornelius, acting well and prostrating himself humbly before him, refus'd to accept immoderate veneration, saying, Stand up; do it not; I myself also am a man Acts 10:26. But, when he discovers the guilt of Ananias and Sapphira, he soon shows with how great power he had been made eminent above all others. For by his word he smote their life, which he detect'd by the penetration of his spirit; and he recollected himself as chief within the Church against sins, though he did not acknowledge this, when honour was eagerly paid him, before his brethren who acted well. In one case holiness of conduct merited the communion of equality; in the other avenging zeal brought out to view the just claims of authority. Paul, too, knew not himself as preferred above his brethren who acted well, when he said, Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy 2 Corinthians 1:23. And he straightway added, For by faith you stand: as if to explain

his declaration by saying, For this cause we have not dominion over your faith, because by faith you stand; for we are your equals in that wherein we know you to stand. He knew not himself as preferred above his brethren, when he said, We became babes in the midst of you 1 Thessalonians 2:7; and again, But ourselves your servants through Christ 2 Corinthians 4:5. But, when he found a fault that required to be corrected, straightway he recollected himself as a master, saying, What will you? Shall I come unto you with a rod 1 Corinthians 4:21?

Supreme rule, then, is ordered well, when he who presides lords it over vices, rather than over his brethren. But, when superiors correct their delinquent subordinates, it remains for them anxiously to take heed how far, while in right of their authority they smite faults with due discipline, they still, through custody of humility, acknowledge themselves to be on a par with the very brethren who are corrected; although for the most part it is becoming that in our silent thought we even prefer the brethren whom we correct to ourselves. For their vices are through us smitten with the vigour of discipline; but in those which we ourselves commit we are lacerated by not even a word of upbraiding. Wherefore we are by so much the more bounden before the Lord as among men we sin unpunished: but our discipline renders our subordinates by so much the freer from divine judgment, as it leaves not their faults without retribution here. Therefore, in the heart humility should be maintained, and in action discipline. And all the time there is need of sagacious insight, lest, through excessive custody of the virtue of humility, the just claims of government be relaxed, and lest, while any superior lowers himself more than is fit, he be unable to restrain the lives of his subordinates under the bond of discipline. Let rulers, then, maintain outwardly what they undertake for the benefit of others: let them retain inwardly what makes them fearful in their estimate of themselves. But still let even their subjects perceive, by certain signs coming out becomingly, that in themselves they are humble; so as both to see something to be afraid of in their authority, and to acknowledge something to imitate with respect to humility. Therefore let those who preside study without intermission that in proportion as their power is seen to be great externally it be kept down within themselves internally; that it vanquish not their thought; that the heart be not carried away to delight in it; lest the mind become unable to control that which in lust of domination it submits itself to. For, lest the heart of a ruler should be betrayed into elation by delight in personal power, it is rightly said by a certain wise man They have made you a leader: lift not up yourself, but be among them as one of them Sirach 32:1. Hence also Peter says, Not as being lords over God's heritage, but being made ensamples to the flock 1 Peter 5:3. Hence the Truth in person, provoking us to higher virtuous desert, says, You know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are greater exercise authority upon them. It shall not be so among you, but whosoever will be greater among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered to, but to minister Matthew 20:25. Hence also He indicates what punishments are in store for the servant who has been elated by his assumption of government, saying, But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delays his coming, and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken, the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looks not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites Matthew 24:48, seq.. For he is rightly numbered among the hypocrites, who under pretence of discipline turns the ministry of government to the purpose of domination. And yet sometimes there is more grievous delinquency, if among perverse persons equality is kept up more than discipline. For Eli, because, overcome by false affection, he would not punish his delinquent sons, smote himself along with his sons

before the strict judge with a cruel doom 1 Samuel 4:17-18. For on this account it is said to him by the divine voice, You have honoured your sons more than Me 1 Samuel 2:29. Hence, too, He upbraids the shepherds through the prophet, saying, That which was broken you have not bound up, and that which was cast away you have not brought back Ezekiel 34:4. For one who had been cast away is brought back, when any one who has fallen into sin is recalled to a state of righteousness by the vigour of pastoral solicitude. For ligature binds a fracture when discipline subdues a sin, lest the wound should bleed mortally for want of being compressed by the severity of constraint. But often a fracture is made worse, when it is bound together unwarily, so that the cut is more severely felt from being immoderately constrained by ligaments. Hence it is needful that when a wound of sin in subordinates is repressed by correction, even constraint should moderate itself with great carefulness, to the end that it may so exercise the rights of discipline against delinquents as to retain the bowels of loving-kindness. For care should be taken that a ruler show himself to his subjects as a mother in loving-kindness, and as a father in discipline. And all the time it should be seen to with anxious circumspection, that neither discipline be rigid nor loving-kindness lax. For, as we have before now said in our book on Morals (Lib. xx., Moral n. 14, c. 8, et ep. 25, lib. 1), there is much wanting both to discipline and to compassion, if one be had without the other. But there ought to be in rulers towards their subjects both compassion justly considerate, and discipline affectionately severe. For hence it is that, as the Truth teaches Luke 10:34, the man is brought by the care of the Samaritan half dead into the inn, and both wine and oil are applied to his wounds; the wine to make them smart, the oil to soothe them. For whosoever superintends the healing of wounds must needs administer in wine the smart of pain, and in oil the softness of loving-kindness, to the end that through wine what is festering may be purged, and through oil what is curable may be soothed. Gentleness, then, is to be mingled with severity; a sort of compound is to be made of both; so that subjects be neither exulcerated by too much asperity, nor relaxed by too great kindness. Which thing, according to the words of Paul Hebrews 9:4, is well signified by that ark of the tabernacle, in which, together with the tables, there as a rod and manna; because, if with knowledge of sacred Scripture in the good ruler's breast there is the rod of constraint, there should be also the manna of sweetness. Hence David says, Your rod and your staff, they have comforted me Psalm 23:4. For with a rod we are smitten, with a staff we are supported. If, then, there is the constraint of the rod for striking, there should be also the comfort of the staff for supporting. Wherefore let there be love, but not enervating; let there be vigour, but not exasperating; let there be zeal, but not immoderately burning; let there be pity; but not sparing more than is expedient; that, while justice and mercy blend themselves together in supreme rule, he who is at the head may both soothe the hearts of his subjects in making them afraid, and yet in soothing them constrain them to reverential awe.

## **Chapter 7**

That the ruler relax not his care for the things that are within in his occupation among the things that are without, nor neglect to provide for the things that are without in his solicitude for the things that are within.

The ruler should not relax his care for the things that are within in his occupation among the things that are without, nor neglect to provide for the things that are without in his solicitude for the things that are

within; lest either, given up to the things that are without, he fall away from his inmost concerns, or, occupied only with the things that are within bestow not on his neighbours outside himself what he owes them. For it is often the case that some, as if forgetting that they have been put over their brethren for their souls' sake, devote themselves with the whole effort of their heart to secular concerns; these, when they are at hand, they exult in transacting, and, even when there is a lack of them, pant after them night and day with seethings of turbid thought; and when, haply for lack of opportunity, they have quiet from them, by their very quiet they are wearied all the more. For they count it pleasure to be tired by action: they esteem it labour not to labour in earthly businesses. And so it comes to pass that, while they delight in being hustled by worldly tumults, they are ignorant of the things that are within, which they ought to have taught to others. And from this cause undoubtedly, the life also of their subjects is benumbed; because, while desirous of advancing spiritually, it meets a stumbling-block on the way in the example of him who is set over it. For when the head languishes, the members fail to thrive; and it is in vain for an army to follow swiftly in pursuit of enemies if the very leader of the march goes wrong. No exhortation sustains the minds of the subjects, and no reproof chastises their faults, because, while the office of an earthly judge is executed by the guardian of souls, the attention of the shepherd is diverted from custody of the flock; and the subjects are unable to apprehend the light of truth, because, while earthly pursuits occupy the pastor's mind, dust, driven by the wind of temptation, blinds the Church's eyes. To guard against this, the Redeemer of the human race, when He would restrain us from gluttony, saying, Take heed to yourselves that your hearts be not overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness Luke 21:34, immediately added, Or with cares of this life: and in the same place also, with design to add fearfulness to the warning, He straightway said, Lest perchance that day come upon you unawares Luke 21:34: and He even declares the manner of that coming, saying, For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth Luke 21:35. Hence He says again, No man can serve two masters Luke 16:13. Hence Paul withdraws the minds of the religious from consort with the world by summoning, nay rather enlisting them, when he says, No man that wars for God entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him to whom he has approved himself 2 Timothy 2:4. Hence to the rulers of the Church he both commends the studies of leisure and points out the remedies of counsel, saying, If then you should have secular judgments, set them to judge who are contemptible in the church 1 Corinthians 6:4; that is, that those very persons whom no spiritual gifts adorn should devote themselves to earthly charges. It is as if he had said more plainly, Since they are incapable of penetrating the inmost things, let them at any rate employ themselves externally in necessary things. Hence Moses, who speaks with God Exodus 18:17-18, is judged by the reproof of Jethro, who was of alien race, because with ill-advised labour he devotes himself to the people's earthly affairs: and counsel too is presently given him, that he should appoint others in his stead for settling earthly strifes, and he himself should be more free to learn spiritual secrets for the instruction of the people.

By the subjects, then, inferior matters are to be transacted, by the rulers the highest thought of; so that no annoyance of dust may darken the eye which is placed aloft for looking forward to the onward steps. For all who preside are the head of their subjects; and, that the feet may be able to take a straight course, the head ought undoubtedly to look forward to it from above, lest the feet linger on their onward journey, the body being bent from its uprightness and the head bowed down to the earth. But with what conscience can the overseer of souls avail himself among other men of his pastoral dignity, while engaged himself in the earthly cares which it was his duty to reprehend in others? And this indeed is what the Lord, in the

wrath of just retribution, menaced through the prophet, saying, And there shall be like people, like priest Hosea 4:9. For the priest is as the people, when one who bears a spiritual office acts as do others who are still under judgment with regard to their carnal pursuits. And this indeed the prophet Jeremiah, in the great sorrow of his charity, deplores under the image of the destruction of the temple, saying, How is the gold become dim! The most excellent color is changed; the stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of all the streets Lamentations 4:1. For what is expressed by gold, which surpasses all other metals, but the excellency of holiness? What by the most excellent color but the reverence that is about religion, to all men lovely? What are signified by the stones of the sanctuary but persons in sacred orders? What is figured under the name of streets but the latitude of this present life? For, because in Greek speech the word for latitude is πλάτος, streets (plateæ) have been so called from their breadth, or latitude. But the Truth in person says, Broad and spacious is the way that leads to destruction Matthew 7:13. Gold, therefore, becomes dim when a life of holiness is polluted by earthly doings; the most excellent color is changed, when the previous reputation of persons who were believed to be living religiously is diminished. For, when any one after a habit of holiness mixes himself up with earthly doings, it is as though his color were changed, and the reverence that surrounded him grew pale and disregarded before the eyes of men. The stones of the sanctuary also are poured out into the streets, when those who, for the ornament of the Church, should have been free to penetrate internal mysteries as it were in the secret places of the tabernacle seek out the broadways of secular causes outside. For indeed to this end they were made stones of the sanctuary, that they might appear in the vestment of the high-priest within the holy of holies. But when ministers of religion exact not the Redeemer's honour from those that are under them by the merit of their life, they are not stones of the sanctuary in the ornament of the pontiff. And truly these stones of the sanctuary lie scattered through the streets, when persons in sacred orders, given up to the latitude of their own pleasures, cleave to earthly businesses. And it is to be observed that they are said to be scattered, not in the streets, but in the top of the streets; because, even when they are engaged in earthly matters, they desire to appear topmost; so as to occupy the broad ways in their enjoyment of delight, and yet to be at the top of the streets in the dignity of holiness.

Further, there is nothing to hinder us from taking the stones of the sanctuary to be those of which the sanctuary was itself constructed; which lie scattered in the top of the streets when men in sacred orders, in whose office the glory of holiness had previously seemed to stand, devote themselves out of preference to earthly doings. Secular employments, therefore, though they may sometimes be endured out of compassion, should never be sought after out of affection for the things themselves; lest, while they weigh down the mind of him who loves them, they sink it, overcome by its own burden, from heavenly places to the lowest. But, on the other hand, there are some who undertake the care of the flock, but desire to be so at leisure for their own spiritual concerns as to be in no wise occupied with external things. Such persons, in neglecting all care for what pertains to the body, by no means meet the needs of those who are put under them. And certainly their preaching is for the most part despised; because, while they find fault with the deeds of sinners, but nevertheless afford them not the necessaries of the present life, they are not at all willingly listened to. For the word of doctrine penetrates not the mind of one that is in need, if the hand of compassion commends it not to his heart. But the seed of the word readily germinates, when the loving-kindness of the preacher waters it in the hearer's breast. Whence, for a ruler to be able to infuse what may profit inwardly, it is necessary for him, with blameless consideration, to provide also for outward things. Let pastors, then, so glow with ardour in regard to the inward affections of those they

have the charge of as not to relinquish provision also for their outward life. For, as we have said, the heart of the flock is, even as it were of right, set against preaching, if the care of external succour be neglected by the pastor. Whence also the first pastor anxiously admonishes, saying, The elders which are among you I beseech, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed, feed the flock of God which is among you 1 Peter 5:1: in which place he showed whether it was the feeding of the heart or of the body that he was commending, when he immediately added, Providing for it, not by constraint, but willingly, according to God, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. In these words, indeed, pastors are kindly forewarned, lest, while they satisfy the want of those who are under them, they slay themselves with the sword of ambition; lest, while through them their neighbours are refreshed with succours of the flesh, they themselves remain fasting from the bread of righteousness. This solicitude of pastors Paul stirs up when he says, If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel 1 Timothy 5:8. In the midst of all this, then, they should fear, and watchfully take heed, lest, while occupied with outward care, they be whelmed away from inward intentness. For usually, as we have already said, the hearts of rulers, while unwarily devoting themselves to temporal solicitude, cool in inmost love; and, being carried here and there abroad, fear not to forget that they have undertaken the government of souls. It is necessary, then, that the solicitude expended on those who are put under us should be kept within a certain measure. Hence it is well said to Ezekiel, The priests shall not shave their heads, nor suffer their locks to grow long, but polling let them poll their heads Ezekiel 44:20. For they are rightly called priests who are set over the faithful for affording them sacred guidance. But the hairs outside the head are thoughts in the mind; which, as they spring up insensibly above the brain, denote the cares of the present life, which, owing to negligent perception, since they sometimes come forth unseasonably, advance, as it were, without our feeling them. Since, then, all who are over others ought indeed to have external anxieties, and yet should not be vehemently bent upon them, the priests are rightly forbidden either to shave their heads or to let their hair grow long; that so they may neither cut off from themselves entirely thoughts of the flesh for the life of those who are under them, nor again allow them to grow too much. Thus in this passage it is well said, Polling let them poll their heads; to wit, that the cares of temporal anxiety should both extend themselves as far as need requires, and yet be cut short soon, lest they grow to an immoderate extent. When, therefore, through provident care for bodies applied externally life is protected [or, through provident care applied externally the life of bodies is protected], and again, through moderate intentness of heart, is not impeded, the hairs on the priest's head are both preserved to cover the skin, and cut short so as not to veil the eyes.

## **Chapter 8**

**That the ruler should not set his heart on pleasing men, and yet should give heed to what ought to please them.**

Meanwhile it is also necessary for the ruler to keep wary watch, lest the lust of pleasing men assail him; lest, when he studiously penetrates the things that are within, and providently supplies the things that are without, he seek to be beloved of those that are under him more than truth; lest, while, supported by his good deeds, he seems not to belong to the world, self-love estrange him from his Maker. For he is the

Redeemer's enemy who through the good works which he does covets being loved by the Church instead of Him; since a servant whom the bridegroom has sent with gifts to the bride is guilty of treacherous thought if he desires to please the eyes of the bride. And in truth this self-love, when it has got possession of a ruler's mind, sometimes carries it away inordinately to softness, but sometimes to roughness. For from love of himself the ruler's mind is inclined to softness, because, when he observes those that are under him sinning, he does not presume to reprove them, lest their affection for himself should grow dull; nay sometimes he smooths down with flatteries the offense of his subordinates which he ought to have rebuked. Hence it is well said through the prophet, Woe unto them that sew cushions under every elbow, and make pillows under the head of every stature to catch souls Ezekiel 13:18; inasmuch as to put cushions under every elbow is to cherish with bland flatteries souls that are falling from their uprightness and reclining themselves in this world's enjoyment. For it is as though the elbow of a recumbent person rested on a cushion and his head on pillows, when the hardness of reproof is withdrawn from one who sins, and when the softness of favour is offered to him, that he may lie softly in error, while no roughness of contradiction troubles him. But so rulers who love themselves undoubtedly show themselves to those by whom they fear they may be injured in their pursuit of temporal glory. Such indeed as they see to have no power against them they ever keep down with roughness of rigid censure, never admonish them gently, but, forgetful of pastoral kindness, terrify them with the rights of domination. Such the divine voice rightly upbraids through the prophet, saying, But with austerity and power did you rule them Ezekiel 24:4. For, loving themselves more than their Maker, they lift up themselves haughtily towards those that are under them, considering not what they ought to do, but what they can do; they have no fear of future judgment; they glory insolently in temporal power; it pleases them to be free to do even unlawful things, and that no one among their subordinates should contradict them. He, then, who sets his mind on doing wrong things, and yet wishes all other men to hold their peace about them, is himself a witness to himself that he desires to be loved himself more than the truth, which he is unwilling should be defended against him. There is indeed no one who so lives as not to some extent to fail in duty. He, then, desires the truth to be loved more fully than himself, who wishes to be spared by no one against the truth. For hence Peter willingly accepted Paul's rebuke Galatians 2:11; hence David humbly listened to the reproof of his subject 2 Samuel 12:7; because good rulers, being themselves unconscious of loving with partial affection, believe the word of free sincerity from subjects to be the homage of humility. But meanwhile it is necessary that the care of government be tempered with so great skill of management that the mind of subjects, when it has become able to feel rightly on some subjects, should so advance to liberty of speech that liberty still break not out into pride; lest, while liberty of the tongue is perchance conceded to them overmuch, the humility of their life be lost. It is to be borne in mind also, that it is right for good rulers to desire to please men; but this in order to draw their neighbours by the sweetness of their own character to affection for the truth; not that they should long to be themselves loved, but should make affection for themselves as a sort of road by which to lead the hearts of their hearers to the love of the Creator. For it is indeed difficult for a preacher who is not loved, however well he may preach, to be willingly listened to. He, then, who is over others ought to study to be loved to the end that he may be listened to, and still not seek love for its own sake, lest he be found in the hidden usurpation of his thought to rebel against Him whom in his office he appears to serve. Which thing Paul insinuates well, when, manifesting the secret of his affection for us, he says, Even as I please all men in all things 1 Corinthians 10:33. And yet he says again, If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ Galatians 1:10. Thus Paul pleases, and pleases not; because in that he desires to please he seeks that not he himself should please men, but truth through him.

## Chapter 9

**That the ruler ought to be careful to understand how commonly vices pass themselves off as virtues.**

The ruler also ought to understand how commonly vices pass themselves off as virtues. For often niggardliness palliates itself under the name of frugality, and on the other hand prodigality hides itself under the appellation of liberality. Often inordinate laxity is believed to be loving-kindness, and unbridled wrath is accounted the virtue of spiritual zeal. Often precipitate action is taken for the efficacy of promptness, and tardiness for the deliberation of seriousness. Whence it is necessary for the ruler of souls to distinguish with vigilant care between virtues and vices, lest either niggardliness get possession of his heart while he exults in seeming frugal in expenditure; or, while anything is prodigally wasted, he glory in being as it were compassionately liberal; or in remitting what he ought to have smitten he draw on those that are under him to eternal punishment; or in mercilessly smiting an offense he himself offend more grievously; or by immaturely anticipating what might have been done properly **and gravely; or by putting off the merit of a good action change it to something worse.**

## Chapter 10

**What the ruler's discrimination should be between correction and connivance, between fervour and gentleness.**

It should be known too that the vices of subjects ought sometimes to be prudently connived at, but indicated in that they are connived at; that things, even though openly known, ought sometimes to be seasonably tolerated, but sometimes, though hidden, be closely investigated; that they ought sometimes to be gently reprov'd, but sometimes vehemently censured. For, indeed, some things, as we have said, ought to be prudently connived at, but indicated in that they are connived at, so that, when the delinquent is aware that he is discovered and borne with, he may blush to augment those faults which he considers in himself are tolerated in silence, and may punish himself in his own judgment as being one whom the patience of his ruler in his own mind mercifully excuses. By such connivance the Lord well reproveth Judah, when He says through the prophet, You have lied, and hast not remembered Me, nor laid it to your heart, because I have held My peace and been as one that saw not Isaiah 57:11. Thus He both connived at faults and made them known, since He both held His peace against the sinner, and nevertheless declared this very thing, that He had held His peace. But some things, even though openly known, ought to be seasonably tolerated; that is, when circumstances afford no suitable opportunity for openly correcting them. For sores by being unseasonably cut are the worse enflamed and, if medicaments suit not the time, it is undoubtedly evident that they lose their medicinal function. But, while a fitting time for the correction of subordinates is being sought, the patience of the prelate is exercised under the very weight of their offenses. Whence it is well said by the Psalmist, Sinners have built upon my back Psalm 128:3. For on the back we support burdens; and therefore he complains that sinners had built upon his back, as if

to say plainly, Those whom I am unable to correct I carry as a burden laid upon me.

Some hidden things, however, ought to be closely investigated, that, by the breaking out of certain symptoms, the ruler may discover all that lies closely hidden in the minds of his subordinates, and, by reproof intervening at the nick of time, from very small things become aware of greater ones. Whence it is rightly said to Ezekiel, Son of man, dig in the wall Ezekiel 8:8; where the said prophet presently adds, And when I had dug in the wall, there appeared one door. And he said to me, Go in, and see the wicked abominations that they do here. So I went in and saw; and behold every similitude of creeping things, and abomination of beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, were portrayed upon the wall (Ibid. 9, 10). Now by Ezekiel are personified men in authority; by the wall is signified the hardness of their subordinates. And what is digging in a wall but opening the hardness of the heart by sharp inquisitions? Which wall when he had dug into, there appeared a door, because when hardness of heart is pierced either by careful questionings or by seasonable reproofs, there is shown as it were a kind of door, through which may appear the interior of the thoughts in him who is reproofed. Whence also it follows well in that place, Go in and see the wicked abominations that they do here (Ibid.). He goes in, as it were, to see the abominations, who, by examination of certain symptoms outwardly appearing, so penetrates the hearts of his subordinates as to become cognizant of all their illicit thoughts. Whence also he added, And I went in and saw; and behold every similitude of creeping things, and abomination of beasts (Ibid.). By creeping things thoughts altogether earthly are signified; but by beasts such as are indeed a little lifted above the earth, but still crave the rewards of earthly recompense. For creeping things cleave to the earth with the whole body; but beasts are in a large part of the body lifted above the earth, yet are ever inclined to the earth by gulosity. Therefore there are creeping things within the wall, when thoughts are revolved in the mind which never rise above earthly cravings. There are also beasts within the wall, when, though some just and some honourable thoughts are entertained, they are still subservient to appetite for temporal gains and honour, and, though in themselves indeed lifted, as one may say, above the earth, still through desire to curry favour, as through the throat's craving, demean themselves to what is lowest. Whence also it is well added, And all the idols of the house of Israel were portrayed upon the wall Ezekiel 8:10, inasmuch as it is written, And covetousness, which is idolatry Colossians 3:5. Rightly therefore after beasts idols are spoken of, because some, though lifting themselves as it were above the earth by honourable action, still lower themselves to the earth by dishonourable ambition. And it is well said, Were portrayed; since, when the shows of external things are drawn into one's inner self, whatever is meditated on under imagined images is, as it were, portrayed on the heart. It is to be observed, therefore, that first a hole in the wall, and afterwards a door, is perceived, and that then at length the hidden abomination is made apparent; because, in fact, of every single sin signs are first seen outwardly, and afterwards a door is pointed out for opening the iniquity to view; and then at length every evil that lies hidden within is disclosed.

Some things, however, ought to be gently reproofed: for, when fault is committed, not of malice, but only from ignorance or infirmity, it is certainly necessary that the very censure of it be tempered with great moderation. For it is true that all of us, so long as we subsist in this mortal flesh, are subject to the infirmities of our corruption. Every one, therefore, ought to gather from himself how it behooves him to pity another's weakness, lest, if he be too fervently hurried to words of reprehension against a neighbour's

infirmity, he should seem to be forgetful of his own. Whence Paul admonishes well, when he says, If a man be overtaken in any fault, you which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering yourself, lest you also be tempted Galatians 6:1; as if to say plainly, When what you see of the infirmity of another displeases you, consider what you are; that so the spirit may moderate itself in the zeal of reprehension, while for itself also it fears what it reprehends.

Some things, however, ought to be vehemently reprov'd, that, when a fault is not recognized by him who has committed it, he may be made sensible of its gravity from the mouth of the reprover; and that, when any one smooths over to himself the evil that he has perpetrated, he may be led by the asperity of his censurer to entertain grave fears of its effects against himself. For indeed it is the duty of a ruler to show by the voice of preaching the glory of the supernal country, to disclose what great temptations of the old enemy are lurking in this life's journey, and to correct with great asperity of zeal such evils among those who are under his sway as ought not to be gently borne with; lest, in being too little incensed against faults, of all faults he be himself held guilty. Whence it is well said to Ezekiel, Take unto you a tile, and you shall lay it before you, and pourtray upon it the city Jerusalem Ezekiel 4:1. And immediately it is subjoined, And you shall lay siege against it, and build forts, and cast a mount, and set camps against it, and set battering rams against it round about. And to him, for his own defense it is immediately subjoined, And do thou take unto you an iron frying-pan, and you shall set it for a wall of iron between you and the city. For of what does the prophet Ezekiel bear the semblance but of teachers, in that it is said to him, Take unto you a tile, and you shall lay it before you, and pourtray upon it the city Jerusalem?

For indeed holy teachers take unto themselves a tile, when they lay hold of the earthy heart of hearers in order to teach them: which tile in truth they lay before themselves, because they keep watch over it with the entire bent of their mind: on which tile also they are commanded to pourtray the city Jerusalem, because they are at the utmost pains to represent to earthy hearts by preaching a vision of supernal peace. But, because the glory of the heavenly country is perceived in vain, unless it be known also what great temptations of the crafty enemy assail us here, it is fitly subjoined, And you shall lay siege against it, and build forts. For indeed holy preachers lay siege about the tile on which the city Jerusalem is delineated, when to a mind that is earthy but already seeking after the supernal country they show how great an opposition of vices in the time of this life is arrayed against it. For, when it is shown how each several sin besets us in our onward course, it is as though a siege were laid round the city Jerusalem by the voice of the preacher. But, because preachers ought not only to make known how vices assail us, but also how well-guarded virtues strengthen us, it is rightly subjoined, And you shall build forts. For indeed the holy preacher builds forts, when he shows what virtues resist what vices. And because, as virtue increases, the wars of temptation are for the most part augmented, it is rightly further added, And you shall cast a mount, and set camps against it, and set battering rams round about. For, when any preacher sets forth the mass of increasing temptation, he casts a mount. And he sets camps against Jerusalem when to the right intention of his hearers he foretells the unsurveyed, and as it were incomprehensible, ambuscades of the cunning enemy. And he sets battering-rams round about, when he makes known the darts of temptation encompassing us on every side in this life, and piercing through our wall of virtues.

But although the ruler may nicely insinuate all these things, he procures not for himself lasting absolution, unless he glow with a spirit of jealousy against the delinquencies of all and each. Whence in that place it is further rightly subjoined, And do thou take to you an iron frying-pan, and you shall set it for a wall of iron between you and the city. For by the frying-pan is denoted a frying of the mind, and by iron the hardness of reproof.

But what more fiercely fries and excruciates the teacher's mind than zeal for God? Hence Paul was being burnt with the frying of this frying-pan when he said, Who is made weak, and I am not made weak? Who is offended, and I burn not? 2 Corinthians 11:29. And, because whosoever is inflamed with zeal for God is protected by a guard continually, lest he should deserve to be condemned for negligence, it is rightly said, You shall set it for a wall of iron between you and the city. For an iron frying-pan is set for a wall of iron between the prophet and the city, because, when rulers already exhibit strong zeal, they keep the same zeal as a strong defense afterwards between themselves and their hearers, lest they should be destitute then of the power to punish from having been previously remiss in reproof.

But meanwhile it is to be borne in mind that, while the mind of the teacher exasperates itself for rebuke, it is very difficult for him to avoid breaking out into saying something that he ought not to say. And for the most part it happens that, when the faults of subordinates are reprehended with severe invective, the tongue of the master is betrayed into excess of language. And, when rebuke is immoderately hot, the hearts of the delinquents are depressed to despair. Wherefore it is necessary for the exasperated ruler, when he considers that he has wounded more than he should have done the feelings of his subordinates, to have recourse in his own mind to penitence, so as by lamentations to obtain pardon in the sight of the Truth; and even for this cause, that it is through the ardour of his zeal for it that he sins. This is what the Lord in a figure enjoins through Moses, saying, If a man go in simplicity of heart with his friend into the wood to hew wood, and the wood of the axe fly from his hand, and the iron slip from the handle and smite his friend and slay him, he shall flee unto one of the aforesaid cities and live; lest haply the next of kin to him whose blood has been shed, while his heart is hot, pursue him, and overtake him, and smite him mortally Deuteronomy 19:4-5. For indeed we go with a friend into the wood as often as we betake ourselves to look into the delinquencies of subordinates. And we hew wood in simplicity of heart, when with pious intention we cut off the vices of delinquents. But the axe flies from the hand, when rebuke is drawn on to asperity more than need requires. And the iron leaps from the handle, when out of reproof issues speech too hard. And he smites and slays his friend, because overstrained contumely cuts him off from the spirit of love. For the mind of one who is reprov'd suddenly breaks out into hatred, if immoderate reproof charges it beyond its due. But he who smites wood incautiously and destroys his neighbour must needs fly to three cities, that in one of them he may live protected; since if, betaking himself to the laments of penitence, he is hidden under hope and charity in sacramental unity, he is not held guilty of the perpetrated homicide. And him the next of kin to the slain man does not kill, even when he finds him; because, when the strict judge comes, who has joined himself to us by sharing in our nature, without doubt He requires not the penalty of his fault from him whom faith, hope and charity hide under the shelter of his pardon.

## Chapter 11

### How intent the ruler ought to be on meditations in the Sacred Law.

But all this is duly executed by a ruler, if, inspired by the spirit of heavenly fear and love, he meditate daily on the precepts of Sacred Writ, that the words of Divine admonition may restore in him the power of solicitude and of provident circumspection with regard to the celestial life, which familiar intercourse with men continually destroys; and that one who is drawn to oldness of life by secular society may by the aspiration of compunction be ever renewed to love of the spiritual country. For the heart runs greatly to waste in the midst of human talk; and, since it is undoubtedly evident that, when driven by the tumults of external occupations, it loses its balance and falls, one ought incessantly to take care that through keen pursuit of instruction it may rise again. For hence it is that Paul admonishes his disciple who had been put over the flock, saying, Till I come, give attendance to reading 1 Timothy 4:13. Hence David says, How have I loved Your Law, O Lord! It is my meditation all the day Psalm 109:97. Hence the Lord commanded Moses concerning the carrying of the ark, saying. You shall make four rings of gold, which you shall put in the four corners of the ark, and you shall make staves of shittim-wood, and overlay them with gold, and shall put them through the rings which are by the sides of the ark, that it may be borne with them, and they shall always be in the rings, nor shall they ever be drawn out from them Exodus 25:12, seq.. What but the holy Church is figured by the ark? To which four rings of gold in the four corners are ordered to be adjoined, because, in that it is thus extended towards the four quarters of the globe, it is declared undoubtedly to be equipped for journeying with the four books of the holy Gospel. And staves of shittim-wood are made, and are put through the same rings for carrying, because strong and persevering teachers, as incorruptible pieces of timber, are to be sought for, who by cleaving ever to instruction out of the sacred volumes may declare the unity of the holy Church, and, as it were, carry the ark by being let into its rings. For indeed to carry the ark by means of staves is through preaching to bring the holy Church before the rude minds of unbelievers by means of good teachers. And these are also ordered to be overlaid with gold, that, while they are resonant to others in discourse, they may also themselves glitter in the splendour of their lives. Of whom it is further fitly added, They shall always be in the rings, nor shall they ever be drawn out from them; because it is surely necessary that those who attend upon the office of preaching should not recede from the study of sacred lore. For to this end it is that the staves are ordered to be always in the rings, that, when occasion requires the ark to be carried, no tardiness in carrying may arise from the staves having to be put in; because, that is to say, when a pastor is enquired of by his subordinates on any spiritual matter, it is exceedingly ignominious, should he then go about to learn, when he ought to solve the question. But let the staves remain ever in the rings, that teachers, ever meditating in their own hearts the words of Sacred Writ, may lift without delay the Ark of the Covenant; as will be the case if they teach at once whatever is required. Hence the first Pastor of the Church well admonishes all other pastors saying, Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you 1 Peter 3:15: as though he should say plainly, That no delay may hinder the carrying of the ark, let the staves never be withdrawn from the rings.

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*Source:* James Barnby, Trans. *From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 12. Ed. by Philip Schaff.  
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