

THE ORIGENIST CONTROVERSY

Introduction

This final section presents a selection of texts on the Origenist controversy not previously translated into English. The volume devoted to Jerome in the second series of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers contains three of Theophilus' personal letters,¹ but omits the Synodal Letter of 400 to the bishops of Palestine and Cyprus, and the three Festal Letters of 401, 402 and 404, rhetorical *tours de force* preserved in their entirety only in Jerome's Latin translations. Jerome asserts in a covering letter to a copy of his translation of *FL* 17 of 402, together with the Greek original, addressed to his Roman friends Pammachius and Marcella that he has worked hard to render Theophilus' sense and tone accurately (*Ep.* 97. 3). The Greek fragments support his claim. Also offered here is an exegetical fragment translated by Jerome and entitled by its modern editors *On Isaiah 6: 1–7*. The remaining texts have been handed down in the original Greek, but only in fragmentary form. Some of the fragments have long been known through their having been cited by Palladius, Theodoret and Justinian. Others have been recovered more recently from anti-Origenist florilegia.

The texts are as follows:

1. *First Synodal Letter* (CPG 2. 2595)

This letter, composed by Theophilus after the synod called by him to consider Origen's writings, belongs to late 399 or early 400.² Three fragments were quoted in the mid-sixth century by Justinian in his *Liber adversus Origenem*.³ Recently a further fragment, linking Justinian's first and second fragments, has been discovered by José Declerck in a remarkable Athonite manuscript containing a unique collection of theological texts, Vatopedi gr. 236.⁴ I have translated Justinian's first two

fragments from Declerck, with the additional linking passage from Vatopedi gr. 236, and Justinian's third fragment from PG 86. 971AB.

2. *Second Synodal Letter to the Bishops of Palestine and Cyprus* (CPG 2. 2596)

This letter has been preserved completely only in Jerome's Latin translation (*Ep.* 92). Written in the autumn of 400, it seeks to prevent the Cypriot and Palestinian bishops from giving hospitality to the monks expelled from Nitria.⁵ I have translated Jerome's version from Hilberg's CSEL edition, comparing it with Labourt's Budé text and often (as also with *FL* 16, 17 and 19) adopting the interpretations suggested by Labourt's punctuation.

3. *Letters to the Origenist monks* (CPG 2. 2601–3 and 2611)

Four fragments survive of Theophilus' correspondence with the Nitrian dissidents. The first has been edited by Eduard Schwartz from Vaticanus gr. 1431.⁶ Two are given by Justinian in his *Liber adversus Origenem*.⁷ The fourth has been published by Richard from Vatopedi gr. 236.⁸ In these fragments Theophilus calls on the dissidents to renounce Origen and accept the decisions of the Western and Alexandrian synods of 399–400.

4. *Sixteenth Festal Letter* (401) (CPG 2. 2585)

This important Festal Letter, almost entirely devoted to refuting selected doctrines attributed to Origen, survives completely in Jerome's Latin translation (*Ep.* 96) and apparently also in Coptic.⁹ As it was much cited in antiquity, however, a number of Greek fragments have been preserved.¹⁰ I have translated this and the remaining two Festal Letters from Jerome's Latin version, except where the Greek fragments allow direct translation from the original text.

5. *Seventeenth Festal Letter* (402) (CPG 2. 2586)

This letter survives completely only in Jerome's Latin translation (*Ep.* 98).¹¹ Jerome describes it as consisting of four parts: (i) an exhortation to celebrate Easter; (ii) an attack on Apollinarius, 'not lacking in dialectical subtlety'; (iii) an attack on Origen; and (iv) an exhortation to heretics to repent (*Ep.* 97. 3). There are two Greek fragments in Theodoret's *Eranistes*, which I have used to control the corresponding Latin passages in Jerome's translation.¹²

6. *Letter written at Constantinople* (403) (CPG 2. 2612)

According to Marcel Richard, this letter was written by Theophilus while he was in Constantinople (therefore in 403) to

justify his action against the Tall Brothers. Nine fragments have been edited by Richard from Vatopedi gr. 236.¹³

7. *Nineteenth Festal Letter* (404) (CPG 2. 2588)

The Nineteenth Festal Letter has come down to us only in Jerome's Latin version (*Ep.* 100).¹⁴ By now the urgency of the Origenist controversy had diminished, for Theophilus devotes only a short section to combating Origen's teaching. We have Jerome's letter which accompanied the copy of his translation he sent to Theophilus (*Ep.* 99), in which he dwells on the pains he has taken to capture the style as well as the sense of the original. Jerome praises Theophilus for his combination of philosophy and rhetoric. He exaggerates, for Theophilus gives no evidence of having pursued philosophical studies, but his mastery of dialectic amply demonstrates his training in rhetoric.

8. *Tractate on Isaiah 6: 1-7* (CPG 2. 2683)

The authorship of this long Latin fragment refuting Origen's exegesis of Isaiah's vision of the *merkabab* (God's heavenly throne) is disputed. It has been edited twice, by Dom A. M. Amelli (Monte Cassino, 1901) and Dom G. Morin (Maredsous, 1903), both of whom place it among Jerome's works. Theophilus' authorship, first suggested by Diekamp, is supported by Altaner (1943) and Chavoutier (1960). The many similarities of expression with Jerome's *Epistles* 96, 98 and 100, the quotations from the Septuagint version of Isaiah, rather than from Jerome's own translation from the Hebrew, and the general method of argument seem to me sufficient grounds for attributing authorship to Theophilus. If this is accepted, the presentation of arguments in the text not only against Origen's subordinationism but also against anthropomorphic ideas of God further supports Theophilus' denial of a *volte-face*. The translation is based on Morin's edition.

TEXTS

FIRST SYNODAL LETTER

(Declerck, 503-4; ACO III. 202.20-203.2 = PG 86.
969C-971B)

*From the letter of the Egyptian and Alexandrian synod, written against the opinions of Origen.*¹⁵

This Origen we are discussing therefore came to be like the desolating sacrilege (cf. Mt. 24:15) in the midst of the true Church. And

although he was ordained a presbyter by the canonical and one true hand, he had merely the rank of a presbyter and nothing more, just as the thief and traitor, Judas, had nothing more than the rank of an apostle. When he began to deliver his blasphemous homilies, the bishop at that time, Heraclas of blessed memory, labourer and honest vinedresser of truth's estate that he was, plucked him out of the good corn, since he was truly a weed sown by the evil one (cf. Mt. 13:38).¹⁶ And like a doctor who does not pretend to be kind but seeks only the body's health, he cut him out with the divine two-edged sword (cf. Heb. 4:12), as if he were a terrible abscess and malignant ulcer, or a painful spreading gangrene, and threw him out of the Church.¹⁷ He was ejected from the truth like the stone in Leviticus with chronic leprosy which was cut out of the house by Aristaeus, the priest of truth at that time (cf. Lev. 14:39–40).

Then after he had been expelled from the Church – for he was not truly of the Church but rather against the Church, for if he had spoken on the Church's behalf he would not have been expelled from the Church – he fell to earth from heaven like lightning, just as his father, the devil and Satan, did (cf. Lk. 10:18; Jn 8.44), and being full of a great and terrible anger against the truth, sailed off to the country called Palestine. He settled in the city of Caesarea and there unmasked himself totally. Vomiting forth whatever dark and black thing happened to please him, like the fish some call the cuttlefish, he set it down there in writing and, like a Jewish merchant in the guise of an honest man, mixed bitterness with sweetness.¹⁸ For what does this scheming madman say? The soul, he says, pre-existed in heaven before the body. And because it sinned there, he says, God shut it up in a prison. That is, God sent it down into the body for the purification and punishment, he says, of the sins previously committed by it in heaven.¹⁹ This is the starting-point from which that most impious of men directly invents his fables and seeks to fight against the truth.²⁰

*And after a little:*²¹ If the soul had pre-existed in heaven and sinned there previously, as that madman and enemy of God, Origen, claimed, the most holy prophet would not have said: 'and forming the spirit of man within him' (cf. Zech. 12:1). He would have said instead: 'shutting in the spirit of man within him', or perhaps: 'sending down'. Now as he does not say this, but 'forming', he shows Origen to be a most savage wolf dressed outwardly in sheepskins to deceive and destroy. For as if he had come down from heaven and knew clearly all that had been formed there, that reprehensible man says that the soul not only pre-existed but also sinned previously in

heaven. Since he has precise knowledge of what is in heaven, let him say in what manner and for what reason the soul sinned in heaven.

SECOND SYNODAL LETTER TO THE
BISHOPS OF PALESTINE AND CYPRUS
(Jerome, *Ep.* 92, CSEL 55. 147–55)

This circular letter was sent to the bishops of Palestine and Cyprus. We have given the opening lines of each of the two versions.

To the Palestinians:

To the most beloved lords, brothers and fellow-bishops Eulogius,²² John, Zebinnus, Auxentius, Dionysius,²³ Gennadius, Zeno, Theodosius, Dictenus, Porphyrius,²⁴ Saturninus, Alanes, Paul, Ammonius, Helianus, the other Paul, Eusebius and all the catholic bishops gathered in Aelia for the Dedication Feast,²⁵ Theophilus sends greetings in the Lord.

To the Cypriots:

To the most beloved lords and brothers and fellow-bishops Epiphanius,²⁶ Marcian, Agapetus, Boethius, Helpidius, Eutasius, Norbanus, Macedonius, Ariston, Zeno, Asiaticus, Heraclides, the other Zeno, Kyriacus and Aphroditus, Theophilus sends greetings in the Lord.

1. I suspect that, before you receive our letter, news will have quickly reached you that certain people have attempted to spread Origen's heresy in the Nitrian monasteries and serve up a polluted cup to the most pure congregation of monks.²⁷ That is why we were compelled by the powerful entreaties of the holy fathers and presbyters who are the superiors of the monasteries to visit the places themselves. We were afraid that so long as we delayed going, those who flatter itching ears were corrupting the hearts of the simple. These men's pre-eminence in wickedness, and their rabid passion for every outrage that ignorance and pride can propose, is such that they rush forward headlong without realizing their limitations. Wise in their own estimation – which is the fount of error – they think themselves very lofty,²⁸ which they are not. In the end, they broke out in such insanity that they turned their hands against themselves and cut off their own members with a knife. They foolishly thought on this account that if they went about with mutilated face and severed

ears they were proving themselves to be religious and humble.²⁹ One of them has even amputated his tongue by biting it off.³⁰ He did this so that he too might show the ignorant the fear with which he kept God's laws, and demonstrate by the very infirmity of impeded eloquence how much his heart burned with ardour.

I have discovered that these men have moved to your province in the company of some of the pilgrims who stay for a while in Egypt – people poor in grace but enticed by money who are obliged to earn a living by manual labour – that in them the scripture may be fulfilled: 'The wicked walk in a circle' (Ps. 12 [11]:8).³¹ Like the Jews, they prefer to be consumed by fire, rather than see Origen's writings condemned, thus proclaiming: 'We have placed our hope in a lie and are protected by a lie' (Isa. 28.15 LXX). In my anxiety that they might disturb the minds of the laity and the monks in your area, and turn to attack us and undermine the truth with a network of lies, though having been reprimanded for their wickedness they would have been better employed doing penance, I have considered it very proper to write to your holinesses and briefly report the facts, namely that the bishops of the region, who individually make up the quorum of a synod,³² proceeded to Nitria. And that in the presence of many monastic superiors who had hastily gathered together from almost the whole of Egypt, Origen's books, which he had sweated over with impious labour, were read and by universal consent condemned.

2. For when the book *Peri archon* (which we would call *De principiis*)³³ was read, in which it is written that the Son compared to us is truth, but in relation to the Father is falsehood;³⁴ and again: 'In the degree that Peter and Paul differ from the Saviour, so is the Saviour less than the Father';³⁵ and again: 'The kingdom of Christ will eventually come to an end; the devil, liberated from the filth of all his sins, will be honoured with an equal glory and will be subjected to God with Christ';³⁶ and in another book, which is entitled *De oratione*: 'We should not pray to the Son, but only to the Father, and not even to the Father with the Son,'³⁷ we put our hands over our ears and unanimously condemned not only Origen but his disciples as well, lest even a modicum of yeast should corrupt the whole lump of dough.

What shall I say about the resurrection of the dead, with regard to which he clearly blasphemes, saying that after the passage of many centuries our bodies will gradually be reduced to nothing and will dissolve into thin air, and, in case we should think this a small

matter, adding that 'the resurrected body will not only be corruptible but also mortal'?³⁸ Evidently our Lord and Saviour destroyed the devil, who had sovereignty over death, in vain if even after the resurrection, with human bodies dissolved into nothing, corruption and immortality really are triumphant.

He also put together some outrageous statements about the angels, claiming that the whole range of heavenly ministries in the service of God was not created in heaven, but that the names of the different offices were allotted as a result of various lapses and falls. It was therefore because of earlier events that the angels were promoted or reduced in rank. In the course of this, as if oblivious to the pain he was causing, with the people shouting out: 'But the Jerusalem above is free' (Gal. 4:26), he contends that nothing in her is pure, nothing free from vices and secure in lasting virtue. His profane discussion of angels does not stop here, but advances more deeply into crime: 'Just as the demons,' he says, 'settling by the altars of the gentiles, used to feed on the fumes of the sacrificial victims, so, too, the angels, attracted by the blood of the victims which – as a type of spiritual things – Israel offered, and by the smoke of the incense, used to stay near the altars and in this way be nourished with food.'³⁹ Who would imagine that he could find anything more extreme than this to demonstrate the complete breakdown of a raving mind? He also attributes the knowledge of the future, which is known to the Lord alone, to the movements of the stars. He believes that from their course and the variety of their forms the demons know the future and either do certain things or entrust the stars to do them. It is evident from this that he approves of idolatry and astrology and the various pagan tricks of fraudulent divination.

3. Certain people bearing the name of monks were living in the monasteries, believing and teaching these and similar doctrines. Indignant that the author of such evil, along with his error, should be condemned, they incited a number of destitute people and slaves by material inducements to join their band. Forming a party, they tried to put pressure on me at my see in Alexandria. They wanted to make a public issue of Isidore's case, which for the sake of decency and ecclesiastical discipline we were reserving for the judgement of the bishops, and come out with things that were not proper matters for discussion in the hearing of pagans, with the intention of stirring up sedition and disorder against the Church.⁴⁰ God destroyed their plans like those of Achitophel (cf. 2 Sam. 15:21–17:23). Yet every effort of theirs was directed to this end, that under the name

of Isidore, who for various reasons had been separated by many bishops from the communion of saints, they should defend heresy.

Meanwhile a woman and her adolescent son were produced by them, and set up in a very populous part of the city, which, if I am not mistaken, is called Genius.⁴¹ They bawled out whatever they believed to be prejudicial to us, inciting the pagan populace against us with the kind of things that unbelievers will readily give ear to. Amongst the things they shouted, even reminding them in passing, so to speak, of the destruction of Serapis⁴² and other idols, was the cry: '[outrages] against the rights of temples have not been [committed] in the Nitrian monasteries!'⁴³ They did all this with the idea of winning the support of the unbelieving rabble and rescuing Isidore from the judgement of the bishops to prevent an examination of the charge against him with the mother and the boy as witnesses, and to stir up hostility against us. For our part, what we wanted was that he should be heard in church patiently, with the clergy and the faithful present, and that in his person the Church's rule should be observed with all reverence and gentleness. For we are not his enemy. Nor have we injured him, or the handful of slaves and fugitives who are his associates in his affairs. But we have preferred the fear of God and the rigor of the Gospel to our former friendship and intimacy.

Isidore was summoned to an examination in the presence of the bishops to explain the affair to the whole clergy. He was called repeatedly to answer the charge. But he began to be evasive and defer his appearance from one day to another, clearly in the hope, as many people said, that given time he could buy the woman's silence. And by this conduct he injured the souls of the holy brethren. For who does not doubt that confidence belongs to a good conscience, but that flight and dissimulation, to put it rather mildly yet still make clear what I think, are judged by most people to be a kind of confession? Especially when the woman pressed a serious charge against him, depositing written statements, and the matter became widely known. Whereupon he made every effort to bring things to a conclusion by any means other than a judgement of the bishops. The woman was inscribed in the roll of widows, without my knowledge, through the good offices of his friends, to ease the pain of the wound by charitable support. I learned this afterwards from a certain deacon, who, refusing to be intimidated, reported that the woman had been put on the list of widows to silence her complaints. I straightaway revealed the informer to Isidore through

many people and warned him to prepare himself for judgement by the bishops. As for the woman, I simply had her taken off the list, until we should see the outcome of the case. For it was not right that she should be maintained out of the Church's resources, when she had either made such a serious accusation frivolously or else had remained silent.

This is the man who is the standard-bearer of the heretical faction. This is the man the people we described at the beginning of this letter regard as their leader and most wealthy patron, for he has the means to keep them supplied with food and support them in the hardships of their wanderings. Where fury and slaughter are called for, they need nobody else's help. Where funds and various disbursements are required, nothing is more accommodating than this generous sponsor.

4. They take offence and rage against me because I have not permitted the desert places and cells of the monks, where a holy way of life is led, to be polluted by Origen's wicked doctrines. I shall pick out some of these, leaving the rest aside. In the *De resurrectione* which he wrote for Ambrosius in imitation of the style of a disputation, a question is put concerning the art of magic and the response approving it is given in the following words: 'The art of magic does not seem to me a term for anything that really exists, but if it did, it is by no means an evil work, nor is what may be held a matter to be despised.'⁴⁴ In saying this, he clearly contradicts the Lord, who says through the prophet: 'Stand now in your enchantments, in your many sorceries, to which you have been dedicated since your youth, if you are able to succeed. You have laboured in your counsels; let the astrologers of the heavens stand forth and let those who contemplate the stars save you; let them predict for you what the future holds for you' (Isa. 47:12-13).

Moreover, in the *Peri archon* he also tries to persuade us that the living Word of God did not assume a human body. Going against the opinion of the Apostle (cf. Phil. 2:6), he wrote that he who was in the form of God and therefore equal to God was not the Word of God but a soul descending from the celestial region who emptied himself of the form of eternal majesty and assumed a human body. In saying this, he very clearly contradicts John, who writes: 'And the Word became flesh' (Jn 1:14). Nor can it be believed that the Saviour's soul rather than God the Word possessed both the form of the Father's majesty and equality to it.

In his raving he also delights in other impieties, claiming that he who in consummation of the ages and for the destruction of sin suffered once and for all, our Lord Jesus Christ, will also suffer crucifixion at some time in the future for the demons and evil spirits. He is unmindful of Paul, who writes: 'It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have moreover tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted nothing less than the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and have lapsed, to be restored again to repentance, since they crucify again the Son of God himself on their account and hold him up to contempt' (Heb. 6:4–6). If he had wanted to understand these things, or at least if he had not disregarded the things he knows, he would never have contradicted the Apostle and said that Christ will also suffer for the demons, exposing him to contempt with his ears closed to the words: 'Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God' (Rom. 6:9–10). For the expression 'once for all' does not admit a second or third time. That is also why the Apostle, knowing Christ to have been crucified once for all, tells the Hebrews with the utmost confidence: 'He did this once for all in offering up himself' (Heb. 7:27).

5. For this reason, and a number of others which an epistolary discourse does not allow me to go into, these people have been condemned and expelled from the Church. And with pride joined to foolishness they reject the judgements of the bishops, eager to defend their fellow-heretic by seditious means. Travelling surreptitiously through foreign provinces as condemned men, they have a condemned man as their leader, and take courage from this fact. I therefore beseech you, my dear brethren, that if they should come into your territory you should move them to tears with the precepts of the Gospel. It is our devout wish that both they and others should correct their error with penitence and live in a manner worthy of their name, so that those who are called monks – if they really want to be what they say they are – may love silence and the catholic faith, to which nothing whatsoever is to be preferred. But, as I hear, they run hither and thither in imitation of the devil, and seek whom they may devour by their impieties (cf. 1 Pet. 5:8). For they take insanity to be faith, and audacity to be courage. And for that reason in their lofty arrogance they prefer Origen's doctrine, which is mixed with idolatry, to the preaching of the Church.

Therefore if they attempt to cause a disturbance in any place to the brethren and the people entrusted to you, guard the Lord's flock and repel their frenzied attacks. We have not done them any harm; we have not acted aggressively. There is only one reason for their animosity against us, the fact that we are prepared to defend the faith to the death.

6. I pass over the rest, how they have attempted to murder us, and the tactics they used to try to achieve this. For after they were condemned they even occupied the church which is in the monastery of Nitria to prevent us from entering, together with the many bishops who were with us, and the fathers of monks, venerable in age and conduct. They used for this purpose hired freedmen and slaves, who to satisfy their voracious appetites were armed for every outrage! These occupied the more strategic parts of the church, as if in the siege of a city, covering their cudgels and staves with palm branches, to hide hearts bent on bloodshed behind the symbols of peace. And to strengthen their party and make their troops more eager for action, they distributed money to many of the freeborn, who accepted it not because they consented to crime, but so as to disclose the attempt to us and warn us by exposing the ambush prepared for us. When the vast gathering of monks perceived this, they all began to shout out and deter the fury of the few by a united clamour that at least through fear they might allow the assembly to be held and the Church's rights to be respected. And if God's grace had not restrained the attack of the mob, what normally happens in riots would have occurred. For people break out into such criminal foolhardiness, or rather insanity, that even monks leading a holy way of life and normally the mildest of men cannot hold back their fury.

All of which, by God's mercy, we listened to patiently and humbly with concern for the salvation of those who were fighting bitterly against us, though without sacrificing the Church's canons and the orthodox faith to anyone's friendship. For the Lord is able to grant both us and all his servants in common to prefer the true faith to human friendship. At the same time we entreat each of you, together with the people entrusted to you, to pray earnestly and beseech God for mercy, that through him we might be able to resist the devilish attacks of the heretics and thus be at peace with those who have always fought for the truth, that we might all together prove worthy of the crown of righteousness. The people who are with me send greetings in the Lord to the brethren who are with you.

LETTERS TO THE ORIGENIST MONKS

(a) Letter to Monks

(Schwartz, 'Codex Vaticanus gr. 1431', 36)

Of Bishop Theophilus from the letter to monks: Christ became man and mediated between us and the Father. But neither did he forsake his consubstantiality with the Father, nor was he alien to communion with us. On the contrary, the theologians⁴⁵ have declared him to be both invisible God and visible man, hidden by the form of a servant yet also Lord of glory.

(b) Letter to Origenist Monks

(Richard, 'Nouveaux fragments', frag. 2 = ACO III, 2001.5–9 = PG 86. 967BC)

Of the same bishop of Alexandria from the letter written to the Tall clerics when they were in Alexandria, after they had been degraded by him for holding the opinions of Origen, in which he exhorts them to repent: Therefore anathematize Origen and the other heretics, as we ourselves have done, and also Anastasius, the bishop of the holy Church of the Romans, who was appointed glorious governor of a distinguished people as a result of earlier conflicts. The entire synod, too, of the blessed bishops in the West follows him, having accepted the decree of the Church of the Alexandrians against impiety.⁴⁶

(c) Letter to the Saints in Scetis

(ACO III, 201.12–16 = PG 86. 967CD)

Of the same from the letter to the saints in Scetis, on account of those who object to the condemnation of Origen's doctrines: Some have dared to call Origen a doctor of the Church. Is it right to tolerate such people? If Origen is a doctor of the Church, Arians and Eunomians take heart and so do pagans. The former blaspheme the Son and the Spirit; the latter are like them in their impiety and deride the resurrection as well.⁴⁷

(d) Third Letter to the Dissidents

(Richard, 'Nouveaux fragments', frag.1)

Of Theophilus, bishop of Alexandria, from the third letter to the dissidents: I hear that being wily, they purport to be willing to anathematize

the cruder doctrinal errors, such as not praying to the Lord and the other blasphemous things that Origen utters against the Son and the Holy Spirit. But you know these errors of theirs.⁴⁸ What I should like you to do, then, is to say the following to them, should you have any dealings with them: they say that souls existed before bodies and after lapsing through sin were sent down into bodies, that the devil will be restored to what he was formerly, that the souls of sinners, even that of Judas, will also be restored and will return to their original state, and so on.

And writing to them in the twenty-seventh letter in a similar vein, he says much the same things.

SIXTEENTH FESTAL LETTER (401)

(Jerome, *Ep.* 96, CSEL 55. 159–81)

1. Let us once again, my dear brethren, praise Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with one voice, and be eager to fulfil the words of the prophet, who encourages us, saying: 'Sing to the Lord a new song' (Ps. 149:1). Let those of us who partake of the faith that guides us to the kingdom of heaven welcome the approach of the sacred festival. Let us celebrate the coming holiday with the whole universe rejoicing with us. One of the sages proclaims: 'Come, eat your bread with enjoyment and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has approved what you do' (Eccles. 9:7). For those who perform good works, and, having left behind the milk of infancy, receive nourishment from more solid food (cf. Heb. 5:13–14) contemplate the divine senses more deeply. Filled with spiritual food, they have God to praise them and witness to the quality of their life. Referring to guests for this kind, Ecclesiastes says: 'Let your garments be always white; let not oil be lacking on your head' (Eccles. 9:8), that clad in the garment of the virtues they might imitate the splendour of the sun, and by the daily reading of the sacred Scriptures pour oil into their understanding and prepare the mind's lamp, which according to the Gospel precept 'gives light to all in the house' (Mt. 5:15).

2. Therefore let us imitate such guests who celebrate together the feasts of the Lord's passion in this way, and let us say with the saint: 'I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being' (Ps. 104 [103]:33). Let us hasten to the mother city of the angels (cf. Gal. 4:26), which is free and unsullied by the filth of any evil, where there are no dissensions, or falls, or

deportations from one place to another.⁴⁹ Once we have trampled on every passion and checked the waves of lasciviousness which swell up against us in quick succession, let us join with the heavenly choirs, that already carried there in spirit and seeing more venerable places, we might even now be that which we shall be in the future. The Jews made themselves unworthy of such beatitude. They have forsaken the resources of sacred Scripture and in their lack of understanding are content with their teachers.⁵⁰ They therefore hear to this day: 'they ever err in heart' (Ps. 95 [94]:10). They refuse to say to Christ present among us: 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord' (Ps. 118 [117]:26; Mt. 21:9), even though the deeds testify more clearly than any words that he is God. He never says: 'the Lord says this,' but 'I say to you', by which he shows himself to be legislator, Lord and true God, not simply one of the prophets.

3. For neither was the assumption of the form of a servant able to obscure his divinity, which is not circumscribed by any spatial dimensions, nor were the confines of a human body able to limit the ineffable excellence of his majesty, when the greatness of his works proves him to be the Son of God. For when he restored the waters of the raging sea, with its high waves rising up like mountains, to sudden tranquillity, the little boat of the apostles was saved from shipwreck, and the depths of the waters sensed the sovereign power of the Lord's presence. When such great dangers from contrary winds and waves stirred up from every side ceased at the Saviour's command, those who were in the boat with him said, as if inspired by the divine Spirit: 'Truly he is the Son of God' (cf. Mt. 14:33), not doubting the divinity to the greatness of which the works testified. For it is to him that the prophetic utterance refers: 'Thou dost rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, thou stillest them' (Ps. 89 [88]:9). And the prophet himself gives the song a title ⁵¹ so that he who was manifested may be believed to be the true God not by words alone but by his acts of power.

Through the greatness of his works he manifestly confirms that he is fully God and completely inhuman, with nothing omitted pertaining to human likeness except sin alone, which has no substance.⁵² For he even became a baby, and was acknowledged to be Emmanuel, with Magi coming to him and by worshipping him declaring that he who was manifested was God. And when he was crucified in the flesh, the sun drew in its rays, and making his deity obvious by an unprecedented miracle he in no way dissipated himself or resolved himself into two saviours. Furthermore, he said to his

disciples: 'Call no man teacher on earth, for you have one master, the Christ' (cf. Mt. 23:8–10). For when he gave this as a precept to the apostles, he was not separating his own Godhead from the visible body, nor when he testified that he was the Christ did he divide the soul from the body. In this way he was both: he was God and also man, seen as a servant and recognized as Lord, hiding the grandeur of the Godhead by the humble purpose of the Incarnation, and transcending the lowliness of the visible body by the operation of the Godhead, | that he should not be believed to be one of the saints, as a great many think, but the one whom Paul wishes to present when he writes: 'there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ' (1 Tim. 2:5); and again: 'now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one' (Gal. 3:20).¹⁵³ Because the one Son, the mediator between the Father and us, neither laid aside equality with him nor separated himself from fellowship with us, He was both invisible God and visible man: hidden in the form of a servant and acknowledged as the Lord of glory in the confession of believers (cf. 1 Cor. 2:8).

4. For the Father did not deprive him of the name expressing his nature after he became a human being and poor for our sake. Nor when he was baptized in the River Jordan was he called by any other title than Only-begotten Son: 'Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased' (Lk. 3:22; Mt. 3:17).¹⁵⁴ Nor was our likeness, in which he shared, changed into the nature of the Godhead; nor was his Godhead changed into our likeness. For he remains what he was from the beginning: God. He remains such, preparing our condition within himself. | He did not come like Jeremiah, so as to say: 'Woe is me, my mother, that you love me, a man of strife and contention to the whole land! I have done no good. Nor has anyone done good to me' (Jer. 15:10), for he came to bestow freedom. Nor did he cry out like Isaiah: 'Woe is me! For although I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of people of unclean lips, I have seen with my eyes the King, the Lord of hosts!' (Isa. 6:5). He himself was the King of glory, as is written in the twenty-third psalm (cf. Ps. 24 [23]:7–10). He was victorious on the cross and checked the advance of the enemy that he might make human beings fashioned from clay inhabitants of heaven and endow them with a share of his victory.

5. Therefore, although those who think that he was changed into another being do not accept this, nevertheless 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever' (Heb. 13:8). There will never

be an end to his kingdom, as Origen's wicked error teaches. Nor when his kingdom ends will he be deprived of eternity. On the contrary, he says in the presence of all: 'I am in the Father and the Father in me' (Jn 14:10, 11). And wishing to teach us that both the Father in the Son and the Son in the Father will rule over all creatures, he also added in corroboration: 'I and the Father are one' (Jn 10:30), in case anyone should divide up the one kingdom he shares with the Father on the pretext of his human flesh. For if, according to Origen's madness, Christ, the Only-begotten Son of God, is at any time to lay aside his Kingdom, how did he himself say to the apostles: 'I and the Father are one' (Jn 10:30), when afterwards he is not to share the one dominion, implying that he has a glory in this world which he is to lay down in the next? And how will it be that the Son is always in the Father and the Father in the Son, if the Son's kingdom is not assured? Indeed, let those who maintain such doctrines perish if they do not show any repentance. Moses, moved by zeal for faith and piety, says to them: 'Cursed are you in the city, and cursed are you in the field' (Deut. 28:16). The psalmist reproves them equally: 'Let sinners and the wicked be consumed from the earth that they may be no more' (Ps. 104 [103]:35).⁵⁵

6. For my part, I cannot understand by what temerity Origen invents such things, and follows his own error rather than the authority of the Scriptures, or how he could have the audacity to publish things potentially harmful to everyone. He does not reckon that there will ever be anyone who will oppose his assertions, if he mixes the subtlety of the philosophers with his own arguments, and advancing from an evil beginning to certain fables and lunacies, turns Christian doctrine into a game and a farce. He does not rely on the truth of divine teaching at all, but on the judgement of the human mind. He swells with such pride at being his own teacher that he does not imitate the humility of Paul, who, though filled with the Holy Spirit, took counsel on the Gospel with the leading apostles, for fear he should be running or had run in vain (cf. Gal. 2:2). He does not know that it is an impulse of a demonic spirit to follow the sophisms of human minds and reckon anything outside the authority of the Scriptures as divine.

Let those henceforth keep silent who, idly imagining the end of Christ's kingdom, desire to feed parasitically on Origen's verbiage. Let them not mix with the faithful and simulate a faith which they do not have. Or rather, let them learn that anything which is one thing and purports to be another is a deceit and a fraud, trying to

conceal vices under the appearance of virtue. Moreover, when Christ underwent the ignominy of the cross, which he suffered for us, he did not cease to be the Lord of glory, as the blessed Apostle tells us (cf. 1 Cor. 2:8), even though the Jews called out against him: 'You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross' (Mt. 27:40). When he suffered in the flesh and was hanging on the cross he displayed the strength of his own majesty, making the sun stop in its course and by the greatness of the signs forcing from the thief a full confession of faith: 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingly power' (Lk. 23:42). Therefore after the glory of the resurrection he is never to lose his kingdom, however many blasphemous stones Origen hurls against him. Or what is the point of promising the perpetuity of the kingdom to the disciples, saying: 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world' (Mt. 25:34), if he himself lacked what he was granting to others? Or when Paul writes to the Corinthians: 'Without us you have become kings! And would that you did reign, so that we might share the rule with you!' (1 Cor. 4:8), how can Christ's kingdom be understood to come to an end after a long period of time? Especially when John cries: 'He who comes from above is above all' (Jn 3:31), and the Apostle writes: 'To them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is Christ, who is God over all, blessed for ever' (Rom. 9:5).

7. There is therefore no doubt at all that he who remains God for all eternity should at the same time both have the kingdom and be called perpetual king over those to whom he granted possession of the kingdom, since he possesses a sovereignty congruent with his divinity, and he has nothing in him loutish or upstart except the assumption of human frailty. For if, according to Origen's madness, Christ's kingdom is to come to an end after cycles of many centuries, it follows as a consequence of his impiety to say that at some time Christ will cease to be God. Anyone who sets a term on the kingdom must be thought to feel the same about the divinity, which naturally possesses a perpetual sovereignty. Since the Word of God reigns, he is certainly God, and for that reason it follows that anyone who attempts to set a term to the kingdom is compelled, as I have argued, to believe that Christ will also cease to be God. While the teacher of no learning prattles on about these things with his impious devotees, let us for our part believe that Christ's kingdom is eternal and on the solemn day let us sing with the angel and say: 'of his

kingdom there will be no end' (Lk. 1:33). For if he is one with the Father, he will never lose that oneness. And the union of the Father and the Son will never be divided into parts, nor will what is said to be one ever cease to be so.

8. ¹⁵⁶ Let these madmen be gone from here, or rather, 'let them go down to Hades alive' (Ps. 55 [54]:15), as the psalm says. And when they descend there and see the patron of their impiety, let them cry out: 'You too have become as weak as we are! You have become like us! Your glory has descended to Hades,' and so forth (Isa. 14:10–11). For since he has become a shepherd of base disciples, he has set his mind on dishonouring Christ everywhere. He has dared to pay great honour to the devil, saying that when he has been freed from all sin he will return to his original state, and that the kingdom of Christ will come to an end, which means that Jesus will one day, jointly with the devil, be ruled over by God. It was against Origen rather than the Jews that the prophet said: 'Heaven was appalled at him and was exceedingly shocked, says the Lord, for he has committed two evils' (cf. Jer. 2:12–13). For on the one hand Origen asserts that Christ will one day lay aside his own kingdom, and on the other he maintains falsely that the devil will be released and will ascend to his original glory.⁵⁷ Having dug for himself this deep pit of impiety, which cannot hold water, he thereby made the devil equal in honour to the Son. For he changed the glory of the Only-begotten and conceived of him as being ruled over one day together with the devil by God. But Christ's kingdom will have no end, as he himself bore witness to the disciples when he said: 'You are those who have continued with me in my trials, and I will appoint an eternal covenant for you, that you may eat and drink for ever at my table in my kingdom' (cf. Lk. 22:28–30). For how will the expression 'for ever' apply unless his kingdom remains for ever and never ceases to exist? | The Magi also understood this, and turning to penitence, enquired very earnestly: 'Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East and have come to worship him' (Mt. 2:2). The Magi called Christ a king, yet Origen denies it, saying that he will not reign in perpetuity. Nor does he notice that he is like the blasphemies of the Jews.

9. We read in the Gospel that when the Lord and Saviour, showing us a model of fortitude and patience, mounted the cross, 'Pilate wrote a title and put it over his head; it read: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews"'. Many of the Jews read this title, which was written in

Hebrew, in Latin and in Greek. The chief priests of the Jews then said to Pilate: "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews'." Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written" (Jn 19:19–22). Therefore if Pilate could not be moved either by civil discord or by entreaty to remove Christ's kingdom from the title, Origen should know that without any compulsion he is doing what the Jews did in reckoning that Christ's kingdom would come to an end. They, indeed, denied that he was a king when he was on earth; Origen strives, so far as he can, to disparage him as one reigning in heaven. As a result he has Pilate who replied to the Jews: 'What I have written, I have written' (Jn 19:22) as the accuser of his crime.

Let us also adduce the prophet's word and it will proclaim Christ's kingdom without any ambiguity: 'Rejoice, O daughter of Sion; proclaim aloud O daughter of Jerusalem; be joyful and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Israel. The Lord has taken away your iniquities; he has redeemed you from the hand of your enemies. The King of Israel is in your midst; you shall experience evil no more' (Zeph. 3:14–15). Nor will he, as Origen's ravings and fables claim, cast down from heaven again and dismiss those whom he has once saved, that they might fall again from the heights. And the text: 'you shall experience evil no more' (Zeph. 3:15) is proof of eternal security, namely, that those who have once been liberated and have enjoyed the possession of the kingdom of heaven will never be drawn down to earth by vices. Nor will they lack the help of God, who according to the prophetic word 'sets up a wall and bulwark' (Isa. 26:1), surrounding them with his strength. That is why the psalmist also sings: 'He abides for ever who dwells in Jerusalem' (Ps. 125 [124]:1), and the Lord assures us: 'I will never fail you nor forsake you' (Josh. 1.5; Heb. 13:5).

It is without any basis that Origen imagines souls ascending to heaven and descending, sometimes advancing and sometimes sinking lower, so that through countless falls they die many times and Christ's passion is rendered ineffectual. For he who died once for us gave us the eternal joy of his victory, which no weight of sin can diminish. Nor does any man die repeatedly, as Origen dared to write, seeking to reinforce the most impious doctrine of the Stoics with the authority of the most divine Scriptures.⁵⁸

10. But why do we mention these things, when he has broken out into such folly – indeed madness – that he brings another charge against the Saviour, saying that he will be fixed to the cross in the realms above on behalf of demons and evil spirits?⁵⁹ Nor does he

understand what a deep abyss of impiety he has fallen into. For if Christ, who suffered for men became man, as the Scriptures testify, it logically follows that Origen should say: 'and as he is to suffer for demons, he will become a demon'. For this is the inference one must necessarily suppose he draws, that his argument should not appear to be inconsistent with its premises, and also that he might reproduce the blasphemies of the Jews, whom he always imitates. For they, too, also spoke of Christ in a similar way, saying: 'You have a demon' (Jn. 7:20; 8:48, 52), and 'You cast out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of demons' (Lk. 11:15). But far be it that Christ should suffer on behalf of demons, let alone that he should himself also become a demon. Those who believe this crucify the Son of God once again and make him a sham. By no means will he assume the seed of demons in the same way that he assumed the seed of Abraham, much less be crucified for them. Nor will the demons see God suffering for them and cry with the prophet: 'he has borne our sins, and is afflicted for us' (Isa. 53:4). Nor will they say with Isaiah: 'with his stripes we are healed' (Isa. 53:5). Nor will Christ be led to the slaughter like a lamb (cf. Isa. 53:7) for the demons as he was for the human race. Nor will it be said for their salvation: 'He did not spare his own Son' (Rom. 8:32). Because neither will the demons cry: 'he was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification' (Rom. 4:25).¹⁶⁰ On the contrary, Paul cries explicitly: 'For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures' (1 Cor. 15:3). And he cites scriptural texts, resolving ambiguities and establishing the reliability of the doctrine by their testimony. But Origen violates the truth by arguments not supported by testimony, reckoning to search out the truth with an unlit lamp.

11. And loving demons rather than Christ, he is unrestrained and insolent in his frequent misrepresentations. He crucifies the Son of God again for himself and makes an example of him, not fearing what absurd and dreadful depths of impiety follow such an argument. For he must go on to say that having been crucified for the demons, the Saviour will say to them: 'Take, eat; this is my body' (Mt. 26:26), and 'Take, drink; this is my blood' (cf. Mt. 26:27). For if he is also crucified for the demons, as the innovator thought, is it not unreasonable to say that only human beings partake of his body and blood, and not the demons as well, if, as that ignoramus holds, he was also crucified for their sake? But the demons will not hear: 'Take, eat' and 'Take, drink', nor will the Saviour annul his own

commandment to the disciples, when he said: 'Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under foot and turn to attack you' (Mt. 7:6). And just as the Apostle, too, writes: 'I do not want you to be partners with demons; you cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons' (1 Cor. 10:20–1), so, too, the demons cannot drink the cup of the Lord or partake of the table of the Lord. † Those who deny God are the food of the devil, for Habakkuk says: 'his food is choice' (Hab. 1:16). On the other hand, the accursed devil himself is the food of the impious, for the prophet's utterance declares: 'Thou didst give him as food for the Ethiopian peoples' (Ps. 74 [73]:14 LXX). All this proves that Christ cannot be crucified for the demons, lest the demons become partakers of his body and blood.

12. Therefore since the Apostle declares of the Saviour: 'He did this once for all when he offered up himself' (Heb. 7:27), and Origen has the audacity flatly to contradict his judgement, it is time to apply to him: 'O land, land, land, hear the word of the Lord! Write this man down as disowned' (Jer. 22:29–30). For what hell can receive these evils? What Tartarus can ponder things of this kind? What madness of giants has proved to be so rebellious and constructed such a tower of impiety? What lewd desire, desperately in love with the demons, has thus spread the legs of its mind, in violation of catholic doctrine? (cf. Ez. 16:25). Who has drunk so much of the vine of Sodom that inebriated with the wine of his wrath he will perish utterly? (cf. Deut. 32:32; Jer. 25:15). Who has been so refreshed with the waters of the Babylonian rivers that he has forsaken the living fountains of Israel? (cf. Jer. 2:13). Who, going out of Jerusalem and imitating Jeroboam the son of Nebat, has built so many altars of error and burned profane incense on them? (cf. 1 Kgs 12:28–33). Why should Dathan and Abiram, who committed lesser sins, not come before Christ's tribunal and condemn him by their evidence, since he has filled the thuribles with the diabolical fire of various doctrines outside the Saviour's Church? (cf. Num. 16:1–33).

For it was not the Lord, who says through the prophet: 'It was I who multiplied visions and by the hands of the prophets gave likenesses of myself' (Hos. 12:10) who taught him to bring forth counterfeit doctrines. Nor was it those who from the beginning saw the Word of God and were his ministers, or the choir of prophets who used to be called 'seers' (cf. 1 Sam. 9:9), who instructed him in these things. No, it was he himself who, submitting to the fury of

the demons by the judgement of his own mind, and deceived by the seductive error of his thinking, has let loose in the minds of the ignorant throughout the world a troop and swarm, so to speak, of perverse doctrines. He is the one who opened his mouth to the rivers of Assyria and Babylon, who attempted with waves of doctrine to overwhelm the ship of the Church, laden with the good merchandise of salvation, while he himself is lifted up by the praise of the ignorant and in his confusion prides himself on expounding the sense of the Scriptures in a manner contrary to the truth.

For who has written books in such a vast number, and so prolix and full of verbosity and ignorance, and has merged day into night in indefatigable study, that in publishing these monuments of error he should deserve to hear: 'You have been led astray by your many journeys'? (cf. Prov. 12:26). For he adopted the worst of guides, popular favour, and after writing several volumes of spurious learning and fighting with a rebellious mind against God, he mingled some kind of corrupt discharge and the filth of his stench with the unguent of heavenly doctrines, so that again it may be said with regard to his soul: 'you are unclean and notorious and abundant in iniquities' (Ez: 22:5. LXX). Nor did he wish to hear the prophet warning him: 'How long will you love vain words, and seek after lies?' (Ps. 4:2). He fixed Christ to the cross for the demons, so that he should be a mediator not only between God and human beings, but also between God and demons. Far be it indeed for us to believe such a shocking impiety about the Saviour that he should lose the temple of his body, which was deemed worthy to be raised from the dead for us, and attach to himself another temple of the demonic creation, that their likeness also having been received, he might suffer crucifixion for them.

13. I beg you, my dearest brethren, to forgive the pain I feel at opposing impious doctrines. For while we strive to repel the impudence of his followers, we have brought into the open the structure of his armour and the deceits of his poisoned mind, that the following text too might be fulfilled in him: 'I shall lay bare your ignominy and show it to your lovers' (cf. Ez. 16:36. LXX). For among other things he so corrupts and violates even the resurrection of the dead, which is the hope of our salvation, that he dares to say that our bodies will again be subject to corruption and death once they have been raised.⁶¹ Tell me, O source of impiety, how Christ, according to the Apostle Paul, will have conquered him who had the power of death, that is, the devil (cf. Heb. 2:14), if our bodies are to

be raised corruptible and mortal again? What benefit has Christ's passion been to us, if death and corruption are once again to possess our bodies? Or what does the Apostle mean when he says, 'For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive' (1 Cor. 15:22), if cruel death will have dominion over those who have risen again? Or how can those who believe such things say in all sincerity: 'Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God' (1 Cor. 1:24), if they make death stronger than Christ, so that the bodies raised by him come to be destroyed and it is not proved that they have survived in every respect? ⁶² But even if Origen would not have it so, Christ our Lord destroyed both death and the devil who has the power of death (cf. Heb. 2:14). He kept his sign of victory immortal for us in heaven, not bringing bodies into non-being, but contriving to resolve death and corruption into non-being after the resurrection of bodies.

14. That is why we rightly celebrate the feast, having been delivered from death and corruption. | Discerning that the oxen and fatted calves are sacrificed by Wisdom according to the Gospel parable (cf. Matt. 22:4), let us feed upon a food that is stronger and full of muscles, a food fatter with doctrine, that leaving behind the milk of infancy we might receive more solid nourishment (cf. Heb. 5:12–14) and escape the ignorance that is the cause of all evils. When it has bound the feet of many with various heresies, this ignorance enjoys Origen as its greatest lover, for amongst other things he dared to say that the Son is not to be prayed to, nor the Father with the Son.⁶³ After many centuries he has reinstated Pharaoh's blasphemy, when he said: 'Who is he that I should heed his voice? I do not know the Lord, and I will not let Israel go' (Ex. 5:2 LXX). To say 'I do not know the Lord' is no different from Origen's statement: 'the Son is not to be prayed to', for Origen certainly acknowledges the Son as Lord.⁶⁴ And although he breaks out in such open blasphemy, nevertheless the Son is to be prayed to. Of him the prophet testifies, saying: 'And they shall make obeisance to thee and make supplication to thee, because God is in thee, and there is no God besides thee' (Isa. 45:14 LXX), and again: 'Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved' (Joel 2:32; Rom. 10:13). And Paul argues: 'How are they to call upon him in whom they have not believed?' (Rom. 10:14). It is necessary first to believe that he is the Son of God, that he may be invoked correctly and logically. And if the proposition 'He who is not God is not to be prayed to' is true, how is it that the contrary is not also true, that he who is known to be God is to be adored? So it was that Stephen knelt down and prayed

for those who were stoning him, saying to the Son: 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them' (Acts 7:60). Also, 'At the name of Jesus Christ every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth' (Phil. 2:10). When it says 'every knee should bow', that is an indication of anxious and most humble prayer. Accordingly, Origen does not believe the Son of God to be God, for he does not think he is to be adored and wounds him with insults. Although he flatters himself that he is familiar with the Scriptures and thinks he understands them, he does not hear Moses saying against him: 'Whoever curses God shall bear his sin, and whoever names the name of God shall be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him' (Lev. 24:15–16 LXX). And who reproaches Christ with such great insults as someone who dares to say: 'He should not be prayed to', attributing to him the name of divinity so devoid of meaning?

15. But what need is there to dwell on such impieties? Let us move on to another of his errors. He says that bodies which rise again are dissolved after many centuries into nothing.⁶⁵ Nor are there to be any bodies in the future, unless when souls fall from the heavenly mansions to the lower regions and need new ones, others come into being again, the first ones having been completely destroyed. Who on hearing these things does not tremble exceedingly in mind and body? For if after the resurrection bodies are reduced to nothing, the second death will be stronger than the first, because it is able to destroy the bodily substance completely. Why does Paul write: 'death no longer has dominion over him; the death he died he died to sin, once for all' (Rom. 6:9–10), if bodies are to be destroyed utterly? Or how will the expression 'once for all' carry a firm meaning, when the flesh separated from its fellowship with the soul is to be reduced to nothing? By what reason does he go on to say elsewhere: 'It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body' (cf. 1 Cor. 15:42–4). For if incorruption reduces bodies to nothing, it would follow that we should say that they are kept in corruption in perpetuity and that corruption is stronger than incorruption. But far be it from Paul to contradict himself and claim that incorruption and corruption are of the same nature.

Therefore, as Origen falsely thinks that the body is to be raised not only corruptible but also mortal, it follows that corruption and incorruption, life and death, are said to be one and the same; they will have the same power in resurrected bodies and corruption and

incorruption, life and death, will be differentiated not in reality but only in name. But if the body is to be raised corruptible and mortal, it would have been more logical for the Apostle to say: 'It is sown in corruption, it is raised in corruption. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in weakness. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in dishonour. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a physical body.' Therefore if he removes corruption and weakness and dishonour from resurrected bodies and says, on the contrary, that bodies are to put on incorruption and power and glory and the body is to be restored as a spiritual rather than a physical body, death will have been destroyed and immortality and incorruption will reign in resurrected bodies instead of death and corruption, For the body itself will rise both immortal and incorrupt, that it might remain coeternal with the soul. Therefore since the Saviour also gives a pledge of salvation for our bodies in the resurrection of his own body, it cannot be believed that he is to die in any further sense. The Apostle agrees with this opinion: 'Christ rising from the dead will no longer die, death no longer has dominion over him' (cf. Rom. 6:9), lest if it has dominion over him it will have dominion over us too.

16. Origen is shown up shamefully among the other kinds of disgraceful things he fabricates in his also offering a defence of the magic arts. For in his treatises he says the following: "The "art of magic" does not seem to me a term referring to anything that actually exists, but if it does, it is not to do with the working of evil, or with what could be held in contempt."⁶⁶ In saying this he shows himself to be assuredly a supporter of Elymas the magician (cf. Acts 13:8) who contended against the apostles, and Jannes and Jambres who resisted Moses with magic arts (cf. 2 Tim. 3:8). But Origen's defence will have no validity, because Christ by his coming destroyed the magicians' trickery. Let the champion of this new impiety reply, and let him hear very plainly: if the art of magic is not an evil, neither is idolatry, which relies on the power of the art of magic. Because if idolatry is an evil, the art of magic, on which idolatry depends, is also an evil.

The fact, however, that idolatry has been destroyed by the majesty of Christ, indicates that the magic art that is related to it has been dissolved with it at the same time. On this matter the prophet clearly proclaims: 'Stand now in your enchantments and your many sorceries, which you have learned from your youth, if you can find profit in them' (Isa. 47:12 LXX). Therefore since the writings of the prophets give this testimony, and no one has dared hand down the

magicians' arts to posterity as something to be highly valued, and the laws of the state also punish magicians and sorcerers, I cannot understand what motive has impelled Origen, who professes to be a Christian, to become an imitator of the false prophet Zedekiah (cf. 1 Kgs 22:11) and make himself horns of iron, armed with which he attacks the doctrines of truth, and neither perceives anything of the heavenly Jerusalem (cf. Heb. 12:22), nor imitates Moses and Daniel and Peter and other saints who, like soldiers standing in the front line, engage in an indefatigable struggle against magicians and sorcerers. With these saints let us form the choirs on the festal day, that passing through the midst of the dangers of Babylon we might avoid Origen's poison and obey the words of the prophet who commands us: 'Go forth from Babylon you that flee from the land of the Chaldaeans' (Isa. 48:20. LXX). Thus may we enter into Jerusalem, where there is the preaching of truth.

17. Notwithstanding that in resisting falsehood we have suffered somewhat like the Three Children who overcame the nature of the flames in the burning fiery furnace (cf. Dan. 3:8–30), nevertheless the Babylonian fire did not prevail against us, nor did it even singe our hair – namely, the doctrinal ends of the Church's truth. Nor was there any damage to our mantles, which Wisdom wove for us for the protection of our souls out of the testimonies of holy Scripture. Nor was there the smell of fire on us, the flame of a perverse knowledge spreading on every side. For we took no pleasure in Origen's doctrine which supposes bodies to have come into being on account of the falls of rational creatures and says that according to the etymology of the Greek word [*psychē*], souls have been called such because they have lost the heat of their intellect and their most fervent love for God, so that they have received the name from coldness [*psychos*].⁶⁷ We reject this lest we deem even the soul of the Saviour to be subject to the same fables. Moreover, we deny that the courses of the sun and the moon and the stars and the most beautiful harmony in diversity of the whole world have come about as a result of previous causes and various sins and failings of souls, or that God's goodness was delayed for a long time, in that he would not have made visible creatures unless the invisible ones had transgressed. Nor do we call corporeal substance 'emptiness', as Origen judges it to be, assenting in different words to the decrees of Mani,⁶⁸ lest even the body of Christ be subject to emptiness. Satisfied with the eating of this body, we meditate every day on the words of him who said: 'Unless a person eats my flesh and drinks my blood he will have no part with me' (cf.

Jn. 6:53). For if corporeal nature is empty and futile according to Origen's error, why has Christ risen from the dead? For what reason has he raised our bodies, as Paul teaches when he writes: 'If the dead do not rise, then Christ has not risen; if Christ has not risen, then our faith is in vain' (cf. 1 Cor. 15:13–14)?

18. From this it is evident that our corporeal nature is not empty, but that those who do not think it will rise and remain for ever believe it to be an emptiness. He also condemns honourable marriage by denying that bodies subsist unless first souls should have sinned in heaven and then been cast out and bound as if to some kind of corporeal prison-houses. Indeed, he expresses whatever opinion he wishes and speaks as if he has no fear. Let him hear us with his own ears invoking Paul: 'Marriage is honourable and the marriage bed undefiled' (cf. Hb. 13:4). And how is it undefiled if the soul, sullied by faults, has been clothed in flesh? ⁶⁹ Nor do we find fault with the request of the blessed Hannah, who prayed to receive a male offspring (cf. 1 Sam. 1:11). For in her soul's longing for a child she did not pray for a soul living in heaven to sin so that she could see her own desire fulfilled. Nor when Moses prayed over the sons of Israel, saying, 'the Lord your God has multiplied you, and behold, you are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude; may the Lord, the God of your fathers, make you a thousand times as many as you are and bless you as he has promised you' (Deut. 1:10–11), did he wish so many souls to sin so that the sons of Israel should be multiplied a thousandfold. | What is discordant is most obvious. Would he who prayed for the people's transgression: 'But if thou wilt forgive their sin, forgive it; but if not, blot me out of the book which thou hast written' (cf. Exod. 32:31–2), have asked for the sons of Israel to be multiplied if he knew that they would increase through the fall of souls? Would he not have prayed for the contrary, lest on account of transgressions the nature of a better substance should be brought to what is worse? Why does David pray in the psalm: 'May the Lord bless you from Sion, and may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life, and may you see your children's children' (Ps. 128 [127]:5–6), if the tribe of the just man increases through the sin of souls? And how does he dare to say: 'Thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord' (Ps. 128 [127]:4), when he knows that delinquent souls are bound by the chains of the body and by divine judgement suffer punishment for their sins in a prison of this kind? How does God say through the prophet: 'If you had hearkened to my commandments, then your peace would have been like a river,

and your righteousness like the waves of the sea, and your seed would have been like the sand, and the offspring of your womb like the dust of the earth' (Isa. 48:18–19 LXX)? For those who keep God's commandments should not accept as a reward the fall from heaven of souls, which, tied to bodies, multiply the increase of their offspring. But if they wish to learn about the origin of the human race, let them hear Moses when he says: 'God took earth and formed man and breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul' (Gen. 2:7 LXX), that is, an immortal soul. God also blessed Adam and Eve with the words: 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth' (Gen. 1:28).

19. If souls are sent on earth after sin that they might be born in bodies, it was not reasonable for Adam and Eve to be blessed, when on account of sin they merited rather to be cursed. In fact, after forming them he then blessed those whom subsequently he struck with a curse because they sinned of their own volition. From this one infers that in no way does the nature of bodies exist on account of the sins of souls. Let them again hear God saying: 'I made the earth and man in it' (Jer. 27:5 [=34:4 LXX]); and David: 'The heaven of heavens belongs to the Lord, but the earth he has given to the sons of men' (Ps. 115 [113]:16 LXX), and let them henceforth cease following the errors of their own opinions and rather be led by the authority of the Scriptures. For those who have become enervated by pleasures and in whose hearts wantonness reigns, when they contemplate bodily charm they seek not moral beauty but the beauty of limbs, and their sense, weighted down with earthy dross, observes nothing higher. Similarly,¹⁷⁰ those who are impressed by the ordered composition of words and are captivated by the sound of eloquence do not observe doctrinal truth, are ashamed to acknowledge their original error, and blinded by the tumour of arrogance do not wish to be disciples, nor, after having been corrected, do they see they were formerly in error.

20. And so having rejected Origen's evils and disregarded the traps of those Scriptures which are called apocrypha, | that is, secret⁷¹ – for 'I have not spoken in secret', says the Lord (cf. Jn. 18:20) – again and again, my dearest brethren, let us celebrate the feasts of the Lord's passion. Adorning faith with practice, let us imitate God, to whom no form of corporeal nature is entirely similar,⁷² by showing mercy to the poor. Let us possess the image of his goodness in every respect. Let us amend our errors by penitence. Let us pray for our

enemies. Let us beseech God for our detractors, emulating Moses, who when his sister spoke against him took away the blame through prayer (cf. Num. 12:13–15). Let us wash away the filth of sins with the oil of almsgiving. Let the chains of captives seem to bind us too, and let us implore God to be well-disposed to them. Let daily human kindness sustain those shut up in prison, and those whose bodies suffer from the royal disease and whose limbs dissolve with a living decay.⁷³ Let us serve them with anxious care on account of the reward stored up in heaven. If judicial responsibilities are given to us and a case comes before us of disputants who are fellow-Christians, let there not be consideration of persons but of facts. Before those who are sinking and are suffering tribulation let us too fall down with kindly feeling. Let the laws maintain the precept of truth; let charity lie prostrate before mercy, not abusing sinners but consoling them. For lapsing into vice is easy and frailty is the human condition. Whatever one discerns in someone else one should fear in oneself. When another is corrected for error, let his amendment be a warning to us. And above all things, as the summit and crown of the virtues, let us maintain devotion to God with all fear in our hearts. And abhorring the plurality of gods, let us confess the substance of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to be one and undivided, for having been baptized into it, we have received eternal life.

And if God grants us his mercy and we are deemed worthy to celebrate the Lord's Pascha with the angels, let us keep the beginning of Lent from the eighth day of the month which according to the Egyptians is called Phamenoth. And if God gives us the strength, let us fast more strictly during Great Week, that is, the week of the venerable Pascha, marking as the first day the thirteenth Pharmuthi, that in this way precisely we may finish the fast in accordance with the Gospel traditions in the middle of the night, on the eighteenth day of the month of Pharmuthi already mentioned. And on the next day, which is the symbol of the Lord's resurrection, that is, the nineteenth of the same month (14 April), let us celebrate the true Pascha, adding to these seven more weeks, which brings us to the feast of Pentecost, and making ourselves worthy of the communion of the body and blood of Christ. For thus we shall merit receiving the kingdom of heaven in Christ Jesus, our Lord, through whom and with whom be glory and sovereignty to God the Father with the Holy Spirit now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

21. Greet one another with a holy kiss (cf. 1 Cor. 16:20, etc.). The brethren who are with me greet you (cf. Phil. 4:21, etc.).⁷⁴

SEVENTEENTH FESTAL LETTER (402)

(Jerome, *Ep.* 98, CSEL 55. 185–211)

1. The divine Word of this sacred feast, flashing from the heavenly regions and in its splendour surpassing the radiance of the sun, pours a bright light into the souls that desire it. And if they can bear its rays with the full gaze of their hearts, it draws them to the innermost parts, to the holy of holies, so to speak, of the heavenly Jerusalem. Hence if we wish to be partakers of salvation and, persevering in the pursuit of the soul's virtues, purge away transgressions and cleanse whatever is sordid in us by constant meditation on the Scriptures, let us, as if contemplating the clear knowledge of doctrines under a cloudless sky, hasten to celebrate the feast of heavenly joy and join ourselves to the choirs of angels, where there are crowns and prizes and certain victory and where the longed-for palm is offered to the victors. Liberated from the heaving waves of the flesh, among the various shipwrecks of the pleasures on this side and that, let us not postpone taking hold of the rudder of the virtues and, after the great perils of the sea, entering into the safe harbour of heaven.

2. Therefore let us address those, too, who are preoccupied with the futile concerns of this life, who are assailed by the clamour of the depths of violent passion surrounding them like a raging abyss. Let us, as if rousing them from deep sleep, summon them to the profit of wisdom. Let us show them the true riches of divine meanings and the un hoped for joys of this holy feast. This is why we accept every labour in the present age, to prepare both those who are a little negligent and ourselves for eternal glory. Hence Wisdom in the book of Proverbs summons those lacking understanding to a feast and proclaims: 'Come, eat of my bread and drink the wine that I have mixed for you' (Prov. 9:5 LXX). For these heavens that we contemplate are not so illuminated by the choirs of the stars, nor do the sun and the moon, the two bright eyes, so to speak, of the world by the course of which the year unfolds and the changing seasons succeed one another, pour such clear light on to the earth as our feast does, shining and radiant with the choir of the virtues. Those who seek its treasures and riches sing in unison with the voice of David: 'Who will give me wings like those of a dove, and I will fly away and be at rest?' (Ps. 55 [54]:6 LXX). And exulting and possessed with a kind of ecstasy, they rejoice with hearts suffused with an ineffable joy, and again cry: 'Here we have no abiding city, but we seek the

city which is to come' (Heb. 13:14), whose architect and builder is God. They know that this is the hope laid up for all their labours, by which they struggle to advance in this world. These are the prizes in store, for which they direct the course of their daily lives without fear of any danger, avoiding as much as possible the impiety and snares of the heretics, by which the blind lead the blind into the pit (cf. Mt. 15:14; Lk. 6:39) and pollute the hearts of those they have deceived as if with a kind of slothful and filthy decay. They are not content with this goal, but suck out the innermost marrow of the Scriptures, condemning what is falsely called knowledge with the truth of the Church's doctrines.

3. This is also what the patriarch Jacob understood when he dreamed of a ladder, the top of which reached up to heaven (cf. Gen. 28:12–17). By this ladder, using the different steps of the virtues, one climbs up on high, and men are called to abandon the lowly things of the world and celebrate the feast of the Lord's Passion with the Church of the first-born. 'This is none other than the house of God', Scripture says, 'and this is the gate of heaven' (Gen. 18:17). David contemplated this very acutely and investigated it with the whole desire of his mind, and meditated on the stages of this journey. And as if grinding and crumbling precious pigments, that they might scatter widely the burning of a most sweet odour, he summons those hastening to the feasts, saying: 'Open to me the gates of righteousness, and I will enter through them and give praise to the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it' (Ps. 118 [117]:19–20). Therefore in no way does any feast belong to the heretics, nor can those deceived by error enjoy participation in it. For it is written: 'If a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned' (Heb. 12:20). Nor can those who contradict the divine doctrines of the Church receive the mysteries of the heavenly words. Let us therefore with all our strength make our souls worthy of the coming celebration, cleansing them of all contagion, that we may be able to sing with the saints: 'The Lord is God, and he has given us light' (Ps. 118 [117]:27). Another prophet, too, of future things, testifies to this with a mystical voice: 'The Lord will appear among them, and will destroy all the gods of the nations' (Zeph. 2:11 LXX). This will occur when words have been changed into deeds, and the truth of things has been demonstrated before the eyes of the doubters, that through the coming to pass of those things which have been predicted, the truth of the words may be confirmed. Thus God will make us participants in his victory, that we may be able both to share

with the saints in the feast and to celebrate the glory of his illustrious advent. For because the whole earth had been corrupted by various allurements, taking vices for virtues, and conversely virtues for vices, while with the passage of time tyrannical pride takes custom for the law of nature, those who had gone before and strengthened falsehood by repetition were thought to be fathers and masters of truth. As a result it came about that the error of human beings grew, and not knowing what was useful, like brute beasts, they despised the true pastor, the Lord, and seized by madness venerated tyrants and princes as if they were gods, deifying their own weakness in men of the same nature as themselves.⁷⁵ Thus it turned out that they escaped imminent danger of death and conciliated those whose clemency was more savage than cruelty.

4. That is why, since everybody had been seduced by error, the living Word of God came down to earth to aid us, because the world was ignorant of the worship of God and endured the privation of truth. This is shown by him who says: 'All have sinned, together they have gone wrong' (Rom. 3:12), and the prophets pray for Christ's help: 'Bow thy heavens, O Lord, and come down!' (Ps. 144 [143]:5), not that he in whom everything exists might change location, but that he might on account of our salvation assume the flesh of human frailty. Paul says the same: 'Though he was rich, yet for our sake he became poor, so that by his poverty we might become rich' (cf. 2 Cor. 8:9). And he came down to earth and was born as a man from a virgin's womb, which he sanctified, confirming by this dispensation the interpretation of his name, Emmanuel, that is, 'God with us' (cf. Mt. 1:23). He began in a wonderful manner to be what we are, yet did not cease to be what he had been, assuming our nature in such a way that he should not lose what he was in himself. For although John wrote: 'The Word became flesh', that is, in other words, 'man', nevertheless he did not turn into flesh, because he never ceased to be God. To him a saint says: 'But thou art the same' (Ps. 102 [101]:27), and the Father, witnessing from heaven, also says: 'Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased' (Lk. 3:22). Consequently, even though he has become man, we profess that he remained what he had been before he became man. Paul preaches the same thing as we do: 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and today and for ever' (Heb. 13:8). For when he says 'the same', he shows that Christ, who for our sake became poor and assumed the full likeness of our condition, did not change his original nature or diminish the richness of his divinity. He assumed humanity in such measure and

kind, only without sin, as the measure and kind in which we were created, not in a partial way but wholly. As the 'mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus' (1 Tim. 2:5), he lacked nothing which belongs to our likeness except sin, which has no substance.

Nor did he dwell in inanimate flesh with God the Word himself occupying the place of a rational soul, as the dull disciples of Apollinarius imagine.⁷⁶ Nor does the Gospel saying: 'Now is my soul troubled' (Jn. 12:27), testify to his divinity being subjected to perturbation, which logically follows for those who contend that his divinity was in his body in the place of a soul. Nor again did he complete the humanity he assumed by uniting only a soul to himself. Nor should we believe that he accomplished the dispensation of a semi-incarnation out of flesh like ours but a soul unlike ours, existing as if in our flesh but with the soul of irrational beasts. If that were the case, the soul of the Saviour, in their view, would be irrational and without mind or sense, which is impious to believe and far from the faith of the Church. And, furthermore, he would be the referent of that utterance in which the prophet reproaches the sinner saying: 'Ephraim is like a senseless dove, not having a heart' (Hos. 7:11 LXX), and as if bereft of reason would hear: 'He is compared to the senseless beasts and has been made like them' (49 [48]:12 LXX). There is therefore no doubt that a soul which is irrational and without sense or mind is comparable to senseless beasts. That is why Moses also writes: 'You shall not muzzle the ox when it treads out the grain' (Deut. 25:4), and Paul commenting on this in his writings says: 'Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not speak entirely for our sake?' (1 Cor 9:9-10).

5. It was therefore for our sake that the Saviour became man, not for the sake of brute and irrational beasts, that he should take on the likeness of an animal without sense and reason. For the Church does not accept that which the followers of this heresy quibble and prattle about, that it should think that the Saviour's soul should be called 'the will of the flesh' when the Apostle clearly calls the will of the flesh hostile to God and death (cf. Rom. 8:6-7). It is quite wrong to say this of the Lord, that one should believe that his soul is death and hostile to God. For if he commanded us: 'Do not fear those who can kill the body but are unable to kill the soul' (cf. Mt. 10:28), it is stupid to argue that our souls are better than the Saviour's soul, and assert that his is the will of the flesh, which is death and hostile to God, when our soul cannot die. This idea is unacceptable, my dearest brethren, when even the will of the soul cannot be called the soul

and the two differ very much from each other. For although the will of the soul is in the soul, whose will it is, nevertheless one contains it, and the other is contained by it. First the soul exists, and afterwards the will dwells in the soul. For if the will of the soul is not the soul itself, a fortiori the will of the flesh cannot be called the soul!

However much they extend the nets of their syllogisms and set traps of captious arguments, they entangle themselves in the snares. They do not know what it is in which they glory with a futile knowledge and should learn from us, whom they drive to take up an argument of this kind unwillingly, that that which knows is one thing, knowledge is another, and that which is known yet another, and that these differ among themselves not only verbally but also in meaning.⁷⁷ For that which knows is the rational soul; moreover, that which is from it and belongs to it, yet is not itself that which knows, is called knowledge; what is known, however, is the matter which is the object of its attention and this knowledge springs from the knower but is not the knower himself or knowledge itself. Let them finally desist subverting the simple decrees of the Church's faith with the tricks of the art of dialectic, calling the Saviour's soul the 'will of the flesh', which the Apostle declares to be death and hostile to God.

6. It would appear that our argument against them should also be as follows. It is written of God's Word: 'All things were made through him' (Jn. 1:3). Is it then credible that the wisdom or will of the flesh, as they understand the Saviour's soul to be, should have been created by the Word of God, so that he should become himself the worker of death and hostility towards God, and, which is a shocking thing to say, unite them to his own person? For if it is impious to believe this, seeing that the Saviour's soul excels in all the virtues, it follows that the will of the flesh cannot be his soul, or else it would be believed that he himself united death and hostility to God to himself. Let Apollinarius' disciples cease defending on account of his other writings those things which he said against the Church's rules. For although he wrote against the Arians and the Eunomians and refuted Origen and other heretics by his arguments,⁷⁸ nevertheless he who has in mind the precept: 'Have no respect to persons in judgement' (Deut. 1:17 LXX) should always love the truth, not persons, and know that in the dispensation of the humanity, which for our salvation the Only-begotten Son of God deigned to assume, Apollinarius is not without blame, for his opinions and writings about his soul are perverse. For as the Apostle said, 'If I give away all that I have and deliver my body to be burned but

have not love, I gain nothing' (1 Cor. 13:3). So although this man of whom I am now speaking, or Origen and other heretics, might well have written other things which do not conflict with the Church's faith, nevertheless they will not be without fault if they oppose the Church's faith in the principal matters pertaining to the salvation of believers. Nor, as he and his followers have tried to prove, did our Lord and Saviour assume a soul without consciousness and mind, or half a soul, or two thirds, or else a third, that he should save the humanity he assumed imperfectly, because neither the half nor the remaining portions could be described as complete. And just as that which is perfect lacks the blemish of imperfection, so that which is imperfect cannot be said to be perfect. And if he received our likeness imperfectly or only partially, how is it said in the Gospel: 'No one takes my soul from me. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again' (cf. Jn 10:18)? Therefore that which is taken up and laid down cannot be said to be either irrational or without mind and intelligence, but on the contrary must be rational and intelligent and possessed of mind and feeling.

7. And indeed the order itself of the argument convinces us that nothing imperfect has been received by the Lord, but what has been assumed by him is a fully and perfectly sound humanity. For there is no doubt that the souls of irrational beasts are not laid down and taken up again, but they perish with the body and dissolve into dust. On the other hand, when the Saviour took up his soul and separated it from his body at the time of the Passion, he received it back again at the Resurrection. And long before he did this, he said in a psalm: 'Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades, neither wilt thou let thy holy one see corruption' (Ps. 16 [15]:10 LXX). Nor is it credible that his flesh should have descended to the lower world, or that the 'will of the flesh', should the soul be called that, should have appeared in the lower world, but that his body should have been placed in a tomb. He himself would not have said of the body or of the wisdom of the flesh or of his divinity: 'Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades' but truly of a soul of the same nature as our own, to show us that it was a perfect, rational, intelligent and sensitive soul that descended to the lower world. We exhort those who hold such opinions to abandon their heretical errors and acquiesce to the Church's truth and not make the celebration of the Lord's Passion incomplete or deny the principal and greater part of the Saviour's humanity by asserting that his body is without soul and mind. For if that were so, what did he want us to make of him when he said: 'The good shepherd lays down

his soul for his sheep' (Jn. 10:11)? And if he only assumed human flesh, why did he say in his Passion: 'the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak' (Mt. 26:41)?

8. Hence it should be understood that, manifesting the mystery of the human condition put together from each of its parts, he assumed the perfect likeness of our condition, and uniting to himself not the flesh alone, nor a soul deprived of reason and consciousness, but a complete body and a complete soul, he manifested in his own person a perfect human being, that through and in his own person he might grant perfect salvation to all people. And having fellowship with us who were created from earth (cf. Gen. 2:7), he brought down from heaven neither flesh nor a soul which existed previously and had been created before his flesh, which he then coupled with his body, as Origen's disciples try to teach. For if the Saviour's soul, before he assumed a human body, dwelt in the realm above without yet being his soul, it would be necessary to say most impiously that it existed before the Lord's body, having an activity and vigour, and was afterwards changed into his soul. It would be a different matter if they could teach from Scripture that before he was born of Mary, God the Word possessed this soul and that before the assumption of the flesh it was called his soul. Therefore if, both by the authority of the Scriptures and by reason itself, they are compelled to admit that Christ did not have a soul before he was born of Mary – for in the assumption of humanity his soul was also assumed – they are clearly proved to be saying that the same soul was both his and not his. But let these ranters cease from the impiety of novel doctrines! As for us, following the rule of the Scriptures, we preach with full boldness of heart, that neither his flesh nor his soul existed before he was born of Mary, nor did a soul previously dwell in heaven which he subsequently united to himself. For when he came down from heaven, the Lord brought nothing belonging to our condition down with him. That is why, cutting down whatever is contrary to the truth with the sickle of the Gospel, he says: 'Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up' (Mt. 15:13). He completes the word by the deed, the threat by the outcome, and proves the power of the assertions by the accomplishment of the facts themselves, that whatever the word has promised the truth of the deeds might demonstrate.

9. Therefore let those who follow Origen, that hydra – to use an expression from the fables of the poets – of all the heresies, and are

proud to have him as the teacher and leader of their error, know that they are alien to this feast and cannot celebrate the Lord's Passion with us. Although he wrote countless books and left the world a heritage of his garrulity as a pernicious possession, nevertheless we know what is prescribed by the Law: 'You may not put a foreigner over you, he is not your brother' (Deut. 17:15 LXX). For anyone who strays by a different path from the rules of the apostles is excluded from Christ's feast as one who is profane and unworthy of the choir of Christ and participation in his mysteries. He is driven far from it by the Fathers and elders who founded the Saviour's Church for striving to stitch the philosopher's rags on to the new and most sound garment of the Church (cf. Mt. 9:16) and associate the false with the true, with the result that the weakness of the former is proved by the proximity of the stronger and the beauty of the latter is violated.

10. For what reasoning, what chain of argument has led him to subvert the truth of the Scriptures with the shadows of allegory and empty imaginings? What prophet has taught him to think that God was compelled to create bodies on account of souls falling from heaven?⁷⁹ Which of those who, according to blessed Luke, 'were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word' (Lk. 1:2) of God handed down to him the teaching that God was provoked to create the diversity of this world by the negligence and movement and fall of rational creatures from the realm above? In his account of God's creation, Moses neither says nor even suggests that it was on account of certain antecedent causes that sensible things were produced from rational things, visible things from invisible things, and worse things from better things, as Origen most clearly preaches. For he says that the world came into being on account of the sins of intellectual creatures, thus refusing to celebrate Easter with the saints or say with Paul: 'Ever since the creation of the world the invisible things of God are clearly perceived in the things that have been made' (Rom. 1:20). Nor does he wish to exclaim with the prophet: 'I considered thy works and was amazed' (Hab. 3:2 LXX). For the beauty of the world could not have come into existence in any other way, if the attractive variety of the creatures had not filled it. In fact, the sun and the moon, the two great luminaries, and the rest of the stars, before they were what they are – for the duty of their daily course testifies that they are created – were not incorporeal, nor did they abandon their original simplicity for some cause or other and become clothed with bodies, as he imagines, constructing doctrines contrary to the faith. Nor did souls commit some sin in the realm above and were therefore

banished to bodies. If that were so, the Saviour would not have needed to assume a body himself to liberate souls from bodies. When he remits sins in baptism, he would have needed at the same time to free the baptized person from the bonds of the body, which Origen claims were fashioned on account of sins in condemnation of sin. Moreover, he also promises the resurrection of bodies in vain, if it is advantageous to souls to fly up to heaven freed from the weight of bodies. The Saviour himself when he rose again would not have needed to resuscitate his flesh, but only unite his soul to his divinity, if it is better to live without bodies than with them.

11. What does he mean by claiming that souls are repeatedly united with bodies and then divided from them, thus inflicting many deaths upon us? He ignores the fact that Christ came not to separate souls from bodies after the resurrection, or when they have been liberated to clothe them again in new bodies, having them descend from the heavenly regions and cladding them with blood and flesh, but once bodies have been raised again to grant them incorruption and eternity. For as Christ having died will never die again, neither will death have dominion over him (cf. Rom. 6:9), so when our bodies have been raised again after the resurrection, neither will they perish a second time or repeatedly, nor will death ever have dominion over them, nor will they be dissolved into nothingness, because the coming of Christ has saved the whole human person.

12. Furthermore, this, too, has excluded Origen from Christ's Paschal feast. He represents principalities, authorities, powers, thrones and dominions not as created from the beginning in this state (cf. Col. 1:16), but as becoming such after their creation because they had performed some deeds worthy of honour. When others similar to them had fallen and been demoted because of negligence, the former received their eminent names.⁸⁰ Thus – according to his error – God did not create them principalities and powers and so on, but the sins of others furnished them with the matter of their glories. Then how does the Apostle Paul write: 'In Christ all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities – all things were created through him and for him, and he is before all things' (cf. Col. 1:16–17)? If he had understood significance of this expression – 'through whom' it is said 'all things were created' – he would have known that they were created thus from the beginning. It was not the carelessness of others and their fall to a lower rank that gave

God the occasion for naming them principalities and authorities and powers, and so on, since beauty in the created world consists mostly in a hierarchy of dignities. For it is written of the sun and the moon and the stars: 'God made two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, the lesser light to rule the night, and the stars, and set them in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth' (Gen. 1:16–17 LXX). They did not receive it as a reward for good works that after being placed in the firmament of heaven they should shine and that days and nights should succeed one another. Similarly, we do not suppose that the principalities and authorities, which were created in the heavenly regions, have advanced to this state after good works, but that they exist just as they were created from the beginning. Let us not then imitate the error of Origen and his disciples, who think that like demons and the devil, who on account of their own will were allotted their names and ranks, the principalities, powers, virtues, thrones and dominions should have accomplished something good after their creation, so that when others had fallen to a lower rank they should mount up to the heights and be distinguished by these titles, having afterwards what they did not have previously. In saying this they do not understand that they are going against Paul's judgement that the principalities, powers, thrones and dominions were created through Christ. For when he says 'created' there is no doubt that they were created thus from the beginning and did not afterwards receive these dignities in that way.

13. Doubtless it suffices to have touched on these things briefly. Let us turn now to another impiety of his, which he utters as if vomiting it up from the deepest darkness, and has bequeathed to the world as the worst monument to his blasphemies. For he says that the Holy Spirit does not work on those things that are inanimate nor does it reach irrational beings.⁸¹ In asserting this he does not reflect that the mystical waters of baptism are consecrated by the coming of the Holy Spirit, or that the eucharistic bread by which the body of the Saviour is manifested and which we break for our sanctification, together with the sacred chalice – which are set on the church's altar and are certainly inanimate – are sanctified by the invocation and coming of the Holy Spirit. If the power of the Holy Spirit did not extend to irrational beings and to things without soul, why does David sing: 'Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?' (Ps. 139 [138]:7). He shows by these words that all things are embraced by the Holy Spirit and surrounded by his majesty. If all things are in all things,⁸² then certainly so are the irrational and the inanimate. And elsewhere

we read: 'the Spirit of the Lord has filled the world' (Wisd. 1:7), which Scripture would never have mentioned unless irrational and inanimate beings were also filled with his divine majesty. Indeed, he is not content to stop at this blasphemy, but in the manner of madmen, who show evidence of their madness by gnashing their teeth and emitting foaming saliva, he again vomits forth and says that the Son of God – that is, his reason and word and virtue – extends only so far as those things that are endowed with reason. On hearing this I am amazed where he got it from. Does he not know how to read the text: 'All things were made through him' (Jn 1:3): – which proves that the power of the Word of God extends to all things – perhaps even forgetting the well-known story of Lazarus being raised by Christ's excellence? Lazarus' body, at least at the moment when he was rising from the dead into life certainly lacked soul and reason (cf. Jn 11:1–44). He also ignored this: that five thousand men, not counting the women and children, were satisfied by five loaves, and twelve baskets of broken pieces were left over, which Christ's power certainly accomplished (cf. Mt. 14:19–21). In my view, neither did he recall the famous miracle when, treading on the waves of the irrational sea with his divine foot, he made them calm again for the people in the boat (cf. Mt. 8:23–7). It was Christ's excellence, not anybody else's, that brought the waves under control. How then does he not tremble in his entire soul and body, when he says that the power of the Word of God cannot extend to irrational creatures? And let him who prides himself on his knowledge of the Scriptures, and thinks that he is more learned than anybody else, take note of the text in which they carried out the sick on pallets into the crossroads and squares, that Peter's shadow might touch them and heal them (cf. Acts 5:15). The testimony of the sacred Acts of the Apostles refutes Origen's stupidity. It proves that the Son and Word of God did by the shadow of the apostles that which Origen claims he could not do.

14. Deceived by a similar error and not knowing what he is saying, he follows the opinion of those who deny that providence descends as far as all creatures, even to the lower parts of the world, but only stays in the regions of heaven, with the result that Peter's shadow would have done that which the Saviour's power was unable to accomplish. But let us come to the most notorious points. For the Apostle clearly proclaims of the Only-begotten Son of God: 'Let us have this mind among ourselves, which was in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God

a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself taking the form of a servant' (cf. Phil. 2:5-7). Yet Origen has dared to say that it was the Saviour's soul that emptied itself and received the form of a servant, so that John should be believed to be a liar when he says 'the Word became flesh' (Jn. 1:14).⁸³ He assimilates the Saviour to our own condition, so long as it is not his very self which empties itself and receives the form of a servant, but his soul, and thus dissolves the faith which has been established by the confession of all. For if it is the Saviour's soul that was in the form of God and equal to God, according to Origen's madness, yet the Son of God is equal to God and that which is equal to God must be of the same substance, we are led by the logic of the argument to believe that the soul and God are of a single nature. When he says this, it follows that he maintains that our souls, too, are not of a different nature from God, for there is no doubt that our souls and the Saviour's soul are of one substance, so that consequently the Creator and the creature would be of one substance. And how were all things created through Christ, if human souls are of the same substance as the Creator? Truly it is not so, brethren. Nor was it the Saviour's soul but the Son of God himself, since he was in the form of God and equal to God, who emptied himself and accepted the form of a servant. Sunk in the deep filth of impiety, Origen does not realize that he aligns himself with the pagans, who venerate idols instead of God: 'claiming to be wise they became fools, and transformed the glory of the immortal God into an image resembling mortal man' (Rom. 1:22-3). He, too, fell into this and was deceived by a similar error. For affirming that the Saviour's soul was in the form of God and equal to him, as we mentioned above, he puts himself on the same level as the impiety of the pagans. For as they transformed the glory of the immortal God into an image resembling mortal man by saying that those were gods which were not gods, so he, too, transformed the glory of the immortal God, by asserting that the Saviour's soul, which was created, was in the form of God and equal to him, and that it was this that emptied itself, not the Word of God who came down to earth, as the authority of the Apostle affirms.

15. Nor does he blush, unmindful of himself because of his loquaciousness, that he does not even wish the human soul to be called such from the beginning of its creation, but because it was mind and sense first and then acquired the coldness of negligence and unfaithfulness. (This etymology suits the Greek rather than the Latin language.⁸⁴) If, however, he asserts that the Saviour's soul was equal

to God and constituted in his form,⁸⁵ it follows that it too has received this appellation from the coldness of love, and has lost the dignity of its earlier name. For his general argument is that human souls were called such because they lost the warmth of their pristine fervour. Therefore if everybody's souls are called such because of their acquired coldness, and it is admitted that the Saviour had a soul, it follows that he holds that even this soul has migrated from mind and sense to an appellation of this kind. Although he does not literally say this, and open impiety restrains his insanity, nevertheless he is compelled to say it of very necessity, because it is implied by the logic of what he has previously conceded. For either he must deny that the Saviour had a soul, which goes very clearly against the authority of the Gospels, or, if he is not to contradict himself, he must admit that even this soul is called such on account of mind and sense growing cold in love. For obviously he regards the souls of all who have withdrawn from God and lost the heat of divine love to be the result of growing cold. Who will believe him satisfied with this degree of sacrilege?

16. ¹⁸⁶ Indeed he does not keep silent but blasphemes again, calumniating the Son of God when he says in the following words: 'As the Son and the Father are one, so too the soul which the Son assumed and the Son himself are one.'⁸⁷ He does not understand that the Father and the Son are one on account of the one substance and the same divinity, whereas the Son and his soul are of a substance and nature | different from each other. For if the Son's soul and the Son himself are one, as the Father and the Son are one, the Father and the soul would also be one and the Son's soul could say: 'He who has seen me has seen the Father' (Jn 14:9). But this is not so – God forbid! The Son and the Father are one, because they are not different divinities. But the soul and the Son differ both in nature and in substance, because the soul too was created by him since it is of one substance with us.⁸⁸ For if the soul and the Son are one in the same way as the Father and Son are one, as Origen reckons, then the soul, like the Son, would be 'the radiance of the glory of God and the stamp of his substance' (cf. Heb. 1:3). But this is impossible. It is therefore also impossible for the Son and his soul to be one, in the way that the Father and the Son are one. Again, regardless of the fact that he is contradicting himself, he says: 'For the soul that was "troubled" and "sorrowful" (cf. Mt. 26:38) was certainly not the "Only-begotten" and the "first-born of all creation" (Col. 1:15), nor was it God the Word,⁸⁹ who is superior to his soul, as the Son of

God himself says: "I have the power to lay it down, and I have the power to take it up" (Jn 10:8).⁹⁰ Therefore, if the Son is superior to his soul, of which there is no doubt, how could his soul be equal to God and in the form of God? When he said it was the soul that emptied itself and assumed the form of a servant, he exceeded all other heretics in the magnitude of his blasphemy, as we have already noted. For if the Word is in the form of God and equal to God, yet the Saviour's soul is thought to be in the form of God and equal to him as he has dared to write, how can what is equal be superior? For those things which transcend nature bear witness to the superiority of what lies beyond them.⁹¹

17. This blasphemy is not sufficient for him, but directing the course of his stupidity beyond the rivers of Ethiopia (cf. Isa. 18:1) again he raves like a madman. He says that God of his own free will created as many rational creatures as he could govern,⁹² with the result that he put the power of God on the same level as the weakness of men and the rest of what has been created. For in the human body, as much strength sustains and rules its members as can be imparted to them and flourish. It provides us with that temperament which it is able to rule by its presence, and sustains it with as much strength as human members can bear. But God, who is greater than the things which he himself has made, seeing that he has granted them the measure in creation which the order of things required, more than which they could not bear, is able to go beyond what creatures are capable of attaining. But Origen, that pillar of truth, asserts that God's power is limited and inferior to human skills. Indeed, masons and those who are experienced in building houses can build greater things than they have done – if of course the foundations can support what is to be constructed on them. Nor does the construction mark the end of thinking about the design. When such works have been completed as the need required, and they have proportions beyond which, if anything were to be added, it would prove to be ugly and useless, the artist's mind contains more than has been demonstrated in the work. Nor is the limit of knowledge imposed by the end of the task, if of course, as I have said, whatever the mind has conceived and the imagination has developed, can be sustained by what has been laid as a foundation. And how is it not impious not to place a limit on human skill or make practical knowledge co-extensive with its products, and yet say that God made only as many rational creatures as he was able to create? Therefore let the ungodly one hear and learn: the power of God is not co-extensive with as

many rational creatures as he is said to have made. Though imposing a limit to his works beyond which they could not go, and restricting the number of the things by his art, he himself is not limited by measure and number (cf. *Wisd.* 11:20). From this it is patently obvious that he did not make as many things as he was able, but his power made as many things as necessity required. Let us give an example, that what we have said might become clearer. If a wealthy householder wishes to invite guests to a dinner and offers sufficient food to satisfy the eager appetite of the diners, that does not mean that this rich gentleman only has as much as they would eat and as much as he has had prepared for them. He sets before them as much as the dignity of the meal demands. In a similar way almighty God, too, exceeding the example we have given as a comparison, did not make as many creatures as he was capable of making, but made as many as needed to be made. Yet Origen constructs a ragbag of verbosity,⁹³ and repeating himself says: ‘God made as many things as he could grasp and hold in subjection to himself and control by his providence’.⁹⁴ Nor does he hear the prophet saying: ‘If all the nations are counted like a drip from a bucket, and as the tipping of a balance, and shall be counted as spittle, to whom will you compare God?’ (cf. *Isa.* 40:15–18 LXX). And again: ‘Who has measured the water in his hand, and heaven with a palm, and all the earth in a handful?’ (*Isa.* 40:12 LXX). If in comparison with the power of God water is measured in the hand and heaven in the palm and the whole earth in a handful – this, however, is said metaphorically, that the paltriness of those created things might be confirmed in relation to the magnificence of their maker, for God is not composed of a diversity of members – how is he said to have made only as many things as he could grasp with his power?

18. Let us complete what we have begun and explain our meaning more fully. If all the nations are thought of as drops from a bucket and as the tipping of a balance and will be counted as spittle – by which words the paltriness and poverty of substance of all creatures is demonstrated, so that the incomparable sublimity of God may be apparent – it follows that even God’s power will be thought of as a drop from a bucket and as the tipping of a balance and human spittle, if, according to Origen, he made only as many things as he was powerful enough to grasp. It would then be necessary to equate God’s power with the number and measure of the things he has made, if he was unable to make any greater things than those he made. Truly, I do not think anybody – I do not say any human being but even

indeed any demon – has dared to dream up about God what Origen has thought and written, that God has only made as much matter as he could organize and distribute among the forms of things. Since this is what he thinks, again let him learn from us: God did not make only as many things as he was able to make, but whatever number the measure of the order of things required, that is how many he created, since he possesses a far greater skill and power than is required by the number and measure of the things that he made. And let him know that this is proved by the testimonies of the prophets, one of whom says: ‘His excellence covered the heavens’ (Hab. 3:3 LXX) and another cries: ‘he made the earth as nothing’ (Isa. 40:23 LXX), thus proclaiming that the excellence of God is greater than these created things. Furthermore, the expression: ‘he made the earth as nothing’, the Apostle interprets as relating to the whole of creation, when he says: ‘who calls those things which do not exist as if they existed’ (cf. Rom. 4:17). By these words he teaches us that the power of God is greater than the things which have been made by him. But Origen does not blush to dispute the power of God by claiming that God was limited by the material available to him for the execution of his work. Nor does he understand that the nature of created things is one thing, and the nature of their maker is another. Nor can the former, from which something comes into being, be as great as he who makes something from it. For the excellence and condition of different substances differs.

19. Therefore, if they wish to celebrate the Lord’s Pascha with the Church, those who prefer the ravings of Origen to the authority of the Scriptures, let them listen to God rebuking them: ‘Did I not set this before you, that you should turn aside from the way?’ (cf. Deut. 11:26–28). Let them also hear the prophet mournfully reminding them: ‘Flee from the land of the north, says the Lord; for I will gather you from the four winds of heaven; escape to Sion, you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon’ (Zech. 2:6–7 LXX), that leaving the darkness of error and the cold of ignorance they might return to the rising of the sun of righteousness (cf. Mal. 4:2) and that sharing in the researches of the Magi, and dwelling in the region of the hottest climate, which means in the fervour of the Scriptures, they might enquire of the Church’s shepherds, spurning the madness of Origen, and say: ‘Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?’ (Mt. 2:2). When they found him lying in the manger, that is, in the humble eloquence of the Scriptures, they will offer him gold and frankincense and myrrh, that is, a faith proved and gleaming with

all the splendour of truth together with the ardour of a sweet-smelling manner of life and a continence that causes the wantonness of voluptuousness and the enticing movements of the flesh to wither away. For those who after repeated warnings contradict the Church's faith are afflicted by the double malady of wickedness and ignorance. Turned entirely towards earthly things and adhering to the ground just like serpents, they prefer evil to good and are unaware of the difference between vices and virtues. They despise the remedies drawn from the holy Scriptures for their correction and healing, maintaining a disgust for the truth like pregnant women who reject their accustomed food and crave whatever is noxious. Nor are they able to hold up the clear light of the soul to the rays of the truth. Disdaining the Church's discipline they wallow like pigs in the mire and despise unguents. But it is right that they should at least receive healing from the examples we have given. For just as an inflammation closes the eye, or a fever wracks the whole body, or bronze and iron are gradually consumed by rust, so the pernicious contagion of perverse doctrines injures the beauty of the souls of the negligent and fills them with the ugly pallor of lies.

I beseech you, brethren, to forgive the distress I feel at dealing with these accursed doctrines publicly. For although we have crossed the rivers of Babylon to persuade the captives dwelling there to make their way to the feast of Jerusalem, nevertheless by the mercy of God himself we have not experienced this captivity, for we have spread our sails to the favourable winds of the Scriptures. Nor have the heaving waters of heretical doctrine overwhelmed us. Nor has the tempest of lies intimidated us. Nor have the torrents of iniquity in the midst of their sea touched us, where according to the psalmist's song 'there are reptiles which are innumerable' (Ps. 104 [103]: 25 LXX), and where the dragon dwells who is the devil, that most poisonous animal, ready to sport with the saints (cf. Ps. 104 [103]: 26). Nor, to conclude all this briefly, have the blasts coming from every quarter been able to capsize the ship of the Church or overwhelm the oars of our efforts with a raging whirlwind.⁹⁵ See now, getting into the boat with the Lord our Saviour like his disciples, we have crossed over (cf. Mt. 8:23–7) and, entering the harbour of repose, have embraced the very lovely shore of the divine scrolls. Picking the various flowers of knowledge and planting fervent kisses on the white limbs of Wisdom, we hold fast to her embraces and, if the Lord grants it, living with her (cf. Wisd. 7:28) and persevering in her love, we sing: 'I become enamoured of her beauty' (Wisd. 8:2). For all those who read the sacred Scriptures more attentively, and

roam through the flowery meadows of heavenly discourses, are delighted with this beatitude. But those who abandon the lushness of the Lord's feast and pass over to desert places are subjected to the hostile attacks of demons like cities lacking a wall.

20. On this account, as we celebrate the coming feasts, let us understand both ourselves and all that is ours, and embrace knowledge and our rational soul like a mother with all zeal. Let us have as the root of speech and thought an idea of knowledge, and let us make speech, as it were, the vestibule of action. Then action arising from speech and knowledge will be the completed structure of the building, with a solid roof fixed on top. For speech, thought, knowledge and faith without action are futile and unstable. And for the sake of those who are trained in the art of dialectics let us borrow something from their field. If we join a verb to a noun, the sense is made complete, but if the verb remains on its own or the noun is pronounced without a verb, the words express nothing at all. Similarly, knowledge without action or action without faith are weak and frail, and conversely knowledge joined to action is a sign of perfect virtue. For indeed the silent thought of the soul is its hidden speech, which resounding outwardly through the tongue reveals the mind's thinking. Whenever speech is consummated by action, a term is placed on our knowledge and thought. We shall therefore give an account of our thoughts, words and actions at the judgement, with our thoughts accusing or defending each other on the day when God is to judge the hidden things of men through Jesus Christ, as the Apostle Paul writes (cf. 1 Cor. 4:5).

21. This being so, with the feast of the Lord approaching, let us say to those whom Origen's error has enveloped and deceit holds captive: 'Flee from the midst of Babylon and let every man save his life!' (Jer. 51 [28]:6). For although according to the prophetic oracle Babylon is said to be a golden cup (cf. Jer. 51 [28]:7), and by its style and verbal elegance displays the beauty of truth and transfigures itself into an angel of light (cf. 2 Cor. 11:14), nevertheless it should be known that all those who drink of its wine totter and fall, and brought to disaster are worthy of lamentation. Let us, however, resisting fatal disorder, fortify our soul with the wall of continence and guard its liberty by the daily practice of the virtues. For just as bought slaves are called the servants and scoundrels of those who have paid for them, so those who have sold their souls to various desires are called the servants of those to whom they have handed themselves

over, and they obey them like cruel masters. Even when people correct their error they show disdain with a stern face, and defend their stupidity with temerity. They do not know that their audacity is nothing else, at least as it seems to me, than an opinion without mind or sense that drives away from itself a soul which can control its disorder. And when it has been deprived of such help, it is carried headlong into the depths of impiety. It darkens the light of its mind as if with some very bitter phlegm and surrounds its eye, according to the eloquence of the Scriptures, with a palpable darkness (cf. Ex. 10:21).

22. Therefore those who delight in Origen's errors should not despise the preaching of the Lord's feast. Nor should they seek ointments, gold and pearls in the mire. Nor should they abuse their mother, the Church, in the great cities, for she gave them birth and nourished them. Those who were once of our family now on account of him and his disciples exceed the enmity of the pagans against us. To their delight they redouble their abuse against us, haunt the doors of the rich and are not afraid of hearing with the Jews: 'Sons I have begotten and brought up, but they have rejected me' (Isa. 1:2 LXX). These people seem to me not to know that every word lacking any basis in truth, even if it misleads the hearer for a while, making him think something to be true when it is not, is gradually dissolved and reduced to nothing. The thinking as a whole which emanates like a torrent from a depraved mind overwhelms its own author. Losing the letters and syllables with which it has been put together, it is left without sense or sound or any representation and is abandoned. Like a most poisonous snake it strikes the one that has brought it forth and at once draws back its head, and as if in a hole in the mind wastes away and is destroyed. For the end of liars is death.

Those who formerly boasted that they were lovers of solitude should at least build a little cell on the lips of their fury to hide the abuse, not with the holy stones of Jerusalem, but with the rough rocks of Babylon, which, unhewn and of different sizes, might prop up the walls of their tottering house. Although they commend themselves to the effeminate ears and hatreds of the pagans by calumniating us,⁹⁶ reviling ecclesiastical discipline and abusing our patience as if it were something kindling their temerity, nevertheless let them at last be silent and still and let them hear the prophet saying: 'Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit' (Ps. 34 [33]:13). Let them desire to hold opinions worthy of the solitary life and let them not grieve God, the ruler and master of the Church.

23. As for you, brethren, I beseech you that we should pray together for them and say with the prophet: 'Who will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes? Then would I weep for this my people day and night, for the wounded of the daughter of my people' (Jer. 9:1 LXX), imploring the mercy of God, that he might free them from the error that binds them, and change the hatred that rages in vain against us into love. Hence we, too, forgetful of our injuries, desire to welcome them back with a most tender embrace, and reckon their health and conversion to God as our own health and glory. And if they cannot be cured in any other way except by our showing humility, we shall satisfy them unasked. We hold nothing against them; we have done no injury to them, even though they are indignant and rage against the Church's remedies, which restore health to wounds. As for us, we speak of what we know, and we preach what we have learned, praying that those who despise the Church's rules might receive the precept of truth, and not on account of human shame – because of which it is usually difficult for those who stray to be corrected – lose the benefits conferred by penitence. And now we say what we have said before and what we frequently repeat: we do not wish them to wander about or roam through other provinces, but to these exiles raging in fury we call out, saying with the prophet: 'Escape from the land and return and do not stay; you that are far away remember the Lord, and let Jerusalem come into your heart' (Jer. 51 [28]:50 LXX).

24. Perhaps on hearing these things love of the Church's assembly will enter into them and they will remember the fraternal joy they shared with us, and the hymns in which with the rest of us they praised the Lord. Perhaps they will transform the coldness of hatred into the warmth of love, and understand that we are physicians, not enemies, most affectionate fathers, not opponents swelling with pride against them. For it cannot be that those we wish to be saved we would willingly allow to perish. We would rather the ecclesiastical cane be converted into a staff for them, if only they would abandon their error and follow the truth and stop behaving like insolent boys. But if they reject the truth and hold the Church's discipline in contempt, if they raise up their horn against the Church's rules and spurning sound advice thrust it behind them, let them hear the Lord warning them: 'The man who acts presumptuously, by not obeying the priest who stands to minister in the name of the Lord your God, or whatever judge presides in those days, that man shall die and you shall purge the evil from Israel and all

the people hearing shall fear and shall not act impiously again' (Deut. 17:12–13 LXX). But lest in our preoccupation with the cure of those who wound us we should be unmindful of ourselves and neglect what pertains to us, and, according to what is written, while preaching to others are ourselves disqualified (cf. 1 Cor. 9:27), let us warn those who are on their feet to be on their guard that while reaching out a hand to the prostrate they do not themselves fall. They should observe the Church's discipline and fear the judgement to come.

25. Therefore in celebrating the Lord's Pascha let us purify ourselves with the holy texts of the Scriptures, and in contemplating the Saviour's victory let us banish all the stumbling blocks by which the course of our life is impeded. Turning away from avarice as if from a ruthless usurer, let us destroy the desire for vainglory like an insatiable wild beast and avoid the fawning and slippery serpent of fornication with an anxious mind. If at any time a more prosperous breeze favours us, let us temper the swelling of the soul with humility and gentleness. If adverse winds blow upon us, let us exercise fortitude and arouse our dejected soul. Let us become ourselves accusers of our own sins and let us be assured that this is the beginning of health. For it is impossible for us to become worthy of the Lord's feast unless we reproach ourselves by constant meditation on the virtues and recover the soul's liberty, which has been suppressed by the vices.

And so, occupied in the struggle, and by the sweat and labour of our present circumstances preparing for ourselves the future glory of the heavenly feast, let us correct our past sins by penitence before we stand before the judgement seat of Christ (cf. Rom. 14:10), and by present weeping secure the joys to come (cf. Ps. 126 [125]:6). Using the sting of conscience, let us like bees drive away the harmful drones of the sins to keep our hives full of wax and honey. Let us heal the various wounds of the sins and by repeated warnings let us check the plundering of riches, to which the human race is perhaps especially addicted. And thus we shall be able to follow the journey of the coming fast, beginning Lent on the thirteenth day of the month of Mechir, and the week of the saving Pascha on the fifth day of Pharmuthi, finishing the fast according to the traditions of the Gospels on the evening of Saturday the tenth day of Pharmuthi. And immediately at first light on Sunday let us celebrate the feasts on the eleventh day of the same month (6 April), adding too the seven following weeks of Pentecost, that with those who confess one divinity in trinity we might receive our reward in heaven in Christ

Jesus our Lord, through whom and with whom be glory and dominion to God the Father with the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen (cf. 1 Pet. 4:10).

26. Greet one another with a holy kiss (cf. 1 Cor. 16:20 etc.). The brethren who are with me greet you all (cf. Phil. 4:21, etc.). And we also need to write the following that you may know who has succeeded the holy and blessed bishops who have fallen asleep in the Lord: in Limnias Mnaseas has been ordained in place of Heron,⁹⁷ in Erythrum Paul in place of Sabbatius,⁹⁸ and in Ombi⁹⁹ Verses in place of Silvanus. Therefore write to them and receive from them letters of commendation according to the Church's custom.

LETTER WRITTEN AT
CONSTANTINOPLE (403)

(Richard, 'Nouveaux fragments', frags 3–11)

3. *Of the same, from another letter written at Constantinople against the Origenists, which begins: 'The wicked went to the {places} of tranquillity'.* It is commonly acknowledged that after impiously denying the most essential points of orthodox doctrine, Origen handed on to Arians and Eunomians his profane blasphemies against the Son of God and the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁰ And not writing correctly about the resurrection, he attempted to upset the simplicity of the faith with his destructive notions.

4. *And shortly afterwards:* For in his books he very openly blasphemes both the Son of God and the Holy Spirit. Purporting to speak of the resurrection of the dead, he impiously denigrates it in a way that is possible even for those who dispute it to approve. For he claims that when the dead have been raised, after a certain length of time people's bodies will pass into non-existence. What he maintains amounts to making death, even when bodies have been resurrected, last for ever, with the annihilation of the departed as a consequence. For this is what he holds blessedness to be for souls: complete deliverance from the bodies attached to them. In saying this he wrongly conceives of the coming of the Saviour as ineffective and even harmful to us. For if after the resurrection, when each has paid the penalty for his transgressions for a certain length of time, corporeal nature passes into non-being, with the souls restored, as he says, to the realm of the immaterial and the spiritual, he would have the Saviour

confirm death, if after a certain length of time resurrected bodies really did end up in non-existence, having received sufficient punishment. Now Origen bequeathed to the Arians the teaching that the Son of God is a creature along with the Holy Spirit. Accordingly Eusebius, the ancient serpent of Caesarea – for let him not be called bishop, since he is infected with the Arian madness – after writing a *Life of Origen*¹⁰¹ and thinking he has endowed him with a reputation for piety, accepts him as one of like mind with himself.

5. *And after a little*: for who does not shudder when Origen says in the *Peri archon* that Christ is truth in relation to us but not truth in relation to the Father?¹⁰² Or again, who does not loathe him when he says that just as Christ was crucified for human beings, so he will also suffer the same for the demons?¹⁰³ For the Apostle writes about Christ risen from the dead: 'Death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God' (Rom. 6:9–10). Challenging the apostolic judgement, Origen writes that Christ will also be crucified on behalf of the demons, unaware of what his impious opinion implies. If for the sake of human salvation, the Saviour, as our blessed fathers who met at Nicaea confessed, after having become incarnate and been made man, accepted the cross for our sake, how did Origen not shudder to say that he would also be crucified on behalf of the demons, with the result that the logic of his impiety makes him say that he will become a demon? For just as he would not have been crucified if he had not assumed the likeness of human beings, so by a novel wonder, according to the logic of the Scriptures, if he is to be crucified on behalf of the demons, as it wrongly seemed to Origen, necessity will inevitably force the heretic to think that he will also become like them. But God forbid that such a thought should enter the mind of a Christian! For Christ died in the flesh and rose again on behalf of human beings, and will not be crucified on behalf of demons, as it seemed to the impious author. Consequently he hears along with those who have blasphemed greatly: 'Their throat is an open sepulchre' (Ps. 5:9; Rom. 3:13). I am also obliged, because of those who are his advocates, to mention the following: He professes to teach the resurrection of the dead and yet claims that the coming of the Saviour has become ineffective for us. For with regard to the body raised from the dead, Origen himself writes that it will not only be corruptible but also mortal.¹⁰⁴ And who can rightly reproach us, when his disciples dare to disseminate this foul doctrine? On bodily resurrection from the dead the Apostle says: 'For the trumpet will

sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed' (1 Cor. 15:52). But Origen, audaciously seeking to establish his loathsome doctrine, accuses even the Apostle Paul of not knowing the difference between corruptible and incorruptible. He claims that the Apostle Paul said 'it will be raised incorruptible' in a private capacity. For he does not mean, in his view, that the resurrected body is incorruptible and immortal, but corruptible and mortal, proclaiming in these very words that it will be mortal as well as corruptible. And what else? Since he, along with his disciples, has dared to raise error to the heights, like some virulent mosquitoes, we shall not rest in our efforts, in case the people's ears should be deceived through our negligence. And when this man discusses the Seraphim in the Prophet Isaiah (cf. Isa. 6:2), he has the audacity to say that these are God's Christ and the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁵ How can anyone who holds orthodox opinions tolerate his saying such things?

6. *And after a little*: How can anyone not repudiate him utterly when he says, with regard to the angelic orders, that the sins later committed by them brought them into being among us, since at the beginning God had not made the angelic orders, but it was their sins that arranged them in order of rank?¹⁰⁶ For this is what he accuses them of in his presumptuous attack on the world above. How can anyone not shudder when he says that there would have been no archangels unless all the others had been made subject to their order on account of certain sins? The Apostle writes: 'For in him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities; all things were created through him and for him; and he is before all things' (Col. 1:16–17). How is it then that Origen dared, as if gathering filth for himself from the dungheap, to say that the principalities are principalities because they exercise their rule over those who have fallen through sin, not that they are principalities from the time they were created, but from the time those ruled by them stumbled and fell? These are the absurdities he utters, that looking at the upper world of the holy angels he might say: 'How lonely sits the city that was full of people' (Lam. 1:1). He means by this that when many, or rather, all have fallen, the Jerusalem above is left alone and deserted, taking what was said with regard to the world below and transferring it to the world above.

7. *And after a little*: We have not only anathematized Origen's heresies, but also another heresy that attempted to cause serious

disturbance to the monasteries. Since certain people of the more rustic and uncultivated sort claimed that it was necessary to conceive of God in human form, we did not remain silent but also refuted this heresy, Christ having lent us vigilance, with written proofs in official ecclesiastical letters.¹⁰⁷

8. *And after a little*: How was it possible for us to remain silent when the Origenists say that resurrected bodies do not have a fitting form but are spherical in shape?¹⁰⁸ For if we had been silent we would have confirmed the erroneous opinions they babble about as if in a dream. But if we reveal their unseemliness, we shall not share in their madness in any way. To further their deception they cobble together arguments such as the following: the best of all shapes is the spherical;¹⁰⁹ the best shape is fitting for resurrected bodies; therefore bodies raised from the dead are spherical. Through this supposed reasoning they have deluded the more simple. But we rightly refute them, saying that for each body its own body is best. For example, for irrational beasts a four-footed body is best, for birds a winged body, and for human beings their own form. For when Christ was raised from the dead he was not seen in spherical form by his disciples. A spherical form is appropriate to the sun to enable it to move easily and very rapidly along its course through the sky, and perform its other functions known precisely to God its creator. Fish have fins appropriate to them as well as gills and other things consistent with these. We reject as rustics those who hold the coarser ideas about the resurrection. Similarly, we refuse to praise those who subscribe to Origen's profane doctrines about the resurrection, for we have Christ, who died and rose again for our sake, as a pledge of how we are resurrected.

9. *And again*: For he also claims that the differences between bodies in the world exist for the following reason. He supposes that as the falls of spiritual beings were various, so they were combined with various bodies. He thus misrepresents the way the world came into being, even though Plato, whose student Origen became, did not venture to say with regard to the whole world that it came into being on account of sins. For in his discussion of the world, Plato himself says that it came into being for no other reason than out of the goodness of God, when he writes that he created it in his dialogues.¹¹⁰ It is generally acknowledged that it was from Plato himself that Origen derived the idea that when souls fell from heaven they were sent here and became associated with bodies, but he did not follow either the

Scriptures or his own teacher in every respect. For the latter does not imagine that all bodies came about as a result of the fall of spiritual beings.¹¹¹ But let Origen and his followers hear this: 'Woe to those who prophesy from their own hearts' (Ez. 13.3 LXX). For Moses has said: 'In the beginning God created the heavens' (Gen. 1:1); he did not record that when spiritual beings fell, the sun or the moon or the stars came into being. For such are the things that Origen adumbrates as if in fables.

10. *And after a little*: For what intelligent and Godfearing person can put up with Origen writing that just as the Son transcends created things, so the Father transcends the Son?¹¹² For he contradicts the Son's saying: 'I and the Father are one' (Jn 10:30), when he says that the Father transcends the Son in the degree that the Son transcends the things made by him.

11. *And after a little*: Since they were disseminating Origen's doctrines very openly, they could no longer bear to live in the hermitages in solitude, loving as they do the vomit of Origen, who dared to say that the first human being would not have had a body if his mind had not fallen into sin and he had been sent into this world. For misinterpreting the text: 'God took dust from the ground and formed man' (cf. Gen. 2:7), Origen claimed that he had come into being when he fell from heaven because of sin.¹¹³ And he says that woman would not have been created, nor would there have been any need for childbearing, if souls had not gone astray in heaven and been sent down here. And how is it written of Adam and Eve: 'Male and female he created them, and blessed them and said: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth"' (Gen. 1:27–8)? For if souls had fallen from heaven through sin and had been combined with bodies, as he says, how was this written of Adam and Eve, through whom it was not the alleged motive of sins but the power of the blessing that bestowed on Adam and Eve the increase of childbearing? *And you will find similar arguments in what follows.*

NINETEENTH FESTAL LETTER (404)

(Jerome, *Ep.* 100, CSEL 55. 213–33)

1. Once again the living Wisdom of God summons us to celebrate the holy Pascha, desiring us all to participate in it. Therefore running towards it at a swift pace by fasting, continence and every affliction

of the body, let us reduce to nothing the pleasures that fight against the activity of the virtues. Let us rely on the help of the Saviour and simply reveal our sins to God, who is able to heal them. Let us fear the true judgement of our conscience, that crying out and saying with David: 'Remember not the sins of my youth or my sins of ignorance; according to thy mercy remember me!' (Ps. 25 [24]:7 LXX), we might consume our burgeoning sins by the fear of eternal fire. The goal of these things is to sin no more, and the beginning of salvation is forgetting what lies in the past. For just as the beginning of a good way of life is to do what is right, so the beginning of the cessation of sins is to curb their drive, until either they are reined in by reason or through fear do not bring us to disaster. As soon as remembrance of the Law comes into the soul, they immediately flee, and ceasing to advance any further, surrender to the camp of the triumphant virtues. And gradually withdrawing through penitence and shunning the judgement of the wise, they are dissolved into nothing like smoke. Evils which are not suppressed as soon as they have begun to grow are difficult to heal. Their eradication is easy when those who have sinned a short time previously are converted through penitence to prudent behaviour and gain as the reward of penitence the end of sinning. For neither can we suppress the things that incite sins, unless we begin to practise the virtues, nor will the old habits cease before we shut them out by the operation of the new. If we resist the pleasures that confront us with a resolute mind, past sins are cancelled. Similarly, if our forgetfulness of the past endures, future sins will not be able to grow any further. Indeed the workers of evil bring into their power, as it were, those who can restrain all the insanities that have a rage to sin, but fail to do so. Taking silence as consent, they strive to put into effect whatever the soul's fancy suggests. The liberty allowed to present sins breeds future sins; if you neglect the earlier ones, they are the source and seed-bed of future ones.

2. This being the case, those who are able to restrain sinners yet turn a blind eye, avoiding trouble and maintaining a passive silence, and thus allowing the evils to increase, are very rightly judged to be accomplices of the authors of the sins, and incur the punishment for negligence. For they have preferred an unreasonable ease to the sweat of punishers, choosing a culpable peace instead of a severity that cuts off vices. For if we desist from vices, they will die away completely and their fraudulent sweetness will dry up and all the onsets of pleasure grow torpid with, so to speak, a certain sluggishness, when our

mind gives hospitality to virtue. Recollection of the Law does not allow sins to be born, nor does it suffer them to grow. When it ponders the future tribunal and the dread day of judgement, it checks not only the beginning, but also the middle and the end of sin, and dries up its bitter surges and heaving waves to the very source and spring. Virtue accompanied by law checks the seeds of the vices and raises the soul from the depths to the heights. Vices, by contrast, if they are not disciplined, grow arrogant and thrust those obedient to them into hell. Once they take possession of souls they overwhelm them with the allurements of the pleasures, not allowing them to receive a dignified upright posture like the human body but bending them to the earth like the brute beasts. The psalmist witnesses to these things when he says: 'They have called their lands after their own names' (Ps. 49 [48]:11 LXX).

3. Someone might say at this point: 'If vices have such power and trip up so many people by their seductive persuasion, what should those do who, aware that they are sinning, desire to exchange sins for virtues and spurn the worse out of love for the better? Listen to Moses speaking to people of this kind:¹¹⁴ 'Have you sinned? Cease doing so' (cf. Eccles 21:1), destroying what was earlier by putting a stop to sin, and correcting vices by a most efficacious medicine, which is the cessation of vices. Shun the allurements of sweet evil and avoid the beguiling pleasures of the body like noxious poisons. Do not take the slippery and soft path of luxurious living, because the feast is attained by fasting and continence. With much effort and sweat we can exchange evil for good, and by resisting pleasures we can destroy them. Those who keep to the path of truth by trampling on the vices are few, since evil makes use of innumerable arts for causing harm and cannot be overcome unless we are supported from on high by the help of Wisdom, crying to us and saying: 'Fear not, for I am with you' (Gen. 26:24). The death of evil is to do evil no more; the root of the vices is to despise the ordinances of the Law. Just as negligence causes sins to germinate, so vigilance gives birth to virtues. When the Law is observed, it puts ignominy to flight; when it is neglected, it generates punishments. In the measure that if it is despised it resembles the harshness of a severe judge, so if it is observed, it manifests the gentleness of a most tender father.

Therefore the cessation of sin is the beginning of virtue, and the medicine of past, present and future vices is the tireless study of the Law. When such study has a secured tenant, it is free from all anxiety. Wisdom indeed works good in us after we have provided it with

purity of heart as a lodging and have turned intentions into deeds. Nor let it be doubted that in both cases, either doing or not doing good, we have the capacity to make a free choice. When what is crooked is suppressed, what is straight comes to birth. Then the choir of the virtues sings in harmony, once the soul has been deserted by the vices. When continence comes to reign in our bodies, it prevents infirmities from being born. It neither weakens nor kills those who love it, but restores past feeblenesses to pristine health. Expelling what is contrary to nature, it calls back those things that are in conformity with it, that the conduct of this life might be kept in balance. Similarly, when the soul observes the precepts of the Law in the measure in which human nature is capable, it separates itself from the contagion of evil. Wholly alert and cautious, it permits nothing to enter into it which is contrary to honourable thoughts. Indeed, turned rather into a temple of God, it enjoys the heavenly feast right away, since it has as its riches the observance of the Law, which raises up the fallen, and while punishing some corrects others, always crying: 'When shall not he that falls, rise up again, or he that turns away, shall he not return?' (Jer. 8:4 LXX). The observance of the Law bestows the hope of salvation on the penitent, for it admonishes that it might benefit, reproves that it might amend, and, being the occasion of shame for previous transgressions, makes them follow what is better, which they cannot desire unless first they condemn the wounds of conscience.

4. Now the Law hastens with excellent counsels to recall those who neglect it and are immersed in error to a better way of life, rather like a check-list of vicious works. Yet it does not allow those who obey it to be without a reward, or to be oppressed with eternal distress. Therefore let all of us who celebrate the holy Pascha, by continence and fasting make the bringer of the Law a friend of ours. The prophet promises those who celebrate the Pascha: 'You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord and a royal diadem in the hand of your God' (Isa. 62:3). Let us therefore seek out the rich feast of the virtues, adorning ourselves with the knowledge of the Scriptures as if with solemn vestments. Let us prepare holy kisses for the angels rejoicing with us in heaven, banishing all negligence and removing any cause for delay, that we might press on at a rapid pace with the disciples to the Saviour and say to him: 'Where will you have us prepare the Pascha for you?' (cf. Mt. 26:17). Installed in the upper room of heaven and celebrating the mystical Pascha, let us be able to sing: 'How lovely is thy dwelling place, O Lord of hosts'

(Ps. 84 [83]:1). For there we shall meet the choirs of angels and, celebrating the feasts with them, shall share with them in the mysteries of God. We shall be transported with an ineffable exultation, as we study with them the mystical teachings of wisdom, where there is no trickery or deceit, where anyone who does not have a wedding garment is prohibited from joining the banquet (cf. Mt. 22:11–14), even if in the present age he boasts of his righteousness. Everyone there has grown old and is of a full and advanced age. No one there, according to the prophet, is found to lack mature wisdom: 'For the youth,' he says, 'shall be a hundred years old' (Isa. 65:20 LXX), indicating perfection of erudition in the magnitude of the number. Therefore, holy brethren and sharers in a heavenly calling, let us listen to the Saviour proclaiming through the prophet: 'I am coming to gather all the nations, and they shall come and see my glory, and I will bestow upon them a universal sign' (Isa. 66:18–19 LXX).

5. Let us hasten towards the Paschal feast and say: 'Far be it from me to glory except in the cross of Christ' (cf. Gal. 6:14). He will give, I repeat, he will give joy to those who labour. Blessing those who fast, he says; 'they shall be to the house of Judah for joy and gladness and for good feasts and you shall rejoice; you must love truth and peace' (Zech. 8:19 LXX). For the feast does not belong to all, but is for the house of Judah, that is, the Church of Christ. Now, according to the Psalmist, 'it is time for the Lord to act' (Ps. 119 [118]:126), and Paul writes: 'the night is far gone, the day is at hand; let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light; let us conduct ourselves becomingly as in the day, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires' (Rom. 13:12–14). Therefore it is right that all who have been cleansed by the fear of the Lord to make a worthy celebration should redeem their chastity by continence and fasting, arouse their sleeping spiritual perception by a vigilant faith, and imitate the most wise Daniel, of whom it is written: 'There is in your kingdom a man in whom is the spirit of God, and in the days of your father vigilance and wisdom were found in him' (Dan. 5:11 LXX). For those who are careful about their conduct, that they might make good progress, have the law as their formidable commander, obey its orders and repel the sins that advance to attack them. They adorn the Paschal feast with the splendour of their deeds, disregarding the darts of the passions in the security of a good conscience, and anticipate victory by hope.

Those who are their imitators win the victor's palm by their desire for virtue even before they engage in combat, and contemplating with unveiled face the crown which those who have triumphed over seductive pleasure possess in heaven, they cry out and say: 'The Lord God is my strength, and he will perfectly strengthen my feet; he sets me up on high places that I may conquer by his song' (Hab. 3:19 LXX).

6. Nor should we think, my dearest brethren, that the contest is for ever and on that account grow weary. We should know that its end is the crown of righteousness, which no passage of time can destroy (cf. 2 Tim. 4:8). The stadium of this life and its contest is transitory. These, then, who run at a steady pace and reach the finishing line where the prizes are awarded will find new mansions and mark the victory with songs. And so, by the Lord's grace that promises us victory over the wicked demons, let us keep the fast in a fit manner, that we might also participate in the feast in a fit manner. Let us by no means in the days of Lent sigh for a cup of wine like the opulent rich are accustomed to do; nor in the preparation for combat and the battle itself, where labour and sweat are necessary, should we delight in eating meat. Indeed, dissipation and drunkenness and the other allurements of this life exhaust the very great treasure of souls and stifle the lavish sowing of knowledge and doctrine by their admixture. This is why the Lord and Saviour, summoning his disciples to the rigour of continence, said: 'take heed to yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a snare; for it will come upon all who dwell upon the face of the whole earth' (Lk. 21:34-5). 'Rise, let us go hence' (Jn 14:31). For such people punishments because of their negligence will follow immediately. Those, then, who observe the precepts of the Law abstain from wine during the fast, reject the eating of meat, and check insatiable avarice by the fear of God. That is why Scripture cries out daily to the continent: 'They do not drink wine or strong drink' (cf. Lk 1:15). And conversely the Jews hear on account of their guilt: 'You gave the consecrated ones wine to drink and commanded the prophets, saying: "You shall not prophesy"' (Am. 2:12 LXX). Those who are seduced by the delights of luxurious living cannot accept correction, nor can those who dishonour the pursuit of virtue by indolence and transitory pleasure curb the belly's gluttony by reason and advice and come to love fasting. They are not ashamed to drink wine in private and tipple honey-wine in their

bed-chambers with greedy gullets, keeping out of sight of spectators that they might exchange fasting and abstinence, which they should have sought of their own accord, for luxury and drunkenness in the time of fasting. For they do not know that even if they avoid detection and eat meat behind closed doors, and in the days of Lent, even with Easter approaching, dismember fat capons with impure hands, while giving an impression of fasting in public with long faces, the Lord rebukes people of this kind and says: 'They commit great abominations, that they should keep away from my sanctuary' (Ez. 6:8 LXX). It does not become those who fast to eat meat in the time of contest and battle, since Scripture warns: 'You shall afflict your souls' (Lev. 16:29 LXX). Nor does it become them to search diligently for pheasants and chattering birds and stuff gaping gullets with their richness, or track down expensive chefs, who soothe the ravenous appetite with complicated sauces and meat transformed by pounding and food altered in flavour, with the vapour from steaming platters caressing the craving of the gullet, while, to the detriment of continence, wines are sought of various flavours and colours.¹¹⁵

7. The account of saint Daniel and the unanimous virtue of the Three Children teaches us to yearn for and honour the fasts. To summarize a long story, when their freedom was transformed into slavery and as captives they were obliged to desire rich food, they held the Babylonian feasts in contempt and preferred simple food to the royal table (cf. Dan. 1:8–16). For King Nebuchadnezzar had commanded the chief of the eunuchs to choose some boys of royal blood from among the captive sons of Israel who were without blemish, handsome in appearance and able to acquire wisdom, and bring them into the palace, that they might be in the king's court and learn the letters and language of the Chaldaeans, and live on the left-overs of his table and drink the wine received from it (cf. Dan 1:3–5). And so there were chosen from the tribe of Judah Daniel, Ananias, Azarias and Misael, equal in birth and by faith, whose nobility had been replaced by harsh servitude. Of these Daniel, as Scripture witnesses, 'resolved in his heart that he would not defile himself from the king's table' (Dan. 1:8 LXX). The three youths also, united no less by religion than by kinship, accepted Daniel's advice and followed his wisdom. Together they petitioned the chief of the eunuchs, and with the help of God's mercy obtained what they desired, and in the land of captivity maintained the nobility of their birth. For they calmed the fear of the official in charge, that when the faces of the other youths were seen to be more joyful, he would

pay for it with his head, by reasoning with him and advising him in the following words: 'Test your servants for ten days and let us be given pulse to eat and water to drink And let our appearance be observed by you, and the appearance of the youths who eat at the king's table, and according to what you see deal with your servants' (Dan. 1:12–13 LXX). For they were confident that the desire for virtue would by God's mercy keep their appearance attractive and their bodies strong, that faith would overcome all ugliness, and that no emaciation would spoil the lustre of their beauty.

8. Therefore, my dearest brethren, we have repeated these things, that acknowledging the words of the Apostle Paul in his preaching on the virtues of the saints, where he says: 'Consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith' (Heb. 13:7), we might persuade those who in the time of fasting enjoy eating meat to imitate the continence of the saints. No force could overcome them and make them let slip the rigour of virtue, so that fearing the power of the Babylonians they should show themselves captives of pleasure. No, they remained free. They overcame by reason the desires of the belly and conquered the titillating luxury of the gullet. And they left us examples of their fortitude, dwelling in Babylon corporeally, but living with the angels in the heavenly Jerusalem in disposition and faith (cf. Heb. 12:22), that henceforth they might teach every age in the time of fasting to abstain from wine and meat, and prefer the products of the earth and water to drink, which are the companions chastity enjoys.

9. What should I say about the famous victories of the Maccabees (cf. 2 Macc. 7:1–42)? Rather than eat unlawful meat and touch common food, they offered their bodies to torture. In the Churches of Christ throughout the world they are praised and commended as stronger than the punishments inflicted on them and more ardent than the fire with which they were burned. All the devices of cruelty were conquered in them, and whatever the anger of their persecutor could invent the fortitude of their sufferings overcame. In the midst of torture they were more mindful of their ancestral law than their suffering. Their bodies were mangled, their limbs flowed with blood and gore, but nevertheless their determination did not waver. Their souls were free and despised present evils in the hope of future rewards. Their torturers grew weary, but their faith did not. Their bones were broken and on the turning wheel every fastening of their sinews and limbs was torn apart; flames rose to an immense height

emitting death; pans were filled with boiling oil and sang out with incredible terror to fry the bodies of the saints. Nevertheless, in the midst of all these things, they walked in Paradise in their soul; they did not feel what they suffered but were aware only of what they desired to see. For their mind, walled round by the fear of God, overcame the flames, despised the different torments inflicted by the torturers, and since it had given itself once and for all to virtue, trod underfoot and spurned whatever calamity occurred. Such was Paul when he wrote: 'in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us' (Rom. 8:37). For what the weakness of the flesh, conquered by natural infirmity, cannot bear the soul overcomes when it converses with God in faith.

10. Therefore those who fast, that is, who imitate the angelic mode of life on earth and are mindful of the saying: 'the Kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and joy and peace and rejoicing' (cf. Rom. 14:17), gain through continence, by a brief and modest effort, great and eternal rewards for themselves. They receive much more than they give and mitigate present hardship with the glory of the age to come, because for those in this stadium who fight for virtue the end of the contest will come at last. But those who engage in the battle against vices and dedicate their souls to the disciplines of wisdom, and, so far as the human condition allows, strive for the wisdom of the things to come, discerning the kingdom of heaven in a mirror and image (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12) through insight and faith, attain rewards that are eternal and not terminated by any end of the age.

Day and night succeed each other at the fixed intervals of the hours. Gradually decreasing, what they lose they receive, and what they receive they give up, coinciding in length twice a year. They do not remain in the same state, but determine their movements by the shortening or lengthening of the hours, in order to effect the changes in the seasons that are useful to the world.¹¹⁶ For the day in its series and circuit borrows from the times of the night, and the night in turn receives what it has granted: And since they mutually give and receive, and in following a certain cycle what they gradually lose they receive by slowly decreasing and increasing, they express the wisdom of God the Creator. And as a result of this alternation of intervals both the monthly circuit of the moon is accomplished, and by the sun going back upon its track, the year is completed. Since they increase and decrease, and as the past slips away the future succeeds, the seasons, always the same and yet

different, are interchanged. Hence too the moon, created by God's most providential art, changes the varieties of its forms. It tends to fullness and hastens to diminution, that what it acquires as it waxes, it loses and gives up as it wanes. Nor does it remain in the same state, but rising and descending by certain steps passes from poverty to richness and from richness returns to poverty, by its very diversity of forms showing itself to be created and mutable. Who indeed can find words worthy to describe the course of the sun and the annual cycle coinciding with the reckoning of the months, as it revolves through the four seasons and always returns to itself, and ascends and descends in the same measure, and runs smoothly in an eternal order that what the lunar interval accomplishes in thirty days and nights, the course of the sun effects in the recurring cycle of the year? And when it arrives at an equality of day and night, and for a brief while its course stands in perfect balance, it hastens to inequality, abandoning the point where it had arrived. This is what I think Ecclesiastes refers to, not to draw from sources alien to our own, when he says in his book: 'Round and round goes the spirit and on its circuits the spirit returns' (Eccl. 1:6 LXX), signifying the annual course of the sun which by this seasonal rotation comes back to itself, returning to the point from which it started.

11. But the holy and heavenly feast which sends out its ray of splendour to us is not bounded by any intervals; and when the contests of the saints and the work of this present age come to an end, perpetual joy and eternal festivity follow. Hence the perfect, who have separated their souls from all darkness of error, already sing of the feasts now: 'Let us enter into his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with hymns' (cf. Ps. 100 [99]:4 LXX), proclaiming aloud the coming of the Saviour with joyful voices. For when evil was reigning over the whole world, and the demons had spread darkness over people's eyes, nor could anyone help them according to the text: 'I looked, but there was no one to help; I observed, but there was no one to uphold' (Isa. 63:5 LXX), so that impiety should be brought to an end at last and the fraud of idolatry be destroyed, the living Word of God, omitting nothing that belongs to our likeness except sin alone, which has no substance, deigned to come to us in a new way, that he might become the son of man while remaining the Son of God. Born indeed of a virgin (what stupid minds believe is only what they can see with their own eyes), he is discerned by the intelligent from his works and the greatness of his miracles to be truly the invisible God. He whose external appearance demonstrated that

he was a man, was shown by his virtues to be God covered by the vileness of a servant's form. For although the Jews betrayed him and with impious voices called for him to be crucified, blaspheming God by killing his body, and indeed by slaying the Lord's flesh making themselves servants of impiety, nevertheless by going fearlessly to his death, that he might provide us with an example of virtue, he was shown to be the Lord of glory in his very passion. For he remained impassible in the majesty of his divinity and yet proved to be passible in his flesh, according to the saying of blessed Peter (cf. 1 Pet. 3:18). That is why suffering for us he did not evade death, lest we who struggle for piety should lose the victory through his fear of death. For if he had been afraid of the cross, acting in a way contrary to what he had taught, which of his disciples would have been willing to fight for the faith? Accordingly, he who subjected the whole universe to his faith and granted to the saints the dignity of the name of Christians is derided by the stupid and unbelieving. And although the greatness of his virtues is evident to all, they do not cease to blaspheme. Indeed he who is derided has been shown to be God by his works, in that he overthrew the temples of the demons, in that he refuted the impiety of the Origenists, whose teacher Origen, deceived the ears of the simple and the insignificant by his persuasive arguments, like the towering waves that usually come crashing down on the shore and break on themselves in a mass of spray.¹¹⁷

12. Therefore, fired by zeal for the faith, we say to him who has dared to write that created bodies are the ruin of rational creatures: If this kind of impiety pleases you, how is it that the Apostle Paul writes: 'I would have young women marry, bear children' (1 Tim. 5:14)? Did he enjoin marriage so that when angels fall from heaven and (as you say) are transformed into souls, bodies born from women should provide prisons for them? Or was it so that the marriage union, in compliance with God's judgement, should maintain the human race? For if he would have young women marry and bear children, so that through them human bodies are born, yet erring souls are clothed with bodies on account of sins and the ensuing penalties, there is no doubt that the bonds of marriage would be laid on young women for the punishment of souls rather than for procreation. But God forbid that we should believe this to be so and suppose that the bond between husband and wife has been instituted not as a blessing but on account of sin. Nor when he made Adam and Eve did God unite them with a blessing because of souls falling

from heaven or the lapsing of rational creatures, saying: 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth' (Gen. 1:28). For if souls were sent down to earth because of sins previously committed in heaven to be bound to bodies, Paul is lying when he writes: 'Let marriage be held in honour and let the marriage bed be undefiled' (cf. Heb. 13:4). But he is certainly not lying. Therefore bodies are created not because of the fall of the souls, but so that by a succession of births and deaths the world should make good the loss and overcome the shortness of human life through a perpetual succession. For if after falling and being bound to bodies souls are blessed by God, they would be in a better state after having received bodies. If they are consequently expelled on that account, so that they receive bodies as a punishment for sins, how can they be blessed in the bodies they have acquired because of sins? For one of two things must follow: either they had been blessed before the Fall, or bound to bodies after the Fall in no way could they be blessed. For if a blessing followed the first life, it forsook this one; if it was transferred to this life, it is proved not to have existed in the first one. Suppose for the sake of argument that before they fell and were not yet clothed in human bodies, they enjoyed a blessing and once they had fallen and had bodies they were again blessed, the life before and the life after would be the same as regards the state of being blessed. But this is not at all logical, because souls that have sinned deserve punishment, those that have not sinned deserve a blessing. Whichever of the two they say is the right response, they will be at fault because they are unwilling to observe the rule of the Church's teaching. For if they reply that souls fell from heaven because of sins and were bound to bodies as if chained up in a prison, how is it that Adam and Eve, male and female, were blessed when living in the body – for according to their madness naked souls were not called man and woman, but it was bodies that distinguished the sex of each. Or if before they had bodies they dwelt in heaven and their manner of life at that time was happy and worthy of benediction, for what reason were they either blessed before they fell, or, after they fell and as a punishment for lapsing were joined to dense bodies, were they granted a blessing once again? For blessing and punishment are not the same thing. In name and effect they stand very much apart, nor can there be any kind of relationship between them when so great an incompatibility divides them. Moreover, how is a multitude of children promised to the righteous as a blessing, when the prophet says: 'And the smallest shall become thousands, and the least a great nation' (Isa. 60:22 LXX)?

13. Therefore those who wish to celebrate the Lord's feasts should condemn Origen's idols and vanquish the foulness of his doctrines by the use of reason. For the most impious of the pagans prefer their error and custom to the truth, and make idols in the form of men and blaspheme the invisible God, when they fashion them with shapes and limbs and sexual organs, making them sometimes male and sometimes female, 'and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man' and various other forms (Rom 1:23). Similarly, by the fickleness and impiety of his beliefs, Origen left the memorials of his treatises like the shrines of idols, which we (to continue the analogy) by the authority of the Scriptures and the zeal of faith demolish. For when builders wish to construct a square house, they measure out walls of equal length on each side, setting the line by rule and plumb line, and what they have conceived mentally, they raise up in deed, and join the four sides by a square of the same measure, keeping the initial equality by going up and down gradually by increments at the corners, that the beauty of the construction might unite the diversity of materials and the skilled structure might maintain its angular lines. Similarly, the Church's teachers, using the testimonies of the Scriptures, lay down strong foundations of doctrine and remain undaunted, offering their works to Christ and saying: 'Strengthen me according to thy word' (Ps. 119 [118]:28). For he it is of whom it is written: 'the very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner' (Mt. 21:42). He joins us and the other Church leaders in a single celebration. Sailing towards it on a swift course, let us have very little fear of the anger against us of the waves of heresy which are soon to be destroyed.

14. For when the helmsmen of large ships see an immense swell bearing down on them they receive the foaming waves like huntsmen do a ferocious beast and ride them with the bow presented towards them, turning the rudders in a different direction, and, as the strength of the wind and necessity dictates, tightening the cables or loosening them. And when the swell has subsided, they loosen the ropes operating the rudders on either side of the ship, that for a while they might prepare calmly for the next swell. When it comes, they tighten the heads of the rudders and extend the blades, that with the winds parting this way and that the work of each side might be equal, and that which could not be sustained simultaneously, might become more tolerable when divided.¹¹⁸ Similarly, those who are careful about themselves follow the example of this analogy. Using

the dispensation of the divine words like a rudder, they meet the tempest and the waves of the heretics head-on, using God's law in the place of technical skill, so that those who fall get up again, while those who are on their feet persevere with a firm step, that all might be kept unharmed as a body with the help of doctrine. For what the rudder is to the helmsman, God's law is to the soul. By keeping the Lord's Pascha in accordance with it, let us value nothing in the world above the love of God and one's neighbour. Nor let us alter our opinion in accordance with the vagaries of human chance which turn this way and that, so that with those whom a little while before we served with shameful adulation because they were powerful, if the winds blow strongly in the opposite quarter and riches are changed into poverty, high standing into humiliation, glory into ignominy, we turn suddenly into enemies, and resist to their face, though we used to hold them worthy of honour, weighing friendship by circumstances not by faith, or indeed even demonstrating hidden enmities in time of need like snakes coming out of their holes. We are not only ungrateful towards those whose generosity sustained us when we were happy to be known as their clients, but like traitors we hunt them down even to the point of bloodshed. We trample upon them cast down and prostrate, when a little before we looked up to them because of their riches. We call them the worst of all, after they have changed their wealth into poverty. We praise power and decry misfortune, honouring people or despising them not because of what they really are but because of the vagaries of fortune, so that those we formerly called lords and patrons, we now address as if they were scoundrels and worthless slaves. Our iniquity appears on every side, whether we praise the unworthy or pursue the worthy with belittlement, imitating that which the accusers said to blessed Job: 'You have been scourged for only a few of your sins' (Job 15:11 LXX).

15. Let us therefore love not uncertain riches, but most steadfast virtue. Let us not allow the hardness of poverty to humiliate us, or riches to puff us up. These things are wont to depress or exhilarate only the very stupid. Let us instead temper both of them for the sake of our integrity and bear sadness or joy with equanimity. Concern for riches disturbs the sweetest slumbers, raises calumnies against the innocent, and when it has gathered together infinite supplies of wealth, prepares material for the eternal fires. Indeed, after an insatiable passion has brooded over the acquisition of wealth, avarice is still not satisfied, but defies the laws, despises the flames of Gehenna, and reckons the tribunal of the judgement to come as nothing. Nor

do adversaries fight against their enemies with as much passion as riches contend against the virtues, unless they are moderated by reason and generosity towards others. In the cities riches are preferred to noble birth. They confer ancient lineage on self-made men. Never has the desire for riches been capable of being satiated by yet more riches. An avaricious person is always in need. A person for whom what he has seems as lacking as what he does not have knows no measure. Hell is not satiated with the dead, but the more it receives the more it wants. Avarice therefore imitates it. It cannot be satisfied, but the more it has the more it wants. It thinks all that it has is less than what it desires. Always boundless, always excessive, the magnitude of its wealth does not extinguish the fire in its breast. At dinner parties it greedily devours not food but injustice. Mixing disputes and dissensions in legal cases, it gives birth to envy, through which it arrives at murder. It has no stability of mind, but vacillates as if inebriated, its only measure being always to seek what is beyond measure. The sea is hemmed in by the shore; the strongest harbours, either man-made or natural, check the waves crashing down from a height and the fury of the swelling rollers. The lust for riches, unless restrained by reason, can neither be tempered by discretion nor mitigated by the law. Nor does any abundance satiate it. It does not blush, it does not fear the judgement to come, but in its craving for having more – just as those living in luxury and dedicated to pleasure generally long for caresses and are smitten with lust – it fills towns, villages and farms with malicious chicanery and dissension. Islands, seas, lands, shores, roads, river crossings, all are the object of avarice's zeal for possession, while in its desire to have more it exchanges goods from far and wide through trade and by fraud and perjury lays the insatiable foundations of its riches.¹¹⁹

16. Therefore despising madness of this sort, let us seek to make our riches the worship of God and our most solid possessions the holiness of chastity. Let us adore the one divinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and believe the resurrection of the dead to be incorruptible and permanent. For it cannot be that death is triumphant, when the resurrection has been confirmed by the passion of Christ, who raised the temple of his body incorrupt and lasting forever. Let us pray for the most pious emperors.¹²⁰ And by observing the divine law let us honour the precepts of fasting. For virtue guards her followers without any constraint. She elevates the mind, which vacillates amongst various thoughts, from earthly matters to the heights, contemplating not the beauty of bodies but right order in

life and conduct. She shows it the choirs of angels rejoicing in heaven and teaches it the brilliance of splendid disciplines, that in the present age like a very strong athlete it may take the blows aimed at it and expect future glory in exchange. By no means does it give way to vices, but sustains the inner man by its desire for eternal things. Checking every attack of pleasure by reason, it ponders what belongs to the future, and, so far as human frailty can bear, withdraws from concern for bodily things, preferring the spiritual to the carnal. As a result it even despises the body itself and the cultivation of the pleasures of this life. It persuades it to embark on a harder but better life, so that he who a little while previously used to serve wantonness should serve chastity in perfect freedom, and drawing back from the precipice, should accept the gentle restraints of fasting. For indeed, if the weak nature of bodies were to be without a ruler and master, and did not wish to obey the spirit that commands it, it would be the occasion of countless shipwrecks to both itself and its ruler, and would drag it down to the foulest lusts, to a cesspit of pleasures. Then it would in no way ponder what is honourable, but fleeing what is good would wallow in filth and mire. But when virtue rules the spirit in the manner of a charioteer, and standing in the chariot, so to speak, checks its impetus and various appetites with the reins of doctrine, she raises it up from lowly things to the heights,¹²¹ and showing it what is invisible and eternal in place of what is visible, she prepares a resting place in heaven and makes her friends those who dedicated to God's service enjoy spiritual delights. Thus what she discerned here in a mirror dimly she sees there in truth (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12). And she sees a clarity brighter than the sun's rays that descends to us here in part. Therefore let us reach out from the lesser to the greater just as we advance through knowing letters and syllables to proficiency in reading, because the greater need the lesser elements and vice versa. When we arrive there and are joined in communion with the blessed, we shall hear: 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master' (Mt. 25:23).

17. Beginning the fast of holy Lent from the eleventh day of the month of Phamenoth and the week of the Lord's passion on the sixteenth day of the month of Pharmuthi, we should end the fast on Saturday evening the twenty-first day of the same month of Pharmuthi, and we should celebrate Easter on the following day, which is Sunday, the twenty-second of the same month (17 April). After

which we should add the seven weeks of holy Pentecost, mindful of the poor, loving God and our neighbour, praying for our enemies, mollifying our persecutors, raising up the weak from their falls with consolation and mercy, that the tongue may always be sounding the praises of God, that the just judgements of the Church might in no way be destroyed by unreasonable clemency, nor human opinions be preferred to the law of God. If we have desired his friendship, we shall arrive at the glory of heaven in Christ Jesus, our Lord, through whom and with whom be splendour and dominion to God the Father with the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.

18. Greet one another with a holy kiss (cf. 1 Cor. 16:20). The brethren who are with me greet you (cf. Phil. 4:21). And you should know this, that the following have been appointed in each place respectively to replace the bishops who have died: in the city of Nikiu for Theopemptus, Theodosius;¹²² in Terenuthis, Arsintheus;¹²³ in the town of Gerae for Eudemon, Pizozus;¹²⁴ in Achaeus for Apollo, Museus;¹²⁵ in Athribis for Isidore, Albanasius;¹²⁶ in Cleopatris, Ophelius;¹²⁷ in the town of Laton for Timothy, Appelles.¹²⁸ Therefore write letters to them and receive them from them according to the Church's custom.

TRACTATE ON ISAIAH 6: 1–7
(Morin, *Anecdota Maredsolana* III. 3, 103–22)

‘And it came to pass in the year in which King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord Sabaoth sitting upon a throne high and lifted up: and Seraphim stood around him: one had six wings and the other had six wings’ (cf. Isa. 6:1–2 LXX). Let us see what Isaiah the prophet, who is reckoned to be a most learned man, understood at this point. The sacred Scriptures record that Uzziah was king of Judah. But Origen says: ‘It was not possible that Isaiah the prophet saw a vision unless King Uzziah had already died’,¹²⁹ which we can in no way accept. For in fact we read before this section that Isaiah saw many things while Uzziah was alive, as the prophet himself testifies at the beginning, saying: ‘The vision which Isaiah the prophet the son of Amos saw, which he saw against Judah and against Jerusalem in the reign of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah’ (Isa. 1:1). How therefore does Origen assert that Isaiah could not have seen the vision unless King Uzziah was already dead, when clearly Isaiah began to prophesy before Uzziah died? And he goes on to say: ‘Hear,

O heaven, and give ear O earth, for the Lord has spoken' (Isa. 1:2), setting forth what things the Lord said after the vision. Nor is it denied that King Uzziah was a sinner: but the question we are trying to resolve is how is it that the holy prophet could not see a vision of God on account of the king's being a sinner? Therefore Origen in consequence, interpreting King Uzziah allegorically, amongst other things adduces the following: 'It is necessary that such a king and prince of the soul should die, that we might be able to perceive the vision of God. For it is not written without reason: "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord Sabaoth" (cf. Isa. 6:1). For everyone of us, as Uzziah lives so lives Pharaoh, but as long as we do the tasks of Egypt, we do not groan: but if Pharaoh should die to us, at once we declare our pain with groaning, as it is written in Exodus (cf. Ex. 2:23). In this way as long as Uzziah lives, we cannot see the vision of God.'¹³⁰

Since he interprets the text in this way, we are not so obstinate that we should reckon to refute an allegory if it is pious and imbibes from the fountain of truth; but only in so far as it is not contrary to the truth, does not distort the factual record, follows the sense of sacred Scripture, and does not prefer the will of a perverse interpreter of the Scriptures to authority.¹³¹ Therefore we, too, should say to Origen, who confuses everything in the fog of allegory: Not so your divination, not so. For the factual narrative relates what was done in accordance with the conditions of the times, and reading it rouses us by its example to follow the best and avoid what is contrary to it. Moreover allegory, as if by a series of steps, ascends through the factual narrative to the heights, and so should be more sublime, not contrary. Indeed blessed Paul, in expounding the mystery of Adam and Eve, did not deny their creation, but building the spiritual understanding on the foundation of the factual narrative, says: 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one. This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the Church' (Eph. 5:31-2; cf. Gen. 2:24). And elsewhere, when he brings forward an example from very ancient history, in which it is written how water burst out of the rock struck by Moses' rod, that a thirsty people should drink, he applies the spiritual sense thus: 'For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ' (1 Cor. 10:4). In no way does he deny the very clear factual record, but drawing what was actually done to a higher sense, he thus erects the roof without taking away the foundations. If Origen had looked for allegories of this sort, we would have accepted them willingly.

But because he constructs a lie in such a way as to destroy the truth, we reject his explanation.

Let us therefore examine what he means when he says: 'The prophet could not have seen a vision so long as Uzziah was still alive.' And immediately applying an allegorical interpretation he adds: 'It was necessary for Uzziah, the prince of the soul, to die first, so that the prophet could thus see a vision.' What then should we say about Isaiah's words: 'Woe is me! For I am pricked to the heart; for although I am a man and have unclean lips, I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, and I have seen with my eyes the King, the Lord of Hosts' (Isa. 6:5 LXX)? For if he had unclean lips, how should King Uzziah have died in his soul for him to see a vision? He admits that his own lips and those of the people were impure to such a degree that afterwards he can say that he arrived at the grace of purification. For there follows: 'And there was sent to me one of the Seraphim, and he had in his hand a coal, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth, and said: "Behold this has touched your lips and will take away your iniquities, and will purge away your sins"' (Isa. 6:6-7 LXX). It was not before his iniquities were taken away and his sins purified that he saw the vision. How then, according to Origen's allegory, had Uzziah, the prince of the soul, died, when Isaiah had impure lips until after the vision, indeed when his iniquities were taken away and his sins purified after it? For the Lord appears even to sinners, to draw them away from sin. For even Saint Paul, when he was a young man and was devastating the Church, and after receiving letters against the apostles was raging for their blood – the Saviour appeared to him and said: 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' (Acts 9:4). Nebuchadnezzar, too, the Chaldaean king, when the three youths were walking about in the furnace of fire, saw a fourth amongst them and said: 'Did we not cast three men bound into the fire? How then do I see four men loose, and walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt, and the appearance of the fourth is like the son of God?' (Dan. 3:24-5 LXX). Moses also, who was brought up in Egypt and was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, saw the vision of the burning bush which was not consumed; and when he had said: 'I will turn aside and see this great sight', God first said to him: 'Moses, Moses, do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground' (Ex. 3:4-5). He is then instructed so that after the vision of God he says that he is weak in speech and very slow-tongued (cf. Ex. 4:10 LXX), that is, unworthy to be a minister of the word of God, on behalf of which he was being sent to the people.

Therefore this is how God in his great mercy also revealed himself to Isaiah, in so far as a human being can see him; and for that reason the prophet says after the vision: 'Woe is me! For I am pricked to the heart, for although I am a man and have unclean lips, I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips and have seen with my eyes the King, the Lord of Hosts' (Isa. 6:5 LXX). What the prophet is relating is simply this: Although I am a sinner and full of iniquities, I have seen the Lord sitting on a high and lofty throne. The facts prove that Origen's allegory possesses neither elegance nor truth: for it is not, as he has testified, that the prince of his soul has died, and it was thus that he saw the vision of God, since after the vision he testified that he had impure lips. Whether according to the literal sense or according to the allegorical sense, he is convicted of falsehood. For while Uzziah was still alive Isaiah saw a vision against Judah and Jerusalem, as we read in the text; and in the same year that Uzziah died, he saw another vision. Moreover, he is discovered to be in error even according to the allegorical sense. For how was Uzziah, the prince of his soul, dead when as yet he still had unclean lips? If he was not dead to him who had unclean lips, how does he also die to us when we see a vision, if after the vision we still have unclean lips? But the sense is obvious, for as Paul has written: 'While we were still sinners, Christ died for us' (Rom. 5:8). Similarly we say of Isaiah: if he still had unclean lips, and Uzziah, whom Origen interprets as the prince of the prophet's soul, was not yet dead to him, Isaiah saw the vision not as a result of his own merit, but as a result of the Saviour's mercy. And although unclean lips prohibited him from seeing the divine grandeur, nevertheless the Creator's compassion bestowed on him the ability to see him. This vision therefore appeared to sinners to take away their sins.

Therefore let these little snares of Origen cease, and let truth prevail. Against which he says again: 'I saw two Seraphim. Each of them had six wings: With two they covered their face, not their own but God's, and with two they covered their feet, not their own but God's, and with two they flew.'¹³² In this passage, too, it is clear that he has set down his own sense; he always takes pleasure in novelties, and blushes to say what is obvious to everyone. For it was not God's face – that which enables God to be seen – that the Seraphim covered with their two wings, as he imagined, but their own, since the prophets showed that God's face – that which God is – cannot be seen by mortal eyes. Hence when Moses said to the Lord: 'Reveal thyself to me clearly that I may see thee' (Ex. 33:13 LXX), he heard from him: 'No one shall see my face and live' (Ex. 33:20 LXX). By these words he

is taught to place a limit on his desire, and to understand the extent of his own weakness. John, too, cries: 'No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he had made him known' (Jn 1:18). The explanation of this saying teaches that not only human beings but rational creatures as a whole and whatever is outside God cannot see God as he really is, but only as he has deigned to reveal himself to his creatures. This is also why Saint Paul says: 'To the king of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory' (1 Tim. 1:17). When he calls God 'invisible' he does not mean that he is visible to some and invisible to others: for whatever is invisible is seen by nobody, but is invisible to all, that the invisibility of God's nature might be preserved. The following testimony also supports this sense: 'who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has ever seen or can see' (1 Tim. 6:16). The unapproachable Word [. . .].¹³³ Therefore the Seraphim covered their own face, not God's: for no creature, whether visible or invisible, can apprehend the divine greatness.

In consequence Origen also asserts wrongly: 'Two Seraphim covered God's feet.' But if the Seraphim cover his face and his feet, they would be greater than God, in that, so to speak, they cover him from head to toe. This is totally unacceptable, otherwise we would believe that the Seraphim are greater than God; which, although Origen does not state it explicitly, is a consequence of what he says.¹³⁴ For everything that covers something else is greater than that which it covers; and whatever is covered is less than that by which it is covered. Origen, not realizing what he is saying, impiously arrives at this conclusion. David, too, asserting that God is uncircumscribed, sings with mystical voice: 'Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend to heaven, thou art there! If I go down to hell, thou art there! If I take up my wings in the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there thy hand shall lead me and thy right hand shall hold me' (Ps. 139 [138]:7-10). Hence, too, Saint Paul says of Moses: 'he endured as seeing him who is invisible' (Heb. 11:27). According to this sense even the Seraphim do not cover the uttermost parts of God, which are called spiritually his 'feet'; but they place a restraint on their steps and prophetic desire, that they should not wish to reach out beyond that which the weakness of creatures can bear. And so they cover their feet, that they should not desire to know God more than he wishes himself to be understood.

It also says: 'Seraphim stood around him' (Isa. 6:2). To 'stand' means to remain in their measure and not to hasten to greater things.

That is why they flew with their middle wings, as if content with the middle state of the flying which is added; that leaving behind lowly things, they should meditate on matters concerning God which are more exalted. That God who holds together all things in his majesty is omnipotent, is both commonly said by mortals and is witnessed to by the prophet, who says: 'His excellence covered the heavens' (Hab. 3:3 LXX). Before him Solomon expressed the same sense in different words: 'The glory of God conceals a word' (Prov. 25:2 LXX). David also declares something similar about God: 'He made darkness,' he says, 'his secret place' (Ps. 18 [17]:11 LXX). This demonstrates that God is incomprehensible and invisible. Isaiah, too, who before had said 'I saw the Lord of hosts sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up' (Isa. 6:1), says in what follows: 'and the house was filled with smoke' (Isa. 6:4), that he might demonstrate the incomprehensibility and inaccessibility of God. Certainly all things around God are wrapped in darkness and cloud, although he appears to those whom he wishes to instruct, as Isaiah himself was deemed worthy to experience. This is what Paul, too, understands when he says: 'O the depths of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements and how inscrutable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counsellor? Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid? For from him and through him and to him are all things' (Rom: 11: 33-6). Therefore if all things are in him, so are the Seraphim; and although they seem to be greater than other creatures, nevertheless God cannot be covered by them, but the divine splendour surrounds these and all other creatures. For where it is said 'O the depths of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!' (Rom. 11:33) his incomprehensibility is indicated. And since the same Apostle Paul writes in another place: 'Whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists' (Heb. 11:6), he does not set down that one must know who and of what nature God is, but simply that he exists.

For we know that God exists, and we know what he is not; but what he is, and of what nature, we cannot know. Because it belongs to his goodness and mercy descending upon us that we may be capable of determining something about him, we perceive him to exist through benefits he confers. But what his nature is, on account of the gulf separating us from him, no creature can comprehend; and, to put it succinctly, we know what God is not, but we cannot know what he is. Not by reason of his having something which afterwards he ceased to have, but by reason of that which is joined to us through the weakness of our nature which he does not have; for example, that

he should have a mutable body,¹³⁵ or that he should be in need of anything, or that he should be accessible to human vision or subject to anything else that pertains to the creature. Though since the creature has been made by God, it has been perfected by his wisdom and rationality. Nor have all things begun to exist by chance without providence, as some philosophers think: for whatever happens by chance lacks order and purpose.¹³⁶ What is produced by art, which is evident in all things, also declares the intelligence of its maker, when considered not only in relation to its activity but also in relation to the purpose and rationality of its activity.

Thus the wisdom of God shines in every creature, and nothing that has been made, has been made without cause and utility. Utility itself also possesses beauty and beauty is adorned with utility; and the single material of the elements receives different forms, that the providence of God might be recognized in the particular species. Contemplating this, the psalmist breaks out in praises, saying: 'Wonderful are thy works; and my soul knows it well' (Ps. 139 [138]: 14 LXX). And the prophet says in agreement: 'I considered thy works and was amazed' (Hab. 3:2 LXX). Also the text: 'And behold, everything was very good' (Gen. 1:31) signifies not that the creature came into being by chance, but that all things were made by the purpose and wisdom of God, so that splendour and beauty and incredible harmony should be made known in the diversity of all creatures. The blessed prophet says: 'The heavens are telling the glory of God' (Ps. 19 [18]:1), not because the heavens use mouth and tongue and windpipe for crying out; but because by their harmony and perpetual service they indicate the will of the Creator. For from the magnitude and beauty of creatures we consequently understand their Creator, and 'ever since the creation of the world we perceive mentally the invisible things of God in the things that have been made' (cf. Rom. 1:20).

What then, as we have said, is God, that we cannot know him? That he exists we understand, not through our senses but by his mercy, as we contemplate the prudence of the Creator through the things he has made. In a ship or building do we not ponder the skill of the shipwrights or builders, seeing their art in the work, and in the individual things which have been perfected by reason do we not discern the invisible rationality? So, too, God is perceived through his creatures, and his invisibility is made in some way visible. For neither does heaven cover God and make him invisible, nor do the Seraphim and the other creatures, as if he could be seen or cease to be visible thanks to their service and covering of him. But he is in

all things, and is everywhere, and is above all things, and surveys all things visible and invisible, ruling all things and sustaining them, not changing from place to place, but ordering all things through reason; that the earth's mass should be made firm by his will, and again be shaken at his nod, striking fear into the hearts of mortals when we stand in need of correction; that the seas should be spread out as a free-flowing liquid, and when they come to their appointed boundaries that they should beat against them with the dashing of the waves; that the year's cycle should be divided into four seasons,¹³⁷ and that by the decreasing and increasing movements in the variation of weather they should germinate seeds, nourish shoots, and parch them by the heat of the sun; and that illuminated with his light, both rational and invisible creatures might be sustained always by the love of God and in no way turn away to earthly things.

Indeed, it is shown by these things that the Seraphim do not cover God's face and feet, as Origen imagines, wishing to prove him invisible not as a property of his nature, but by the ministry of creatures. For when the prophet says: 'I saw the Lord of hosts sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up' (Isa. 6:1), again the Seraphim are seen to cover their face and their feet, that they might show the prophet that the magnificence of God is not seen, but that as a favour he offers himself to the sight of mortals, in such a way, however, that he remains invisible. Hence Moses, too, when he was instructing the people that God is invisible, says: 'You heard the sound of the words, but saw no form; there was only a voice' (Deut. 4:12). For indeed the Lord and Saviour also says of the Holy Spirit: 'The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes' (Jn 3:8), insisting that the Spirit, too, is invisible and beyond human understanding. On which the learned Apostle Paul bursts out with these words: 'For what person knows a man's thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God' (2 Cor. 2:11). And since God is invisible, consequently the Spirit who is in God is also called invisible, containing all things and penetrating them, in accordance with that which is written elsewhere: 'the Spirit of the Lord has filled the world' (Wisd. 1:7). We read of almighty God: 'Do I not fill heaven and earth? says the Lord' (Jer. 23:24). And of the Saviour, who assumed a human body, the Apostle says with faith: 'He who descended is he who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things' (Eph. 4:10). By participation in him the Seraphim, too, share in the fullness, and by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit all the holy powers receive sanctity.

Let us turn to Ezekiel to show how he, too, experiences similar things. In his description of the vision of the Cherubim, and the four living symbols, he adduces the following: 'And the four had their wings spread out above; each had two joined to one another, and two covered their bodies' (Ez. 1:11 LXX). Let us examine what he says: they veiled their own bodies, not that of God; that by these words we might learn that every creature, although it might be rational and transcend earthly things, nevertheless in the condition of its weakness it cannot see God as he is, nor can it look at his clear light with its dim eyes. Which sense the same prophet conveys in different words in a mystical narration: 'And behold, a voice from above the firmament that was over their head, looking as it were like a stone, in the likeness of a throne; and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as it were of a human form. And I saw the appearance as it were of amber from the loins and above; and from the kidneys and below the appearance, as it were, of fire, and brightness round about, like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain. This was the appearance of the brightness round about, and this was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord' (Ez. 1:25-2:l LXX). By this description he demonstrates that he saw not God himself but the likeness of the glory of the Lord; that from the likeness which he could not bear to experience he could guess how great the reality is, the likeness of which is granted to each of the saints: because the creature cannot see the nature of the divine majesty. Hence the same prophet says further on: 'And I arose and went forth into the plain; and lo, the glory of the Lord stood there, like the glory which I had seen by the river Chebar, and I fell on my face' (Ez. 3:23); that he may show that God is invisible, and that no created thing can see its Creator. We read in the Gospel, that when the Lord was transfigured on the mountain the apostles fell on their faces (cf. Mt. 17:6) because their countenances could not bear the glory. For not only God the almighty Father, but also the Son, that is the Word of God, is by his nature invisible. On account of which he assumed a visible human body, that through that which could be seen the invisible God could speak in person.

Although nobody doubts this, once again in discussing the Seraphim, Origen praises them so much above their measure that he blasphemes the Son of God and the Holy Spirit. For he says in what follows: 'But this is about the Seraphim who are around God and only rationally and intelligently say "Holy, Holy, Holy". They therefore praise him intelligently and wisely because they are holy.'¹³⁸ We cannot deny that the Seraphim say 'Holy, Holy, Holy' rationally and

intelligently: but I ask the distinguished doctor where in the holy Scriptures do we read that only the Seraphim praise God intelligently; since all rational creatures and the first-born of the heavenly Church know God? The thrones, and dominions and principalities, and authorities, and powers, which Paul lists (cf. Col. 1:16), proclaim God intelligently as holy. For Isaiah cries: 'God who dwells on high is holy' (Isa. 33:5 LXX). And before him, David: 'Extol the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool, for he is holy' (Ps. 99 [98]:5). Daniel also says of the host of angels: 'a thousand thousands served him' (Dan. 7:10). For all the ministers of the Spirit intelligently and rationally proclaim God as holy; so, too, we read that the four youths in the fiery furnace sang: 'Bless the Lord you angels of the Lord, praise him and exalt him for ever' (Dan. 3:58 LXX). And not only do the Seraphim, as Origen audaciously declares, intelligently and learnedly praise God, saying 'Holy, Holy, Holy'; but also every creature, according to Ananias and Azarias and Misael, is attested worthily to praise God. For there follows: 'Bless the Lord, all works of the Lord, praise him and exalt him for ever' (Dan. 3:57 LXX). And in the psalms every creature is called upon to praise the Lord, as David says: 'Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise him in the heights! Praise him all his angels, praise him all his hosts!' (Ps. 148:1-2). And assuredly if they praise God, they know him to be holy; and not only the Seraphim, as we have already said, but all things that praise God know him whom they praise to be holy.

We know, for example, that with the Father there are many mansions (cf. Jn. 14:2) but the holiness of God is proclaimed in each mansion individually according to the measure of those who dwell in the various mansions. Thus as the Seraphim praise God in accordance with the manner of their faith, so they also know his holiness, in accordance with which both the archangels and the angels and all the ministers of the Spirit praise God as holy. If this is only allowed to the Seraphim, in accordance with Origen's error, it follows that knowledge of God and the grounds for praising him are taken away from the Archangels Gabriel and Michael and the rest who occupy the same rank in God's service. For Paul says: 'But you have come to Mount Sion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven' (cf. Heb. 12:22-3). If, according to Origen, only the Seraphim praise God intelligently, it follows that all these should be believed to praise him foolishly and irrationally. Yet how does the psalmist say: 'A hymn for all his saints' (Ps. 148:14)? Or by what confidence does Isaiah

exhort us who are human beings to praise God, saying: 'Sing to the Lord, call upon his name' (Isa. 12:3 LXX)? And again in the same volume, censuring the impiety of the Jews, he says: 'Ah, sinful nation, a people full of sins, a seed of sin, unjust sons; you have forsaken the Lord, and provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger' (Isa. 1:4 LXX). When he said 'the Holy One of Israel', did he speak intelligently or unintelligently? I do not think there is anyone so unsound of mind that he should dare to say that the prophet stupidly proclaimed God to be holy. And in another place in the same prophet we read: 'Thus says the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, "When you return and mourn, then you shall be saved"' (Isa. 30:15 LXX).

If only the Seraphim praise God as holy, it follows that the angels and all rational creatures and even the prophet himself, are excluded from intelligent praise, which says 'Holy, Holy, Holy'. Hannah, too, when she had weaned Samuel, broke out in these words, giving thanks to God: 'I have rejoiced in thy salvation, because there is none holy like the Lord, and there is no one holy like our God' (cf. 1 Sam. 2:1-2 LXX). It would follow that in saying this she spoke unintelligently. But Isaiah, too, in predicting the coming of the Lord in the flesh, writes: 'Sanctify him who despises his life, who is abhorred by the nations that serve the princes' (Isa. 49:7 LXX). How ought we, who belong to the nations, praise him? Intelligently or unintelligently? If we praise him intelligently, we, too, are worthy of praise; but if stupidly, then stupidity is applicable to us too. When he said: 'who despises his life', we must accept that he disparages it, and considers it negligible, and disregards it for that which it is; which is what the Saviour did when he said: 'Now is my soul troubled' (Jn. 12:27), and: 'My soul is sorrowful, even to death' (Mt. 26:38). Doubtless he said this because of the lowliness of the body he assumed. We have said these things to prove that not only the Seraphim but also the angels and other rational creatures praise God intelligently as holy.

Furthermore, in his discussion of the celestial beings, Origen makes himself a judge of the holiness of each of the spiritual beings, and says rashly of the Seraphim: 'We know that there is nothing more holy than these among existent things.' So says he, but we for our part know that the Seraphim, and thrones, and principalities, and authorities and powers and dominions, which according to the Apostle Paul serve God, and all the angels and archangels which serve in their turn, are all holy, leaving to the mind of God alone which is more holy than which. For we do not know which archangels are holier than which, nor which angels seem to be better

than which. 'For star differs from star in glory' (1 Cor. 15:41). Gazing at them with our eyes, we can judge which star is bigger than another; but with regard to the angels, whom we do not see, and the archangels, principalities, thrones and dominions, authorities and powers, and the other spiritual ministers, we cannot judge. For an inferior and more humble nature cannot express an opinion about natures which are superior, so as to say: this angel is better than that angel, and this dominion and authority is more sublime than that dominion and power and authority.

But Origen audaciously pronounces on the Seraphim, saying that 'among those things which are holy, nothing is holier than the Seraphim'. Since David says: 'Give ear, O shepherd of Israel, thou who leadest Joseph like a flock, thou who sittest upon the Cherubim, manifest thyself' (Ps. 80 [79]:1-2), do you think that anyone of us can know whether the Cherubim are holier than the Seraphim, when they too are holy, and God alone and those to whom he himself has deigned to reveal it, have knowledge of this matter, which are holier than which? For even the apostles, since they were ignorant of their own measure, and did not know who was greater than whom, were judged by the Lord; and thus Peter was given the first place, that each of them should have his order (cf. Mt. 18:1; 16:18; 10:2-4). And David sings: 'Lord thou hast searched me and known me' (Ps. 13 [138]:1). For if 'no one knows a man's thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him' (Cor. 2:11), by what temerity does Origen dare to say that he knows which is more holy than which in heaven, and that nothing seems to him to be holier than the Seraphim? Who gave him the power of this judgement, that he should judge between Cherubim and Seraphim?

When Ezekiel says of the Cherubim: 'And the sound of the wings of the Cherubim was heard as far as the outer court, like the voice of God Shaddai when he speaks' (Ez. 10:5), it belongs to stupid temerity for anyone to wish to discern what the difference may be between the Cherubim and the Seraphim, since this is reserved to the knowledge of God alone. And again as the same prophet says about the Cherubim: 'And the glory of the Lord departed from the vestibule of the house, and went up on the Cherubim: and the Cherubim lifted up their wings and mounted up from the earth in my sight' (Ez. 10:18). What human being, then, will boast that he knows the measure of their holiness, and that by a comparison of glory the Seraphim occupy a lesser position, or venture to pronounce on celestial beings when he does not know the terrestrial? For who knows clearly which men are more holy than which others, unless

perhaps the Holy Spirit reveals it to us? Ignorant of this, Origen did not place any restraint on his tongue.

The same Ezekiel, again describing the Cherubim says: 'And the glory of the God of Israel was over them. This is the living creature that I saw underneath the God of Israel by the river Chebar; and I knew that they were Cherubim. Each had four faces, and each had eight wings, and underneath their wings was the semblance of human hands. These were the faces I had seen under the glory of the Lord by the river Chebar; and they went everyone straight forward' (Ez. 10:19–22). We know from Isaiah's teaching that the Seraphim each have six wings. Furthermore, Ezekiel informs us that one of the Cherubim has four faces and eight wings. If one is going to pronounce on comparative greatness, what do you think is greater, a being that has a single face and six wings, or one that has four faces and eight wings? But it is presumptuous not only to speak of these things but even to think of them, especially when we are ignorant even of the principle by which we ourselves are made, since David says of God: 'For it is he who knows our frame' (Ps. 103 [102]:14). Both are holy, but which is greater God sees.

For if we cannot know the measure of the sea and the sand, and also of the stars and clouds and rain, nor the depth of the earth, nor the magnitude of the ocean, nor the number of the plants which grow in the mountains and the valleys, nor by what principle we ourselves have been put together, why should we know those things that exceed the mode of human knowledge? Origen in his raving is so audacious that while amongst the inexperienced and simple he seeks to win glory by the novelty of his words, he does not know that he is a man. In the Gospel the Saviour says of John the Baptist: 'What did you go out into the desert to behold? A reed shaken by the wind? Why then did you go out? To see a man clothed in soft raiment? Behold those who wear soft raiment are in kings' houses. Why then did you go out? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet' (Mt. 11:7–9). And at once he adds: 'among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist' (Mt. 11:11). And the Lord said the same about Job: 'Have you observed my servant Job? For there is none like him on earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God, turning away from evil and still holds fast to his integrity' (Job 2:3).

Let Origen therefore reply to us if he has heard the Lord speaking, as he did of John and Job, of the Seraphim too, that nothing is holier than they. But if he has not heard him, let him be silent, and leave the art of judging his creatures to God. For since David says of God:

'He mounted on a cherub and flew' (Ps. 18 [17]:10), and Saint Paul to the Hebrews says of the tabernacle as a ty[pe of the Lord's body, in whose likeness that Jewish tent]¹³⁹ had been made: 'And above the ark were the Cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat' (Heb. 9:5); it is dangerous to say that the Seraphim are more holy than the Cherubim, and exceed the measure of human humility. The Lord says to Jeremiah: 'I have made you an assayer among the people that you may assay them' (Jer. 6:27 LXX); and Origen, as if appointed an assayer of heavenly and invisible things, dares to say of the Seraphim that nothing among rational creatures is holier than they.

If his temerity had advanced only to this point, we could in some way or other have put up with his madness. But now he embarks on greater blasphemies, and his impiety reaches God himself. For like a maker of idols and creator of new images,¹⁴⁰ he calls the Son and the Holy Spirit two Seraphim; and in this vomiting forth of sacrilege breaks out with: 'from that which is primarily holy the Seraphim receive a participation in holiness, and one calls to another: "Holy, holy, holy"' (Isa. 6:3). And again: 'What are,' he says, 'these Seraphim? My Lord and the Holy Spirit.'¹⁴¹ That the Seraphim receive their holiness from God, who is the source of all holiness, and one cries to another, 'Holy, holy, holy' we cannot deny. But that these are reckoned to be the Son and the Holy Spirit, we utterly reject. For whatever possesses holiness by participation in another, is not called holy in the proper sense, nor is it of the same holiness as that from which it receives holiness; but the Son and the Holy Spirit [are holy] not in an improper sense, by participation in another, but by nature[. Indeed the creature]¹⁴² which receives the name of holy through sanctification by God, either remains in holiness and is called holy, or through negligence loses what it has received and ceases to be holy.

On the other hand, the Son and the Holy Spirit do not possess holiness through participation in another, nor do they seem to be like creatures and receive what they do not have from elsewhere, and are inferior to him from whom they possess holiness. For a body which has colour is not itself what colour is. It is either white or red or black by participation in colour; although it cannot be without colour, it is not the same kind of thing as colour itself. Similarly, if the Son has holiness from another, as Origen would have it, he is not holy by nature. And what we have said of the Son we should understand, too, of the Holy Spirit. For it is one thing to be holy by nature and another by participation: because in the one what always exists

cannot be lost, whereas in the other it can be taken away because it has been received. Let us take another example. Fire is hot by nature, but it also makes other things hot which receive its heat by participation; and they are said to be hot not so much by nature, as by participation in heat. Similarly with the Son and the Spirit, if they possess holiness from another, they are to be believed to possess holiness not according to nature but according to grace.

But what shall we say to Origen, who has dared to call the Son and the Holy Spirit holy not by nature but by participation, with the result that they are not very different from us, who merit having a share in holiness from another? Even though he does not put it in so many words, this is the logical consequence of what he says. He does not know that although colour cannot be separated from a body, nevertheless every participation that descends from another is of inferior merit to that which sanctifies through participation in it. For it is one thing to possess something by nature, and another to possess it by accident. Therefore if the Son and the Holy Spirit receive their holiness from some principal source, they are not holy by nature but in an improper sense. For whatever is holy by participation receives what it did not have from that in which it begins to have a share. God forbid that we should think this of the Son and the Holy Spirit, and break out into such lunacy that, in accordance with Origen's ravings, we say the two Seraphim are the Son and the Holy Spirit. Why not rather say to him with the zeal of the Apostle: "To which of the Seraphim and the other creatures did God say, "Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee"? And again: "Let all his angels worship him". For he says of the angels: "Who makes his angels winds and his servants flames of fire". And of the Son indeed: "Thy throne is for ever and ever, the righteous sceptre is the sceptre of thy kingdom" (cf. Heb. 1:5-8). And again of the Son, certainly not of the Seraphim, the psalmist sings: 'In the beginning thou, O Lord, didst lay the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands' (Ps. 102 [101]:25 LXX). For these things are not said of the Seraphim, but of the Son; nor did the Seraphim lay the foundation of the earth, nor are the heavens the work of their hands, as we should believe the Son and the Holy Spirit are, according to Origen's madness.

For to which of the Seraphim, or 'to what angel did God say: "Sit at my right hand, till I make thy enemies a stool for thy feet"? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?' (Heb. 1:13-14). That is why Isaiah cries out concerning the Seraphim: 'One of the seraphim was

sent to me' (Isa. 6:6 LXX); it can hardly be doubted that it was as a minister serving the commands of God that the Seraph was sent. For he was sent on account of those who are pursuing salvation. On this point, too, we evidently do not know, according to Origen's argument, that the Seraphim are not the Son and the Holy Spirit, because they cry: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts; and the whole earth is full of his glory' (Isa. 6:3). If they had not been ministering spirits prophesying the coming of our Lord and Saviour, they would no doubt have said: 'Heaven and earth are full of my glory.' Isaiah says: 'There was sent to me one of the Seraphim, and he had in his hand a coal, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold this has touched your lips, and takes away your iniquities, and purifies your sins"' (Isa. 6: 6-7). Therefore it was not one of the Seraphim, but the coal which he had taken from the altar, that is, the fiery word and teaching of God, which took away the prophet's iniquities and purified his sins. If the Son of God, who took away iniquities and purified sins, were the Seraph, he would have said: 'Behold, I have taken away your iniquities and purified your sins.' Therefore it was the word of God seized from the spiritual altar that took away the prophet's iniquities and purified his sins. Which, if it is kept in the hearts of believers, even today takes away iniquities and purifies sins, as David says: 'I have laid up thy word in my heart, that I might not sin against thee' (Ps 118 [119]:11).