

Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, Book XI

Origen

Early Church (pre-Nicene) · Ante-Nicene · Commentary

STROMATA 178

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INTRODUCTION

In this book of his sprawling commentary on Matthew, Origen works through the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus walking on water, and the dispute with the Pharisees over ritual purity, reading each episode on multiple levels at once, literal and allegorical together. Five loaves become the five senses; the disciples' boat becomes the trials of the soul contending with contrary winds. This is Origen at his most characteristic: relentlessly attentive to the letter of the text while always reaching past it for a deeper spiritual sense. Readers new to patristic allegorical exegesis may find the method unfamiliar, but it rewards patience, this is one of the founding documents of an entire way of reading Scripture.

1. Introduction to the Feeding of the Five Thousand.

And when even had come His disciples came to Him, Matthew 14:15 that is, at the consummation of the age in regard to which we may fitly say what is found in the Epistle of John, It is the last hour. 1 John 2:18 They, not yet understanding what the Word was about to do, say to Him, The place is desert, Matthew 14:15 seeing the desert condition of the masses in respect of God and the Law and the Word; but they say to Him, The time is past, Matthew 14:15 as if the fitting season of the law and prophets had passed. Perhaps they spoke this saying, in reference to the word of Jesus, that because of the beheading of John both the law and the prophets who were until John had ceased. Luke 16:16 The time is past, therefore they say, and no food is at hand, because the season of it is no longer present, that those who have followed You in the desert may serve the law and the prophets. And, further, the disciples say, Send them away, Matthew 14:15 that each one may buy food, if he cannot from the cities, at least from the villages — places more ignoble. Such things the disciples said, because, after the letter of the law had been abrogated and prophecies had ceased, they despaired of unexpected and new food being found for the multitudes. But see what Jesus answers to the disciples though He does not cry out and plainly say it: You suppose that, if the great multitude go away from Me in need of food, they will find it in villages rather than with Me, and among bodies of men, not of citizens but of villagers, rather than by abiding with Me. But I declare unto you, that in regard to that of which you suppose they are in need they are not in need, for they have no need to go away; but in regard to that of which you think they have no need — that is, of Me — as if I could not feed them, of this contrary to your expectation they have need. Since, then, I have trained you, and made you fit to give rational food to them who are

in need of it, give ye to the crowds who have followed Me to eat; for you have the power, which you have received from Me, of giving the multitudes to eat; and if you had attended to this, you would have understood that I am far more able to feed them, and you would not have said, 'Send the multitudes away that they may go and buy food for themselves.' Matthew 14:15

2. Exposition of the Details of the Miracle.

Jesus, then, because of the power which He gave to the disciples, even the power of nourishing others, said, Give ye them to eat. Matthew 14:16 But (not denying that they can give loaves, but thinking that there were much too few and not sufficient to feed those who followed Jesus, and not considering that when Jesus takes each loaf — the Word — He extends it as far as He wills, and makes it suffice for all whomsoever He desires to nourish), the disciples say, We have here but five loaves and two fishes. Matthew 14:17 Perhaps by the five loaves they meant to make a veiled reference to the sensible words of the Scriptures, corresponding in number on this account to the five senses, but by the two fishes either to the word expressed and the word conceived, which are a relish, so to speak, to the sensible things contained in the Scriptures; or, perhaps, to the word which had come to them about the Father and the Son. Wherefore also after His resurrection He ate of a broiled fish, Luke 24:42-43 having taken a part from the disciples, and having received that theology about the Father which they were in part able to declare to Him. Such is the contribution we have been able to give to the exposition of the word about the five loaves and the two fishes; and probably those, who are better able than we to gather together the five loaves and the two fishes among themselves, would be able to give a fuller and better interpretation of their meaning. It must be observed, however, that while in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the disciples say that they have the five loaves and the two fishes, without indicating whether they were wheaten or of barley, John alone says, that the loaves were barley loaves. John 6:9 Wherefore, perhaps, in the Gospel of John the disciples do not acknowledge that the loaves are with them, but say in John, There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fishes. John 6:9 And so long as these five loaves and two fishes were not carried by the disciples of Jesus, they did not increase or multiply, nor were they able to nourish more; but, when the Saviour took them, and in the first place looked up to heaven, with the rays of His eyes, as it were, drawing down from it power which was to be mingled with the loaves and the fishes which were about to feed the five thousand; and after this blessed the five loaves and the two fishes, increasing and multiplying them by the word and the blessing; and in the third place dividing and breaking He gave to the disciples that they might set them before the multitudes, then the loaves and the fishes were sufficient, so that all ate and were satisfied, and some portions of the loaves which had been blessed they were unable to eat. For so much remained over to the multitudes, which was not according to the capacity of the multitudes but of the disciples who were able to take up that which remained over of the broken pieces, and to place it in baskets filled with that which remained over, which were in number so many as the tribes of Israel. Concerning Joseph, then, it is written in the Psalms, His hands served in the basket, but about the disciples of Jesus that they took up that which remained over of the broken pieces twelve baskets, twelve baskets, I take it, not half-full but filled. And there are, I think, up to the present time, and will be until the consummation of the age with the disciples of Jesus, who are superior to the multitudes, the twelve baskets, filled with the broken pieces of living bread which the multitudes cannot eat. Now those who ate of the five loaves which existed

before the twelve baskets that remained over, were kindred in nature to the number five; for those who ate had reached the stage of sensible things, since also they were nourished by Him who looked up to heaven and blessed and broke them, and were not boys nor women, but men. For there are, I think, even in sensible foods differences, so that some of them belong to those who have put away childish things, 1 Corinthians 13:11 and some to those who are still babes and carnal in Christ.

3. The Exposition of Details Continued. The Sitting Down on the Grass. The Division into Companies.

We have spoken these things because of the words, They that ate were five thousand men, beside children and women, Matthew 14:21 which is an ambiguous expression; for either those who ate were five thousand men, and among those who ate there was no child or woman; or the men only were five thousand, the children and the women not being reckoned. Some, then, as we have said by anticipation, have so understood the passage that neither children nor women were present, when the increase and multiplication of the five loaves and the two fishes took place. But some one might say that, while many ate and according to their desert and capacity participated in the loaves of blessing, some worthy to be numbered, corresponding to the men of twenty years old who are numbered in the Book of Numbers, Numbers 1:3 were Israelitish men, but others who were not worthy of such account and numbering were children and women. Moreover, interpret with me allegorically the children in accordance with the passage, I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ; 1 Corinthians 3:1 and the women in accordance with the saying, I wish to present you all as a pure virgin to Christ; 2 Corinthians 11:2 and the men according to the saying, When I have become a man I have put away childish things. 1 Corinthians 13:11 Let us not pass by without exposition the words, He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass, and He took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, He blessed, and broke, and gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitudes. And they did all eat. Matthew 14:19-20 For what is meant by the words, And He commanded all the multitudes to sit down on the grass? And what are we to understand in the passage worthy of the command of Jesus? Now, I think that He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass because of what is said in Isaiah, All flesh is grass; Isaiah 40:6 that is to say, He commanded them to put the flesh under, and to keep in subjection the mind of the flesh, Romans 8:6 that so any one might be able to partake of the loaves which Jesus blesses. Then since there are different orders of those who need the food which Jesus supplies and all are not nourished by equal words, on this account I think that Mark has written, And He commanded them that they should all sit down by companies upon the green grass; and they sat down in ranks by hundreds and by fifties; Mark 6:39-40 but Luke, And He said to His disciples, Make them sit down in companies about fifty each. Luke 9:14 For it was necessary that those who were to find rest in the food of Jesus should either be in the order of the hundred — the sacred number — which is consecrated to God, because of the unit, (in it) or in the order of the fifty — the number which embraces the remission of sins, in accordance with the mystery of the Jubilee which took place every fifty years, and of the feast at Pentecost. And I think that the twelve baskets were in the possession of the disciples to whom it was said You shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Matthew 19:28 And as the throne of him who judges the tribe of Reuben might be said to be a mystery, and the throne of him who judges the tribe of Simeon, and another of him who judges

the tribe of Judah, and so on with the others; so there might be a basket of the food of Reuben, and another of Simeon, and another of Levi. But it is not in accordance with our present discourse now to digress so far from the subject in hand as to collect what is said about the twelve tribes, and separately what is said about each of them, and to say what each tribe of Israel may signify.

4. The Multitudes and the Disciples Contrasted.

And straightway He constrained the disciples to enter into the boat, and to go before Him unto the other side, till He should send the multitudes away. Matthew 14:22 It should be observed how often in the same passages is mentioned the word, the multitudes, and another word, the disciples, so that by observing and bringing together the passages about this matter it may be seen that the aim of the Evangelists was to represent by means of the Gospel history the differences of those who come to Jesus; of whom some are the multitudes and are not called disciples, and others are the disciples who are better than the multitudes. It is sufficient, however, for the present, for us to set forth a few sayings, so that any one who is moved by them may do the like with the whole of the Gospels. It is written then — as if the multitudes were below, but the disciples were able to come to Jesus when He went up into the mountain, where the multitudes were not able to be — as follows: And seeing the multitudes He went up into the mountain, and when He had sat down His disciples came unto Him; and He opened His mouth and taught them saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit, etc. Matthew 5:1-3 And again in another place, as the multitudes stood in need of healing, it is said, Many multitudes followed Him and He healed them. Matthew 12:15 We do not find any healing recorded of the disciples; since if any one is already a disciple of Jesus he is whole, and being well he needs Jesus not as a physician but in respect of His other powers. Again in another place, when He was speaking to the multitudes, His mother and His brethren stood without, seeking to speak to Him; this was made known to Him by some one to whom He answered, stretching forth His hand not towards the multitudes but towards the disciples, and said, Behold My mother and My brethren, Matthew 14:46-49 and bearing testimony to the disciples as doing the will of the Father which is in heaven, He added, He is My brother and sister and mother. Matthew 14:50 And again in another place it is written, All the multitude stood on the beach and He spoke to them many things in parables. Matthew 13:2-3 Then after the parable of the sowing, it was no longer the multitudes but the disciples who came and said to Him, not Why do you speak to us in parables, but, Why do you speak to them in parables. Matthew 13:10 Then also He answered and said, not to the multitudes but to the disciples, To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to the rest in parables. Matthew 13:11 Accordingly, of those who come to the name of Jesus some, who know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, would be called disciples; but those to whom such a privilege is not given would be called multitudes, who would be spoken of as inferior to the disciples. For observe carefully that He said to the disciples, To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but about the multitudes, To them it is not given. Matthew 13:11 And in another place He dismisses the multitudes indeed, and goes into the house, Matthew 13:36 but He does not dismiss the disciples; and there came to Him into His house, not the multitudes but His disciples, saying, Declare to us the parable of the tares of the field. Matthew 13:36 Moreover, also, in another place when Jesus heard the things concerning John and withdrew in a boat to a desert place apart, the multitudes followed Him; when He came forth and saw a great multitude He had compassion on them and healed their sick — the sick of the multitudes, not of the disciples. Matthew 14:13-14 And when even had come there came to Him, not the multitudes, but the disciples, as being different from the multitudes, saying, Send the multitudes away that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food. Matthew 14:15 And, further, when Jesus took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven He blessed and broke the loaves, He gave not to the multitudes but to the disciples, Matthew 14:19 that the disciples might give to the multitudes who were not able to take from Him, but received

with difficulty at the hands of the disciples the loaves of the blessing of Jesus, and did not eat even all these; for the multitudes were filled and left that which remained over in twelve baskets which were full.

5. The Disciples in Conflict. Jesus Walks Upon the Waters.

The reason why we have taken up this subject is the passage under discussion which tells that Jesus separated the disciples from the multitudes, and constrained them to enter into the boat and to go before Him unto the other side until He Himself should send the multitudes away; Matthew 14:22 for the multitudes were not able to go away to the other side, as they were not in the mystic sense Hebrews, which are by interpretation, dwelling on the other side. But this was the work of the disciples of Jesus — I mean to go away to the other side, and to pass beyond things seen and material, as temporal, and to go on to things unseen and eternal. To be dismissed by Jesus was a sufficient act of kindness bestowed on the multitudes by Jesus; for just because they were multitudes they were not able to go away to the other side; and this kind of dismissal no one has the power to effect save Jesus only, and it is not possible for any one to be dismissed unless he has first eaten of the loaves which Jesus blesses. Nor is it possible for any one to eat of the loaves of blessing of Jesus unless he has done as Jesus commanded and sat down upon the grass as we have told. Nor again was it possible for the multitudes to do this unless they had followed Jesus from their own cities, when He withdrew into a desert place apart. And at first, when He was asked by the disciples to send away the multitudes, He did not send them away until He had fed them with the loaves of blessing; but now He sends them away, having first constrained the disciples to enter into the boat; and He sends them away, while they were somewhere below — for the desert was below — but He Himself went up into the mountain to pray. Matthew 14:23 And you must observe this, that immediately after the five thousand had been fed, Jesus constrained the disciples to embark into the boat, and to go before Him unto the other side. Only, the disciples were not able to go before Jesus to the other side; but, when they had got as far as the middle of the sea, and the boat was distressed because the wind was contrary to them, Matthew 14:24 they were afraid when about the fourth watch of the night Jesus came to them. And if Jesus had not gone up into the boat neither would the wind which was contrary to the disciples who were sailing have ceased, nor would those who were sailing have gone across and come to the other side. And, perhaps, wishing to teach them by experience that it was not possible apart from Him to go to the other side He constrained them to enter into the boat and go before Him to the other side; but, when they were not able to advance farther than the middle of the sea, He appeared to them, and did what is written, Matthew 14:25 and showed that he who arrives at the other side reaches it because Jesus sails along with him. But what is the boat into which Jesus constrained the disciples to enter? Is it perhaps the conflict of temptations and difficulties into which any one is constrained by the Word, and goes unwillingly, as it were, when the Saviour wishes to train by exercise the disciples in this boat which is distressed by the waves and the contrary wind? But since Mark has made a slight change in the reading, and for Straightway He constrained the disciples to enter into the boat and to go before Him to the other side, has written, And straightway He constrained His disciples to enter into the boat and to go before Him unto the other side unto Bethsaida, Mark 6:45 we must attend to the word, He constrained, when first we have seen to the slight variation in Mark who indicates something more definite by the addition of the pronoun; for the same thing is not expressed

by the words, straightway He constrained the disciples. Something more than the disciples simply is written in Mark, namely, His disciples. Perhaps, therefore, to attend to the expression, the disciples who found it hard to tear themselves away from Jesus, and could not be separated from Him by any ordinary cause, wished to be present with Him; but He having judged that they should make trial of the waves and of the contrary wind, which would not have been contrary if they had been with Jesus, put on them the necessity of being separated from Him and entering into the boat. The Saviour then compels the disciples to enter into the boat of temptations and to go before Him to the other side, and through victory over them to go beyond critical difficulties; but when they had come into the midst of the sea, and of the waves in the temptations, and of the contrary winds which prevented them from going away to the other side, they were not able, struggling as they were without Jesus, to overcome the waves and the contrary wind and reach the other side. Wherefore the Word, taking compassion upon them who had done all that was in their power to reach the other side, came to them walking upon the sea, which for Him had no waves or wind that was able to oppose if He so willed; for it is not written, He came to them walking upon the waves, but, upon the waters; Matthew 14:25 Just as Peter, who at first when Jesus said to him, Come, went down from the boat and walked not upon the waves, but upon the waters Matthew 14:29 to come to Jesus; but when he doubted he saw that the wind was strong, which was not strong to him who laid aside his little faith and his doubting. But, when Jesus went up with Peter into the boat, the wind ceased, as it had no power to energise against the boat when Jesus had gone up into it.

6. Interpretation of the Details in the Narrative. Application Thereof to All Disciples.

And then the disciples having crossed over came to the land Gennesaret, Matthew 14:34 of which word, if we knew the interpretation, we might gain some assistance in the exposition of the present passage. And observe, since God is faithful, and will not suffer the multitudes to be tempted above that they are able, in what way the Son of God constrained the disciples to enter into the boat, as being stronger and able to get as far as the middle of the sea, and to endure the trials by the waves, until they became worthy of divine assistance, and saw Jesus and heard Him when He had gone up, and to cross over and come to the land Gennesaret; but as for the multitudes who, because they were weaker, did not make trial of the boat and the waves and the contrary wind, them He sent away, and went up into the mountain apart to pray. Matthew 14:22-23 To pray for whom? Was it perhaps to pray for the multitudes that, when they were dismissed after the loaves of blessing, they might do nothing opposed to their dismissal by Jesus? And for the disciples that, when they were constrained by Him to enter into the boat and to go before Him unto the other side, they might suffer nothing in the sea nor from the contrary wind? And I would say with confidence, that, because of the prayer of Jesus to the Father for the disciples, they suffered nothing when sea and wave and contrary wind were striving against them. The simpler disciple, then, may be satisfied with the bare narrative; but let us remember, if ever we fall into distressful temptations, that Jesus has constrained us to enter into their boat, wishing us to go before Him unto the other side; for it is not possible for us to reach the other side, unless we have endured the temptations of waves and contrary wind. Then when we see many difficulties besetting us, and with moderate struggle we have swum through them to some extent, let us consider that our boat is in the midst of the sea, distressed at that time by the waves which wish us to make shipwreck concerning faith or some one of the virtues; but when we see the spirit of the evil one striving against us, let us conceive that then the wind is contrary to us. When then in such suffering we have spent three watches of the night — that is, of the darkness which is in the temptations— striving nobly with all our might and watching ourselves so as not to make shipwreck concerning the faith or some one of the virtues — the first watch against the father of darkness and wickedness, the second watch against his son who opposes and exalts himself against all that is called God or thing that is worshipped, 2 Thessalonians 2:4 and the third watch against the spirit that is opposed to the Holy Spirit, then we believe that when the fourth watch impends, when the night is far spent, and the day is at hand, Romans 13:12 the Son of God will come to us, that He may prepare the sea for us, walking upon it. And when we see the Word appearing unto us we shall indeed be troubled before we clearly understand that it is the Saviour who has come to us, supposing that we are still beholding an apparition, and for fear shall cry out; but He Himself straightway will speak to us saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. Matthew 14:27 And if, warmly moved by His Be of good cheer, any Peter be found among us, who is on his way to perfection but has not yet become perfect, having gone down from the boat, as if coming out of that temptation in which he was distressed, he will indeed walk at first, wishing to come to Jesus upon the waters; but being as yet of little faith, and as yet doubting, will see that the wind is strong and will be afraid and begin to sink; but he will not sink because he will call upon Jesus with loud voice, and will say to Him, Lord, save me; Matthew 14:30 then immediately while such a Peter is yet speaking and saying, Lord save me, the Word will stretch forth His hand, holding out assistance to such an one, and will take hold of him when he is beginning to sink, and will reproach him for his little faith and doubting. Matthew 14:31 Only, observe that He did not say, O you without faith, but, O you of little

faith, and that it was said, Wherefore did you doubt, as he had still a measure of faith, but also had a tendency towards that which was opposed to faith.

7. The Healing of the Sick on the Other Side. The Method of Healing.

But after this both Jesus and Peter will go up into the boat, and the wind will cease; and those in the boat, perceiving the great dangers from which they have been saved, will worship Him, saying, not simply, You are the Son of God, as also the two demoniacs said, but, Of a truth, You are the Son of God. Matthew 14:33 This the disciples in the boat say, for I do not think that others than the disciples said so. And when we have undergone all these experiences, having crossed over, we shall come to the land where Jesus commanded us to go before Him. And perhaps, also, some secret and occult mystery with reference to some who were saved by Jesus is indicated by the words, And when the men of that place knew Him,— plainly of the place on the other side —they sent into all that region round about,— round about the other side, not on the other side itself, but round about it —and they brought unto Him all that were sick. Matthew 14:35 And here observe that they brought unto Him not only many that were sick, but all in that region round about; and the sick who were brought to Him besought Him that they might touch if it were only the border of His garment, Matthew 14:36 beseeching this grace from Him, since they were not like the woman who had an issue of blood twelve years, and who came behind Him and touched the border of His garment, saying within herself, If I do but touch His garment, I shall be made whole. Matthew 9:20-21 For observe in what is said about the border of His garment, on account of what the flowing of her blood ceased at once. But those from the country round the land of Gennesaret, to which Jesus and His disciples crossed over and came, did not come of themselves to Jesus, but were brought by those who had sent the tidings, inasmuch as they were not able because of their extreme weakness to come of themselves. Nor did they merely touch the garment, like the woman who had an issue of blood, but they touched after that they had besought Him. Only, of these, as many as touched were made whole. Matthew 14:36 And whether there be any difference between the They were made whole, which is said in their case, and the being saved, — for it was said to the woman with the issue of blood, Your faith has saved you, Matthew 9:22 you may yourself consider.

8. Concerning the Pharisees and Scribes Who Came and Inquired, Why Do Your Disciples Transgress the Tradition of the Elders?

Then there came to Him from Jerusalem Pharisees and scribes, saying, Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread. Matthew 15:1-2 He who observes at what time the Pharisees and scribes came from Jerusalem to Jesus, saying, Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders, etc., will perceive that Matthew of necessity wrote not simply that Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem came to the Saviour to inquire of Him the matters before us, but put it thus, Then come to Him from Jerusalem. What time, therefore, are we to understand by then? At the time when Jesus and His disciples crossed over and came in the boat to the land of Gennesaret, when the wind ceased from the time that Jesus entered into the boat, and when the men of that place knowing Him sent into all that region round about, and brought unto Him all that were sick, and besought Him that they might touch if it were only the border of His

garment, and as many as touched were made whole. Matthew 14:35-36 At that time came to Him from Jerusalem Pharisees and scribes, not struck with admiration at the power which was in Jesus, which healed those who only touched even the border of His garment, but in a censorious spirit, accusing the disciples before their Teacher, not concerning the transgression of a commandment of God, but of a single tradition of the Jewish elders. And it is probable that this very charge of these censorious persons is a proof of the piety of the disciples of Jesus, who gave to the Pharisees and scribes no opportunity of censure with reference to the transgression of the commandments of God, as they would not have brought the charge of transgression against the disciples, as transgressing the commandment of the elders, if they had had it in their power to censure those whom they accused, and to show that they were transgressing a commandment of God. But do not suppose that these things go to establish the necessity of keeping the law of Moses according to the letter, because the disciples of Jesus up to that time kept it; for not before He suffered did He redeem us from the curse of the law, Galatians 3:13 who in suffering for men became a curse for us. But just as fittingly Paul became a Jew to the Jews that he might gain Jews, 1 Corinthians 9:20 what strange thing is it that the Apostles, whose way of life was passed among the Jews, even though they understood the spiritual things in the law, should have used a spirit of accommodation, as Paul also did when he circumcised Timothy, Galatians 2:3 and offered sacrifice in accordance with a certain legal vow, as is written in the Acts of the Apostles? Only, again, they appear fond of bringing accusations, as they have no charge to bring against the disciples of Jesus with reference to a commandment of God, but only with reference to one tradition of the elders. And especially does this love of accusation become manifest in this, that they bring the charge in presence of those very persons who had been healed from their sickness; in appearance against the disciples, but in reality purposing to slander their Teacher, as it was a tradition of the elders that the washing of hands was a thing essential to piety. For they thought that the hands of those who did not wash before eating bread were defiled and unclean, but that the hands of those who had washed them with water became pure and holy, not in a figurative sense, in due relation to the law of Moses according to the letter. But let us, not according to the tradition of the elders among the Jews, but according to sound reason, endeavour to purify our own actions and so to wash the hands of our souls, when we are about to eat the three loaves which we ask from Jesus, who wishes to be our friend; for with hands that are defiled and unwashed and impure, we ought not to partake of the loaves.

9. Explanation of Corban.

Jesus, however, does not accuse them with reference to a tradition of the Jewish elders, but with regard to two most imperative commandments of God, the one of which was the fifth in the decalogue, being as follows: Honour your father and your mother, that it may be well with you, and that your days may be long on the land which the Lord your God gives you; Exodus 20:12 and the other was written thus in Leviticus, If a man speak evil of his father or his mother, let him die the death; he has spoken evil of his father or mother, he shall be guilty. Leviticus 20:9 But when we wish to examine the very letter of the words as given by Matthew, He that speaks evil of father or mother, let him die the death, Matthew 15:4 consider whether it was taken from the place where it was written, Whoever strikes his father or mother, let him die the death; and he that speaks evil of father or mother let him die the death. For such are the exact words taken from the Law with regard to the two commandments; but Matthew has quoted them in part and in an abridged form, and not in the very words. But what the nature of the charge is which the Saviour brings against the Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem, when He says that they transgress the commandment of God because of their tradition we must consider. And God said, Honour your father and your mother, Exodus 20:12 teaching that the child should pay the honour which is due to his parents. Of this honour to parents one part was to share with them the necessities of life, such as food and clothing, and if there was any other thing in which it was possible for them to show favour towards their own parents. But the Pharisees and scribes promulgated in opposition to the law a tradition which is found rather obscurely in the Gospel, and which we ourselves would not have thought of, unless one of the Hebrews had given to us the following facts relating to the passage. Sometimes, he says, when money-lenders fell in with stubborn debtors who were able but not willing to pay their debts, they consecrated what was due to the account of the poor, for whom money was cast into the treasury by each of those who wished to give a portion of their goods to the poor according to their ability. They, therefore, said sometimes to their debtors in their own tongue, That which you owe to me is Corban,— that is, a gift — for I have consecrated it to the poor, to the account of piety towards God. Then the debtor, as no longer in debt to men but to God and to piety towards God, was shut up, as it were, even though unwilling, to payment of the debt, no longer to the money-lender, but now to God for the account of the poor, in name of the money-lender. What then the money-lender did to the debtor, that sometimes some sons did to their parents and said to them, That wherewith you might have been profited by me, father or mother, know that you will receive this from Corban, Matthew 15:4 from the account of the poor who are consecrated to God. Then the parents, hearing that that which should have been given to them was Corban —consecrated to God — no longer wished to take it from their sons, even though they were in extreme need of the necessities of life. The elders, then, declared to the people a tradition of this kind, Whosoever said to his father or mother, that which should be given to any of them is Corban and a gift, that man was no longer a debtor to his father or mother in respect of giving to them the necessities of life. The Saviour censures this tradition, as not being sound but opposed to the commandment of God. For if God says, Honour your father and your mother, but the tradition said, he is not bound to honour his father or mother by a gift, who has consecrated to God, as Corban, that which would have been given to his parents, manifestly the commandment of God concerning the honour due to parents was made void by the tradition of the Pharisees and scribes which said, that he was no longer bound to honour his father or mother, who had, once for all, consecrated to God that which the parents would have received. And the Pharisees, as lovers of money, in order that

under pretext of the poor they might receive even that which would have been given to the parents of any one, gave such teaching. And the Gospel testifies to their love of money, saying, But the Pharisees who were lovers of money heard these things and they scoffed at Him. Luke 16:14 If, then, any one of those who are called elders among us, or of those who are in any way rulers of the people, profess to give to the poor under the name of the commonweal, rather than to be of those who give to their kindred if they should chance to be in need of the necessities of life, and those who give cannot do both, this man might with justice be called a brother of those Pharisees who made void the word of God through their own tradition, and were accused by the Saviour as hypocrites. And as a very powerful deterrent to any one from being anxious to take from the account of the poor, and from thinking that the piety of others is a way of gain, 1 Timothy 6:5 we have not only these things, but also that which is recorded about the traitor Judas, who in appearance championed the cause of the poor, and said with indignation, This ointment might have been sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor, but in reality was a thief, and having the bag took away what was put therein. John 12:6 If, then, any one in our time who has the bag of the Church speaks like Judas on behalf of the poor, but takes away what is put therein, let there be assigned to him the portion along with Judas who did these things; on account of which things eating like a gangrene into his soul, the devil cast it into his heart to betray the Saviour; and, when he had received the fiery dart, Ephesians 6:16 with reference to this end, the devil afterwards himself entered into his soul and took full possession of him. And perhaps, when the Apostle says, The love of money is a root of all evils, 1 Timothy 6:10 he says it because of Judas' love of money, which was a root of all the evils that were committed against Jesus.

10. The Traditions of the Elders in Collision with Divine Law.

But let us return to the subject before us, in which the Saviour abridged and expounded two commandments from the law, the one from the decalogue from Exodus, and the other from Leviticus, or the other from some one of the books of the Pentateuch. Then since we have explained in what way they made void the word of God which said, Honour your father and your mother, by saying, You shall not honour your father or your mother, whosoever shall say to his father or mother, It is a gift that wherewith you might have been profited by me, some one may inquire whether the words, He that speaks evil of father or mother, let him die the death, Matthew 15:4 are not extraneous. For, granted that he does not honour his father and mother, who consecrates to what is called Corban that which would have been given in honour of father and mother, in what way, therefore, does the tradition of the Pharisees make void the word which said, He that speaks evil of father or mother, let him die the death? But, perhaps, when any one said to his father or his mother, It is a gift, that wherewith you might have been profited by me, Matthew 15:5 he, as it were, casts abuse on his father or mother as if he were calling his parents sacrilegious, in taking that which was consecrated to Corban from him who had consecrated it to Corban. The Jews then punish their sons according to the law, as speaking evil of father or mother, when they say to their father or mother, It is a gift, that wherewith you might have been profited by me, but you by one of your traditions make void two commandments of God. And then you are not ashamed to accuse My disciples who transgress no commandment; for they walk in all His commandments and ordinances blamelessly, but transgress a tradition of the elders, so as not to transgress a commandment of God. And if you had held this aim before you, you would have kept the commandment about the

honour due to father and mother, and that which said, He that speaks evil of father and mother, let him die the death; but the tradition of the elders which is opposed to these commandments you would not have kept.

11. Exposition of the Prophecy of Isaiah Quoted by Jesus.

And, after this, wishing to refute completely from the words of the prophets all these traditions of the elders among the Jews, He brought before them a saying, from Isaiah, which in the exact words is as follows: And the Lord said, This people draws near to Me with their mouth, etc.; Isaiah 29:13 and, as we said before, Matthew has not written out the prophetic saying in the very words. And, if it be necessary because of its use in the Gospel to interpret it according to our ability, we will take in addition the preceding passage which is, in my judgment, noted with advantage by us for the exposition of that passage in the Gospel which was taken from the prophet. The passage in Isaiah from the beginning is thus, Be faint, and be maddened: be ye drunken, but not with strong drink nor with wine: for the Lord has given you to drink of the spirit of stupor, and He will close their eyes, both of their prophets, and of their rulers who see things secret. And all these sayings shall be to you as the words of the book, which has been sealed, which if they give to a man who knows letters, saying, Read this, he shall answer, I cannot read, for it is sealed. And this book will be given into the hands of a man who does not know letters, and one will say to him, Read this, and he will say, I know not letters. And the Lord said, This people is near to Me, etc., down to the words, Woe unto them that form counsel in secret, and their works shall be in darkness. Isaiah 29:9-15 Taking up then the passage before us in the Gospel, I have put some of the verses which come before it, and some which follow it, in order to show in what way the Word threatens to close the eyes of those of the people who are astonished and drunken, and have been made to drink of the spirit of deep sleep. And it threatens also to close the eyes of their prophets and their rulers who profess to see things secret — which things, I think, took place after the advent of the Saviour among that people; for all the words of the whole of the Scriptures, and of Isaiah also, have become to them as the words of a sealed book. Now the expression sealed is used of a book closed in virtue of its obscurity and not open in virtue of its lucidity, which is equally obscure to those who are not able to read it at all because they do not know letters, and to those who profess to know letters but do not understand the meaning in the things which have been written. Well, then, does he add to this, that when the people, fainting because of their sins and being in a state of madness rage against Him through those sins wherewith they shall be drunken against Him with the spirit of stupor, which shall be given to them to drink by the Lord when He closes their eyes, as unworthy to see, and the eyes of their prophets and of their rulers who profess to see the hidden things of the mysteries in the Divine Scriptures; and, when their eyes are closed, then shall the prophetic words be sealed to them and hidden, as has been the case with those who do not believe in Jesus as the Christ. And when the prophetic sayings have become as the words of a sealed book, not only to those who do not know letters but to those who profess to know, then the Lord said, that the people of the Jews draw near to God with their mouth only, and He says that they honour Him with their lips, because their heart by reason of their unbelief in Jesus is far from the Lord. And now, especially, from the time at which they denied our Saviour, it might be said about them by God, But in vain do they worship Me; Matthew 15:9 for they no longer teach the precepts of God but of men, and doctrines which are human and no longer of the Spirit of wisdom. Wherefore, when these things happen to them, God has removed the people of the Jews, and has caused to perish the wisdom of the wise men among them; for there is no longer wisdom among them, just as there is no prophecy; but God has utterly destroyed the prudence of the prudent and concealed it, Isaiah 29:14 and no longer is it splendid and conspicuous. Wherefore, although they may seem to form some counsel in a deep fashion, because they do it not through the Lord they are called

miserable; and even though they profess to tell some secrets of the Divine counsel they lie, since their works are not works of light, but of darkness and night. Isaiah 29:15 I have thought it right briefly to set forth the prophecy, and to a certain extent elucidate its meaning, seeing that Matthew made mention of it. And Mark also made mention of it, from whom we may usefully set down the following words in the place, with reference to the transgression of the elders who held that it was necessary to wash hands when the Jews ate bread, For the Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash their hands diligently, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders; and when they come from the market-place except they wash themselves they eat not. And there are some other things which they have received to hold, washings of cups and pots and brazen vessels and couches. Mark 7:3-4

12. Things Clean and Unclean According to the Law and the Gospel.

And He called to Him the multitude and said to them, Hear and understand, etc. Matthew 15:10 We are clearly taught in these words by the Saviour that, when we read in Leviticus and Deuteronomy the precepts about meat clean and unclean, for the transgression of which we are accused by the material Jews and by the Ebionites who differ little from them, we are not to think that the scope of the Scripture is found in any superficial understanding of them. For if not that which enters into the mouth defiles the man, but that which proceeds out of the mouth, Matthew 15:11 and especially when, according to Mark, the Saviour said these things making all meats clean, Mark 7:19 manifestly we are not defiled when we eat those things which the Jews who desire to be in bondage to the letter of the law declare to be unclean, but we are then defiled when, whereas our lips ought to be bound with perception and we ought to make for them what we call a balance and weight, Sirach 28:25 we speak offhand and discuss matters we ought not, from which there comes to us the spring of sins. And it is indeed becoming to the law of God to forbid those things which arise from wickedness, and to enjoin those things which tend to virtue, but as for things which are in their own nature indifferent to leave them in their own place, as they may, according to our choice and the reason which is in us, be done ill if we sin in them, but if rightly directed by us be done well. And any one who has carefully thought on these matters will see that, even in those things which are thought to be good, it is possible for a man to sin who has taken them up in an evil way and under the impulse of passion, and that these things called impure may be considered pure, if used by us in accordance with reason. As, then, when the Jew sins his circumcision shall be reckoned for uncircumcision, but when one of the Gentiles acts uprightly his uncircumcision shall be reckoned for circumcision, Romans 2:25-26 so those things which are thought to be pure shall be reckoned for impure in the case of him who does not use them fittingly, nor when one ought, nor as far as he ought, nor for what reason he ought. But as for the things which are called impure, All things become pure to the pure, for, To them that are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure, since both their minds and their conscience are defiled. Titus 1:15 And when these are defiled, they make all things whatsoever they touch defiled; as again on the contrary the pure mind and the pure conscience make all things pure, even though they may seem to be impure; for not from intemperance, nor from love of pleasure, nor with doubting which draws a man both ways, do the righteous use meats or drinks, mindful of the precept, Whether you eat or drink or whatsoever other thing ye do, do all to the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31 And if it be necessary to delineate the foods which are unclean according to the Gospel, we will say that they are such as are supplied by covetousness, and are the result of

base love of gain, and are taken up from love of pleasure, and from deifying the belly which is treated with honour, when it, with its appetites, and not reason, rules our souls. But as for us who know that some things are used by demons, or if we do not know, but suspect, and are in doubt about it, if we use such things, we have used them not to the glory of God, nor in the name of Christ; for not only does the suspicion that things have been sacrificed to idols condemn him who eats, but even the doubt concerning this; for he that doubts, according to the Apostle, is condemned if he eat, because he eats not of faith; and whatsoever is not of faith is sin. Romans 14:23 He then eats in faith who believes that that which is eaten has not been sacrificed in the temples of idols, and that it is not strangled nor blood; but he eats not of faith who is in doubt about any of these things. And the man who knowing that they have been sacrificed to demons nevertheless uses them, becomes a communicant with demons, while at the same time, his imagination is polluted with reference to demons participating in the sacrifice. And the Apostle, however, knowing that it is not the nature of meats which is the cause of injury to him who uses them or of advantage to him who refrains from their use, but opinions and the reason which is in them, said, But meat commends us not to God, for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we eat not are we the worse. 1 Corinthians 8:8 And since he knew that those who have a loftier conception of what things are pure and what impure according to the law, turning aside from the distinction about the use of things pure and impure, and superstition, I think, in respect of things being different, become indifferent to the use of meats, and on this account are condemned by the Jews as transgressors of law, he said therefore, somewhere, Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, etc., Colossians 2:16 teaching us that the things according to the letter are a shadow, but that the true thoughts of the law which are stored up in them are the good things to come, in which one may find what are the pure spiritual meats of the soul, and what are the impure foods in false and contradictory words which injure the man who is nourished in them, For the law had a shadow of the good things to come. Hebrews 10:1

13. The Offence of the Pharisees.

And as in many cases we have to consider the astonishment of the Jews at the words of the Saviour, because they were spoken with authority, so also in regard to the words in this place. Having called the multitudes therefore, He said to them, Hear and understand, Matthew 15:10 etc. And He said this, the Pharisees being offended at this saying, as, because of their evil opinions and their worthless interpretation of the law, they were not the plant of his own Father in heaven, and on this account were being rooted up; Matthew 15:13 for they were rooted up as they did not receive the true vine, which was cultivated by the Father, even Jesus Christ. John 15:1 For how could they be a plant of His Father who were offended at the words of Jesus, words which turn men away from the precept, Handle not, nor taste, nor touch — all which things were to perish in the using — after the precepts and doctrines of men, Colossians 2:21-22 but induce the intelligent hearer of them to seek in regard to them the things which are above and not the things upon the earth as the Jews do? Colossians 3:2 And since, because of their evil opinions, the Pharisees were not the plant of His Father in heaven, on this account, as about such as were incorrigible, He says to the disciple, Let them alone; Matthew 15:14 Let them alone, He said for this reason, that as they were blind they ought to become conscious of their blindness and seek guides; but they, being unconscious of their own blindness, profess to guide the blind, not reckoning that they would fall into a pit, about which it is written in the Psalms, He has made a pit, and dug it, and will fall into the ditch which he has made. Again, elsewhere it is written, And seeing the multitudes, He went up into the mountain, and when He had sat down His disciples came unto Him; Matthew 5:1 but here He stretches forth His hand to the multitude, calling them unto Him, and turning their thoughts away from the literal interpretation of the questions in the law, when He in the first place said to them, who did not yet understand what they heard, Hear and understand, and thereafter as in parables said to them, Not that which enters into the mouth defiles the man, but that which proceeds out of the mouth. Matthew 15:10-11

14. Why the Pharisees Were Not a Plant of God. Teaching of Origen on the Bread of the Lord.

After this, it is worth while to look at the phrase which has been assailed in a sophistical way by those who say that the God of the law and the God of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not the same; for they say that the heavenly Father of Jesus Christ is not the husbandman of those who think that they worship God according to the law of Moses. Jesus Himself said that the Pharisees, who were worshipping the God who created the world and the law, were not a plant which His heavenly Father had planted, and that for this reason it was being rooted up. Matthew 15:13 But you might also say this, that even if it were the Father of Jesus who brought in and planted the people, when it came out of Egypt, to the mountain of His own inheritance, to the place which He had prepared for Himself to dwell in, Exodus 15:17 yet Jesus would have said, in regard to the Pharisees, Every plant which My heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up. Now, to this we will say, that as many as on account of their perverse interpretation of the things in the law were not a plant of His Father in heaven, were blinded in their minds, as not believing the truth, but taking pleasure in unrighteousness, 2 Thessalonians 2:12 by him who is deified by the sons of this world, and on this account is called by Paul the god of this world. 2 Corinthians 4:4 And do not suppose that Paul said that he was truly God; for just as the belly, though it is not the god of those who prize pleasure too highly, being lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, is said by Paul to be their god, Philippians 3:19 so the prince of this world, in regard to whom the Saviour says, Now

has the prince of this world been judged, John 16:11 though he is not God, is said to be the god of those who do not wish to receive the spirit of adoption, in order that they may become sons of that world, and sons of the resurrection from the dead, and who, on this account, abide in the sonship of this world. I have deemed it necessary to introduce these matters, even though they may have been spoken by way of digression, because of the saying, They are blind guides of the blind. Matthew 15:14 Who are such? The Pharisees, whose minds the god of this world has blinded as they are unbelieving, because they have not believed in Jesus Christ; and he has blinded them so that the light of the Gospel of the glory of God in the face of Christ should not dawn upon them. 2 Corinthians 4:4 But not only must we avoid being guided by those blind ones who are conscious that they are in need of guides, because they have not yet received the power of vision of themselves; but even in the case of all who profess to guide us in sound doctrine, we must hear with care, and apply a sound judgment to what is said, lest being guided according to the ignorance of those who are blind, and do not see the things that concern sound doctrine, we ourselves may appear to be blind because we do not see the sense of the Scriptures, so that both he who guides and he who is guided will fall into the ditch of which we have spoken before. Next to this, it is written in what way Peter answered and said to the Saviour, as if he had not understood the saying, Not that which comes into the mouth defiles the man, but that which goes out of the mouth, Declare unto us the parable. Matthew 15:11 To which the Saviour says, Are ye also, even yet, without understanding? Matthew 15:16 As if He had said, Having been so long time with Me, do ye not yet understand the meaning of what is said, and do ye not perceive that for this reason that which goes into his mouth does not defile the man, because it passes into the belly, and going out from it is cast into the draught? Matthew 15:17 It was not in respect of the law in which they appeared to believe, that the Pharisees were not a plant of the Father of Jesus, but in respect of their perverse interpretation of the law and the things written in it. For since there are two things to be understood in regard to the law, the ministration of death which was engraven in letters and which had no kinship with the spirit, and the ministration of life which is understood in the spiritual law, those who were able with a sincere heart to say, We know that the law is spiritual, Romans 7:14 and therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and righteous and good, Romans 7:12 were the plant which the heavenly Father planted; but those who were not such, but guarded with care the letter which kills only, were not a plant of God but of him who hardened their heart, and put a veil over it, which veil had power over them so long as they did not turn to the Lord; for if any one should turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away, and the Lord is the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:16-17 Now some one when dealing with the passage might say, that just as not that which enters into the mouth defiles the man, Matthew 15:11 of even though it may be thought by the Jews to be defiled, so not that which enters into the mouth sanctifies the man, even though what is called the bread of the Lord may be thought by the simpler disciples to sanctify. And the saying is I think, not to be despised, and on this account, demands clear exposition, which seems to me to be thus; as it is not the meat but the conscience of him who eats with doubt which defiles him that eats, for he that doubts is condemned if he eat, because he eats not of faith, Romans 14:23 and as nothing is pure to him who is defiled and unbelieving, not in itself, but because of his defilement and unbelief, so that which is sanctified through the word of God and prayer does not, in its own nature, sanctify him who uses it, for, if this were so, it would sanctify even him who eats unworthily of the bread of the Lord, and no one on account of this food would become weak or sickly or asleep for something

of this kind Paul represented in saying, For this cause many among you are weak and sickly and not a few sleep. 1 Corinthians 11:30 And in the case of the bread of the Lord, accordingly, there is advantage to him who uses it, when with undefiled mind and pure conscience he partakes of the bread. And so neither by not eating, I mean by the very fact that we do not eat of the bread which has been sanctified by the word of God and prayer, are we deprived of any good thing, nor by eating are we the better by any good thing; for the cause of our lacking is wickedness and sins, and the cause of our abounding is righteousness and right actions; so that such is the meaning of what is said by Paul, For neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we eat not are we the worse. 1 Corinthians 8:8 Now, if everything that enters into the mouth goes into the belly and is cast out into the draught, Matthew 15:17 even the meat which has been sanctified through the word of God and prayer, in accordance with the fact that it is material, goes into the belly and is cast out into the draught, but in respect of the prayer which comes upon it, according to the proportion of the faith, becomes a benefit and is a means of clear vision to the mind which looks to that which is beneficial, and it is not the material of the bread but the word which is said over it which is of advantage to him who eats it not unworthily of the Lord. And these things indeed are said of the typical and symbolic body. But many things might be said about the Word Himself who became flesh, John 1:14 and true meat of which he that eats shall assuredly live for ever, no worthless person being able to eat it; for if it were possible for one who continues worthless to eat of Him who became flesh, who was the Word and the living bread, it would not have been written, that every one who eats of this bread shall live forever. John 6:51

15. Eating with Unwashed Heart Defiles the Man.

Next to this let us see how the things which proceed out and defile the man do not defile the man because of their proceeding out of the mouth, but have the cause of their defilement in the heart, when there come forth out of it, before those things which proceed through the mouth, evil thoughts, of which the species are — murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, railings. Matthew 15:18-19 For these are the things which defile the man, when they come forth out of the heart, and going out from it proceed through the mouth; so that, if they did not come out of the heart, but were retained there somewhere about the heart, and were not allowed to be spoken through the mouth, they would very quickly disappear, and a man would be no more defiled. The spring and source, then, of every sin are evil thoughts; for, unless these gained the mastery, neither murders nor adulteries nor any other such thing would exist. Therefore, each man must keep his own heart with all watchfulness; Proverbs 4:23 for when the Lord comes in the day of judgment, He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts, 1 Corinthians 4:5 all the thoughts of men meanwhile accusing or else excusing them, Romans 2:15 when their own devices have beset them about. Hosea 7:2 But of such a nature are the evil thoughts that sometimes they make worthy of censure even those things which seem good, and which, so far as the judgment of the masses is concerned, are worthy of praise. Accordingly, if we do alms before men, having in our thoughts the design of appearing to men philanthropic, and of being honoured because of philanthropy, we receive the reward from men; Matthew 6:1-2 and, universally, everything that is done with the consciousness in the doer that he will be glorified by men, has no reward from Him who beholds in secret, and renders the reward to those who are pure, in secret. So, too, therefore, is it with apparent purity if it is influenced by considerations of vain glory or love of gain; and the teaching which is thought to be the teaching of the Church, if it becomes servile through the word of flattery, either when it is made the excuse for covetousness, or when any one seeks glory from men because of his teaching, is not reckoned to be the teaching of those who have been set by God in the Church: first, apostles; secondly, prophets; and thirdly, teachers. 1 Corinthians 12:28 And you will say the like in the case of him who seeks the office of a bishop for the sake of glory with men, or of flattery from men, or for the sake of the gain received from those who, coming over to the word, give in the name of piety; for a bishop of this kind at any rate does not desire a good work, 1 Timothy 3:1 nor can he be without reproach, nor temperate, nor sober-minded, as he is intoxicated with glory and intemperately satiated with it. And the same also you will say about the elders and deacons. And if we seem to some to have made a digression in speaking of these things, consider if it were not necessary that they should be said, because that evil thoughts are the spring of all sins, and can pollute even those actions which, if they were done apart from evil thoughts, would have justified the man who did them. We have thus investigated according to our ability what are the things which defile; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man; but if we must say it with boldness, with unwashed heart to eat anything whatsoever which is the natural food of our reason, defiles the man.

16. Concerning the Canaanitish Woman. Meaning of the Borders of Tyre and Sidon.

And Jesus went out thence and withdrew into the parts of Tyre and Sidon. And behold a Canaanitish woman. Matthew 15:21-22 Whence the thence? Was it from the land of Gennesaret, concerning which it was said before, And when they had crossed over they came into the land of Gennesaret? Matthew

14:34 But He withdrew, perhaps because the Pharisees were offended when they heard that not that which enters in, but that which proceeds out, defiles the man; Matthew 15:11 and that, because of their being suspected of plotting against Him, it is said, He withdrew, is manifest from the passage, And when He heard that John was delivered up He withdrew into Galilee. Matthew 4:12 Perhaps also on this account, when describing the things in this place, Mark says that He rose up and went into the borders of Tyre, and having entered into the house wished no man to know it. Mark 7:24 It is probable that He sought to avoid the Pharisees who were offended at His teaching, waiting for the time for His suffering, which was more fitting and rightly appointed. But some one might say that Tyre and Sidon are used for the Gentiles; accordingly when He withdrew from Israel He came into the parts of the Gentiles. Among the Hebrews, then, Tyre is called Sor, and it is interpreted anguish. Sidon, which is also the Hebrew name, is rendered hunters. And among the Gentiles likewise the hunters are the evil powers, and among them is great distress, the distress, namely, which exists in wickedness and passions. When Jesus, then, went out from Gennesaret He withdrew indeed from Israel and came, not to Tyre and Sidon, but into the parts of Tyre and Sidon, with the result that those of the Gentiles now believe in part; so that if He had visited the whole of Tyre and Sidon, no unbeliever would have been left in it. Now, according to Mark, Jesus rose up and went into the borders of Tyre, Mark 7:24 — that is, the distress of the Gentiles — in order that they also from these borders who believe can be saved, when they come out of them; for attend to this: And behold a Canaanitish woman came out from these borders and cried saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David, my daughter is terribly vexed with a demon. Matthew 15:22 And I think that if she had not come out from those borders she would not have been able to cry to Jesus with the great faith to which testimony was borne; and according to the proportion of faith one comes out from the borders among the Gentiles, which when the Most High divided the nations He set up according to the number of the sons of Israel, Deuteronomy 32:8 and prevented their further advance. Here, then, certain borders are spoken of as the borders of Tyre and Sidon, but in Exodus the borders of Pharaoh, Exodus 8:2 in which, they say, were formed the plagues against the Egyptians. And we must suppose that each of us when he sins is in the borders of Tyre or Sidon or of Pharaoh and Egypt, or some one of those which are outside the allotted inheritance of God; but when he changes from wickedness to virtue he goes out from the borders of evil, and comes to the borders of the portion of God, there being among these also a difference which will be manifest to those who are able to understand the things that concern the division and the inheritance of Israel, in harmony with the spiritual law. And attend also to the meeting, so to speak, which took place between Jesus and the Canaanitish woman; for He comes as to the parts of Tyre and Sidon, and she comes out of those parts, and cried, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David. Matthew 15:22 Now the woman was Canaanitish, which is rendered, prepared for humiliation. The righteous, indeed, are prepared for the kingdom of heaven and for the exaltation in the kingdom of God; but sinners are prepared for the humiliation of the wickedness which is in them, and of the deeds which flow from it and prepare them for it, and of the sin which reigns in their mortal body. Only, the Canaanitish woman came out of those borders and went forth from the state of being prepared for humiliation, crying and saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David.

17. Exposition of the Details in the Narrative.

Now bring together from the Gospels those who call Him Son of David, as she, and the blind men in Jericho; Matthew 20:30 and who call Him Son of God, and that without the addition truly like the demoniacs who say, What have we to do with You, Thou Son of God; Matthew 8:29 and who call Him so with the addition truly, like those in the boat who worshipped Him saying, Truly You are the Son of God. Matthew 14:33 For the bringing together of these passages will, I think, be useful to you with a view to seeing the difference of those who come (to Jesus); some indeed come as to Him who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh; Romans 1:3 but others come to Him who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness; Romans 1:4 and of these some with the truly, and some without it. Further, observe, that the Canaanitish woman besought Him not about a son, whom she does not seem to have brought forth at all, but about a daughter who was terribly vexed with a demon; but another mother receives back alive her son who was being carried forth dead. Luke 7:12 And again the ruler of the synagogue makes supplication for a daughter twelve years old, as being dead, Matthew 9:18 but the nobleman about a son as being still sick, and at the point of death. John 4:46 The daughter, accordingly, who was distressed by a demon, and the dead son sprang from two mothers; and the dead daughter, and the son who was sick unto death, sprang from two fathers, of whom the one was a ruler of the synagogue, and the other was a nobleman. And I am persuaded these things contain reasons concerning the diverse kinds of souls which Jesus vivifies and heals. And all the cures that He works among the people, especially those recorded by the Evangelists, took place at that time, that those who would not otherwise have believed unless they saw signs and wonders might believe; John 4:48 for the things aforetime were symbols of the things that are ever being accomplished by the power of Jesus; for there is no time when each of the things which are written is not done by the power of Jesus according to the desert of each. The Canaanitish woman, therefore, because of her race was not worthy even to receive an answer from Jesus, who acknowledged that He had not been sent by the Father for any other thing than to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, Matthew 15:24 — a lost race of souls possessed of clear vision; but, because of her resolution and of having worshipped Jesus as Son of God, she obtains an answer, which reproaches her with baseness of birth and exhibits the measure of her worthiness, namely, that she was worthy of crumbs as the little dogs, but not of the loaves. But when she with intensified resolution, accepting the saying of Jesus, puts forth the claim to obtain crumbs even as a little dog, and acknowledges that the masters are of a nobler race, then she gets a second answer, which bears testimony to her faith as great, and a promise that it shall be done unto her as she wills. Matthew 15:28 And corresponding, I think, to the Jerusalem above, which is free, the mother Galatians 4:26 of Paul and those like to him, must we conceive of the Canaanitish woman, the mother of her who was terribly distressed with a demon, who was the symbol of the mother of such a soul. And consider whether it is not according to sound reason that there are also many fathers and many mothers corresponding to the fathers of Abraham to whom the patriarch went away, Genesis 15:15 and to Jerusalem the mother, as Paul says, concerning himself and those like to him. And it is probable that she of whom the Canaanitish woman was a symbol came out of the borders of Tyre and Sidon, of which the places on earth were types, and came to the Saviour and besought Him and even now beseeches Him saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David, my daughter is terribly vexed with a demon. Matthew 15:22 Then also to those without and to the disciples when necessary He answers and says, I was not sent; Matthew 15:24 teaching us that there are some lost souls pre-em-

inently intellectual and clear of vision, figuratively called sheep of the house of Israel; which things, I think, the simpler who are of opinion that they are spoken in regard to the Israel which is after the flesh will of necessity admit, namely, that our Saviour was sent by the Father to no others than to those lost Jews. But we, who can truthfully boast that if we have once known Christ after the flesh, but now no longer do we know Him so, 2 Corinthians 5:16 are assured that it is pre-eminently the work of the Word to save the more intelligent, for these are more akin to Him than those who are duller. But since the lost sheep of the house of Israel, with the exception of the remnant according to the election of grace, Romans 11:5 disbelieved the Word, on this account God chose the foolish things of the world, 1 Corinthians 1:27 namely, that which was not Israel, nor clear of vision, that He might put to shame the wise ones of Israel; and He called the things which are not, 1 Corinthians 1:28 handing over to them an intelligent nation who were able to admit the foolishness of the preaching, 1 Corinthians 1:21 and of His good pleasure saved those who believe in this, that He might refute the things which are, having perfected praise for Himself, out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, when they became hostile to truth. Now, the Canaanitish woman, having come, worshipped Jesus as God, saying, Lord, help me, but He answered and said, It is not possible to take the children's bread and cast it to the little dogs. Matthew 15:25-26 But some one might inquire also into the meaning of this saying, since — inasmuch as there was a measure of loaves such that both the children and the dogs of the household could not eat loaves, unless the dogs ate other loaves than those which were well made — it was not possible according to right reason for the well-made loaf of the children to be given as food to the little dogs. But no such thing appears in the case of the power of Jesus, for of this it was possible both for the children and those called little dogs to partake. Consider, then, whether perhaps with reference to the saying, It is not possible to take the bread of children, we ought to say that, He who emptied Himself and took upon Him the form of a servant, Philippians 2:7 brought a measure of power such as the world was capable of receiving, of which power also He was conscious that a certain quantity went forth from Him as is plain from the words, Some one did touch Me, for I perceived that power had gone forth from Me. Luke 8:46 From this measure of power, then, He dispensed, giving a larger portion to those who were pre-eminent and who were called sons, but a smaller portion to those who were not such, as to the little dogs. But though these things were so, nevertheless where there was great faith, to her, who because of her base birth in Canaanitish land was a little dog, He gave as to a child the bread of the children. And perhaps, also, of the words of Jesus there are some loaves which it is possible to give to the more rational, as to children only; and other words, as it were, crumbs from the great house and table of the wellborn and the masters, which may be used by some souls, like the dogs. And according to the law of Moses it is written about certain things, You shall cast them to the dogs, Exodus 22:31 and it was a matter of care to the Holy Spirit to give instruction about certain foods that they should be left to the dogs. Let others, then, who are strangers to the doctrine of the Church, assume that souls pass from the bodies of men into the bodies of dogs, according to their varying degree of wickedness; but we, who do not find this at all in the divine Scripture, say that the more rational condition changes into one more irrational, undergoing this affection in consequence of great slothfulness and negligence. But, also, in the same way, a will which was more irrational, because of its neglect of reason, sometimes turns and becomes rational, so that that which at one time was a dog, loving to eat of the crumbs that fell from the table of its masters, comes into the condition of a son. For virtue contributes greatly to the making of

one a son of God, but wickedness, and mad fury in wanton discourses and shamelessness, contribute to the giving of a man the name of dog according to the word of the Scripture. 2 Samuel 16:9 And the like you will also understand in the case of the other names which are applied to animals without reason. Only, he who is reproached as a dog and yet is not indignant at being called unworthy of the bread of children and with all forbearance repeats the saying of that Canaanitish woman, Yea, Lord, for even the little dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table, will obtain the very gentle answer of Jesus saying to him, Great is your faith,— when he has received so great faith— and saying, Be it done unto you even as you will, Matthew 15:28 so that he himself may be healed, and if he has produced any fruit which stands in need of healing, that this, too, may be cured.

18. Concerning the Multitudes Who Were Healed. Comparison of the Mountain Where Jesus Sat to the Church.

And Jesus departed thence, — manifestly, from what has been said before, from the parts of Tyre and Sidon, — and came near unto the sea of Galilee, Matthew 15:29 which is commonly called the Lake of Gennesaret, and again went up into the mountain where He went up and sat. We may say, then, that into this mountain where Jesus sits, not only the sound in health go up, but along with the sound, those also who were suffering from various disorders. And, perhaps, this mountain to which Jesus went up and sat is that which is more commonly called the Church, which has been set up through the word of God over the rest of the world and the men upon it; whither go not the disciples only, leaving the multitudes as in the case of the beatitudes, but great multitudes who were not accused themselves of being deaf or suffering from any affection, but who had such along with themselves. For you may see, along with the multitudes who come to this mountain where the Son of God sits, some who have become deaf to the things promised, and others blind in soul and not looking at the true light, and others who are lame and not able to walk according to reason, and others who are maimed and not able to work according to reason. Those, accordingly, who are suffering in soul from such things, though they go up along with the multitudes into the mountain where Jesus was, so long as they are outside of the feet of Jesus, are not healed by Him; but when, as men suffering from such disorders, they are cast by the multitude at His feet, Matthew 15:30 and at the extremities of the body of Christ, not being worthy to obtain such things so far as they themselves are concerned, they are then healed by Him. And when you see in the congregation of what is more commonly called the church the catechumens cast behind those who are at the extreme end of it, and as it were at the feet of the body of Jesus — the church — coming to it with their own deafness and blindness and lameness and crookedness, and in time cured according to the Word, you would not err in saying that such having gone up with the multitudes of the church to the mountain where Jesus was, are cast at His feet and are healed; so that the multitude of the church is astonished at beholding transformations which have taken place from so great evils to that which is better, so that it might say, those who were formerly dumb afterwards speak the word of God, and the lame walk, the prophecy of Isaiah being fulfilled, not only in things bodily but in things spiritual, which said, Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of him that has an impediment in his speech be plain. Isaiah 35:6 And there, unless the expression, the lame man shall leap as an hart, is to be taken as accidental, we will say that those formerly lame, and who now through the power of Jesus leap as an hart are not without design compared to a hart, which is a clean animal, and hostile to serpents and cannot at all be injured by their poison. But also, in respect of the fact that the dumb are seen speaking is the prophecy fulfilled which said, And the tongue of him that has an impediment shall be plain, or rather that which said, Hear ye deaf; but the blind see according to the prophecy following, Hear ye deaf, and you blind look up that you may see. Isaiah 42:18 Now the blind see, when they see the world and from the exceeding great beauty of the things created they contemplate the Creator corresponding in greatness and beauty to them; and when they see clearly the invisible things of God Himself from the creation of the world, which are perceived through the things that are made; Romans 1:20 that is, they see and understand with care and clearness. Now the multitudes seeing these things, glorified the God of Israel, Matthew 15:31 and glorify Him in the persuasion that it is the same God, who is the Father of Him who healed those previously mentioned, and the God of Israel. For He is not the God of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles. Romans 3:29 Let us then cause to go up along with ourselves to the mountain where Jesus sits — His church — those who wish to go up to it along with

us, the deaf, the blind, the lame, the maimed and many others, and let us cast them at the feet of Jesus that He may heal them, so that the multitudes are astonished at their healing; for it is not the disciples who are described as wondering at such things, although at that time they were present with Jesus, as is manifest from the words, And Jesus called unto Him His disciples and said, I have compassion on the multitudes, Matthew 15:32 etc.; and perhaps if you attend carefully to the words, There came unto Him great multitudes, Matthew 15:30 you would find that the disciples at that time did not come to Him, but had begun long ago to follow Him and followed Him into the mountain. But there came unto Him those who were inferior to the disciples, and were then for the first time approaching Him, who had not the same experience as those who had gone up with them. Observe, moreover, in the Gospel who are described as having followed Jesus, and who as having come to Him, and who as having been brought to Him, and the division between those who go before and of those who follow; and of those who came, who came to Him in the house, and who when He was elsewhere. For by observation, and by comparing things spiritual with spiritual, you would find many things worthy of the accurate wisdom in the Gospels.

19. Concerning the Seven Loaves. The Narrative of the Feeding of the Four Thousand Compared with that of the Five Thousand.

And Jesus called unto Him His disciples and said. Matthew 15:32 Above in the similar history to this about the loaves, before the loaves are spoken of, Jesus came forth and saw a great multitude and had compassion upon them and healed their sick. And when even had come the disciples came to Him saying, The place is desert and the time is already past, send them away, Matthew 14:15 etc. But now after the healing of the deaf and the rest, He takes compassion on the multitude which had continued with Him now three days and had nothing to eat. And there the disciples make request concerning the five thousand; Matthew 14:15 but here He speaks of His own accord about the four thousand. Matthew 15:32 Those, too, are fed when it was evening after they had spent a day with Him; but these, who are testified to have continued with Him three days, partake of the loaves lest they might faint by the way. And there the disciples say to Him when He was not inquiring, that they had only five loaves and two fishes; but here to Him making inquiry, they give answer about the seven loaves and the few small fishes. And there He commands the multitudes to sit down or lie upon the grass; for Luke also wrote, Make them sit down, Luke 9:14 and Mark says, He commanded them all to sit down; Mark 6:39 but here He does not command but proclaims to the multitude to sit down. Again, there, the three Evangelists say in the very same words that He took the five loaves and the two fishes and looking up to heaven He blessed; but here, as Matthew and Mark have written, Jesus gave thanks and broke; there, they recline upon the grass, but here they sit down upon the ground. You will moreover investigate in the accounts in the different places the variation found in John, who wrote in regard to that transaction that Jesus said, Make the men sit down, John 6:10 and that, having given thanks, He gave of the loaves to them that were set down, but he did not mention this miracle at all. Attending, then, to the difference of those things which are written in the various places in regard to the loaves, I think that these belong to a different order from those; wherefore these are fed in a mountain, and those in a desert place; and these after they had continued three days with Jesus, but those one day, on the evening of which they were fed. And further, unless it be the same thing for Jesus to do a thing of Himself and to act after

having heard from the disciples, consider if those to whom Jesus shows kindness are not superior when He fed them on the spot with a view to showing them kindness. And, if according to John, John 6:13 they were barley loaves of which the twelve baskets remained over, but nothing of this kind is said about these, how are not these superior to the former? And the sick of those He healed, Matthew 14:14 but here He heals these, along with the multitudes, who were not sick but blind, and lame, and deaf, and maimed; wherefore also in regard to these the four thousand marvel, Matthew 15:31 but in regard to the sick no such thing is said. And these I think who ate of the seven loaves for which thanks were given, are superior to those who ate of the five which were blessed; and these who ate the few little fishes to those who ate of the two, and perhaps also these who sat down upon the ground to those who sat down on the grass. And those from fewer loaves leave twelve baskets, but these from a greater number leave seven baskets, inasmuch, as they were able to receive more. And perhaps these tread upon all earthly things and sit down upon them, but those upon the grass — upon their flesh only — for all flesh is grass. Isaiah 40:6 Consider also after this, that Jesus does not wish to send them away fasting lest they faint on the way, as being without the loaves of Jesus, and while they were still on the way — the way to their own concerns — might suffer injury. Take note also of the cases where Jesus is recorded to have sent any one away, that you may see the difference of those who were sent away by Him after being fed, and those who had been sent away otherwise; and, as a pattern of one who was sent away otherwise, take Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity. But further the disciples who are always with Jesus are not sent away by Him; but the multitudes after they have eaten are sent away. Likewise, again, the disciples who conceive nothing great about the Canaanitish woman say, Send her away, for she cries after us; Matthew 15:23 but the Saviour does not at all appear to send her away; for saying unto her, O woman, great is your faith, be it done to you even as you will, Matthew 15:28 He healed her daughter from that hour: it is not however written that He sent her away. So far at the present time have we been able to investigate and see into the passage before us.

Source: Translated by John Patrick. From Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 9. Edited by Allan Menzies. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1896.)

Previously prepared for an earlier version of The Stromata. Accessed July 2026.

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