

Appendix 2: Translation of Gregory's *carmina* II, 1, 10.12.13.17

II.1.10 To the Priests in Constantinople and the City Itself

O priests, you who offer bloodless sacrifices, 1
and servants of the great Unity in Trinity,
O laws, oh kings boasting piety,
O of the great Constantine glorious abode,
younger Rome, as much surpassing all cities 5
as the starry sky surpasses earth,
your generosity I invoke; what has Envy
done to me? How far from my holy children threw
me, all too long struggling, having brought light
of heavenly teachings, having drawn streams from a rock. 10
What kind of justice is this, toil and throes for me,
as the first marks of religion were carved on the City,
and another one instead rejoicing in his heart for my toils,
lifted suddenly on a throne not his own,
upon which had got me God and God's good worshippers? 15
These things are a loathsome bane, these things God's servants,
in their gloomy reciprocal contest,
O Lord Jesus Christ, plot against me.
For neither party dared I to bare arms,
and no one besides Christ I wanted to support. 20
This is my fault: neither failed I someone else this way,
nor I followed like a raft a merchant ship.
Thus, I'm hated by the fickle-minded, those who left
this tribune in unholy manner and roared against friends.
But let a deep oblivion conceal these things, whilst I, 25
thence departed, will enjoy stillness,
having left everything at once, the court, the city,
and the clergy, willingly, as I had been already desiring,
when God called me with nightly dreams
and with the grievous terrors of the icy sea. 30
Therefore, with a laugh I flew envy, and from a violent
storm I dropped anchor in a steady haven,
where, elevating my spirit with pure thoughts of the mind,
I shall offer silence too, as before speech.
This is the word of Gregory, whom reared the land 35
of the Cappadocians, for Christ stripped of all.

II.1.12 To Himself and on the Bishops

Prologue (1–32)

Maybe, as I stood slander on the model	1
of the One who suffered and commanded thus,	
so, once I had suffered, I should have curbed my words too,	
and thereby, by way of a full contest,	
hoped for a fuller reward.	5
Yea, to full toil, fuller reward,	
but to the wanting, also the prize is lacking.	
Yet, that the evil may not suppose themselves to prevail	
totally, nor have an easy ride,	
as no one resists them, while I'm leaving	10
their end to the Last Fire,	
to the All-Questioning and the justly purging,	
even what by some plot goes unnoticed here,	
I myself will smite with a brief speech	
my murderers: because they are murderers, who pervert judgement	15
and shed the blood of all those innocent souls	
that they smote with their dispositions.	
I'll speak what I'll say, without being wary	
of slander, which is forbidden	
to anyone, but to me even very hateful.	20
Therefore, I won't name names in my speech,	
that I may not seem to be shaming what ought to be hidden;	
nor shall I mention everyone regardless,	
—may not my mouth exceed so much!—	
because I know also many deserving a better speech.	25
But whoever is among the evil and beyond them,	
be conquered and be tamed now:	
the sword of speech will cut the worse.	
So what? If you should oppose the speech,	
you'll prove clearly and plainly your own accuser.	30
Such, then, is my stance, and let anyone smite me:	
for a long time I have been suited to the stones.	

Bad bishops (33–42)

Trust the lion, the leopard regard as tame,	
and maybe the viper can run away from you while you fear,	
but please, this one beast avoid: bad bishops,	35
with little awe for the dignity of their throne.	
They all have rank, not all have grace,	
strip off the fleece and behold the wolf.	
Don't try to convince me with words, but with facts:	

I hate teachings that life contradicts. 40
 While praising the colour of the sepulchre, I loathe
 the inner stink of rotting limbs.

Moral of the story: Life is unjust (43–69)

“How do you speak? And why? How come you,
 always putting forth better words, don’t speak kindly now, too?”
 It’s usual for those who suffer to throw up their misery 45
 to God, to friends, to parents, to neighbours, to guests,
 or to the time and life of posterity.
 I shall bring the speech slightly further up.
 Let no one ever say to toiling people that something more
 is to be found in this life, for the one who thinks this is deluded. 50
 Everything is driven through night and darkness;
 indeed, God trials some by fire, other by darkness,
 until the fire sheds light on all these things.
 One endures a life of hardships,
 groaning, sleepless, through tears wasting his limbs away, 55
 sleeping on the ground and feeding scarcely,
 and with anxious examining of the Divine Scriptures
 and inner scourges mangling himself:
 What have I missed? What wrong have I committed?
 Another one has plucked all the pleasures of youth, 60
 has danced, sung, has satisfied his feverish belly,
 to all sorts of lust yielded, for the senses
 failed to fit a bolt, a colt without reins.
 And then the first is overrun by misfortunes—
 except it’s not misfortunes, for nothing in this world 65
 really bothers the wise, as seems to most of those
 who deem lost even the appearance of wisdom—
 while the other, always successful, succeeds also in this,
 to be seen as the pinnacle of virtue.

An example: Gregory’s story (*narratio* 70–153)

Gregory is called to the bishopric (70–92)

Witness of these words is the one delivering them. 70
 I was seated above visible things,
 touching with thought only the intelligibles
 and casting off fame, property, hopes, erudition,
 in not taking delight I took delight, with a scanty loaf
 sweetening life, free from insolence of pride, 75

when (you should expect anything, even if wise)
 against every expectation one good person dragged me
 and brought me abroad; who this was, I dare not say.
 Maybe the Holy Spirit, maybe my sins,
 that I may atone for my conceit. 80
 This, however, was clear: that the assemblies of shepherds
 and the orthodox people, not yet so widespread,
 or rather having just opened its eyes to the rays of the sun,
 wanted some freedom of speech to come back,
 and to enjoy a little respite from the evil all around, 85
 from babbling tongues and from the many splinters of error,
 at the hand of which they laboured, without any shelter,
 like some sweet rose amidst brambles,
 or a single black grape among an unripe bunch.
 Thus, then, I came upon a pious stranger, 90
 bowing down before oaths and entreaties manifold,
 resisting which would have been too much of a disdain.

Gregory's behaviour as a bishop (93–113)

After I came here, having left the land of Cappadocia,
 which seems to everyone as the rampart of faith,
 without a community or anything I was compelled by 95
 (these are enemies' lies, fake accounts
 and covers for envy, randomly made up),
 thereafter what happened I want you to relate,
 because you were witness of my toils.
 Did I do or say something clumsy or uncomely 100
 or damaging in these three years?
 Except only this: I spared the evil people
 by whose hands I endured to be welcomed
 with a lapidation. Indeed, it was more pious
 that I also suffered Christ's pains with Christ's mind. 105
 See, such is the poor's present to God.
 But let's take this as an accusation, if you want.
 A sensitive temper—they say—is a moth
 in the bones, and this I learned the hard way.
 This brazen body of mine, pining for anxiety, 110
 already droops, and I have nothing else to give,
 owing much more even if I should bring everything in.
 What will become of one who's paired with an unsound friend?

Gregory's moment of glory (114–135)

But let's return to the starting point.
 I had been called, I established a nation among wolves, 115
 I gushed forth words for a thirsty flock,
 sowed the faith, which struck root thanks to God,
 those who had formerly been clouded I enlightened with Trinity.
 I was like rennet in the milk, a drug
 that forces persuasion, and some were already bound, 120
 and some others were not far, and others would have been forthwith.
 Every heart was charmed, even if after seething,
 and affection was already blended with doctrine.
 I could hope everything, or at least a small turn of the scale.
 That fortunate city of Rome knew this, 125
 and her foremost kin knew this especially.
 They thought me perchance of some worth,
 whose least esteem is greater
 than attaining every highest glory among others,
 so much do they excel all others! 130
 They held me in esteem as I was there,
 and still censure the evil now that I'm gone.
 More than this they could not do,
 nor did I ask anything. Alas city, city!
 Let me deliver some tragic verse, too. 135

Gregory is dismissed by the bishops (136–153)

Yet those real gentlemen, my fellow shepherds,
 burst with envy (you know those Ancient Pistols:
 the boorish can't stand education)
 and took my sickness as an ally,
 sprung from my toils, which should have been revered 140
 by those labouring even a little while for God,
 and my poor fondness for the power of that high throne,
 while the whole world was torn apart 'tween battling fronts.
 So, with these pretexts and a nudge from the devil,
 those loving friends were more than happy to escort me thence, 145
 as if throwing ballast from a weighed-down
 ship. My rectitude was a burden for the evil.
 Then, they'll raise their hands—as innocents—to God,
 and expiatory gifts they'll send sincerely,
 hallowing the congregation with mystic forms, 150
 they who have sent me too thence out of cowardice,
 though not very much against my will, because 'twas a real shame
 to be one among those dealers in faith.

Humble background of the bishops (154–175)

Some of them are sons of clerks for the exactors,
 and they can't think of anything but skimming; 155
 others come from the bank and the exchanges thereof,
 others from the plough, baked in the sun,
 others from daily pitchfork and mattock;
 others left the oar or the army,
 stinking still of bilge water or marked in the body, 160
 and like helmsmen or commanders of the people,
 won't yield even in the smallest matter;
 others, without having yet completely removed the soot
 of the forge from their bodies,
 are rascals worthy of the lash or the chain gang, 165
 who even before they have paid their price to their masters,
 when they have the least rest from labours,
 at once become wanton, and steal
 someone from the mob, or swindle or extort.
 Then they hurry upwards, beetles towards the sky, 170
 rolling the sphere, yet no more the one of dung,
 nor bowing down as before,
 but convinced to hold power over those above;
 they babble awkwardly and can't even
 count their own feet or hands. 175

Intellectually unfit bishops (176–191; larger section: 176–329)

Are not all these things awful, especially for a bishop,
 my good friend? Let's not be so old-fashioned
 as to wrongly approve such a situation,
 not even if we zealously pursue humility.
 The episcopate is not the least of things. As it should 180
 definitely be for the best, I would choose
 the very first; if not, at least be he not the last.
 If my opinion should find some acceptance,
 especially now, in this squall of raving tongues,
 and enormous cities and congregations, 185
 which, if they can keep firm, are a greater gain,
 but, if they don't persevere, the loss is even greater;
 according to it, then, you should be choosing the good,
 for a mediocre man could barely manage,
 even with serious effort, to equal the good. 190
 Only a most truthful observer can take such a stance.

Objection: The apostles (192–198)

But here come to me the evangelists, exactors
 and fishermen, and poor in speech,
 who nevertheless have ensnared the world with simple speech,
 catching even the learned into their net, 195
 that the miracle might be greater than the speech.
 'Tis indeed an argument easy for everyone to raise,
 against which my answer will be short and really clear.

Answer 1: The faith of the apostles (199–216)

Give me, prithee, the faith of just one of the apostles,
 his lack of brass, not carrying a scrip, 200
 nor yet staves, half naked, without sandals,
 living day by day and wealthy in hope alone,
 courteous to no one for approval of his preaching,
 lest flattery seem worthier,
 nor busy with foreign doctrines. 205
 Be one like them, and I'll take anything,
 be he ignorant of the language, deformed, lowborn and cowherd:
 for his ways cover the misery.
 Be you like them, and even if you fish frogs,
 we will then number you in the choirs of angels. 210
 Therefore, grant me this one thing: Do you cleanse from devils?
 Do you cast out the leper; the dead from his grave?
 And do you give firmness to the limb of the palsied?
 Lay hands on the sick, and rest the disease:
 this way you'll convince me to despise education. 215

Answer 2: Knowledge is good in itself and was granted to the apostles (216–244)

So, if having one thing resulting from two,
 one praiseworthy, the other deplorable,
 you take into account one, leaving aside the other wittingly,
 you, mischievously indeed, are hijacking the comparison.
 Yea, Matthew was a tax collector, but worthy, 220
 yet not as tax collector, but as laden with Spirit.
 Peter was the chief of the disciples, but he was Peter
 not as fisherman but because full of zeal.
 The ways persuade me to honour even the net.
 But you I avoid, even if you show some sign of seriousness, 225
 because it is only a snare and a trap.

You are a painter, who imitates the beautiful
 forms only when leprous or maimed.
 Either you paint the whole beauty, or you leave it out whole. 230
 And tell me also this, how come you call such people uneducated,
 whose speeches and writings
 we strive to understand even in the least detail,
 we, bred in eloquence from the beginning,
 and for whom the works and words are still so many
 that everything is filled with books, 235
 from every tongue and learned mind,
 bringing the sublime fruit of interpretation?
 Wherefore were kings and cities, assemblies,
 accusers, and eloquent prosecutors,
 at the bar or in the middle of theatres, 240
 wise men, lawyers, supercilious philosophers,
 politicians who speak properly and timely,
 convinced and refuted outspokenly,
 if they hadn't the doctrine you deny them?

Answer 3: The role of charisma (245–264)

Maybe you'll say, "Through the stream of Spirit", 245
 and you'd be right, but consider what you imply.
 Don't you partake of the Spirit, too? Of course, and you take
 too much pride in it. Why, then, do you grudge doctrine
 to those who seek it? Either you attribute
 falsely to the nature of Spirit 250
 and to the righteous to inspire doctrine
 and to be inspired, or they were indeed wise.
 This way, you are inextricably ensnared by your own reasoning,
 yes, you who promptly say, and only,
 what would have been better not to have said, but to have kept inside. 255
 I've heard that the spirit of the enemies is mute:
 'tis better to keep silent than to speak badly.
 May you loosen the tongue, O Word of God,
 of those who utter justice, and burden the one
 of those who spout and hiss like vipers 260
 and shoot poison from the inside to kill their siblings.
 You are just like this: How could be different
 the speech of the ignorant? But let me say briefly
 how things really are, and what is better to think.

Nature and use of knowledge (265–302)

They were, yea, they were well learned back then, of course, 265
 but not well learned even in the pleasantries of speech,

because, here's the thing: our every speech is double,
 the words and the meaning; the ones are like the outward
 clothing, the other is the body clothed.
 Someone has both good, others only one of them, 270
 or finally both are bad, according to nature or nurture.
 As regards us, the outside is not a big deal,
 nor its conditions, while the inside is really important,
 for in the meaning is our salvation,
 if it's uttered and shown. 275
 Which profit from a sealed spring,
 from a ray of sun concealed by clouds?
 Such is a wise thought unspoken,
 like the beauty of a rose that an ugly cup
 covers; the beauty appears when, 280
 burst open by the wind, the cup pushes its offspring on stage;
 but if the beauty were to remain always covered,
 there would be no delight in much-revered spring.
 We don't look for anything more than speaking
 like those who seem simple as regards speaking. 285
 At least, may their meanings be present.
 I long to perceive if only a part of your splendour.

Value of education (288–308)

For if written doctrines are of no value,
 why did I jest such a long time,
 or rather: why did I count vainly the sands of the sea, 290
 in toils weaving nights with the days,
 in order to have, if only with wrinkles, a bit of learning?
 But if they are—as they are—well written,
 then leave not to the cobwebs the labours of the just.
 Be the style pedestrian, the language coarse, 295
 I won't mind: I can walk lowly, too.
 The frugal meal I oftentimes find dearer
 than the one adorned by the hands of the cooks.
 For the garment is the same: fair is the beauty
 not feigned by hands, but inherent to nature. 300
 Be the meaning noble, and it will be enough.
 Sophistication is vain, we leave it to those who like it.
 Spare me Sextus and Pyrrho,
 goodbye Chrysippus, far be the Stagirite from me,
 don't grow fond even of Plato's eloquence. 305
 Renounce the ornaments of the doctrines you rejected.
 Be philosopher, but with plain words:
 you'll please us even with unrefined talks.

Christian culture (309–329)

Teach us as you prefer, but teach,
 who is Trinity for me, how God is One 310
 and still distinct, one worship, one nature,
 monad and triad; which is the nature of angels,
 the duplicity of the world, the justice of Providence
 in spite of many injustices apparent to the majority
 and which is the relationship between soul and body 315
 and the first and second laws and what is incarnation,
 which exceeds by far any other object of knowledge,
 and the mixture of two natures in one glory,
 mortification resulting in awaking and heaven again,
 and what is the sense of resurrection and judgment, 320
 which the life of the just, which of the wicked.
 Tell me, prithee, how everything goes, and where it stands,
 if the Spirit has revealed some of these things to you,
 or everything, whether only a little or even poorly,
 inasmuch as the purity of your mind was capable. 325
 Rob me not of these! But if you are totally blind,
 then why do you blindly lead? Alas, the dimness
 of those who trust a blind guide,
 how shall they fall together in the pit of their ignorance!

Morally unfit bishops (330–354)

Be this enough for those: yes, they are the lesser evil, 330
 but ignorance is still an evil, even if the lesser.
 Yet what should be said mentioning also the wicked?
 For there are, truly there are, some who are more wretched,
 miserable, revolting crapshoots of the game of life,
 ambidextrous of the faith, honouring the laws of fashion, 335
 not those of God, weathercocks of words
 always changing direction, or flapping willows,
 flattering to women, pleasant poisons,
 lions for the weak, dog for the strong,
 natural hunters of any table, 340
 wearing out the doors of the powerful, not the wise,
 esteeming favour, not duty,
 so as to make even their neighbours worse.
 Do you want me to say something wise about them?
 There's one boasting nobility, another eloquence, 345
 another one riches, another his clan.
 Those who lack something to stand out
 make themselves known through knavery.
 Also, this is artful: they know nothing of speech,
 and they bind the tongue of the more eloquent with a law. 350

If a strife were kindled of eyes or hands,
 you would have cut these off from us, too, you artists!
 Is this not a clear outrage? Is it not a plain damage?
 Who shall tolerate this? *Mysterium fidei!*

Consequences for the church (355–370)

What a salvation we have received from God, 355
 one that spread already almost to the whole world,
 and nevertheless what utterly worthless leaders we have!
 I won't speak falsely, yea, but neither pleasantly.
 Alas, what a specious scene is played:
 Personages now, and the persons later. 360
 It is shameful to say how things are, and still I'm going to say it.
 Appointed to be teachers of virtue,
 we are the workshop of every vice,
 silently screaming even when appearing not to talk:
 "Wickedness presides: let no one labour, 365
 be wicked instead, 'tis the shortest
 and best way: action lays down the law."
 For one could barely, through toils of teachers,
 incline for the better, but if one has a perverse
 model, one's done, a stream running downhill. 370

The reason: failure in selecting bishops (371–396)

Here's the reason: they say it is with the rays of the sun
 that the eagle tries his hatchlings' sight cleverly;
 through these, the bastard from the legitimate is told,
 and the one cast forth, the other recognized as son;
 we on the contrary enthrone easily anyone, 375
 provided he wants it, as leader of the community,
 examining nothing of neophytes nor of older Christians,
 neither their behaviour, nor any of their words, nor their acquaintances,
 not even as much sound as suffices to evaluate a coin,
 and not those conspicuous for the trial by fire of time, 380
 but those who there and then appear worthy of the throne.
 Indeed, if we should keep in mind that power
 in the majority of cases makes its recipient worse,
 who in his right mind would put forward someone he doesn't know?
 And if 'tis such a big deal to steer 385
 only my own soul through the mighty swells of life,
 how dare you give the reins of such a community to anyone,
 except if you truly want to drown the ship?

How come when precious stones are difficult to find,
 and spices are not grown on any place of earth, 390
 many are the cheap nags on the market,
 while the high-bred are nurtured in the houses of the rich,
 that the leader is easily found,
 without training, ready and fresh for the office?
 What quick reversal of ways and habits! 395
 It's a roll of dice: what is divine is decided by dice.

Second reason: Lack of preparation of bishops (397–431)

Or you just put at once a comic mask
 on someone paltry and cheap,
 and suddenly he appears to us as a pious man.
 Truly, great is the grace of the Spirit, 400
 if even our most dear Saul is among the prophets.
 Yesterday you were a mime in the theatre
 (let another one inquire what you were outside the theatre),
 now you yourself are our unusual show.
 You were just now a horse lover, sending God dust 405
 as others send prayers or pious thoughts;
 something happens—a charioteer falls,
 or a horse comes second at the races—
 and the nimble haze of horses strikes you,
 as a madman or one out of his mind; 410
 now you are well-behaved and radiate only sobriety,
 unless you are not seen and run to your old vice,
 like a queer branch that, fleeing the grip
 of the hand that kept it straight, runs to its shape.
 Yesterday an attorney, you sold justice, 415
 twisting the law up and down,
 thus damning those whom justice would have saved
 and applying the rule of justice to the highest bidder;
 Now you are my judge, an instant Daniel.
 Yesterday you judged me, sword drawn, 420
 and made of the court a lawful den of robbers,
 stealing and bullying, above all the very laws;
 how meek are you today! One could not change
 clothes as easily as you your character.
 Yesterday you squirmed among effeminate dancers, 425
 at weddings you played the burlesque among the Lydians,
 twisting your voice in songs and swelling on drunken pride;
 now you watch the behaviour of virgins and consorts:
 how suspicious your virtue after your former habits!
 Simon Magus yesterday, today Peter Simon. 430
 O the speed! O a lion instead of a fox!

Not enough time between baptism and ordination (432–441)

But tell me, dear friend and exactor of tributes,
 or former-something in the civil service,
 how come you, being poor, and then exceeding Cyrus
 the Mede, Croesus, or Midas with your revenues, 435
 owning a house made and full of tears,
 you migrated to the altar and took hold of the throne,
 and still retain what you seized by force?
 And finally you are a tyrant even of God's mysteries,
 upon which one shouldn't perhaps even dare to look 440
 if not prepared for a very long time.

Objection 1: Baptism (442–502)

The purification of baptism has changed you utterly?
 Wait: we'll see, why should we envy you?
 The advantage is mine, allow just some time,
 I ask you just a little delay of desire. 445
 If you, cleansed today by a gift of God,
 burst forth again with the same mud thanks to sluggishness,
 the spring that burst forth with those former vices being still there
 (because immersion doesn't cleanse your every habit,
 but the fruit grown out of your habits), 450
 know clearly that yours is a mournful salvation,
 all the more because before, there were at least high hopes,
 but now not even these: one is the grace of the One God.
 But maybe one is not evil: Will it suffice?
 Well, we prefer a wax tablet that, formerly smoothed 455
 of its old images, registers new, beautiful ones.
 Become a Zacchaeus, and if you want to,
 don't give more, but just the sum you stole from them,
 for you cannot abide by the law;
 give to the poor as much as you want, 460
 and then you'll host Christ properly.
 But if you keep the spoils inside or give little
 to the poor, and believe yourself to be acquitted,
 then our God—if I may speak thus—can be sold.
 Where is justice, if my mischief 465
 is unforgiven while Grace allows you
 not to pay the price of your trespasses?
 You have Grace? Then from the others' wealth
 stay far away: this way your purification will be perfect.
 But if, while you were receiving the charisma, 470
 you had what's not yours, or were not thoroughly cleansed,
 then I omit the rest, because it's clear to anyone.
 You look for Grace: it's because you now know you're a debtor,

even if the throne lifts you too high.
 'Tis our past faults, not our present errors, 475
 that baptism washes. Therefore, purify
 yourself perfectly, and do not become now a laughingstock,
 purifying others as you yourself are soiled,
 unless you alone had from God the distinction—
 similar to those written by the emperor's hand and grace— 480
 to be praised even in your tyranny.
 If, however, even baptism does not purify totally
 those who—as I said—receive its grace
 (for never has anyone cheated with God,
 Who binds even the cunning more cunningly), 485
 who could purify of the sins after the anointing
 those who plunge themselves again in the muddy pit
 and the dignity of our image from above
 outrage with the effigies of reptiles
 and brutes, which we become by imitation? 490
 Habit is a second Maker,
 difficult to uproot and cast away.
 Therefore, there is no second cleansing.
 Once I was begot, and then formed anew by God;
 perchance I will be formed in another, future 495
 creation, cleansed by the loving fire.
 Now I do not know remedy, except tears,
 wherefrom barely comes healing,
 while the scars remain anyways, I believe,
 as accusers of the former nefarious wounds. 500
 If there is someone who trusts more in God,
 the advantage is mine: let him just persuade us.

Objection 2: Ordination (503–521)

One could say that the hands of bishops,
 the public mandate, are cleansing graces,
 or our loud proclamation of unworthiness 505
 in public, taking the genuflection as a purification,
 or the Spirit, that veritable tyrant,
 according to righteous and wise bishops,
 although I believe these will get some defilement faster
 than add something to their own splendour. 510
 For 'tis easier to partake in evil than in good,
 and thence you'll know this truth:
 if sanctified meat should touch
 a drink—as Micah says—or some mortal,
 it could never sanctify that which it touched, 515
 whereas defiled things will profane the sacred.

The blessed Paul knows this very well,
 when, instructing Timotheus in his epistles,
 he gives the precept not to impose hands offhand
 on another, and not to share his ways: 520
 Our own sins are burden enough.

The importance of morality: For outsiders of the church (522–540)

But let's concede as you like that even this is a purification.
 Who guarantees for the morality, except time,
 which shows that Grace has wiped clean in depth
 and not on the surface, as if like a dye from herbs 525
 is the splendour whose beauty can be washed away?
 But be it a complete purification as well:
 your degree has changed you. Behold! You're an angel.
 A faithful one who honours our laws
 will concede this readily for the sake of dogma. 530
 But the pagan has, apart from our reputation,
 no other standard for the goodness of the faith:
 he, who doesn't care about his vices,
 becomes a grudging prosecutor of yours.
 How are we, tell me, to persuade him to change 535
 his mind from the one we gave him formerly?
 How are we to put to rest his tongue, with which words?
 Indeed, 'tis not in our laws to despise what
 in any respect polishes, as a kind of statue,
 the leader, lest the people have any damage. 540

It is difficult to achieve *after* ordination (541–569)

But I'll concede also that grace is stronger than fame.
 Everyone marvels at you and blame doesn't reach you.
 You come right after Elijah for your holy speech.
 How come you sit high, unproven and uneducated
 in things thoroughly practised and desired 545
 by many? I'd marvel if you at least desired them:
 Conceit doesn't allow learning,
 because it convinces you that what you don't have is easy to acquire.
 But that's not the problem: rather, how will you avoid
 seeming at the same time the student and the teacher, 550
 and to sharpen the sharpening as the fangs of boars,
 having to teach while you still learn?
 What is such a confusion of tasks?
 Since when has our doctrine become so cheap?
 There is no boxer who hasn't begun by holding forth 555
 his hand or by looking for the favourable position;

nor a runner not training his feet in advance;
 which sane human, in just one day,
 has ever cut, wrought, and played a flute in a contest?
 Of which consummate painter has it ever been hear 560
 that he did not mix many different qualities of colours?
 Who harangued or healed a disease
 before many pleas and many diseases?
 Small indeed would be the renown of art
 if the bare will sufficed to its acquisition. 565
 Yet the prelate is required, and he alone,
 to be admirable and excellent straightway.
 But, as the saying goes, "No sooner said than done":
 Christ orders, and a creature forms.

The importance of morality for the faithful (570–574)

I'll just drop this. How dare you, looking down 570
 on the abiding worshipper of God there,
 exalt yourself and desire the power of the throne?
 Don't you shiver and tremble before the throne,
 lest you should herd cows better than their herder?

The good faithful vs. the bad bishop (575–633)

Consider things this way, provided you bother to look them at all: 575
 This one sleeps on the ground, devoured by ashes,
 and he wasted away his flesh with vigils,
 chanting the psalms and standing night and day
 and exiling his thoughts from the crass to the sublime
 (for why should one entrust to the graves one's whole dust 580
 and be for the worms a more lavish food,
 begetting and feeding the begotten?),
 and with springs of tears he wiped clean his stains,
 if he ever had the smallest of sprinklings,
 whence even the wise is affected in the mire of life. 585
 He was sealed with worthy signs in his flesh,
 parched by prayer and manifold toils
 (with them the ancient tasting afflicted me,
 turning me to earth, our nurturing mother),
 and he shudders, with his hunger and meagre rags 590
 desiring to reach the clothing of incorruption.
 He did violence to the violence of belly with scant
 food, wooing death each day:
 for he knew the only food of angels is God.
 This one is now poor, but there was a time when he was very rich. 595

He, though, preferred jettisoning and sailing light,
 casting the load not to the abyss but to the poor.
 This one, fleeing the cities and the applause of the crowd
 and the storm that shakes all public things,
 fitted closely to God the dignity of thought, 600
 alone devoted to divine matters with himself alone.
 This enclosed his beautiful body (for how can
 the body of the best not be beautiful?) with pearls—
 iron chains, a hidden ornament—
 thereby binding himself though innocent, 605
 lest he trespass, even when free,
 and binding together with himself the erring senses.
 To such a man the Spirit taught the depths of Scripture,
 loosening what's sealed for the minds of the many.

Show me, prithee, such beautiful things among yours! 610
 A house, a plump woman, desire of children,
 wealth, butlers, exactors, cries, lawsuits,
 everything full of worries and works;
 a table swollen with provisions
 by the combinations of drinks and cooks, 615
 who bring their fruit to guts by sea and by land
 (by which the mind is drowned and loses scope)
 and by perfumes, laughter, consorts of tunes
 that need cymbals and noise of feet.
 Others then, filled with the folly of nature, 620
 addicted and swelling, all spruced up
 for women, just married—to say the least—
 having still to open the bridal chamber
 or even living together with their lovers still unmarried,
 even before their cheek is covered with beard, 625
 the ornament of men, just in their prime,
 young in the body, younger in the behaviour,
 or, on the contrary, laden with vices of days past,
 these are the leaders of not-carnal children,
 whom the Spirit, averse to flesh, begets, 630
 these, who have learnt to honour the passions they suffer,
 who use the vices of others as excuses for their own,
 giving the same permit they claim.

Power is wearing (634–657)

Such are they. But maybe, in becoming
 better than themselves, they can be hindered by their thrones. 635
 Power, in facts, makes the fool worse.
 The disciplined instead remains disdained,
 eyes down, looking to God alone,
 fond of the place of the disciple, whose current teacher

maybe is unworthy to be his student, 640
 if at least valour is not told by position.
 Such is the power of the Slanderer among us!
 Such subtle, shrewd tricks he plays
 whenever he wants to strike a city or a nation:
 besides the individual temptations, he gives also 645
 the leader as a summary law of wickedness.
 Here it is, then: copper laminate in gold,
 or the changing colour of a chameleon,
 a beard, a downcast countenance, a bent neck,
 a mild voice, dressed up as faithful, 650
 a slow pace, in all wise, except mind.
 Here are the first of the foremost honours of our time,
 the holy ephod and Samuel's cloak,
 a petty cot, not even totally made up,
 sackcloth as dress and a linen knot around 655
 luxuriant hair, fitter for the heads of maidens,
 ostentatious outwards frills of orison.

Avoiding duplicity and unseemingly imitation (658–695)

How shall I not utter this uttering foreign to me?
 But I could not deliver something—even if from wrath—
 casual: maintain either the luxury or the mop! 660
 Why do you strive to possess both what's yours and what's not?
 Different are the borders of Phrygia and Mysia,
 different the courses of Merra and Siloam:
 the ones cannot be even tasted; to the others, moved
 by an angel, illnesses yielded. 665
 You plant two vines, twice then
 you sow; your garment is woven from two cloths,
 you render a pair what does not belong to the same pair.
 Don't you know it is forbidden by the law
 that shuns duplicity, the twisting and mixing? 670
 One is the ornament of women, the other that of men;
 one the flight of jackdaws, the other that of eagles;
 the imitation of the great by the petty is very shameful,
 because of its shabbiness: let the sorcerers of Pharaoh
 persuade you clearly with their story. 675
 But if you strived to be one of the wise men,
 don't just turn the rod into a snake;
 I want you to be all in all the great Aaron.
 However, if you are numbered among the mages of Egypt,
 if it's good, practise the whole art itself: 680
 no one grudges you a fair imitation,
 but if it's foul, then stay away. Refrain from what's mine,
 for you know what is mine, even if you pretend cleverly.

You too rob me of my one little ewe lamb:
 your countenance is a cheating, and which Nathan will speak? 685
 I'll rip your grey garments running onto you,
 if I catch you, because sometimes even of these
 you brag, as of the worst of foods,
 when you suffer from overeating delicacies.
 But rip you too something mine, if you can find something 690
 too feeble or fake in me.
 What would be more right than this?
 Let Laban keep the white flocks, but the spotted ones
 are of the shepherd that has long laboured,
 frozen by nights and baked by the sun. 695

Example of imitation (696–708)

Therefore, feigning one's character is the worst of shames;
 however, if you hold fast, I will praise you.
 But how is it this, and to what is it similar?
 Can I play a bit with a pleasant fable
 while being serious? There is laughter even in tears. 700
 The tale places a kitten in a bridal chamber,
 because it depicts her as a bride in bridal garments;
 Gifts, applauses, laughter: 'twas really a brilliant wedding.
 Then, she saw a mouse running through the middle of the room.
 She was a bride, yea, but still a cat: at that sight 705
 she ran upon it and had dinner; not wedding.
 Such is every false teacher:
 Nature is not easily changed.

Should a bishop be a skilful politician? (709–760)

“Still, he knows his way around in business,
 this one you blame, and is a perfect leader, 710
 practised in old and new movements,
 whereas that pious one is useful only to himself.”
 Who says such things? Someone too malignant.
 For no one exists to live for himself only,
 neither among the good nor among the evil. 715
 Rather, as this air, depending on who draws it,
 acquires a pleasant or a bad odour,
 so we are made like our neighbours most quickly,
 less, however, from the good, but too much from the evil.
 Wickedness in facts is easier to imitate. 720
 But if such a man should become also our leader—
 that is, if he is mean and full of wickedness—

then this is the proverbial bramble ruling the trees,
 whereas if he's excellent, by the pillar of fire
 once more led, the Great Israel will proceed 725
 to that land of hope we all earnestly pursue,
 even if its leader is not always around in the marketplace,
 nor a Proteus skilful in stealing appearances,
 nor a Melampus nor another restless man
 easily adapting himself in everything to everyone else, 730
 based on everyone's continuous changing.
 So why do you call useless—tell me—the one
 whose imitation can make us better?
 Or why is the best leader and right the one 735
 whose imitation makes you despise ours?
 Excess is unsuitable for the sage,
 while generosity is most trustworthy.
 You can be that one, if you desire, but I'm this.
 Do you hold as the best of painters
 not the one painting lively forms with simple colours, 740
 a Zeuxis or Polyclitus or a Euphranor,
 but anyone who with bright and shadowless
 dyes contrives misshapen bodies,
 like Callimachus and Calais did, in my opinion
 barely representing the copies of the copies? 745
 Such is every manifold man.
 Is it with this in mind, then, that you were striving to find a shepherd?
 How small an effort! I'm ashamed for you.
 You look for a bishop as for a city curator.
 You care for dung, but my concerns are wider. 750
 Leave to the priest one task and one only,
 to purify souls through life and words,
 bringing them upwards with inspired impulses,
 being gentle and high-minded, only by the divine,
 spotless reflections moulded 755
 as a mirror reflecting from within
 and to send pure offerings on behalf of his children,
 until he has restored them as an offering.
 Let other tasks be left for the ones in them more accomplished.
 This way, we can have a secure life. 760

Should a bishop be a good polemicist? (761–776)

Yet, as you deem free speech as the highest value,
 I accept it: nor do I find it unimportant,
 provided we use it with reason and moderation;
 however, mind how things are: the wise man's
 silence is worth more than your claptrap, 765
 for, while even your courage is boldness,

nobility means also curbing our words.
 But if the right chance occurs for speaking freely,
 you'll see the meek turn pugnacious, and you'll experience
 in that circumstance how much he's successful. 770
 You'll learn how the ape and how the lion roars,
 when your human nature will be spit,
 as the bad conscience turns towards earth,
 while he, being irreproachable, is easily received.
 Nothing else in fact is more trustworthy than temper. 775

The strife for the biggest cities (776–791)

Thus in this respect too is the skilful one worse.
 Nevertheless he boastfully takes seat in the spotlight,
 enjoying the fruits of another man's table,
 so much despising all the others, like abortions,
 as he himself should be despised, 780
 having this one spur of pride, his glorious city,
 and deserving for this an even more abject downfall:
 for in this way you are producing more wicked men.
 What kind of urban ass have you tried
 to present as better than another ass from the countryside? 785
 An ass is an ass, even if it lives in the city.
 What do I mean? Well, how won't this favour the wicked?
 Is it not a plain snare for those who progress?
 In fact, the wise becomes like the unwise,
 whenever things flow well for the wicked 790
 and those who correct have a wretched life.

Gregory renounces further action (792–810)

But this is the best course: as in a storm
 that twists everything, veering a little away
 from where everything is turning up and down,
 secure our short days, 795
 and give to old age a good end.
 So, go ahead and keep your thrones and tyrannies,
 you, since you deem them as most important.
 Enjoy it, exploit it, carve up
 your patriarchates, let the great world yield to you, 800
 change seat after seat, plunge
 the ones, the others lift: 'tis what you like.
 Go ahead, I'll recollect myself in God,
 by whom I live and breathe and for whom I look,
 to whom before birth my mother promised me, 805

with whom bound me dangers and the gifts of night,
 and to him I'll sacrifice pure movements of the mind,
 as far as it's possible at least, alone talking to him alone.
 All these things have been said to you, wicked, on behalf of the good:
 if one is grieved by these, my speech has reached its target. 810

All the rest, my friends, will be brought up in the end;
 however, please accept from me a valediction
 that, although brief, is still useful,
 like those who receive the last, fatherly
 words and commands, worthy of remembrance 815
 because not a word more will be ever heard again,
 so that they remain even more deeply in the heart.
 If you should receive another Gregory, my friends,
 be more careful with him; if not, then
 be ye gentlemen with your neighbours 820
 and with yourselves, you that agree just as long
 as you are possessed by the same passions;
 and that peace that I always earnestly served
 you should love, giving up your weaknesses,
 by which the community is miserably troubled. 825
 I too shall let go of mine, be it that I think
 myself better than others or that my old age
 has made me harsh and peevish for anything,
 or finally that I, the one high in spiritual drunkenness,
 believe the sober to be dead drunk. 830
 Be it as you prefer, but remember me,
 who has suffered much for the behaviour of friends,
 but keeping reason as a good guide
 and this old age, which delivers me from these sorrows.
 In this way maybe a friend could make peace with me 835
 after the strife has died, with which envy goes along.

II.1.13 To the Bishops

O priests, you who offer bloodless sacrifices! 1
 O highly glorious ministers of souls, bearing
 in your hands the image of the great God!
 O, you who the Supreme God with human beings together bring!
 O, world's pillars, life's light, foundation of the doctrine, 5
 initiators to the shining mysteries of life immortal,
 Christ-bearers, sitting on the topmost thrones,
 most high, rejoicing in comely shows,
 stage treaders, standing on wooden stilts,
 feebly yawning through alien masks, 10
 for what pertains to religion, the very same as everyone else.
 Yea, you may play, although you play shamefully,

and your speech may be haughty, yet what you do is really shallow,
 whereas I, even if all of you together may hold me
 an evil man and strange, and pull me far away 15
 from your chorus, shooting one dart after another,
 openly and, what you love even more, secretly;
 nevertheless, what my heart stirs and urges,
 I will say, yet not wilfully, but I'll burst forth speech
 from my soul, as when a swell, forced from within 20
 by a mighty wind and running under a rock, invisibly
 bellows, and then blasts out of the ground,
 from the rim of the crack in throes.
 I cannot hold my gall within, so bear it,
 if I should say some heart-biting word, too, born of grief. 25
 Talking is a remedy for sorrow, if only to the wind.

Christ's great body, the Lord's pride and glory,
 a kingly people from the whole earth, a nation beyond belief
 was once; now instead God's property is shaken
 to and fro, like a swell in the roaring sea, 30
 or a plant quaking though raging winds.
 This people, for whom God came from his heavenly throne,
 and emptied his glory in the bowels of a mortal,
 and mixed with mankind, God and mortal in one conjoined,
 and, suffering, gave his body as a great price, his divine blood 35
 poured as restitution of our sin, and many other
 victims, those who later sowed everywhere the gospel
 and from a bitter hand accepted a sweet death,
 thereby paying God the Word with word, his blood with blood.
 Who is disturbing this body? Whence such a burden for me? 40
 How come a lone-grazing boar spoils my vineyard?
 How come a shadowy night conceals such splendour?
 Rabid, malevolent, grudging mankind
 ever since he first cast Adam out of paradise
 and immortal life, deceiving with the baneful fruit 45
 and always striking us with many and powerful disruptions,
 because he managed not, even as he desired, to cast down
 our whole race with his cunning (the spark of Word and lifted torch
 spread all over the earth with fame, while the persecutors
 confirmed even more those convinced by the martyrs), 50
 he found another wily mean. Recognizing the power
 of the army, he throws a deadly enmity between its leaders.
 Thus, once the chief is fallen, the whole army declines;
 a bad gale can capsize a seafaring ship
 or break it on the cliffs when it is without helmsman. 55
 Thus households, cities, choruses, cattle, chariots, flocks
 destroyed the ignorance of their guide. I speak to those who know
 the vice of all of us, guiding the people.

In the past a city was assigned as exile for the murderers,
 and a place to send the scapegoat to, 60
 and also one of bitterness and blood in the last
 days, whither whoever despised Christ gushed out,
 having the scarce and petty price of the Priceless,
 and not from One unwilling, since God is intangible
 to the hands, if he wants; and nevertheless they gushed out. 65
 But now 'tis one the place known for wickedness and doom
 by everyone, the strangers as well as our fellow believers,
 the former august seat of the wise, hedge of the best,
 this stage thriving with angelic choirs,
 the midmost gate between two worlds, the perennial 70
 and the one flying away, boundary of gods and mortals.
 Such was once; now instead 'tis ludicrous, as everyone
 is given way inside through an open door; so that I seem
 to hear a herald shouting in the town square:

"Come here, you experts of vice, shames of mankind, 75
 Tubbies, jocks, shameless, arrogant,
 drunkards, tramps, jeer lovers, clad in luxury clothes,
 liars and wantons, quick to perjure,
 devourers of the public, on other people's properties laying
 invincible hands, envious, wily, unreliable, 80
 humble flatterers of the mighty, lion with the humble,
 two-faced slaves of the ever-changing convenience,
 octopus on the stone sung in the stories for their skin,
 just married and already seething, still with their first down,
 you surely hide the natural fire, keeping in the eyes 85
 a misty love, when you wander publicly,
 ignorant of heaven, just baptized yet sooty,
 as wickedness is joined with the dazzling Spirit.

Come on, here, bold ones, a broad throne is ready for everyone!
 Come here, bend with the hands the young neck 90
 to everyone readily; even to the unwilling 'tis bent.
 The manna again, a strange rain: everyone collect
 in his lap, some more, some less, the same grace.
 If you want, don't even spare God's holy day of rest,
 for it may fester in greedy hands. 95
 Common to all is air, and common is earth,
 common the wide sky, and what his eyes illuminate,
 common is also the bounty of the sea, common the thrones, too.
 How wonderful! Not even Saul is a stranger to grace, but an oracle.
 Therefore, let no ploughman, no carpenter, no worker in leather, 100
 no hunter of prey, no one forging fiery works
 remain afar, nor let him have someone else as guide to God.
 For 'tis better to rule than to obey the ruler.
 So, the one who from the hands a big axe or a plough
 threw away, or the leather, or the planks or the tongs, 105

let him come here, to press all around God's table,
 thronging and thronged. Let the strong drive away the other,
 often even the better, who sweated in these seats,
 old aged, worn out in the flesh, conversant with heaven,
 despising the world and having his lot with God, 110
 a dead among the living and a faithful priest of the King.
 One paints an image from its model,
 setting it before himself, and the board takes up its form;
 but seeing you, one should take the opposite way.
 This is the only advantage of your depravity." 115

Thus would the herald shout. Yet I do
 dread such things as I've heard about the glorious Moses,
 who alone gazed openly in through the cloud to God
 and ordered the others to remain on the foothills,
 although most holy in clothes most holy and trembling 120
 at the very sound of the divine voice. For 'twas better
 even for the brutes not to step on God's ground,
 that they might be not destroyed under bursting stones.
 I do dread also the end of Aaron's sons, who, for the offerings
 put on strange fire, a strange death died 125
 and sudden, and the place of their death was sanctified.
 Although the sons of the great Aaron, they were destroyed.
 Thus even the Helids a baneful fate seized,
 the sons of Heli, for their greedy mind. Yea, they'd lay
 unholy hands on the holy kettles. 130
 Nor did Heli escape the wrath, but even him
 the ungodly belly of his sons vexed, though righteous
 and laden with words of rebuke for them.
 So, if such sins such a wrath awaits,
 how much more should we dread before greater evils! 135
 Even thee, kingly ark, he who kept thee with impure hands
 from falling died forthwith. God's temple too was made
 to hands untouchable by the pillars outside the walls.

Therefore, I wail and fall at your feet,
 Lord Jesus Christ, that no disgrace may come upon me 140
 as I retire. I am wearied by the wolves hurting the flock,
 with the shepherds I strove long; heart has fled
 my crooked limbs, I can barely breathe,
 oppressed by toils and our disgraces.
 Of whom some compete for the holy seats, 145
 swell one against the other, through evils
 tossed and tossing to and fro, and are stubborn contenders
 who scream "Peace!" and brag of the blood.
 Oh, that they may try the full measure of the Gethan plague,
 righteous and on the seat, for 'tis the seat's retribution. 150
 The others, divided on each side, harass
 East and West; God has left flesh,

and among these fighters there are different names and slogans:
 Paul is with me, Peter with you, Apollo with him,
 and these are the gods. Christ was vainly nailed, 155
 for 'tis not Christ's name we bear, but those of humans,
 although we have glory in his blood and hands.
 How much lust has clouded our eyes,
 lust for vain glory or possessions, or dread envy,
 consuming and delighting in evil, to our rightly sore eyes! 160
 And Trinity is just an excuse, actually 'tis hate unbelievable.
 Everyone is two-faced, a sheep enfolding a wolf,
 and bronze concealing a sour bite for the fish.

Such are the leaders. Then follows closely the people,
 prone to wickedness, even without a leader. 165
 There is no distinction between good and evil,
 nor between hoary sense and reckless youth,
 nor a grievous and devout life and an effeminate one.
 One is the rule: to make much of the worst. Damn
 that man who first brought here the wicked! 170
 Let them have the world, God, and whatever
 compensation awaits the good in the last days;
 let the good fruitlessly toil. Such is the sentence
 of our judges, and let justice be banned from here.
 Let everything be the same, Christ, man, sun, star, 175
 light, shadow, a pious angel, and Lucifer no more shining.
 Let God-slayer Iscariot be the same as Peter,
 and most impious Samaria as Jerusalem most holy.
 Let gold and silver be worth the same, and even iron,
 a pearl and a rugged stone, fountains and ravines: 180
 let's mix up everything and treat it as the same!
 Thus 'twas once, as the first-created matter was unadorned,
 still delivering the unsteadily defined world.

Once the great temple was unapproachable to the Moabites
 and the Ammonites, for they vexed a brave army. 185
 Others were numbered by Joshua among the water bearers
 and the wood bearers, for they had deceived him.
 This for the evil, yet they honoured great Levi's seed:
 indeed, they made him servant of the heavenly tent,
 and here too there were rules for victims, place and toil. 190
 Each man laid hands on his task,
 to hasten what was of the temple and outside it.
 Those served under such rules of virtue,
 whereas we raffle prizes for the vice: oh, death!
 Is there a bard skilled enough in laments to bewail this? 195

Refrain, friends: let's stop suffering for the derangement;
 even late God can be honoured with pure victims.
 If I'll have persuaded, then good; but if my words and age
 should be smothered by youthful rashness or by a cloud

of jackdaws croaking death to me foolishly, 200
 I shall testify by the hand of God immortal and the black
 day that devours with the last fire the light materials,
 I am not on the same throne as those, nor of the same works,
 nor even of the same mind, on the same boat or the same road.
 But let them thread their own way, whilst I 205
 will search Noah's ark, to avoid a grim fate.
 So may I escape, far removed from the wicked,
 even the fiery rain of Sodom, awful and bitter.
 From these bounds recollecting the wondering mind inside,
 all turned inwards, laughing about the storms of life 210
 which still soil shamefully even the faces of the wise,
 and always impressing on the heart divine notions,
 approaching nothing mixed with evil, but pure, to the light
 of the Thrice-Shining Godhead, with urging longings,
 I shall come blameless to the throne of God immortal; 215
 There all will be visible, nay, what is more, equal,
 then, when the balance will be in the hands of God, the Just Judge.

II.1.17 On the Different Lifestyles and against Fake Priests

A painter is excellent when he draws on his canvas 1
 the exact shapes, looking as if they were alive,
 not when, mixing many colours and bright aimlessly,
 he makes a meadow of painting of the canvas.
 I praise the seafaring ship, not the one counterfeited 5
 in her beauty, or splendid with garlands on the stern,
 rather the one the hands of the shipwright had best fastened
 with bolts and given to the swells confident.
 Even a host is excellent if braver, not if fair-looking,
 and the dazzling house is second to the sound and solid. 10
 Such are even the lives of mortals. The one is immortal whom awe
 brings to Christ, an alien unto twisted vice,
 steadfast, unshaken, imperturbable. The other most wretched,
 inside being feeble, outside feigning force,
 short-lived, the like of the idiots, to whom everything 15
 whirls, as their mind is unstable.

Such is the heart even of glorious Christ's priests.
 The one is slave to the ever-shifting strength of mortals,
 bowing to opportunity, a cane oftentimes bent by winds,
 of all kinds of vices not remedy, but model, 20
 whereas the other with trembling and cleansed palms
 offers the Gift, reconciled by the flesh of Christ
 and by the great sufferings that God bore down here,
 ransom of our ancestral passions.

For him alone he lives and rejoices; for him he rips 25
 his heart apart from earthly things, turned away from here.

To good people he gives mind; to the evil, however,
 he bows like a rugged, inflexible stone.
 Nor does he turn to riches or important thrones,
 nor the ephemeral glory that creeps along here, 30
 nor does he, with the skin of the violent king, the lion,
 conceal inside servile self-interest,
 scavenger, skilled in deceit, wicked, shifting concealer
 of shifting and various kinds of misdeeds.
 Rather, nourishing his mind with pure thoughts, 35
 he already grasps the heavenly Trinity,
 Whose image he fixed in his own senses,
 beholding one glory in triple beauties;
 then, making the people Godlike with holy sacrifices,
 he will finally bring the bloodless offerings of soul. 40

I (I won't hide it) longed to be one of them,
 and I had already one foot on the threshold,
 when I saw godless behaviours and troublesome mischief;
 suddenly I recoiled and brought away my foot,
 yet how much I toiled among the other misbelievers, 45
 among whom the echo of my tongue is still heard.
 To me the stones, Trinity to them, the divinity finally confirmed:
 such gifts we gave to each other!
 But even thus I complied, leaving a doctrine no more unbelieved,
 thrown everywhere by my swells. 50
 I'm down: trample, trample, malignant envy! But perchance
 I'll stop you when I'll hide at the extreme boundaries,
 or I'll be shut in the dark bowels of some beast,
 a huge sea monster, as Jonah once was plunged.
 Well, the body may well be in the bowels, but the mind will move 55
 with unbound rush, wherever it wants, even if shut in.
 This one thing of the good is free and can't be restrained
 nor taken away: a mind lifted by Christ.

No more guest of a mortal king, as was before,
 is Gregory, giving tiny gifts to his envelope, 60
 lying in the public, downcast and mute,
 with a breathless panting and feasting on slavish food.
 The judge won't punish me with a seat, either equal
 or lower, to give a measure to my inflation.
 Nor will I greet murderous hands or clutch 65
 their cheek to obtain a measly favour,
 nor will I run with many people to some holiday feast,
 either for a birthday or for a funeral or a wedding,
 to put every spoil in my jaws or give it to my attendants
 with the rapacious hands of a Briareus; 70
 then late, bearing a burden, as a living grave, I'll drag myself
 back home, worn out by the toiling belly,
 slurring the breath of surfeit, still hurrying towards another

fat feast, before having dispersed the previous glut.
 Nor, presiding in the holy places, 75
 be I alone or with many gathered as one,
 Shall I utter something pleasant to hear, excluding the Spirit,
 that I may be prudent and loved by the majority,
 enjoying the applause and dance in the theatres,
 a tightrope walker of fighting speeches, 80
 the like of winning athletes and much-modulating disgraces,
 or even the mad antagonist charioteers:
 not wounding the rage, not quenching the fury
 of the burning body, not fettering with reason
 the hand raging all over other people's property, 85
 not scattering false conceit from the heart,
 not throwing on the floor with doctrine swelling delusion,
 not calling forth tears with floods of tears,
 but using just one terrible drug, a heart hunting
 glory, and really a deadly drug. 90
 Nor shall I ever sit in one of those synods,
 where geese and cranes recklessly quarrel:
 there is strife, there are fight and disgraces formerly hidden
 gathered to one place full of enemies.
 Therefore, I for me sit among the humble ones, 95
 healer of pains, myself being sound.
 My hoar should not play, and it's unmeet to be
 a servant before the thrones, for which, competing,
 they divide, and unlawfully cut to pieces the whole world.
 Alas! How large our distresses! 100
 Let these things to the one who cares about them, and the power to the monkeys,
 while I'll fill full of Christ in stillness.
 And if 'tis bad to cast away the reins of a godly minded people,
 let the chiefs of those who shook me off from themselves know,
 until they, like a quick horse, which spits the bit, 105
 will be by appetite dragged and brought over cliffs or reef.
 I pray that they care for whatever God wants,
 but if 'tis worse, may my ears be far away.

