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THE BOOK OF WISDOM



CHAPTER 11

The Book of Wisdom never existed among the Hebrews. Its style has rather the fragrance of Greek eloquence. The Jews claim that it is a work of Philo; it is then said to be a work of Wisdom because in it the coming of Christ, the Wisdom of the Father, and his passion are clearly expressed. This is the Prologue Jerome put before the Book of Wisdom; he shows firstly the origin of this book saying: 'The Book of Wisdom never existed among the Hebrews. Its style, that is, its language is so elegant that it 'has rather the fragrance of Greek eloquence', that is, its taste is more Greek than Hebrew. The Greeks are more eloquent and deeper in their statements than the Hebrews. So, since this book has a most elegant style with the deepest teachings, it is clear that it was written in Greek rather than in Hebrew. Secondly, Jerome names its author when he says: 'The Jews claim that it', namely, the Book of Wisdom 'is a work of Philo' as its compiler but that Solomon was the person who discovered. While Philo was a Jew he was highly skilled in the Greek language. Jerome says of him in the book *De viris illustribus* that 'he was a Jew of Alexandria of the class of priests'. Thirdly, he gives the reason for the title when he says: 'it is then said to be a work of Wisdom because in it the coming of Christ, the Wisdom of the Father, and his passion are clearly expressed'. The translation is based on the Douay Rheims version of the Bible.

**THE COMMENTARY ON THE CHAPTERS OF THE BOOK OF WISDOM
ARE THE INTERPRETATIONS OF THE SERAPHIC DOCTOR SAINT BONAVENTURE, OFM**

Chapter 11

On the benefits pertaining especially to the punishment of enemies

She prospered their works. Here he treats of benefits pertaining to the punishment of adversaries, and, firstly, of benefits pertaining to punishment by lighter penalties aimed at their reform, namely, in this chapter and in chapter twelve; secondly, on benefits pertaining to heavier penalties aimed at their condemnation, namely, in chapter thirteen and further.

Firstly, on punishment by lighter penalties considered in two ways

In the first point he deals, firstly and especially, with the punishment of the Egyptians unjustly oppressing the Israelites; secondly, with the punishment of the Canaanites unjustly holding on to their land, namely, in chapter twelve.

(Verse 26). *And how could anything*, that is, any creature, *endure*, namely, in its being, *if you had not willed it*, that is, unless you preserved it willingly by your goodness, as if to say: in no way; 'Everything that exists would tend to nothing unless the hand of the Creator were to sustain or hold it'. *Or be preserved, if not called forth by you*, that is, unless you were to approve it by looking at it with your wisdom; Romans 4:17: 'Does not God call those things that are not, as those that are?' This is equivalent to saying: nothing.

(Verse 27). *But you spare all*, namely, human beings who are called every creature, according to Mark 16:15: 'Preach the Gospel to every creature'; I say *spare* because it is proper to God according to the text: 'God to whom it is proper always to be merciful and to spare'. *Because they are yours, O Lord*; Ezekiel 18:4: 'Behold all souls are mine'; *who loves souls*; this is clear because you laid down your life for us; John 15:13: 'No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends'; 'You had greater love because you laid down your life for your enemies'.

END OF WISDOM 11

(Verse 24). *And you have mercy upon all*, that is, you carry out the effect of mercy in all things, according to Psalm 144:9: 'The Lord's tender mercies are above all the Lord's works'; also Psalm 24:10: 'All the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth'; also Psalm 32:5: 'The earth is full of the mercy of the Lord'. *Since you can do all things*; hence all things are your creation and your works, according to Psalm 145:6: 'Who made heaven and earth and all things that are in them'. *And overlook*, by not punishing at the time, *the sins of human beings*; he does not say of angels because the sin of the Angels was immediately punished; so Isaiah 14:12: 'How have you fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, who did rise in the morning?' *For the sake of repentance*; so Romans 2:4: 'Do you not know that the kindness of God leads you to penance?'

Ezekiel 18:21: 'If the wicked do penance for all their sins which they have committed, and keep all my commandments, and do judgment and justice, living they shall live and shall not die'.

(Verse 25). *For you love all things that are*, namely, by approving and preserving the good in them; so Genesis 1:31: 'And God saw all the things that God had made and they were very good'; 'A good worker loves his work'; but God did not make sin, so John 1:3: 'Without him was made nothing', that is 'sin, according to Saint Augustine. So God does not love sin, but hates it, according to Psalm 44:8: 'You have loved justice and hated iniquity'. And you hate none of the things which you have made, namely, by condemning no one.

Against this it is said in Psalm 118:113: 'I have hated the unjust'; also in Psalm 5:7: 'You hate all the workers of iniquity'; also Sirach 12:3: 'The Most High hates sinners'.

But it has to be said that God does not hate what God has made but the vice of the one made, just as a statue maker loves what is done, and yet hates some imperfection in the material used.

And hate, that is, not wanting, *none of the things which you have made*, namely, by creating them from nothing, or make anything hating it, by forming it from pre-existing material;

Who to your work moved by no external cause:
But by a sweet desire, where envy has no place,
Your goodness moving you to give each thing its form.

So Proverbs 16:4: 'The Lord has made everything for himself'

Firstly, on the punishment of the Egyptians because of the double sin, firstly, because of unjust oppression

In the first point he deals with the punishment of the Egyptians because of the unjust oppression of the children of Israel; secondly, because of idolatry: *some being deceived worshipped dumb serpents and worthless beasts*.

In the first point there is shown the mercy of God towards the children of Israel who wanted to stay; secondly, the justice of God against the Egyptians wanting to detain them unjustly: *For by what things*.

In the first point he treats of the guidance of the Israelites on the way; secondly, the taking away or removal of the obstacles met on the way: *They stood against their enemies*; thirdly, their refreshment on the way: *They were thirsty*.

(Verse 1). He says, therefore: *She prospered*, as if to say: wisdom not only gave these benefits to the Israelite people but also *prospered their works*; 'Of the Israelites', namely, after their going out of Egypt; *in the hands*, that is, in the power and direction, *of the holy Prophet*; 'Of Moses' who was a prophet in his teaching; Deuteronomy 18:15: 'The Lord our God will raise up to you a prophet like unto me'; *holy*, in his life; Exodus 33:17: 'You have found grace before me'. Because he was a prophet, he taught and ruled them not only with words but also by example and, because he was holy, the text of Luke 24:19 can be applied to him: 'He was a prophet mighty in work and word'.

(Verse 2). *They went*, 'Hurrying to the promised land', *through wildernesses*, that is, through many abandoned places, namely, abandoned by farmers, *that were not inhabited*, namely by settlers. This was done by wisdom directing them by the hand of Moses, according to Psalm 76:21: 'You have conducted your people like sheep, by the hand of Moses and Aaron'. Many did not remember this; so Jeremiah 2:6: 'They have not said, where is the Lord that made us come up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the desert, through a land uninhabited and unpassable'. *And in desert places they made their tents*; 'Lodgings', that is, poor small houses that are called tents from falling because they could easily collapse; a similar thing is said of Abraham who, in Hebrews 11:9 is said to have lived 'in cottages'. They did this moving through forty two dwellings as listed in Numbers 33:1ff.

(Verse 3). *They stood against their enemies*, namely, by fighting against the Amalekites, as seen in Exodus 17:8ff., and against the Midianites, Numbers 31:3ff. *And revenged themselves of their adversaries*, namely, the Amalekites by conquering and killing them, and they did this by the prayer of Moses and the raising of his hands, as is clear in Exodus 17:10ff.

(Verse 4). *They were thirsty*, namely, from bodily thirst due to a shortage of water, as is clear in Exodus 17:2-6 and Numbers 20:2-5; *and they called upon you*, in their souls, and they did this themselves or through Moses; so Numbers 20:6: 'O Lord God, hear the cry of this people'; Psalm 106:6: 'And they cried to the Lord in their tribulation'. And water was given them out of the high rock, that is, from a high cliff; Exodus 17:6: 'You shall strike the rock and water shall come out of it'; also Numbers 20:8: 'Speak to the rock and it shall yield waters'. *And a refreshment of their thirst*, that is, quenching thirst from the drink of water, *out of the hard stone*, repeat, *given them*; Psalm 77:20: 'He struck the rock and waters gushed out'; also Numbers 20:11: 'There came forth water in great abundance, so that the people and their cattle drank'. It is called the *highest rock*, that is, exceedingly high, or *highest* because of what it represents, namely, because it prefigured Christ; so 1 Corinthians 10:4: 'The rock was Christ'. Spiritual water of graces came out from this rock; John 4:13: 'Whosoever drinks of this water shall thirst again, but the one who shall drink of the water that I will give shall not thirst for ever'; also John 7:37: 'If any thirst, let them come to me and drink'.

For by what things their enemies were punished, when their drink failed them, while the children of Israel abounded therewith and rejoiced. Here is shown the effect of divine justice against the Egyptians who wanted to keep the Israelites. Firstly, the punishment of the Egyptians by a lack of water is treated; secondly, the fittingness of the punishment:

For instead of a fountain of an ever running river, you gave human blood to the unjust; thirdly, the intention of the one punishing: *And whilst they were diminished for a manifest reproof of their murdering the infants*; fourthly, the severity of the punishment: *For you admonished and tried them as a father: but the others, as a severe king, you examined and condemned*; fifthly, the effect on those punished: *For when they heard that by their punishments the others were benefited.*

(Verse 22). *For great power* etc., as if to say: it is clearly apparent that it was not from weakness that they were punished in this way; *for great power*, that is, to be able to act strongly, *always belonged to you alone*, without the help of others, namely, from your infinite power. 'For the infinite is that in which the parts or quantity as in one receiving always has something outside it;' Luke 1:37: 'No word shall be impossible with God'; *always*, that is, at all times and for eternity, according to Daniel 7:14: 'The power of the Ancient of days is an everlasting power'. *The strength*, that is, of perfect power, because, 'strength is the limit of potential in something'; *of your arm*, according to Isaiah 51:9: 'Put on strength, you arm of the Lord'; *who shall resist*, as if to say: no one can; and that implies not suffering from any other.

(Verse 23). *For the whole world before you is as the least movement of the balance, and as a drop of the morning dew, that falls down upon the earth*, as if to say: this is truly so *for the whole world*, that is, the total of all creatures, *before you*, that is, in your ordering or in comparison with you, *is as the least grain of the balance*, that is, a particle by which a balance leans this way or that; it is called a movement from the verb to move, or because, it is so easily moved this way or that, just as the world is moved by divine power as God wishes;

so Isaiah 40:15: 'Behold the Gentiles are as a drop of a bucket and are counted as the smallest grain of a balance'; *and as a drop of the morning dew*, that is, falling before dawn, *that falls down upon the earth*, but is easily dispersed by the face of the sun, unable to resist. And note, that he says a creature is as *the least movement* etc., before God who can act on it so easily; *and as a drop of the morning dew*, to imply the impossibility of being affected by a creature; Isaiah 40:17: 'All nations are before God as if they had no being at all'.

And you have mercy upon all, since you can do all things, and overlook the sins of human beings for the sake of repentance. Here he treats of the proof of divine mercy; and, firstly, he proves it by the effect of overlooking;

secondly, by the effect of love: *For you love all things*; thirdly, by the effect of conservation: *And how could anything endure, if you had not willed it, or be preserved, if not called forth by you*; fourthly, by the effect of pardon: *But you spare all because they are yours.*

This can be interpreted in another way: *all things*, namely, things that are corporal by their nature, *you have ordered in measure, and number, and weight*, because the four elements are the measure of everything corporal for they have number, weight and measure, as it clear.

Or in another way: *weight*, as applied to the power of the one working; number, as applied to the wisdom of the one putting in order; measure, as applied to the kindness of the one preserving; Romans 11:36: 'For of him', referring to the power of the Father, 'and by him', referring to the wisdom of the Son, 'and in him are all things', referring to the kindness of the Spirit. - '*In measure*, quality; *in number*, quantity, *in weight*, reason'. - According to Saint Augustine, *measure* is the same as manner of acting; *species* is the same as number; *order* the same as weight. 'These three', namely, manner, species and order, 'where they are great are great benefits; where they are small, there are small benefits; where they are not, there are no benefits', as he says.

Or it can be interpreted of measure, number and weight in uncreated beings as follows: *in measure*, that is, by measuring in yourself all things by setting the mode of everything; *in number*, that is, by numbering all things in yourself by conferring the species proper to each thing; *in weight*, that is, by weighing in yourself what is proper to everything and by setting a certain order. 'In measure, that is, in yourself who are measure without measure setting the mode of everything; number without number granting species to everything; weight without weight drawing everything to stability'. You are the first as the efficient cause, the second as the exemplary cause, the third as the final cause. - In a moral sense it can be interpreted as: *In measure*, against the vice of over abundance; *in number*, against the vice of singularity; *in weight*, against the vice of fickleness.

But it is objected: if everything is ordered in measure, number and weight, therefore, there is measure in measure etc., and so on to infinity.

It can be said, that speaking of number, weight, and measure in uncreated beings, the distribution is universal; but when speaking of created things, the distribution is accommodated, in such a way that it is understood of a distribution made for things that are measured, numbered and weighed. Or: *all things*, complete beings that are not created together in another. Such are without measure, number and weight; but in beings created together in others, the beings are not self sufficient and complete.

For great power always belonged to you alone: and who shall resist the strength of your arm? Here, the proof of divine power is considered, firstly, in its greatness in itself; secondly, in the smallness of a creature: *For the whole world before you is as the least grain of the balance.*

(Verse 5). *For by what things* etc.; 'After recalling the benefits given to the first people, the punishment of the enemies is told'. *For by what things* etc., as if to say: an abundance of water was given to the Israelites; *for*, meaning because; *for by what things their enemies were punished*, namely, *when their drink failed them* when all the water of Egypt was turned into blood so that they could not drink it, as is clear in Exodus 7:20ff. *While the children of Israel abounded therewith*, namely, in the waters that were abundant in the land of Goshen, 'That flowed from the rock', Numbers 20:11; *and rejoiced*.

(Verses 6-7). *By the same things*, namely, by the waters, *in their need of water*, 'among the Israelites', *they were benefited*, because the lack was supplied by a miracle.

For instead of a fountain of an ever running river, as if to say: the lack of water was both right and fitting for the Egyptians, while an abundance of water was given to the Israelites; *for instead of a fountain*, certainly, *of an ever running river*, that is, of the Nile flowing continuously from the beginning of the world; for it is one of the rivers of paradise; *you gave human blood*, that is, a kind of human blood, *to the unjust*, namely, to the Egyptians since, 'their waters were turned into blood, as is clear in Exodus 7:20ff.

(Verse 8). *And whilst they*, namely, the children of Israel, *were diminished for a manifest reproof of their murdering the infants*, that is, from the public killing of the infants, which was done lest the people increase rather than become fewer, as is clear in Exodus 1:16 and 22; you gave to your own, namely, to the children of Israel, abundant water unlooked for, 'that is, unexpected' because you gave it in the desert and you gave it by a miracle with water flowing from a rock in the desert. 'A miracle is a difficult and unusual event beyond the hope and ability of the admirer'. *You gave human blood to the unjust*, as if he were to say, You gave blood to the Egyptians in place of water, and water to the Israelites because of the blood of the children that was shed.

(Verse 9). *Showing*, O Lord, *by the thirst that was then*, namely in Egypt for the Egyptians and in the desert for the Israelites, *how you exalted your own*, namely, in the future when 'you shall make them drink of the torrent of your pleasure'; you have shown this by giving them drink now in such a wonderful way. *And killed their adversaries*; 'With eternal thirst', like the rich man who feasted and of whom Luke speaks in chapter 16; also Isaiah 65:13: 'Behold my servants shall drink and you shall be thirsty'. Or according to the text in which were prefigured the death of the Egyptians in the Red Sea and the deliverance of the Israelites.

(Verse 10). *For when they were tried*, namely, the children of Israel in the desert with many temptations and trials; 'God inflicted divine scourges on the sinful Israelites and consoled the penitents'. The text adds: *And indeed*, that is, certainly, *they accepted discipline with mercy*; Psalm 59:3: 'You, O God, have been angry and have had mercy on us'; *with consoling mercy* and reproaching *discipline*; or: a merciful and light correction or punishment for their sins and so they should not reject discipline; Proverbs 3:11: 'My son, reject not the correction of the Lord'; Hebrews 12:8: 'If you be without chastisement, then you are bastards and not sons'. *They knew*, namely, by experience, *how the wicked were judged with wrath*, that is, how roughly, what the Prophet feared when he said: 'O Lord, rebuke me not in your indignation, nor chastise me in your wrath'; *the wicked were judged*, namely, now, *and tormented*, in a future with incomparably more grievous torments: 'The Lord shall rain snares upon sinners, fire and brimstone and storms of winds shall be the portion of their cup'. I say, *they knew*, by the experience of being so roughly coerced; Luke 23:31: 'If in the green wood one does this, what shall be done in the dry?' Also Proverbs 11:31: 'If a just person receives in the earth, how much more the wicked and the sinner?' Also Jeremiah 25:29: 'Behold, I bring evil on the city wherein my name is called upon, and shall you be as innocent and escape free?' As if to say: no.

(Verse 11). *For you admonished and tried them*; 'The Israelites'; *as a father*, namely, for their greater progress and advance to what is better, that is, by admonishing them with your correction you made them upright. 'The Lord scourges everyone whom he receives', Hebrews 12:6; Proverbs 3:12: 'For whom the Lord loves, he chastises, and as a father in the son he pleases himself'; also above in Wisdom 3:6: *As gold in the furnace he has proved them. But the others*; 'The Egyptians or the Canaanites'; *as a severe king*, as judged from the punishment, you who by nature are kind; *you examined*, namely, by punishments and examinations by torture, just as bandits, thieves and evil doers are put on trial and tortured; 'Punishment searches out whether or not a calm person loves truth'. *Condemned*, because from the scourging they did not change for the better but got worse; Ezekiel 24:12: 'Great pains have been taken, and the great rust thereof is not gone out, not even by fire'; also Jeremiah 6:30: 'Call them reprobate silver for the Lord has rejected them'.

(Verse 12). *For whether absent or present, they were tormented alike*, as if to say: I have said well that you condemned them rigorously. *For whether absent*, namely, the Egyptians from the presence of Moses and Pharaoh, or from the children of Israel, *or present*, namely, explicitly consenting to the malice of Pharaoh; or even, according to a the Canaanites, or those who were killed by Israel, or who heard of their victory; *were tormented alike*, because the plagues were 'in all the land of Egypt', as is clear in Exodus 7:21. Or: *present, they were tormented*, in body, *absent*, those who heard of it, *were tormented*, in mind.

(Verse 21). *And without these, they might have been slain with one blast*. The Lord was able to punish them not only in this way, for *without these*, that is, without the help of these beasts, *they might have been slain with one blast*; : 'That is, by one act of displeasure or by a command'. The word *blast* is to be understood as in Genesis 6:3: 'My spirit shall not remain in mortals forever', that is my displeasure etc. Or: *with one* angelic *blast*, as happened to Sennacherib and his army, as is clear in Isaiah 37:36. *Persecuted*, namely, for a reason meriting this, *by their own deeds*, so that they were destroyed by their own actions, just as a viper perishes when giving birth; Luke 3:7: 'You offspring of vipers, who has taught you to flee from the wrath to come?'; Psalm 27:4: 'According to the works of their hands, give you to them'. *And scattered*, namely, to different places away from their own land, *by the breath of your power*. This can be understood as intransitive, and then it refers to the uncreated Spirit; or as transitive, and then it can be understood of a created spirit; Job 4:8-9: 'I have seen those who work iniquity, perishing by the blast of God and consumed by the spirit of God's wrath'.

But you have ordered all things in measure, and number, and weight. Here he shows that God punished out of mercy and punished less than God could have done; and, firstly, showing by this, firstly, that God punished *in measure* by not punishing beyond what the weight of the sin demanded; secondly, that God punished *in number* by not punishing beyond what the number of sins demanded; thirdly, that God punished *in weight* by not punishing beyond what the condition or quality of the sinners demanded.

(Verse 21). I have said well that you do not punish according to the greatness of your power, that is, as much as you could; *but you have ordered all things in measure, and number, and weight*, as if to say: *you have ordered in measure* not only the creatures themselves but also their retributions, penalties and punishments so that they do not exceed the weight of the sin; *in number*, so that they do not exceed the number of sins; *in weight* so that they do not exceed the condition of the sinner nor the circumstances of the sin. That God punishes according to *measure*, Revelation 18:7: 'As much as she has glorified herself and lived in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give you to her'; also Isaiah 27:8: 'In measure against measure, when it shall be cast off, you shall judge it'; also Luke 6:38: 'With the same measure that you shall mete, withal it shall be measured to you again'. That God punishes according to *number*, Revelation 18:6: 'Double unto her double according to her works'; also Isaiah 40:2: 'She has received of the hand of the Lord double for all her sins', that is, double punishment, namely, the punishment of loss and a punishment of the mind, or an exterior bodily punishment and an interior spiritual punishment, that is, remorse of conscience. That God punishes according to *weight*, is clear from above in Wisdom 6:7: *For to him that is little, mercy is granted: but the mighty shall be mightily tormented*.

He shows in the first part that God could have punished in other ways, namely, either by means of punishment already created, or by something to be created new, as in: *Or unknown beasts of a new kind*; or by immediately acting alone: *And, without these*.

(Verse 18). Therefore, he says: *For your almighty hand, which made the world of matter without form, was not unable to send upon them a multitude of bears, or fierce lions*. I have said well, that you have punished them by those things in which they sinned, and this because the punishment fits the sin, not because of a lack of power. *For your hand*, 'that is, your Son', *was not unable*, that is, quite powerless, according to Psalm 143:7: 'Put forth your hand from on high'; *almighty*; so below in Wisdom 18:15: *Lord, your almighty word leapt down from heaven. Which created*, that is, formed *the world*; for to create is to make something from nothing, but to form is to use pre-existing matter. The world came from pre-existing material but it was first created without form; so he adds: *of matter without form*, that is, from prime matter which is unseen, invisible. From the point of view of the world, it was then without a distinct form, and from the view of the one acting, it lacked light which is necessary for bringing the sense of sight from potency to act; so Genesis 1:2: 'The earth was void and empty', as regards the first defect, 'and darkness was upon the face of the deep', as regards the second defect. *To send upon them*, namely, for punishment, *a multitude of bears, or fierce lions*, strong and rapacious animals; for this reason, in 1 Samuel 17:36, David gloried in having overpowered them: 'For I your servant have killed both a lion and a bear'. I say, *to send upon them a multitude of bears, or fierce lions*, as was done when the Lord sent lions into the land of Samaria and they devoured the people dispersed there because they did not worship God.

(Verses 19-20). *Or unknown beasts of a new kind, full of rage*, and so more frightening; Deuteronomy 32:24: 'I will send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the fury of creatures that trail upon the ground and of serpents'. *Either breathing out a fiery vapour*, or of fires, *or sending forth*, namely, to devour, *a stinking smoke*, to infect the atmosphere, *or shooting horrible sparks out of their eyes*, to cause terror.

Whereof not only the hurt, caused by striking, *might be able to destroy them*, that is, to put them beyond the limits of life; *but also the very sight*, from seeing, *might kill them*, the unjust and the evil, *through fear*; Psalm 90:13 says of a just person: 'You shall walk upon the asp and the adder and you shall trample under foot the lion and the dragon'.

Note that the six kinds of sins can be understood in the six kinds of animals just mentioned: by a bear the vice of gluttony; by a lion, pride; by *beasts full of rage*, anger; by those *breathing out a fiery vapour*, lust; by *sending forth a stinking smoke*, avarice; by those *sending forth a stinking smoke*, envy.

But then it is asked: how, therefore, are they *tormented alike*, namely, those absent in mind, those present in body?

It has to be said that they are alike in general, namely, referring to the thing, that both one group as well as the others were tormented but not alike in detail or in the method.

(Verse 13). *For a double affliction came upon them*, namely, like something owned, *affliction*, that is, torment, according to Psalm 108:29: 'Let them be covered with their confusion as with a double cloak'; Jeremiah 17:18: 'With a double destruction destroy them'. I say *double, and*, meaning that is; *groaning*, from the infliction of present evils; *for the remembrance of things past*, that is, with the sorrow they had from remembering past evils, and seeing how plague followed on plague. : 'A *double affliction*, that is, the memory of past evils and the storm of the present moment'.

For when they heard that by their punishments the others were benefited, they remembered the Lord, wondering at the end of what was come to pass. Here is shown the effect of the punishment of those punished, firstly, by the Israelites; secondly, by the Egyptians: *For when they heard* etc.; thirdly, by both: *being unlike*.

(Verse 14). As if to say: truly *you have tried* and *you have condemned them*. *For when they heard*, namely, the children of Israel when Moses preached this; *that by their punishments the others were benefited*, that is, it was of value for their salvation, according to Romans 8:28: 'To them that love God, all things work together unto good'; *they remembered the Lord*, who had handed them over to being forgotten; these became desperate; Psalm 77:42: 'They remembered not God's hand in the day that God redeemed them from the hand of him that afflicted them'; also: 'They forgot God's benefits and the wonders God had shown them'; however, after they had been afflicted, they remembered God: 'Punishment opens the eyes that sin closes',

Psalm 77:35: 'They remembered that God was their helper'. *Wondering*, namely, at the power and wisdom of God, *at the end of what was come to pass*, that is, after the matter had been concluded; for right judgment depends on the conclusion. 'The conclusion tests actions'; so Peter followed Christ 'that he might see the end', Matthew 26:58.

Secondly, on the punishment of the Egyptians for their idolatry

(Verse 15). *For whom they scorned before, when he was thrown out at the time of his being wickedly exposed to perish, him they admired in the end, when they saw the event: their thirsting being unlike to that of the just.* This is equivalent to saying: and this is rightly so; *whom*, namely, the Israelite people or Moses, *when he was thrown out*, that is, wrongly and dangerously thrown in the river, *they scorned*, namely, the Egyptians as he was about to perish in the river, in spite of the basket.

They admired in the end, that is, after seeing the result, namely, Moses rescued from there by miracles; so Exodus 11:3: 'Accordingly, Moses was a very great man in the sight of Pharaoh's servants and of all the people'. Or: *they admired in the end*, namely, the people delivered miraculously; Exodus 14:25: 'The Egyptians said:

Let us flee from Israel, for the Lord fights for them against us'. In this way the wicked erred by not considering the end of the just, but only their present affliction; above in Wisdom 5:4: *We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honour.*

Their thirsting being unlike to that of the just, as if to say: in this way you condemned the wicked and delivered the just; you, I say, not treating the just in the same way; 'As if to the unjust'; because Proverbs 24:16: 'For a just person shall fall seven times and shall rise again, but the wicked shall fall down into evil'. The reason for the difference does not come from God for God 'is not an acceptor of persons', Acts 10:34, but it comes from the unjust.

(Verse 16). The text continues: *However, for the devices*; I have said well: *unlike; however*, meaning rather but; *for the foolish devices*, that is, hardened in evil, *of their iniquities*, namely, those that are exterior, as if to say: because of their evil thoughts they were allowed to fall into evil actions; 'Wicked actions come from thoughts', because the reprobate do not have a change of heart even when afflicted by the Lord; Romans 2:5: 'But according to your hardness and impenitent heart you treasure up to yourself wrath, against the day of wrath and revelation of the just judgment of God'; Revelation 22:11: 'Let the filthy still be filthy'.

That some being deceived worshipped dumb serpents and worthless beasts, you sent upon them a multitude of dumb beasts for vengeance. Here he treats of the punishment of the Egyptians for idolatry, and this is done by sending flies. And the fittingness of this punishment is shown, firstly, from the viewpoint of the sinner; secondly, from the viewpoint of the judge punishing, as in the words: *For your almighty hand, which made the world of matter without form, was not unable to send upon them a multitude of bears, or fierce lions.*

(Verse 16—continued). *That some being deceived* etc., as if to say: they were punished for oppressing the Israelites; *that*, meaning because; *some*, of the Egyptians, *being deceived*, namely, about faith; Proverbs 14:22: 'They err that work evil'. *Worshipped dumb serpents*; he says dumb to distinguish it from the serpent that spoke to Eve in the earthly paradise; Genesis 3:1; *and worthless beasts*, that is, useless for worship; for the Egyptians worshipped Aesculapius in the image of a serpent, Mercury in the image of a dog, Jupiter in the image of a ram, Apis in the image of an ox; Romans 1:23: 'They changed the glory of the incorruptible One into the likeness of the image of a corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and of creeping things'. *You sent upon them a multitude of dumb beasts for vengeance*, namely, frogs, flies, stinging insects and locusts, according to Psalm 77:45-46: 'The Lord sent among them divers sorts of flies which devoured them, and frogs that destroyed them, and gave up their fruits to the blast, and their labours to the locust'.

(Verse 17). *That they might know that by the things*, that is, by what things, *a person sins, by the same*, that is by similar things, *also the person is tormented*; 'So that from the likeness of the punishment he might acknowledge the gravity of the sin', just as 'Haman was hanged on the gibbet which he had prepared for Mordecai', Esther 7:10; and Goliath was killed by his own sword, 1 Samuel 17:50ff.; and Holofernes was killed with his own sword by a woman he had wrongly desired, Judith 13:8ff.

Your almighty hand was not unable to send upon them a multitude of bears, or fierce lions. Here the fittingness of the punishment is shown from the viewpoint of the judge punishing who prefers to use mercy rather than power. And there is shown, firstly, that such a light punishment did not come from a lack of power; secondly that it came from mercy: *but you have ordered all things in measure, and number, and weight*; thirdly, the proof of power is brought out: *For great power always belonged to you alone*; fourthly, a proof of mercy: *And you have mercy upon all.*