

## criticism in translation

# The Ordinary Gloss on Jonah

INTRODUCTION AND  
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RYAN McDERMOTT, assistant professor of English at the University of Pittsburgh, is completing a book project titled “Words into Works: Literary Ethics and Tropological Invention in England, c. 1350–1600.” His article in *Modern Theology*, “Henri de Lubac’s Genealogy of Modern Exegesis and Nicholas of Lyra’s Literal Sense of Scripture” (Jan. 2013), which deals with medieval commentaries on Jonah, articulates the rationale for a second book project, “The Drama of Vernacular Theology: The Bible, Literature, and Genealogies of Modernity.”

## Introduction

THE ORDINARY GLOSS WAS THE MOST WIDELY USED EDITION OF THE BIBLE IN THE LATER MIDDLE AGES AND WELL INTO THE SIXTEENTH

century. Medievalists know the commentary element as the Gloss to which theologians as diverse as Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, John Wyclif, and Martin Luther habitually referred. As the foremost vehicle for medieval exegesis, the Gloss framed biblical narratives for a wide range of vernacular religious literature, from Dante’s *Divine Comedy* to French drama to a Middle English retelling of the Jonah story, *Patience*.

A wider audience might be most familiar with the Gloss’s distinctive page layout, its large-point biblical text nestling up against slabs of commentary on either side—the “outer gloss”—and bristling between the lines with forerunners to the footnote, the “interlinear gloss.” This intricate and surprisingly user-friendly format gathered onto one page the best historical, textual, natural-philosophical, and theological resources available, distilled by “masters of the sacred page” such as the likely glossator of Jonah, Gilbert the Universal, so called for his command of all knowledge (Andrée 37–40). Its layout provided quick, synoptic access to multiple traditions and styles of exegesis and guided five centuries of students into, around, and beyond the sacred page. Even the most successful early English Protestant Bible, the Geneva Bible, owed its layout and note structure, if not its theological apparatus, to the page-design innovations that the Gloss had introduced (Tribble 31–36). In its manifold incarnations, the Gloss harnessed advanced design and codicological technologies to shape scripture’s reception and empower readers to navigate a text that divagates and diversifies just as much as it witnesses to its own unity.<sup>1</sup>

The backbone of the Gloss is Jerome’s fourth-century Latin translation of the Bible, known in the medieval church as the Vulgate. A community of scholars gathered around Anselm of Laon compiled the glosses on the Vulgate from patristic authorities around 1100; the text was well established by 1140, and by 1200 the Gloss had become “the most commonly available type of late-twelfth-century text,” with at least some parts of it in practically every European scholastic library and in many monasteries (Smith, *Glossa Ordinaria* 180).<sup>2</sup> The Gloss on Jonah relies almost exclusively on Jerome’s commentary on

Jonah (c. 396), so its Latin often has a tone of urbane classicism. But the Gloss also chops up, compresses, and rearranges Jerome with scholastic delight and directness that render the Latin authentically medieval. I have tried in my translation to register this range of formal rhetoric and blunt immediacy.

The base text for my translation of the commentary comes from a midpoint in the Gloss's production history, just as it made the leap to print, but before the printed editions permanently accrued additional layers of commentary by Nicholas of Lyra and others in subsequent centuries.<sup>3</sup> When Adolf Rusch produced the first printed edition, in 1480–81, at Strassburg, he pushed the limits of possibility for the complexity of the printed page, employing an elaborate system of tie-marks to use all the space on the page (Froehlich and Gibson).

These innovations change the way we read, literally distancing commentary from base text. The text's material disposition influences what the rhetorical traditions call readers' *ductus*—their movement through a text, simultaneously affective and spatial, and the maneuvers of thought the text invites them to perform (Carruthers 77–81). (I have attempted to emulate the patterns of Rusch's edition here, though my choices are influenced in part by the limitations of a *PMLA* page.)

In the Gloss on Jonah, literal-historical exegesis and allegorical exegesis interanimate each other. Here we are light-years away from the mechanistic "levels" of scripture many literary scholars once imagined as fourfold exegesis. Instead of a schematic semiosis where the literal sense equals X and the allegorical sense equals Y, the Gloss sets historical and allegorical reading in a productive oscillation embodied in the movements of the reader's eyes as they navigate from column to column, gloss to gloss.

For example, the outer glosses on the first word, "And," explain both the source of the author's invention and the odd stylistic quirk of beginning with a conjunction. They attribute this oddity to spiritual inspiration, while the interlinear gloss on "saying" suggests the Trinitarian context in which spiritual inspiration might take place. Like modern-day form critics in biblical studies,

the glossator determines the context of composition, its *Sitz im Leben*—in this case, a prophetic ecstasy—to explicate the passage's form and style and find clues about its purpose.

Inner and outer glosses interact with the biblical text in such a way that none of the three parts can convey its full meaning on its own. This all adds up to a dizzyingly complex theological and critical thought machine that depends on the physical layout of the page to lead readers from center to periphery, from main text to commentary, and back again.

Jesus himself commented allegorically on Jonah (Matt. 12.41), rendering the book a touchstone for Catholic and Protestant allegorical theory. The Gloss on Jonah can thus serve as an excellent undergraduate or graduate course text for discussions of premodern biblical exegesis, medieval Jewish-Christian relations, book history, and, in combination with works such as *Patience* and *Moby-Dick*, the Bible as literature.

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## NOTES

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1. An excellent guide to these developments may be found in Christopher de Hamel's *Glossed Books of the Bible and the Origins of the Paris Booktrade*, a book as intelligently and handsomely designed as its subjects.

2. Beryl Smalley's groundbreaking *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* remains a touchstone for historical research on the Gloss. Lesley Smith's *The Glossa Ordinaria: The Making of a Medieval Bible Commentary* expertly consolidates subsequent research.

3. While the past decade has yielded the first critical edition of a book of the Gloss (Dove, *Glossa ordinaria: In Canticum canticorum*) and translations of a few other books (Andrée; Dove, *The Glossa Ordinaria on the Song of Songs*; Woodward), only one has attempted to transmit the distinctive Gloss formatting (Smith, *Medieval Exegesis*).

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## The Ordinary Gloss on Jonah

¶The prologue for the prophet Jonah begins

**T**he Hebrews say that Saint Jonah was the son of the widowed woman Sareptana [of Zarephath], whom the prophet Elijah raised from the dead. Afterward Jonah's mother said to Elijah, *Now I know that you are a man of God and the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth* [1 Kings 17.24]. For this reason they call this boy Amathi, for Amathi means "truth" in our language. And because Elijah spoke a true thing, the one who was raised is said to be the son of truth. Therefore, a dove is born from truth because Jonah means "dove." Jonah, then, is sent to the nations for the condemnation of Israel because, while Nineveh pursued repentance, they [Israel] continued in wickedness. Indeed, 2 Kings shows that Jonah was a prophet in the time of Jeroboam, king of Israel,

who, having forsaken God, made sacrifice to idols with his people in Samaria. When by means of illuminating prophecy Jonah saw the sinners of the city of Nineveh about to obtain the mercy of God, he did not want to go to proclaim the destruction of Nineveh because he did not want to seem to preach false things. For just as God said to Abraham concerning the wickedness of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, "*The cry of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah has reached me*" [Gen. 18.20–21], so also he says to Jonah concerning Nineveh that the cry of its wickedness has ascended to him. And because when God made his judgment concerning the people of Sodom, it was hardly revoked, so also Jonah, ignorant of the dispensation of God, who desires the salvation of men converting to him more than [their] destruction, did not want the judgment

¶Jonah the dove and the grieving son of Amathi who was from Gath which is in Ofir is sent to proclaim to the Gentiles. Having been sent, he scorns; scorning, he flees; fleeing, he sleeps. Because of him, the ship is imperiled. But the lot reveals him lying hidden. The whale devoured him after he had been cast out, and spewed him back as he was praying. Having been thrown back, he preached destruction. But he is saddened by the repentance of the city, and he begrudges the salvation of the Gentiles. He even enjoys a bower of green ivy, and he is pained by its sudden withering. His grave is pointed out in one of the cities of Gath, in a hamlet that is at the second milestone on the road to Sepphoris, on the road by which one goes to Tiberias.

¶No one is a better interpreter of a type of himself than he who inspired the prophets and guided them along certain lines, as it were, of the truth that would come to be among his own servants—who spoke to the Jews who did not know Christ the son of God. *“The men of Nineveh will rise on Judgment Day with this generation and condemn it because they did penance at the preaching of Jonah. And behold one greater than Jonah is here”* [Matt. 12.41]. The carnal Jew is condemned by the believing world and perishes, unbelieving, even as Nineveh is doing penance.

¶**And:** To those things that were being revolved in the mind of the prophet by the Spirit is joined this conjunction—namely, *and*.

¶**And the word of the Lord was made:** Seeing many things in the Spirit, as is the custom of a prophet, concerning these many things, he bursts forth into these words.

that had been announced against Nineveh to be revoked. What happened to Jonah also had happened to Saint Elisha, who did not recognize the son of the Sunamite woman as dead [2 Kings 4]. So Jonah, having suffered something human, thought that he would flee from the sight of God, saying with David, *“Where shall I go away from your spirit, and where shall I flee from your face?”* [Ps. 138.7].

¶The argument begins  
Jonah the beautiful dove, prefiguring the passion of the Lord by his shipwreck, calls the world back to repentance, and he announces salvation for the Gentiles under the name of “Nineveh.”

### Chapter 1

**A**nd the word of the Lord was

† Christ, over whom the Spirit in the appearance of a dove [appeared], who also is suffering on our behalf.

‡ Of truth; God is truth.

§ The Father to the Son.

made to Jonah† the son of ‡Amathi, saying§  
2 “Arise and go into Nineveh, the great city,

the humble man, having put down corrupting pride, might ascend into heaven by the Son of God descending.

¶Although Jonah, according to the interpretation, displays the figure of Christ himself, it is not necessary for us to strive to refer the whole sequence of the story to Christ by allegory, but only those things that are able to be understood clearly without the risk of interpretation. For just because the apostle says that in our first parents the sacrament of Christ and the Church is prefigured [Eph. 5.32], not all things that are

¶**City:** The world. So that the whole world might accept what the Jew despises. This [world] that God made as if a beautiful house so that he should be served by man, who, because he wandered away through pride, is called back to repentance.

¶Jonah, which means “dove,” is sent to Nineveh, which is said to be splendid. Thus Christ, full of the Holy Spirit, is sent to the world, which is called in the Greek tongue “cosmos”—that is, ornate and beautiful, because of the design of the Creator. Whence *God saw all the things that he had made, and they were very good* [Gen. 1.31]. Therefore the whole world praises him whom Israel despises so that

said about our first parents can be referred to this sacrament.

¶**For their wickedness has risen up:** Similarly in Genesis: “*The cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is multiplied*” [Gen. 18.20]. And to Cain: “*The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to me from the earth*” [Gen. 4.10].

¶**And Jonah rose up:** Because the Spirit revealed it to him, the prophet knew that the repentance of the nations was the fall of the Jews, and so the lover of his homeland does not so much begrudge Nineveh as he desires that his people not perish. For he knew from the prayer of Moses [Deut. 33] that the Lord had in mind the liberation of the Israelites. He saw also that God sent the prophets to the Jews in order to provoke them

to repentance and that prophetic Balaam had prophesied about the salvation of the Jews. It pains him that he alone was chosen to be sent to the city of enemies, where there is the worship of idols and contempt for God. He also knew that whenever the Gentiles believed, Judea would be blinded. He feared that once the Gentiles were converted by his preaching, the Jews would be completely abandoned in his own lifetime, and for this reason he fled.

¶**Tharsis:** According to Josephus, [it] is the city of Cilicia; according to Chronicles, the place is in India. But the Hebrews believed that the sea generally is called Tharsis. Whence *With a vehement breath you will pound to pieces the ships of Tharsis* [Ps. 47.8]—that is, the sea. It is more fitting for a fearful, fugitive man that he does not choose a

specific place for his flight, but is content to be carried away wherever the sea takes him. Or according to the interpretation in which Tharsis is said to be the contemplation of joy, the prophet

and preach in it, for their wickedness has

† Thinking that he could avoid the wrath of God in another place if he should leave behind Judea, in which alone he thought God was known, and in this act he imitated Cain. risen up before me.” 3 †And Jonah rose up to flee from the face of the Lord into

† According to the lay of the land.

‡ The port of Judea, in which to this day the rocks are pointed out on which Andromeda, tied up, was freed by the help of Perseus.

Tharsis, †and he descended into ‡Joppa, and found a ship going into Tharsis, and

† That is, the price of passage.

‡ Like a fugitive anxiously seeking hiding places.

paid them the †fare, ‡and descended into it to go with them to Tharsis away from

† Nothing is safe if God is against it.

the face of the Lord. 4 †But the Lord sent a great wind upon the sea, and a great

† When just before everything had been calm.

tempest was made† on the sea, and the

† ¶Jonah was being shaken to repentance. ¶Because it had taken on board somebody who endangered it.

ship †was in danger of being pounded to pieces. 5 And the sailors were afraid,

hurries to go to the joy of rest, wanting more to hand himself over completely to contemplation and perfectly to enjoy beauty and the variety of knowledge that is signified by Joppa, which is called beautiful, than that by the salvation of the Gentiles the people [of Israel] should perish, from which people Christ was about to be born, according to the flesh.

¶Mystically, Christ, having assumed the flesh, in a certain way fleeing his homeland—that is, heaven—comes to Tharsis—that is, the sea of this world—in which he called out, “*My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me*” [Matt. 26.39], for fear that, the people of the Jews having been damned, the multitude of the Gentiles would believe. And he loved that people [the Jews] so much, on account of his love for the patriarchs and the promise to Abraham, that on the cross he said, “*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*” [Luke 23.34]. For on account of this love, when he was on the farthest point of the shore (which was said to be most beautiful because it was in Judea), he does not want to take bread from the children and give it to the dogs. But because he had come to the sheep of Israel, he pays the fare to the ferrymen so that he who had come at first to save his own people might save the people who dwell near the sea and so that in the midst of storms—that is, his passion

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and cries on the cross—[and] submerged in hell, he might save those whom he was neglecting, it would seem, by sleeping on a ship.

¶The human race may be signified by the flight of the prophet, when, scorning the commands of God, it withdrew from his face and handed itself over to the world, and later, with the shipwreck of the world raging against it, it is compelled to turn back to him whom it fled. And those things which it had thought sources of salvation for itself are turned into destruction. Not only does the help of men not benefit those to whom it is offered, but those who offer it are deftly smashed to pieces, just as we read about Egypt laid waste by the Assyrians, since Egypt was offering help to the Israelites against the will of God [Isa. 20].

¶**And the men cried out:** Not knowing the truth, the sailors do not know the providence of God, yet even under the error of religion, they know that something must be worshipped. Israel, on the contrary, perceives God neither in good things nor in bad things, and while Christ mourns for the people, Israel has dry eyes.

¶**And slept:** Even as the others were thrown into confusion, the prophet is described as care-free and tranquil, as one who thoroughly enjoys a peaceful sleep in the hold of the ship. Or it can be said that conscious of his flight and sin, while the others do not know the cause of the storm, he himself does not dare to see the waves surging up against him, and he sleeps not out of insouciance but out of melancholy, like the apostles in the Lord's passion.

¶The heavy sleep of the prophet signifies man languishing in the slumber of his going astray, for whom it does not suffice to flee from the face of God, but on top of that, overcome by a certain

madness, he ignores the wrath of God, and he sleeps without care, and his deep sleep resounds through raucous nostrils.

¶Tropologically: Many are those who, sailing with Jonah and having their own gods, hasten to go to the contemplation of joy, but after Jonah had been caught by lot, and by that man's death the storm of the world was calmed, and peace was restored on the sea, then the one God will be adored, and spiritual offerings will be sacrificed, which, according to the literal sense, they did not have in the midst of the waves.

† Thinking that the ship is weighed down by its customary freight, they do not know that the entire weight is that of the fugitive prophet.

and the men cried out to their god, †and they threw the wares that were in the ship

† So that it might leap more lightly across the waves. into the sea †to lighten it of them. And Jonah went down to the inner parts of the ship, and slept with a heavy slumber.

† It is natural that anyone, in his own danger, hopes for more from another than from himself.

‡ He who ought to have consoled others, being perturbed by so great a crisis.

6 †And the ‡captain came to him and said

† Foolishly he blamed him for his security.

to him, †“Why are you weighed down with

† Against a common danger let there be a common prayer.

sleep? †Arise! Call on your God (if by chance God will think of us) so that we might not perish. 7 And a man said to his fellow, “Come, and let us cast lots, and let us

† That is, torment.

know why †this is upon us.” And they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. 8 And

¶**And a man said to:** Those who have frequently experienced the nature of winds and of storms see that these waves do not rise up from usual causes. Because if it were [from usual causes], they would not be seeking the cause of the shipwreck by lot, nor would they desire to avoid a certain danger by means of an uncertain thing.

¶That Matthias is chosen by lot and that this fugitive is caught by lot is accomplished not by the power of a lot but by the power of God, who guided the uncertain lots. Therefore we should not because of this example trust in or use lots, because the rights and immunities of individuals cannot make common law. By the will of God Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar come to know future things by the interpretation of dreams; on

account of this, nevertheless, credence ought not to be given to dreams everywhere.

¶ **Tell us:** With wondrous brevity his person, region, and city is asked, so that from these things the cause of the danger might be understood.

¶ **I am a Hebrew:** He did not say, “I am a Jew,” because the cutting of the ten tribes from the two imposed that name on the people. But he said “Hebrew” because that was a general name as much for the two tribes as for the ten.

¶ **When he had told [them] that he feared the Lord, he told [them] that he also had fled from the face of the Lord, and that he had not done his commands. Therefore, the men are afraid because they understand that he is a holy man and of a holy race, and that he who flees is a great man. But [they also understand] that he who is seeking him is greater. They do not dare to hand him over; they are not able to hide him.**

¶ **Since he confesses the creator of the sea and the dry land, why does he think that, leaving the land, he is able to avoid the creator of the sea in the sea?**

¶ **And they said to him:** In rebuke, as if [to say], “If you fear God, whom you declare is so powerful, how do you think that you are able to escape him?” Or, inquiring, wishing to know the reason for his flight, they say, “Why would

he, having left his own land, seek for safety on the sea?”

¶ **What should we do with you?** They ask so that he who was the author of the sin might

be the remedy himself: “Just as you explained the cause of the disease, show also its cure. From the swelling of the sea we understand that the wrath of God is against us because we picked up the fugitive. But we will kill you so that we might ease this anger. But since you are a worshipper of this God, it is yours to order what is necessary for the deed, and it is ours to lay hands on you so that, with the anger of God turned away, the sea might desist.”

¶ **And he said to them:** Now that he has been caught, the fugitive does not conceal or deny his guilt, but having confessed it, he willingly accepts the punishment, preferring to perish alone because of his own sin, rather than that others should sin and perish with him. It is

also prepared, by the salvation and conversion of the sailors, that the great multitude of Nineveh can be saved by a similar confession.

¶ **Allegorically,** these winds, these waves refer to Christ and to the Church in danger, or to the apostles when they awoke [Christ or when], deserting him in the passion, [they] are cast about in the waves. Therefore Christ says,

† What the lot showed, they force him to confess with his own voice.

they said to him, † “Tell us, on whose ac-

† What do you do for a living?

count is this evil? † What is your work?

† From which region or from whose city?

† **What is your country, or of what people are you?** 9 And he said to them, “I am a

† Nomad, just as Abraham and the other patriarchs who were wanderers of this world.

‡ That is, “I worship him whom you do not know” or “I fear as a slave, even if I do not love as a son.”

§ Not the gods whom you worship, but God, who made all things and is powerful in all things.

† **Hebrew, and I ‡ fear the § Lord, the God**

† Onto which I flee.

of heaven, who made the † sea and the

† ¶ From which I flee. ¶ To distinguish it from the sea, he eloquently calls it not the land but the dry land.

† **dry land.** 10 And the men were greatly afraid, and they said to him, “Why have you done this?” (For the men knew that he fled from the face of the Lord—because he had told them.) 11 And they said,

† By this action.

“What should we do with you, and † the

† Behold the reason why they were asking this.

‡ Following the fugitive at the command of God.

sea will hold back from us?” † **For the ‡ sea**

† While the sailors delay, [the sea] was getting harsher, showing that he cannot put off the Creator’s vengeance. flowed and † swelled over them. 12 And he

† The tempest seeks me; destroy me so that by my death you might live.

said to them, † “Take me and cast me into

“Since the world sees that I sail with you to the contemplation of joy, just as you also will be where I am, therefore it roars and wants to devour me, so that it might kill you likewise, nor does it understand that just as it seizes bait on a hook, so also it will die by my death.” *Take me up and cast me into the sea.* “The storm that rages against you on account of me will be calmed when I die. It is not yours to arrest death, but to accept a death that has freely been brought on by another, except where love is endangered.”

¶ **And the men rowed:** Although he had brought the judgment against himself, nevertheless they do not dare to lay a hand on the worshipper of God. For this reason, they labor to return to the land, preferring to die rather than to spill blood. However, they row because they think that without the sacrament of him who was about to suffer, the ship is able to be freed from danger, although the submersion of Jonah is the re-lightening of the ship.

¶ **And they cried out:** They appeal to God that he not ascribe to them the guilt of what they are about to do. As if it were said, “We do not want to kill your prophet, but he himself confessed that you are angry and your storm reveals him; your will is fulfilled by our hands.” What Pilate does and says is similar—Pilate who, washing

his hands, says, “*I am clear from the blood of this just man*” [Dan. 13.46, Matt. 27.24]. The Gentiles do not want Christ to perish; they testify to his innocence, and the Jews say, “*His blood be*

*upon us and upon our children*” [Matt. 27.25].

¶ Because we took him on board, because the sea rages, because he is revealed by lot, because he himself shows what ought to happen because of him, it is necessarily your will. Whence the Savior in the Psalm: “*Lord, I have desired that I should do your will*” [Ps. 39.9].

¶ Before the passion of Christ, errors and diverse teachings were tossing about the little ship of the Church and the whole human race like opposing waves, but after the passion there is the tranquility of faith, the peace of the world, all things secure. Thus after the headlong fall of Jonah, the sea desists from its fury.

¶ **And the men feared:** Before the passion, they were shouting to their

gods in fear; after the passion, they fear God by worshipping and honoring him, and they sacrifice offerings, which, according to the literal sense, they did not have among the waves, but [they did have] the sacrifice of an afflicted spirit, and they made an oath that they would not turn away from God anymore, discerning from the flight of the storm that the words of the prophet were true.

the sea, and the sea will hold back from

† I am not ignorant that the elements are stirred up for my punishment. Once I have endured the storm, you will receive peace.

you. † For I know that this great tempest is

† Who have received me.

upon † you on my account.” 13 And the men rowed to return to the land, but they were not able because the sea ran and swelled over them. 14 And they cried out

† Knowing that the death of sin is worse than [the loss of mortal] life, out of great faith they pray for the soul of another even though their own bodies are in danger.

to the Lord, and said, † “We beseech you, Lord, do not let us perish for the life of this righteous man, and do not place innocent blood on us; for you, Lord, have done just as you willed.” 15 And they

† They do not grab him, but they carry him with deference and honor.

‡ Christ.

§ Not fighting back, but stretching out his hands through the will of God.

† took ‡ Jonah, § and cast him into the

† The sea, which is angry with Jonah absent, now apprehending what it desires, holds it, rejoices in it, and embraces it, and tranquility returns as a result of the joy. sea, and the † sea stood back from its raging. 16 And the men feared the Lord with

† With all the mind, with all the heart, with all the strength.

a great † fear, and sacrificed victims to the Lord, and made vows.



¶**And the Lord prepared:** Either from the beginning when he was creating, or he made it [the whale] come alongside the ship so that it might catch him falling headlong, so that he might provide a dwelling instead of death, so that he who felt God angry on the ship might feel God favorably inclined in death.

¶**And Jonah was:** Just as Jonah points to the passion through his being in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, so also his prayer is a type of Christ's prayer. ¶**Whoever believes** that three young men were indeed freed from the furnace, so that the odor of the fire did not cling to their clothes [Dan. 3], should not doubt about Jonah's salvation in the belly of the whale.

¶**Some say** [the count of three days and nights begins] on Friday during preparation for Passover, when with the sun setting from the sixth hour up to the ninth hour, the night has succeeded the day;

two nights and days then must be calculated up to the morning of the Sabbath, and with the Sabbath meal served on the following night, three days and nights are calculated. Some understand this as a synecdoche—that is, the whole from the part.

¶**I cried out of my tribulation:** As I looked at the enormous beast, I remembered the open jaws of God—and “*I cried out*”: either with the cry finding a place among yielding waters, or with the emotion of the heart alone.

¶As much as it is clear regarding Jonah that he has been trapped in a belly in the middle of the sea, the savior even more so, appearing in the flesh, fully knew life in the storms of this world,

which is called “the sea and the storm” by comparison to his heavenly lodging. Whence, *I am stuck in the mire of the deep and I cannot stand firmly*. And again, *I have come into the depth of the sea, and a tempest has overwhelmed me* [Ps. 69.3].

¶According to anagogy, he remembers that he is in the heart of the sea—that is, in the middle of storms, and among the bitter waters, *tempted in all things without sin* [Heb. 4.15], yet he did not perceive the bitterness of the waters, but *he was surrounded* and revived by the sweetness of the stream, which *gladdens the city of God* [Ps. 46.5].

¶It is clear that all these things happened literally in the person of Jonah. In Christ every temptation, which happened by the will of God, was without

sin, not overwhelming but fleeting, because in him every temptation lost its power, so that in him those who were accustomed to be imperiled might be freed through his conquering.

¶**I am cast away:** I who took on the form of a slave, having imitated the frailty of man. Before, when I was light in your light, I was heard shouting; when this happened, I said, “*I am cast away*,” so that through this I might lead the human race back to you.

## Chapter 2

† He commands death and hell to receive the prophet, but as much as they rejoice in consuming him, they lament just as much in vomiting him up.

**A**nd the Lord prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and

† “*As Jonah was in the whale's belly three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights*” [Matt. 12.40].

three nights. 2 †**And Jonah prayed to the** Lord out of the womb of the fish. 3 †**And he said,** “I cried out of my tribulation to

† After he perceived that he was safe in the belly of the whale, he turns to beseeching the mercy of God.

† Christ, free among the dead, alive in hell, cries out, “*You will not leave my soul in hell; nor will you allow your holy one to see corruption*” [Ps. 16.10].

† That is, from the belly of the whale, which, like hell, has a great capacity.

‡ You who test the kidneys and the heart.

† That is, in hell, for which the Gospel [says], *in the heart of the earth* [Matt. 12.40]; for just as the heart is in the middle of an animal, so is hell considered to be in the middle of the earth.

‡**in the heart of the sea, and the flood surrounded me; all your whirlpools and your waves have gone over me.** 5 **And I said,** ‘I am cast away out of the sight of your eyes;

**¶I will see your temple:** This is appropriate to Jonah either as one desiring or as one trusting, who in the prophetic spirit was contemplating this future thing; it is also appropriate to Christ, as we read: *“And now glorify me, O Father, along with yourself, with the glory which I had before the world came to be”* [John 17.5]. Just as the temple of the Father is the Son, so also the temple of the Son is the Father, about whom he himself said, *“I went forth from the Father and have come into the world”* [John 16.28].

**¶The abyss:** By “abyss” here is understood hostile forces, or powers devoted to torments, to which in the gospel the demons beg that they not be forced to go to be tortured.

**¶The sea has covered my head:** The historical sense is clear that Jonah came all the way to the depths of the earth, by which the globe of the land is held up, as if by bars and columns, by the will of God.

**¶Allegorically:** in Christ as a man, the soul was

the principal part and, as it were, the head, which descended toward the lower regions where the souls of men were being held under the power of the devil. These are the bars that prevent souls from going out from hell; the Lord breaks these levers and frees those who were held confined.

**¶When my soul was anguished:** These [words] are fitting for Christ when he says, *“My*

*soul is sorrowful even unto death”* [Matt. 36.38; Mark 14.34], and again, *“Father, into your hands I commend my spirit”* [Luke 23.46; Ps. 32.6].

**¶That my prayer might come to:** For this

reason, I was mindful of God in tribulation so that out of the bottom of the sea my prayer might ascend to the heavens and so that it might come to your holy temple in which you enjoy eternal beatitude. And he prays because he is the high priest, so that his prayer might ascend to God so that in his own body the people might be freed.

**¶Those who observe:** Since all things are vanity, everyone necessarily does what is vain, but not all guard it like a treasure nor love what they do. Therefore he does not deny mercy to the whole human race.

**¶God,** by nature merciful, was prepared to save through mercy those whom he was not able to save through justice, but we by our vice abandoned the mercy he offered. And notice that the prophet

in the belly of the whale is oblivious to his own danger; he philosophizes concerning the general nature of things.

**¶The Jews,** while they preserve the traditions of men, forsake the commandments of God, who always had shown mercy toward them.

**¶But I with the voice:** Before his passion, Christ had in a certain sense tried to escape

† Even though I am cast away for a time.

‡ Placed in the depths of the sea, he is elsewhere by means of the prophetic spirit.

nevertheless,† I will see‡ your holy temple

† The waters of the world that carry filth along with them nurture the body but kill the soul. Nevertheless, they were not able to harm Christ because he bore them not out of necessity but willingly.

again.⁷ 6 †Many waters compassed me about to the limit of my life; the abyss has walled me in, the sea has covered my head. 7 I descended to the lowest parts of the mountains: the bars of the earth have

† ¶In the opinion of men. ¶In other words, confined.

‡ ¶And nevertheless. ¶You will not allow your holy one to see corruption [Ps. 16.10].

†surrounded me for eternity. ‡And you

† Lest, corrupted in death, I turn into the food of a beast. will lift up my life †from corruption,

† With this coaxing fondness, because through the greatness of [God’s] kindness to him he renders God, who is common to all, his own.

‡ In the belly of the whale, when according to the weakness of the flesh no hope remained, I conquered impossible things by my recollection of the Lord.

†Lord my God. 8 ‡When my soul was anguished within me, I remembered the Lord, that my prayer might come to you,

† Thus am I. But those who [observe . . . ]

to your holy temple. 9 †Those who observe vanities in error forsake their own

† ¶Prepared for them. ¶Which does not forsake a man in his vanity, but waits for him to repent.

‡ Who for the salvation of many have been consumed.

†mercy. 10 But ‡I with the voice of praise

obeying God, when he says, “*It is not good to take the bread of the children*” [Matt. 15.26]. And again, “*Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me*” [Matt. 26.42].

But after his Resurrection, willingly leaving behind the faithless ones, he preaches to the world what had been commanded before the passion.

**¶ Whatever I have vowed:** In the passion he vowed all of us to the Father, so that none of those whom the Father had given him might perish. He promised for the salvation of all. Let us not make him a liar; let us be pure so that he might offer [us] to the Father.

**¶ And the word of the Lord was made:** All of this is fitting for Christ according to the form of a servant: that he is ordered; that he obeys; that he does not want it; that he is compelled once again to want it; that the second time he follows the Father’s will.

**¶ And Jonah rose up:** Allegorically: Christ is rightly said to have risen after hell, and to preach when he sends the apostles to baptize people in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; this is the journey of three days. But this sacrament of human salvation is a journey of one day—that is, it is completed by the con-

fession of the one God. With Jonah—that is, Christ—preaching among the apostles, Christ who said, “*I am with you even to the end of the age*” [Matt. 28.20].

**¶ And Nineveh was:** Nineveh was so large that it could scarcely be circumnavigated by a journey of three days. But he, mindful of the command and of his shipwreck, completed the journey of three days in one day’s haste. But some say that he preached only in a third of the city and immediately the word of his preaching spread to the other people.

**¶ It did not say in three days and nights or one day and night,** but [it said] *days* and *day* precisely, in order to show that nothing is shadowy in the mystery of the Trinity and the confession of the one God.

**¶ Yet forty days:** According to the Septuagint, *Yet three days and Nineveh will be destroyed*. The same Christ is signified, whether by *forty days* or by *three days*. It is by *forty*, of course, because he brought to conclusion forty days with his disciples and ascended into heaven; by *three*

*days* because he rose again on the third day.

**¶ It is not a prophecy** descending from the present [time] of God where all things are such that they endure, but the threat is for correction,

† Myself, who am victim and priest.

will sacrifice† to you. I will pay whatever I have vowed for my salvation to the Lord.”

† It is decreed to the whale, to the abysses, and to hell that they restore the Savior to the earth, so that he might lead out with himself very many dead who were being held by the chains of death.

11 And the Lord said to the fish, †“Vomit

† Out of the deepest entrails of Death, the victrix Life went forth.

him up!” And it †vomited out Jonah onto dry land.

### Chapter 3

† He does not say to the prophet, “Why did you not do what I had commanded?” The devouring of the shipwreck suffices for correction, so that he who had not perceived the Lord commanding might perceive the Lord setting free.

**A**nd the word of the Lord was made to Jonah a second time, say-

† The world.

ing, 2 “Arise, and go to †Nineveh the great

† †Father. ¶ “*I speak not of myself*” [John 14.10].

city, and preach in it the message that †I

† Son.

‡ †From death. ¶ Obediently without delay.

§ Christ.

tell †you. 3 ‡ And §Jonah rose up and

† Through the apostles.

‡ Command.

†went to Nineveh, according to the ‡word of the Lord. And Nineveh was a great city of three days’ journey. 4 And Jonah began to enter into the city one day’s journey,

† Standing in the temple, Christ cries out, “*Whoever thirsts, let her or him come to me and drink*” [John 7.37]. In truth, every speech of Christ, because it deals with great things, is called a cry.

and he †cried out, and said, “Yet forty

proposing a just retribution according to the present sins of the Ninevites.

¶ A period of forty days is fitting for sinners for the sake of penitence and fasting and prayer and sackcloth and ashes and perseverance in begging for mercy. According to this number, Moses and Elijah and Christ himself fasted. This number is indicated for us for preparing our souls to eat the body of Christ.

¶ A beautiful sequence: God commands the prophet; the prophet preaches to the city; the men believe first; when they preach fasting, people of every age are clothed with sackcloth. The men do not preach sackcloth but only fasting, but those to whom penitence is commanded add sackcloth so that their empty belly and their mournful clothing might more boldly beseech God.

¶ Those who had offended God by luxury and ambition appease their condemnation through those things which had given offense before: first fasting, which is offered to God in secret, then sackcloth, which is displayed externally to men.

¶ Nineveh according to Jerome: Nineveh, which was evil and well built, was overturned not with respect to its standing fortifications and build-

ings. The city was overturned in the destruction of its customs. And although what those men had feared did not happen, when Jonah prophesied the future, what he had predicted at God's command

days, and Nineveh will be destroyed.”

† Those who come into mature manhood in the age of Christ [cf. Eph. 4.13].

‡ The foreskin believes; the circumcision remains unfaithful.

5 And the Ninevite †men ‡believed in the Lord, and they preached a †fast, and

† Sackcloth and fasting are the weapons of repentance.

† Because nobody is without sin, not even an infant of one day.

put on sackcloth †from the greatest to the least. 6 And the word came to the king

† He humbled himself, setting aside the heights of power and eloquence.

of Nineveh; and he rose up† out of his throne, and cast away his robe from him,

† Of penitence for his past sins.

and was clothed with †sackcloth, and sat

† Not filth of the senses, but of words.

in †ashes. 7 And one cried out in Nineveh, and spoke from the mouth of the king and

† Rational beings.

of his princes, saying, “Let neither †men

† ¶ Stupid beings. ¶ *You will save humans and beasts, Lord* [Ps. 36.7].

‡ The wise.

§ The simple.

nor †beasts, ‡oxen nor §sheep, taste anything; let them not feed, nor drink water. 8 And let men and beasts be covered

† “Sackcloth” is said metaphorically, for a mourning disposition, grief, and sadness.

with †sackcloth, and cry out bravely to

† To the Lord.

the Lord, and let everyone †turn from his

† Which is from himself.

†evil way, and from the iniquity that is in

† Not only in thought but also in deed.

their †hands. 9 Who knows if God will

did happen after all.

¶ **And the word came to the king:**

After the weak and ignoble people had been chosen, at last the word of Christ arrived to the philosophers and powerful ones who seemed to rule the world. First Peter the fisherman enters, then Cyprian, formerly a champion of idolatry, finally believes, and having become a champion of truth after he heard the message of Jonah, he summons the Carthaginians to repentance and publicly preaches Christ. Behold the king of Nineveh rises from his throne and exchanges purple-dyed cloth for sackcloth, lotions for mud, purity for filth. It is a difficult thing for the powerful and eloquent of the world to convert to the humility of Christ.

¶ **And one cried out:** He cried out, saying in Nineveh, from the mouth of the king and his princes, what had been decided.

Whence the Septuagint, *And it was preached in Nineveh from the king and from all of his elders.*

¶ **Who knows:** He speaks to express uncertainty so that while the people are doubtful about

their salvation, they might perform penance more boldly and provoke God more to mercy.

¶**And God saw:** At that time God threatened the Ninevites and every day he threatens the

people of the world so that they might do penance. If they have converted, God also converts his judgment and is changed by the conversion of the people. He did not hear the words that Israel often used to send up—“*All that the Lord has spoken, we will do*” [Exod. 24.7]—but he, who desires the life more than the death of a sinner, saw their works. Seeing their changed works, he gladly changes his mind. Rather let us say that he persisted in his purpose, wishing from the beginning to show mercy. For he did not want to punish, nor was he who threatened about to punish.

¶**And Jonah was tormented:** He is not grieved that a great number of the Gentiles are being saved, but that he sees his own people perish, and he, chosen out of such a great number of prophets, who announced the ruin of his own people through the salvation of others,

is now in a certain way despairing of the salvation of Israel. Thus the Lord wept over Jerusalem, and *he did not want to cast the bread of the children*, etc. [Matt. 15.26, Mark 7.27]. The apostles

also preach first to Israel. Paul also wishes to be cursed for the sake of his brethren [Rom. 9.3].

¶**Beautifully Jonah**—that is, *suffering*—is troubled even unto death [cf. Matt. 26.38, Mark

14.34] because he endured many things, to the extent he was able, so that the people of the Jews might not perish; the prophet is weighed down by his labors, his travels, and his shipwreck.

¶**For I know that:** I knew that you were merciful and that you were going to do this. I did not want to bear an offensive message, but I wanted to flee to Tharsis—that is, to be free for contemplation and to enjoy quiet and leisure in the sea of this age; I departed my home having gone out from your bosom. If I said that you were forgiving and merciful, no one would do penance; that you were a cruel judge, I knew that this was not your nature. In this dilemma, therefore, I preferred rather to flee than either to deceive penitents by leniency or to proclaim what you were not [forgiving and merciful]. Therefore, *take my life*.

¶**The saddened prophet**

wishes to die, lest Israel perish forever once the multitude of the Gentiles converted.

¶**Do you think:** He does not say, “You are wrongly angry,” lest he seem to rebuke the

† To those who have converted.

‡ If this be done.

†turn, and ‡forgive, and will turn away

† Which he already has almost begun to pour out.

‡ Since he has turned.

from his †fierce anger, and ‡we shall not perish? 10 And God saw their works, that they were turned from their evil way, and

† Affliction.

God had mercy with regard to the †evil which he had said that he would do to them, and he did not do it.

#### Chapter 4

**A**nd Jonah was tormented with great torment, and was angry. 2 And

† About to say that he had justly wanted to flee, in a certain sense he accuses God of injustice. Therefore he tempers his grievances with a supplicatory preface, for he says, “*I beseech*,” which ought to be read with the disposition of flattery, for which in the Hebrew one reads, *anna*, which is the cry of a flatterer.

he prayed to the Lord, and said, †“I beseech you, Lord, is this not my word, when I was still in my country? Therefore I took the initiative to flee into Tharsis, for I know that you are a clement and merciful God, patient and of much compassion,

† “*My soul is sorrowful even unto death*” [Matt. 26.38, Mark 14.34], and, again, “*Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit*” [compline responsory; cf. Luke 23.46].

and forgiving evil. 3 And now, †Lord, I

† Alive, I was not able to save one tribe of Israel; I will die and the whole world will be saved.

pray, take my life from me †because death is better for me than life.” 4 And the Lord said, “Do you think you are rightly

saddened one; nor does he say, “You are rightly angry,” lest he go against his own opinion, but

God asks the angered one himself so that he might respond with the causes of his anger, or if he remain silent, the true judgment of God might be confirmed by his silence.

¶ **And Jonah went out:** Jonah—that is, the dove, or the grieving one—departs from the city, the city which Cain built, and he dwells facing the east, where the sun rises, and there he is in his tabernacle. He waits while some time passes, contemplating what might happen to the city of the world before Nineveh is saved through the gospel of Christ, and before the gourd is dried up and the true man rising is manifested. Jonah was under the bower because the truth had not yet appeared.

¶ **And the Lord God prepared:** In Hebrew we read *ciceion* for gourd (*cucurbita*), which sprouts quickly and withers quickly. It is compared to Israel sending down little roots into the earth and trying to be raised on high, but not equaling the height of the cedars of God or of the fir trees.

¶ Gourd (*cucurbita*) or ivy (*hedera*) is a kind of brushwood or shrub that has broad leaves and

supports a very dense canopy, which creeps along the ground, and without props to lean on it does not seek higher parts. But God prepared this so that it might provide for the prophet a bower suddenly rising into the sky without any supports—in which God’s power was shown. Israel is compared to this ivy or gourd. Israel once protected Jonah under its own shade—that is, Christ—awaiting the conversion of the nations. The vine provided no small joy, making for him a bower, which has the appearance of a house but is not one, because it does not have foundations.

¶ **And God prepared:** Some understand the worm and burning wind to be the Romans who after the resurrection of Christ destroyed Israel.

¶ **Do you think you are rightly:** The prophet, when similarly asked about the penitent Ninevites who had been saved, makes no answer but confirms God’s ques-

† World.

angry?” 5 And Jonah went out of the †city, and sat toward the east side of the city.

† Because none of the Ninevites was able to dwell with him at that time.

And he made for himself † a bower there,

† He sits as if he were a court witness, or as if one diminished in his dignity.

and he sat under it in the shade, † till he

† In the manner of Scripture, it joins human feelings with God.

might see what would happen to the city. †

6 And the Lord God prepared an ivy,

† Suddenly by the wondrous power of God.

and it ascended † over Jonah’s head to be

a shade over his head and to cover him,

for he was fatigued. And Jonah was delighted with the ivy. 7 And God prepared

† Christ, who says, “*I am a worm, and no man*” [Ps. 22.7].

a † worm when the morning arose on the

† Which was green before the sun of justice rose, but when Christ rose, the arbor was deprived of God’s help and it lost all its verdure.

following day, and it struck the † ivy and it

† With whose light the shadows of the Ninevites were dispersed.

withered. 8 And when the † sun was risen,

† Whence in Hosea, *the Lord will bring a burning wind that will rise from the desert, and it will dry up his springs and make his fountain[s] desolate* [Hos. 13.15].

the Lord commanded a † hot and burning

wind, and the sun beat on Jonah’s head,

† Along with Israel.

and he burned. † And he desired for his

† In baptism, so that in washing he might receive the liquid he had wasted in denial. Whence Peter says to the parched Jews, “*Do penance, and be baptized every one of you, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*” [Acts 2.38].

soul that he might die, † and said, “It is bet-

† Father.

† To him.

† Lord said to † Jonah, “Do you think you

tion by his silence, for knowing that God is

merciful and forgiving of sins, he did not grieve

tion by his silence, for knowing that God is merciful and forgiving of sins, he did not grieve

over the salvation of the Gentiles. But here since the gourd has been dried up Israel burns, and because he was questioned with a qualification, “Do you think you are rightly angry about the ivy?” he confidently says, “I am rightly saddened, *even unto death*. For I did not want thus to save some that others might perish; I did not want thus to benefit aliens that I might destroy my own people.” Thus Christ is bewailing Jerusalem even unto a death not his own, but that of the Jews, so that those who deny the son of God might die and the ones who confess him might rise again.

¶ **You have not labored:** As far as the people of the Gentiles are concerned, whence

Israel confidently says, “Behold, I serve you for so many years . . . and yet you have never given me a kid, . . . but . . . you have killed the fatted calf for this one who has devoured his inheritance with whores.” Whoever is not shocked at this, but

are rightly angry about the ivy?” And he said, “I am rightly angry even unto death.”

† Son.

10 And the Lord said, †“You grieve for the

† For the Jews who have been condemned.

† ivy, for which you have not labored nor made to grow, which was born in †one

† That is, in the time before the coming of Christ.

† When the sun of justice lay dead to him.

night, and in †one night perished. 11 And

† Through which is signified the Church, in which there is a greater number than that of the twelve tribes of Israel.

should I not spare the great city †Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred twenty thousand people who do not know the difference between their right hand

† A great number of irrational beings.

and their left, and many †beasts?

hears it, “*All that I have is yours. But it was fitting that we should make merry for the return of the brother*” [Luke 15.31–32]. For the sake of the Gentiles, indeed, the precious blood of Christ was poured out and he himself descended to

hell so that that people might ascend to heaven. No work of such magnitude was [done] on behalf of the sons of Israel, and because of this he envies his younger brother.

¶ **More than a hundred twenty thousand:** We can understand this with regard to the age of infancy, which is innocent and simple, and since the number of little ones is so great, it is clear that the multitude of advanced age was greater. Or

because Nineveh is a great city and in a great house there are vessels not only of gold but also of clay, it can be said that there was a very great multitude who, before doing penance, did not know the difference between good and evil.