

he may bring to life, because he himself is "the last Adam made into a life-giving Spirit."⁴⁰

But these things must be understood to be said figuratively; for Christ himself is called "the tree of life."⁴¹ Just as by other things Christ is disclosed to be priest and victim and altar, and one understanding is not prevented by the other, and in their own passages each thing is perceived figuratively concerning him, so also now in the figures of mysteries a diversity of roles taken from one and the same thing will not get in our way.⁴²

7. But let us see what is written in the following: "And they struck them," it says, "with the edge of the sword until not one of them was left who might be saved or who might escape."⁴³

When the Jews read these things, they become cruel and thirst after human blood, thinking that even holy persons so struck those who were living in Ai that not one of them was left "who might be saved or who might escape." They do not understand that mysteries are dimly shadowed in these words and that they more truly indicate to us that we ought not to leave any of those demons deeply within, whose dwelling place is chaos and who rule in the abyss, but to destroy them all. We slay demons, but we do not annihilate their essence. For their work and endeavor is to cause persons to sin.⁴⁴ If we sin, they have life; but if we do not sin, they are destroyed. Therefore, all holy persons kill the inhabitants of Ai; they both annihilate and do not release any of them. These are doubtless those who guard their heart with all diligence so that evil thoughts do not proceed from it,⁴⁵ and those who heed their mouth, so that "no evil word"⁴⁶ proceeds from it. Not to leave any who flee means this: when no evil word escapes them.

Go, therefore, even you! Let us prepare ourselves for battles of this kind. Let us thrust Ai through with the edge of the sword,

40. 1 Cor 15.45.

41. Prv 3.18.

42. Heb 5.6; 1 Cor 5.7. In *Homilies on Genesis* 8.6, 9, Origen considered the double role of Christ as victim and priest.

43. Jos 8.22-24.

44. See *First Principles* 1.8 and *Homily* 15.5.

45. Cf. Mk 7.21.

46. Eph 4.29.

and I
powe
God
that,
nicat
any c
the s
leave
Fc
shall
joyou
quer
the l
shall
may
For i
the l
thos
nistic
ing u
place
stanc
built
and
ners
wick
"In
help
who
lumi
myst

47
which
ἐν στ
19.15
48
50
52
53
ing liq

and let us extinguish all the inhabitants of chaos, all opposing powers. Would that I also, just now while I speak the word of God to you, could strike the heart of the transgressor! If I do that, it is certain that with the sword of my mouth I shall slay fornication, slay malice. I shall restrain passion. And if there are any other evil things, I shall exterminate them "with the edge of the sword," that is, by the word of my mouth,⁴⁷ and I shall not leave behind any "who may be saved or who may escape."

For if we extinguish all these enemies of ours, then truly we shall celebrate the festal day with God. We shall delight in the joyous festivals after the adversaries have been completely conquered. Some such thing seems to me to be designated also by the holy prophet in the Psalms, where he says of himself, "I shall slay in the mornings all the sinners of the land, so that I may destroy from the city of the Lord all who work iniquity."⁴⁸ For if "the city of the Lord" is understood to be the Church of the living God, the teachers of the Church cast out and slay those "who work iniquity"—the opposing demons and antagonistic powers that drive humans to sin—by teaching, by building up, and by unlocking mysteries and secrets from the sorts of places in the divine letters in which we are now. Or if we understand "the city of the Lord" to be the soul of each of us that is built by the Lord "from living stones,"⁴⁹ that is, from various and diverse virtues, anyone holy and diligent also casts out sinners from that city, that is, he destroys in the morning the most wicked thoughts and distorted desires. For the just person says, "In the morning I meditated on you, because you were my helper."⁵⁰ What is that morning, if not our Lord Jesus Christ, who is "the light true"⁵¹ and "rising in our hearts"⁵² and who, illuminating the darkness of our ignorance and revealing the mysteries to us in this way, makes us "see the light by his light"?⁵³

47. *In ore gladii, id est oris mei sermone*. There is a play on the word *os* (*ore, oris*), which means both "mouth" and the "edge of a sword." The LXX of Jos 8.24 has ἐν στόματι ῥομφαίας. Στόματι also bears this double meaning. See Rv 1.16, 19.15.

48. Ps 101.8. See *Homily* 15.6.

49. 1 Pt 2.5.

50. Ps 63.7-8.

51. Jn 1.9.

52. 2 Pt 1.19.

53. Ps 36.10. See Clement of Alexandria's panegyric on Christ as the morning light in the *Protrepticus* 11.114. See also *Homilies* 11.3 and 16.1.

You will read in the Holy Scriptures about the battles of the just ones, about the slaughter and carnage of murderers, and that the saints spare none of their deeply rooted enemies. If they do spare them, they are even charged with sin, just as Saul was charged because he had preserved the life of Agag king of Amalek.⁵⁴ You should understand the wars of the just by the method I set forth above, that these wars are waged by them against sin. But how will the just ones endure if they reserve even a little bit of sin? Therefore, this is said of them: "They did not leave behind even one, who might be saved or might escape."⁵⁵

Do you perhaps not believe me that the battle is joined against our sin? Then believe Paul as he says, "Not yet to the shedding of blood have you resisted against sin."⁵⁶ Do you see that the fight proposed for you is against sin and that you must complete the battle even to the shedding of blood? Is it not evident that the divine Scripture indicates these things, even as it habitually says, "Sanctify war,"⁵⁷ and, "You will fight the battle of the Lord?"⁵⁸

For what is it "to sanctify war" if not that you become "holy in body and spirit"⁵⁹ after you destroy all the enemies of your soul, which are the blemishes of sins, and "mortify your members that are on earth,"⁶⁰ and cut away all evil desires? And that you boldly come to the presence of the living God and, as a palm of victory by the merit of virtue, are crowned by Christ Jesus our Lord? "To whom is the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen!"⁶¹

54. 1 Sm 15.9-24.

56. Heb 12.4.

58. 1 Sm 18.17.

60. Col 3.5.

55. Jos 8.22.

57. Jl 3.9.

59. Cf. 1 Cor 7.24.

61. Cf. 1 Pet 4.11.

very bodily senses, of which we have spoken, that they may entice them to exhibit evil desires and shameful works of the soul. If faith in Christ overcomes those malignant powers and they are suspended on the wood of his cross so that "he triumphs" over them "on the wood of his cross"²¹ and they are taken away from his kingdom and cast down, then the soul becomes God's portion, then Jerusalem becomes God's kingdom, and the temple is built in it for the Lord.

Did not he discern this, who said, "Once we ourselves were unperceiving, unbelieving, erring, serving various desires and pleasures"?²² For this is nothing but the fact that Jerusalem is written to have been once under the king Adonizedek, or other cities under other kings.

6. But meanwhile Jesus destroyed the enemies, not teaching cruelty through this, as the heretics think, but representing the future sacraments in these affairs, so that when Jesus destroys those kings who maintain a reign of sin in us, we can fulfill that which the Apostle said, "Just as we presented our members to serve iniquity for iniquity, so now let us present our members to serve righteousness for sanctification."²³

What is it then that is condemned by them in this place as cruelty? It is this, it says, that is written, "Set your feet upon their necks and slay them."²⁴ But this is discovered to be humaneness and kindness, not cruelty, is it not?

Would that you might be the sort of person who can "set your feet upon serpents and scorpions and upon every hostile power"²⁵ and "tread underfoot the dragon and the lizard,"²⁶ the petty king who once reigned in you and maintained in you a kingdom of sin. Thus, with all those destroyed who used to rule in you by the work of sin, Christ Jesus our Lord alone will reign in you, "to whom is the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen!"²⁷

21. Col 2.14-15.

22. Ti 3.3.

23. Rom 6.19.

24. Jos 10.24.

25. Lk 10.19.

26. Ps 91.13. The type of crested lizard mentioned is the basilisk. The Latin word is *basiliscus*, taken from the Greek βασιλεύς. In the Greek, therefore, there would have been a play on words, since "petty king" [*regulum*] is βασιλίσκος in Greek, a diminutive of βασιλεύς.

27. 1 Pt 4.11.

HOMILY 12

Concerning the fact that the wars that Jesus waged ought to be understood spiritually and that when the people returned after the victory they did not mutter with their tongue.¹

IF THOSE THINGS that were dimly sketched through Moses concerning the tabernacle or the sacrifices and the entire worship are said to be a "type and shadow of heavenly things,"² doubtless the wars that are waged through Jesus, and the slaughter of kings and enemies must also be said to be "a shadow and type of heavenly things," namely, of those wars that our Lord Jesus with his army and officers—that is, the throngs of believers and their leaders—fights against the Devil and his angels. For it is he himself who strives with Paul and with the Ephesians "against sovereigns and authorities and the rulers of darkness, against spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places."³

Consider, ungrateful heretic, how the new things harmonize fully with the old.⁴ The kingdom of a holy land was promised by the old, "a land pouring forth milk and honey,"⁵ a land that was then held by sinners and the worst inhabitants and kings. Jesus comes into this land with the army of the Lord and the leaders of the Israelites; he subdues all, destroys, and prevails, and for the reward of victory, he receives the kingdoms of those whom he conquered.

The kingdoms of earth are not promised to you by the Gos-

1. Focal passage: Jos 10.20–26.

2. Cf. Heb 8.5.

3. Eph 6.12.

4. For Origen's emphasis on the harmony of the Old and New Testaments, see *Homilies on Genesis* 10.5. See also *Homily 7.2* and *Commentary on Matthew* 14.4.

5. Lv 20.24.

pels, but kingdoms of heaven. These kingdoms, however, are neither deserted nor abandoned; they have their own inhabitants, sinners and vile spirits, fugitive angels. Paul, sounding the apostolic trumpet, exhorts you to the battle against those who dwell there. Just as Jesus said then that your war would be against the Amorites and Perizzites and Hivites and Jebusites, likewise Paul also declares to you here, saying, "Your fight will not be against flesh and blood," that is, we shall not fight in the same manner as the ancients fought. Nor are the battles in our land to be conducted against humans "but against sovereigns, against authorities, against the rulers of darkness of this world."⁶ Certainly you understand now where you must undertake struggles of this kind. Or if this understanding is not enough for you, unless the places are clearly indicated to you by an utterance, listen to the following words: "Against spiritual forces of wickedness," it says, "in the heavenly places." You have heard whom you are to expel from the heavenly places by war and by force, so that you yourself can receive those places of the kingdom of heaven in a share of the inheritance. But does not the Lord also plainly indicate this in the Gospel when he says, "From the days of John the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and those committing violence seize it"?⁷

2. Therefore, why do you delay, O heretic, to also make malicious charges against our Lord and Savior, "who commands the kingdom of heaven," which he had promised to those who believe in him, "to be seized through violence"? By all means, if force must be used, it must certainly be used by those who are taking possession. For to commit violence is to expel the possessor and to seize the possession. Declare, therefore, what else you accuse Jesus the successor of Moses to have done.

Indeed, would that we might be worthy for the Lord Jesus to throw open the courtyard of his wisdom and bring us into the treasure vaults of his knowledge and deem it fitting to reveal

6. Eph 6.12.

7. Mt 11.12. Origen has two lines of interpretation concerning spiritual battles. The battles of the Israelites are shadows of the Christians' battles while placed in this life. These in turn also indicate heavenly battles. Concerning the places of the rulers of darkness being given to the Christians, see *Homily 1.6*.

to be
ed
1

d through
rifices and
shadow of
through Je-
o be said to
y, of those
that is, the
t the Devil
a Paul and
es and the
kedness in

harmonize
omised by
nd that was
ings. Jesus
he leaders
ls, and for
ose whom

y the Gos-

Testaments,
y on Matthew

more fully to us and uncover more completely those things whose figures we now haltingly try to behold in part and examine "as if through a mirror and in a riddle."⁸ As it would become clear to us, you would see from these spiritual enemies who now assail spiritual Israel whose figure this chief of "Magedah" primarily represented, and that of "Lachish" and of "Libnah."⁹ You would see within your very self the symbol of vice or error by which your soul is entangled, the symbol that each of those hold whom the people of the Lord with their leader Jesus destroyed. The people of the Lord are clearly those who hear his commands and observe the precepts, and to whom he has granted "the ability to tread over serpents and scorpions and over every authority of the foe."¹⁰ Therefore, let us pray that our feet may be like this, so beautiful¹¹ and strong that they can tread on the necks of foes and tread upon the head of the serpent so that it cannot bite our heel.¹²

Whoever fights under the leadership of Jesus against opposing authorities ought to merit that which is written about those former warriors: "And the whole people," it says, "returned safely to Jesus and not one of the sons of Israel muttered with his tongue."¹³ You see, therefore, that the person who serves as a soldier under Jesus must come back safely from battle and ought not even receive a wound "from the fiery darts of the wicked one";¹⁴ he ought to be neither polluted in heart nor defiled in thought, and ought not allow any place for demonic wounds—not through wrath, lust, or any other occasion.

Moreover, what is added, "No one muttered with his tongue," seems to me to have been expressed because no one boasted about the victory, no one attributed it to his own power that he conquered. Indeed, knowing that it is Jesus who bestowed the victory, they do not mutter with their tongue. Understanding that well, the Apostle said, "Not I, but the grace of God that is in me."¹⁵ I think, in addition, that he has in mind that command of the Lord in which he said, "But when you have

8. 1 Cor 13.12.

10. Lk 10.19.

12. Gn 3.15.

14. Eph 6.16.

9. Jos 10.10, 23, 31.

11. Rom 10.15; Is 52.7.

13. Jos 10.21.

15. 1 Cor 15.10.

done all these things, say, 'We are unprofitable servants; we have only done what we should have done.'"¹⁶ For in this similar manner he also seems to prohibit boasting about things well done.

3. But Marcion and Valentinus and Basilides and the other heretics with them, since they refuse to understand these things in a manner worthy of the Holy Spirit, "deviated from the faith and became devoted to many impieties,"¹⁷ bringing forth another God of the Law, both creator and judge of the world, who teaches a certain cruelty through these things that are written. For example, they are ordered to trample upon the necks of their enemies and to suspend from wood the kings of that land that they violently invade.¹⁸

And yet, if only my Lord Jesus the Son of God would grant that to me and order me to crush the spirit of fornication with my feet and trample upon the necks of the spirit of wrath and rage, to trample on the demon of avarice, to trample down boasting, to crush the spirit of arrogance with my feet, and, when I have done all these things, not to hang the most exalted of these exploits upon myself, but upon his cross. Thereby I imitate Paul, who says, "the world is crucified to me,"¹⁹ and, that which we have already related above, "Not I, but the grace of God that is in me."²⁰

But if I deserve to act thus, I shall be blessed and what Jesus said to the ancients will also be said to me, "Go courageously and be strengthened; do not be afraid nor be awed by their appearance, because the Lord God has delivered all your enemies into your hands."²¹ If we understand these things spiritually and manage wars of this type spiritually and if we drive out all those

16. Lk 17.10.

17. 1 Tm 6.10.

18. Jos 10.24-26. Marcion and the Gnostics were offended by the violence and denied that the God of the Old Testament could be the Father of Jesus. Origen used allegory to spiritualize the battles and counter their arguments, but also, as in this section, he found evidence even in the New Testament for violence in the heavens. See Harnack's discussion in *Militia Christi*, trans. David McInnes Gracie (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), pp. 46-52.

19. Gal 6.14.

20. 1 Cor 15.10.

21. Jos 10.25.

spiritual iniquities from heaven, then we shall be able at last to receive from Jesus as a share of the inheritance even those places and kingdoms that are the kingdoms of heaven, bestowed by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, "to whom is the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen!"²²

22. 1 Pt 4.11.

I

C

i

C

l

s

"

s

t

e

a

u

i

t

s

i

v

l

t

a

l

S
CH

ORIGEN
HOMILIES ON JOSHUA

Translated by

BARBARA J. BRUCE

Edited by

CYNTHIA WHITE

The University of Arizona

ity
zona
ing
f America

es,

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA PRESS
Washington, D.C.

CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY
OF AMERICA LIBRARIES
Washington, D.C.