

ST ISIDORE OF PELUSIUM AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

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b) Allegorical Interpretations.

We have said that in most cases Isidore follows, and hence he represents, the Antiochian School concerning the interpretation of the Scriptures, and we have cited some examples of his grammatico-historical type of interpretation. But it is also true that he does not reject the allegorical kind even though the N.T. examples belonging to that kind hardly exceed three dozen.

We must stress from the beginning that Isidore usually interprets allegorically those passages which are appropriate for such an interpretation. When for example the Bible itself speaks allegorically or metaphorically or parabolically¹ or when a certain spiritual gain is generally expected. Because how could we interpret literally e.g. Matt. 7,18 'a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit'? «For if the Saviour was speaking about trees, let your mind be superior to that; but if he was speaking about men and had used an example-because what is natural to the trees is optional for us-let allegory be upset»². Also, when our Lord says that the grain of mustard is the kingdom of heaven, (Matt. 13,31) we are obliged to find why He assimilates the heavenly realm with a grain of mustard seed. Isidore says that «the comparison of the kingdom of heaven with mustard is done because of the

1. As a matter of fact we cannot interpret these passages otherwise. Not only Isidore, but other Great Fathers also, interpret in the same way. Basil the Great, e. g. who says: «Τοὺς δὲ τοιοῦτους λόγους ὡς ὄνειράτων συγκρίσεις καὶ γράσδεις μύθους ἀποπεψάμενοι, τὸ ὕδωρ ὕδωρ νοήσωμεν, καὶ τὴν διάκρισιν τὴν ὑπὸ τοῦ στερώματος γενομένην, κατὰ τὴν ἀποδοθεῖσαν αἰτίαν δεξώμεθα...» (in Hex. III 9 Garn: I 44), interprets Matt. 21,33 I planted a vineyard and hedged it round about' as follows: «Τὰς ἀνθρωπίνας ψυχὰς δηλονότι λέγει τὸν ἀμπελῶνα, αἷς φραγμὸν περιέθηκε, τὴν ἐκ τῶν προσταγμάτων ἀσφάλειαν καὶ τὴν φυλακὴν τῶν ἀγγέλων» (In Hex. V 6 Carn. I 64). This is an allegorical interpretation and indeed St Basil could not interpret it literally. St. Basil's homilies on the Psalms (especially on XXVIII and XLIV) supply us with abundant examples of allegorical interpretations.

2. IV 81, 1144AB.

results of the latter. The word of the divine preaching is short when it is sowed and is declared briefly, not only for its shortness, but for the simple and common words too. But when it is cultivated it grows up and it exceeds all preaching which have been admired till now, because it brings forth truth and it does not decorate falsehood. Nothing is more than truth¹. Among the interpretations of Isidore there are also pure allegories which show his relations with the Alexandrian School and of which we shall cite a number.

Thus, referring to Matt. 3,10 Isidore says: «John the prophet seeing the unfruitful intention of the Jews assimilated them to unfruitful trees, saying that the axe lies at their root. Axe is the sharp and abridged division of the Gospel by which (i. s. axe) every tree which does not bear good fruit is felled, not torn out by the roots, because the roots, i.e. the law are left for the new people to be grafted to»².

On the 'winnowing-fan' and 'threshing-floor', Isidore says: «The Lord says that winnowing-fan is the ecumenical Church in which He gathers all harvest of mankind. Threshing-floor is the righteous judgment which for everyone commands the right class and burns those who look like straw and the rubbish. But those whose works are pure and have produced fruits of repentance, He will gather into the appropriate granary, which He also calls salutary abode or mansion»³.

We have said that Isidore allegorizes especially those passages which have been written allegorically or metaphorically; let the following example be its proof. The Biblical verse is Matt. 7,6. Isidore interprets: «This verse signifies the divine word. For the divine word is a really holy and most valuable pearl. Dogs and swine are not only those erring in dogmas but those erring in actions as well. Trampling of the pearl is the dispute and quarrel of dogmas or actions by those who attempt to overturn dogmas or those who abuse the best life. Well, this is the reason why Christ said: Do not cast the word as cheap and easily obtained in order that it be not insulted and you will not be laughed at by those who neither say nor do anything right»⁴. In another of his letters and on the same thing, he says: «Give not that which is holy unto the dogs. i. e. to the Jews who have many times received the

1. IV 70, 1136BC. L. Bober (p. 56-63) classifies this interpretation among the literal ones.

2. I 64, 224C-25A. L. Bober (p. 56-63) classifies this interpretation among the literal ones.

3. I 65, 225AB

4. IV 181, 1273A

divine word and again turned back to the same vomit, or to those who believe in heresy, who are going towards the true word and turn back to their previous bad disposition. Neither cast ye your pearls before swine, i.e. before those who are mixed together with their passions and live a life like swine, lest they trample them in their evil habits cursing the divine name and run again and rend you. Because the communication of mysteries to those people is an unwoken rending¹ for them who communicate it contemptuously². Continuing his interpretation of the same Biblical verse Isidore says that it refers to the priesthood: «Several people say that this commandment commands that the priesthood is not to be given to lascivious and impure men, lest they insult it and assault those who ordained them, rending the dignified glory which they had before³. And finally he says that it may be referred to the sacraments and holy Baptism: «If that means that the divine sacraments must not be given to sinning lay men, consider it. And that prohibits the giving of the holy Baptism to those pretending to accept the Faith but not avoiding their present habits, consider it⁴.

Four continuous verses of Scripture, Matt. 24, 16-9 give Isidore grounds to interpret them allegorically. These allegories are found in one and the same letter. Thus on 'let them which be in Judaea flee in to the mountains' Isidore says: «It means those who are attached to piety (what Judaea means) must look for the high refuge and must be watched by their avowal⁵. Isidore's opinion concerning 'let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house' is: «He who disdained the present house, who scorned the residence which is here; who became great as to life and who expelled his own passions, let him have with him nothing, neither timidity nor indolence nor empty glory nor love for riches all of which come from on high⁶. Again on 'neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes', Isidore writes: «He who has put off the old man and has denied the carnal one must put on the new man which renewed him in the knowledge of God and purged him from the mud⁷. And finally Isidore elu-

1. ῥῆξις ἐστὶν ἀνέλεπτος.

2. I 143, 280A.

3. IV 181, 1273B

4. *ibid.* Chrysostom also connects this verse with sacraments (De Compactione 1 Montf. I, 161E.

5. I 210, 316B.

6. *ibid.* 316BC.

7. *ibid.* 316C.

cidates Matt. 24,19 'woe unto them that are with child and to them that give suck in those days' as follows: It refers to those souls which have the divine love within and which do not dare to speak freely and bring forth the avowal of God and the life according to Him. Also it refers to those souls which have a childish and imperfect idea about the divine forbearance and which do not hope to get rewards, but have been laid bare because of a threat or insult and are lacking in future hopes¹.

Isidore interprets allegorically also Matt. 24,41 (cf. Lk 17, 34-5) concerning the 'mill' and the women grinding at it. «Mill, he says, is the present life's noise which unsteadily passes over us and which changes things as quickly as the mill. That 'women grinding' signifies those who differ according to the life in one thing or class; e.g. askesis or virginity or continence or purity or hospitality (or faith) are done by many people, but not with the same mind or in the same rank². 'The one shall be taken and the other left': Some care for activity and vigilance; some others live with indolence and negligence; of those the former are to be taken, the latter are to be left when the Lord will come in His glory»³.

Another parable is interpreted by Isidore in the same way. The point is the hiding of talents and usury. 'Thou oughtest to have put my money to the exchangers;' «It refers to those who did nothing about a neighbour's salvation, and means: You ought to tell, to confirm, to protest; you ought to show a blameless life⁴. Also this affirmation of Christ refers to those who could tell and preach about a neighbour's salvation and who did not do it⁵. The Lord calls 'usury of hearing' the evidence of the works»⁶.

An allegorical interpretation of Peter's denial is noteworthy but on the whole it is unsuccessful, for there was no reason to allegorize these passages. Thus on Matt. 26,34 'before the cock crow' Isidore says: «It means: before the day of resurrection comes. For these cocks crow when the dawn is coming and while there is still darkness. Then, when the life-giving East was coming, the crow of the cock became an accuser of the denial, signifying the abolition of the night of malediction and the rise of the light of life»⁷. Peter's denial, says Isidore,

1. *ibid.* 316CD.

2. I 285, 349C.

3. I 283, 349AB.

4. IV 177, 1268B.

5. V 201, 1453A.

6. III 398, 1036D.

7. I 357, 385C.

signifies the denial of all mankind, Matt. 26,70; 72; 74: «The chief of the apostles having denied thrice the Lord, suggested the sin of all men who thrice denied the Creator¹. Mankind denied God thrice². Firstly, when God gave the first commandment³. The first denial is the transgression of the commandment which was forbidding the tasting of the fruit of the tree in the middle of paradise⁴. Secondly, when the written law was given⁵. The second impiety within the law is the adoration which the Jews offered to the golden calf⁶. Thirdly, in the incarnation of the Word our God⁷. The third disrespect is the resignation of grace. For they said 'we have no king but caesar' and denied the Lord of glory»⁸.

The phrase 'rise, let us be going', Matt. 26,46, ought to be literally interpreted but Isidore preferred to interpret it allegorically, for a certain spiritual profit: «Christ said 'rise, let us be going' in order that we might not be attached to the earth, because of superstition which is a terrible passion removed with difficulty and is an obstacle for the heavenly prizes»⁹.

Concerning Christ's malediction of the fig-tree, Isidore gives the following allegorical interpretation: «Christ cursed the fig-tree not without reason, but to show to the ungrateful Jews that He had the power of punishment also. This tree is the tree of transgression in the middle of paradise, the leaves of which the first man and woman took and made clothes. And this tree has been cursed by Christ with philanthropy¹⁰, in order that it might no more bring fruit which causes sin»¹¹.

Noteworthy is Isidore's interpretation of the deafening of Zacharias, Lk 1,20: «Zacharias deafening did not take place by ecstasis. For he used to be in association with God's epiphany and with an angelic

1. I 356, 385B.

2. *ibid.*; I 358, 385C; I 359, 385D—388A.

3. I 356, 385B.

4. I 359, 385D.

5. I 356, 385B.

6. I 359, 385D.

7. I 356, 385B.

8. I 359, 385D—88A.

9. IV 48, 1097-1100A. cf. also III 147, 840D—41A.

10. The same idea is found in Chrysostome ad Theodorum Lapsus 1 Montf. I 6B: «Ἐπειδὴ δὲ ἀπαθὲς τὸ Θεῖον ἐστὶ, καὶ κολάζῃ, καὶ τιμωρῆται, οὐ μετ' ὀργῆς τοῦτο ποιεῖ, ἀλλὰ μετὰ κηδεμονίας καὶ φιλελεοςίας πολλῆς». cf also De Statuis VII 3 Montf. II, 102D.

11. I 51, 213BC.

vision, since he as a priest was administering with purity the mysteries; but in the type of his silence, the silence of the Law was signified¹. When the wisdom of the Gospel shone forth, the education of the Law stopped. Thus Zacharias, having heard the good news of the new and paradoxical salute, is deafened².

Noteworthy too is the interpretation of our Lord's transfiguration, Lk 9,29-30: «Our Lord and Saviour's transfiguration on the mountain was signifying before hand our resurrection from death. And the presence of Moses and Elias showed Christ's sovereignty upon the living and the dead»³.

Concerning the two malefactors, Lk 23,39 Isidore thinks that they were representing two people: «The one people showed foolishness till his death and did not acknowledge even the last captivity which he underwent by the Romans. The other people did not despair of redemption even in the last resort and corrected himself by theology»⁴.

On the first miracle of Christ, John 2, 1-11 Isidore says: «The first miracle of the Lord did not happen simply. Because He treated the necessity of the wedding and filled up the omission of the Law. For the Law was baptising only by water whereas Christ perfected and sanctioned it by His own blood uniting both in Himself and joining the Law with Grace»⁵.

John 18,10: Peter smites the Malchus' ear. What does it mean? It means how impetuous and hot-blooded was the chief of the Twelve. But for Isidore it has a secret meaning: «Inasmuch as Jews were guilty of disobedience and they did not obey the Law which taught them to hear completely these truths which Christ would teach them, Peter smote the servant's ear. This action ought to be done to the priest who was the disobedient servant of the Law and who needed a sword for the cutting of his contradiction»⁶.

Of the Epistles there are but few examples of allegorical interpretation. Thus in 1 Cor. 15,41 Isidore, as many others, allegorizes the glory of the sun, moon and stars. He says: «We are permitted to pronounce as similar to the sun those who accepted and preserved virginity, to

1. I 131, 269B.

2. I 257, 337AB.

3. I 239, 329B.

4. I 285, 336C; cf I 286.

5. I 393, 404B.

6. I 291, 353A.

the moon those who accepted and preserved chastity, and to the stars those who accepted and preserved the honourable marriage»¹.

Remarkable is the interpretation of ii Cor. 4,7: 'we have this treasure in earthen vessels': «I think that this line, says Isidore, has two meanings: a) We have this treasure, that is the heavenly wealth and the supreme gifts which are higher than our worth in this mortal body which had reasonably been called *ὀστράκινον* i. e. like a shell, since it was made from the earth. b) We have the wealth of the divine wisdom in the sacred Scriptures in which His wealth is contained in poor and common words and examples»².

We see clearly the method of the Alexandrian School in symbolizing and allegorizing, in Herbr. 9,4-5! «The 'ark' and the 'mercy-seat' which was a covering, *ἐπίθεμα* of the ark, were the symbol of a man who keeps the divine words, who has God's benevolence and who is guarded by the divine powers as the Psalmist says³. But these things are more naturally signs of Christ who fulfilled the Law and who became the propitiation for our sins. He who fulfills the Law, he propitiates the sins of the world⁴. The 'manna' signifies that he who keeps the divine commandments will share a divine delight and food. And the 'Aaron's rod that budded' means that those who transgress the divine commandments and those who unworthily get the priesthood will be corrected»⁵.

Let us now cite the last example which as a summary of Isidore's allegorical interpretations shows where and how he allegorized the N.T. The Biblical verse is Jude 13: 'wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever': «I think that these words, says Isidore, are applied to those men who commit unpardonable faults and are not referred to stars or clouds or waves or trees all of which are used as examples by the Scriptures. The Scriptures accuse those who by their intention present the same characteristic, that is to say unsteadiness which is natural to stars, clouds, waves and trees»⁶.

Less than two dozen examples have so far been cited for illustrating Isidore's allegorical interpretations of the N.T. This number is

1. III 351, 1009BC.

2. II 4, 460B.

3. Ps. 118, 11 and 16,9.

4. IV 73, 1132C.

5. *ibid.* 1133AB.

6. IV 58, 1109AB. L. Bober (p. 56-63) classifies this interpretation among the literal ones.

almost half of the total number of Isidore's N.T. allegorical interpretations. All N.T. allegorical interpretations found among Isidore's letters are approximately one ninth of the total number of his N.T. interpretations.

Whatsoever opinion we form from the cited examples, is also valid for the whole of Isidore's N.T. allegorical interpretations. And the impression from Isidore's allegory is that although he reminds us of the Alexandrian School, he nevertheless avoids carefully all the exaggerations of the well known old Alexandrian allegory. He reminds us rather of the Neo-Alexandrian School, for his allegory is, we may say, conservative in most cases and is especially applied to parables or allegorical expressions of the N.T. which we cannot interpret otherwise. After Isidore's allegorical treatment of some N.T. passages a concrete and certain spiritual profit is to be expected. We judge Isidore's allegory of the N.T., all things considered, as successful in the most examples¹.

c) Combination of literal and allegorical Interpretations.

About a dozen examples from Isidore's N.T. interpretations justify us in saying that he in some cases tried to interpret certain passages literally and at the same time allegorically. Not only the nature of these passages but mainly his intention to edify his addressees gave us this type of interpretation which is not unknown to other Fathers too. We cite half a dozen examples which will better illustrate what we mean and show Isidore's capacity.

Matt. 10,16: 'Be wise as serpents': «The Lord commands us to be as wise as serpents, that is to preserve in every temptation our head, which is our Faith. Because even if a serpent is found in misfortunes and plagues, however great, it keeps its head unhurt². Be wise as serpents, says the Lord, and He means that we have to imitate neither the serpent's capacity for poisoning and striking nor their cunning and deceitfulness, but to lay aside the old man, i.e. vice as a snakeskin³ and to preserve faith⁴ as the serpent his head and to care little for the

1. The allegorical interpretations of the O.T. differ slightly from those of the N.T., but here we are dealing only with the N.T. interpretations.

2. I 126, 268A; cf Chrysostom: De Statuis IV 5 Montf. II,66C: «Ἐκεῖνος (ὄφις) τὸ λοιπὸν προΐεται ἅπαν σῶμα, ὥστε διασῶσαι τὴν κεφαλὴν.

3. Ἴνα τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον ὡς περ λεβηρίδα ἀπεκδυσώμεθα.

4. cf Chrysostom, loc. cit.: «Οὕτω καὶ σὺ κἂν χρήματα, κἂν σῶμα κἂν τὴν παρούσαν ζωὴν, κἂν πάντα προέσθαι δέη ὥστε διατηροῦσαι τὴν εὐσέβειαν, μὴ ἀθύρειν».

body¹. 'Be harmless as doves': The Lord commands us to be as harmless as doves in order that we will imitate not its foolishness², but its simplicity and compound this simplicity with the above explained wisdom³. Because wisdom compounded with simplicity is a most perfect virtue, something divine⁴. And if the one will be separated from the other, then wisdom becomes and is cunning, and simplicity degenerates in foolishness. For the former is capable of committing crimes and the latter of cheating⁵.

On the piece of money, Matt. 17,27 Isidore says: «The piece of money which was hidden in the fish and which Peter had been commanded to get, was signifying our nature covered by passions and which the Lord invites and restores in the original⁶. 'Give in unto them for me and thee'. The Lord had been taxed when he was brought in the womb of his mother and paid tribute unto Caesar, legislating for us to submit to the State when it does not prevent piety⁷. The Lord ordered the tribute to be given for His own sake for He became man and was, as we, under the same law; Neither does He allow us to oppose the king when he harmlessly sets in order and shows forth the activities of the divine power⁸.

Matt. 27,51: 'The veil of the temple was rent': «The way towards the holy place in the temple was hidden and blocked by a veil and this was signifying that the sanctification of our Lord had not yet been given, but was preserved in his presence. But when he rent the veil and uncovered to the Gentiles the secret of the holy place which was covered to the Jews since they were ungrateful. He opened for us the way towards the heavenly relationship⁹. Why in Christ's passion the earth did quake and the rocks rent? a) In order to show that he who was crucified was the Lord of terrestrial and subterranean things¹⁰. b) In order to accuse the stupidity of the Jews, for, whereas things were crushed by fear,

1. II 175, 625C-28A.

2. Osee 5,7.

3. II 275, 628A.

4. «Ἡ φρόνησις τῇ ἀπλότητι κινωμένη, θεῖόν τι χρῆμα, φημι δὲ ἐντελεστάτην ἀρετὴν ἀποτελεῖ».

5. II 175, 625C.

6. I 206, 313B.

7. I 48, 212B.

8. I 206, 313B.

9. I 252, 336A.

10. I 253, 336B.

they were becoming stones and they were insensible towards fear and ungrateful for beneficence»¹.

The πρόχειρος and μυστικὴ interpretation is also applied by Isidore on John 6,48: 'I am that bread of life': «The Lord is by Himself called 'bread'. He is so called according to the mere conception because he became the food of salvation for all men. And according to the secret meaning, because he joined and purified human nature and inflamed it by his own fire of the Godhead and became one person with it and one worshipped hypostasis»².

We cite two examples from the Epistles: Colos. 4,6: 'Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt': «We must season, says Isidore, our talks with salt, not too much not too little in order that they might be pleasant and nutritious to grateful men and in order to catch the minds of those who hear them. And the 'salt' of exhortations is the testimony of the divine word, the fear of the last judgment and the speech concerning the heavenly realm»³.

The last example is on Hebr. 4,13: 'All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him': «None can escape from the brilliant and sleepless Eye or do something secretly for all things are naked to him even if they appear as secret»⁴. The γυμνὰ and τετραχλησιμμένα had been written metaphorically, ἐκ μεταφορᾶς, by the wise Paul, of the victims which were being brought for sacrifice. For as these animals are naked from every garment after the taking away of their skin, so it will happen in the great day of the Lord with us. That is, the uncovering, ἀνακάλυψις, and lack of disguise of our secret actions will be apparent in that day when none could escape but everyone would be uncovered»⁵.

As it is understood from these examples, Isidore tries to apply the μυστικὴν and πρόχειρον interpretation in one and the same passage. He avoids exaggerations and what he says interpreting in such a way, is not strange. We think that the combination of literal and allegorical interpretations of the N.T. by Isidore are worthy of mention.

d) Alternative Interpretations.

Among Isidore's N.T. interpretations there are some examples, less than twenty in number, which we characterize as examples of al-

1. I 254, 336BC.

2. I 360, 388A.

3. IV 49, 1100B.

4. IV 47, 1097C.

5. I 94, 248AB.

ternative interpretation, that is passages for which Isidore gives many interpretations at the same time. These alternative interpretations undoubtedly show Isidore's ability in dealing with Exegesis, his prolific mind, his intention to elucidate a passage as best as possible and of course his significance as an Exegete. Here are some examples:

Matt. 5,28: Concerning adultery in the heart. Nine of Isidore's letters deal with this passage and all he says of it, we may classify in four paragraphs: a) «Whom does the Lord establish as guilty of adultery by these words? Not those merely seeing and being defeated, because it happens many times involuntarily; but those seeing and acting. Because whosoever continually and carefully seeing, even if he will not make it by his body¹, will in his soul make sin»². Did not the Lord tell that he will be punished as an adulterer who merely and per transitum (ἐκ παρόδου) sees and lusts, but whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, that is whosoever by antecedent thought attracts the passion, putting it as his work, continuously waiting for and feeding the passion by continuous and incessant sight, has committed adultery with her already in his heart. In other words, whosoever would make it, if it would be possible³. b) Why did the Lord condemn it? For lusting is born from sight⁴, suspecting before hand not only the act, but its image also⁵. Because the curious sight is considered as adultery⁶. Also He wants men to be pure not only from adultery and prostitution, but from lusting sight as well⁷. Moreover, our spiritual struggle from the beginning is to be easier. Because there is no such a difficulty in not seeing as there is for vanquishing after seeing⁸. c) The validity of this verse refers to women also. Hence, every woman who sees a man and lusts, has committed adultery with him already in her heart⁹. Thus, and according to the question what would be a woman's responsibility if she caused a man to be defeated, we must understand that if a

1. Cf Chrysostom, De Statuis XV 4 Monrf. II 185E: «Καὶ γὰρ ὁ τὰ ἀλλότρια περιεργαζόμενος κάλλη, καὶ μὴ μοιχεύσῃ, τέως ἐπεθύμησε, καὶ γέγονε κατὰ τὴν ἀπόφασιν τοῦ Χριστοῦ μοιχός».

2. II 278, 709BC: «Διὰ γὰρ τῆς θεᾶς θεραπέων τὸ πάθος, διὰ τῆς συγκαταθέσεως τὸ ἄγος πληροῦν».

3. III 11, 733D-36A; see also III 66, 773C-76A.

4. Ἐπειδὴ ἐκ τοῦ ὁρᾶν τὸ ἐρᾶν τίκεται

5. III 254, 933A.

6. IV 109, 1176A.

7. IV 204, 1292C.

8. V 65, 1364D-65A.

9. III 12, 740C.

woman is walking prudently and modestly and not hunting to catch those she meets, she is not responsible. On the contrary, (if she is not walking prudently and modestly and if she is hunting to catch those she will meet) she is responsible and too much¹. d) If anyone says that it is necessary to look on a woman (recalling ii Tim. 2.5) in order to have a spiritual struggle, let him learn that a legal fight is only that which has been ordered by the Impartial Judge, not by everyone's indolent superstition².

Matt. 5,38-9: 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'. As Isidore interpreted the aforementioned passage, so did he with regard to the passage in question. «a) why did Moses command it? I think that in order that the Jews might not be inexcusable and bitter to those who injure them and to avoid injustice calculating what they would suffer if they were unjust³. In other words: Moses suspended faults by the fear of punishment⁴. Besides this commandment is full of justice only if we examine it in promptu; but if we will understand it, it is full of philanthropy also⁵. b) As to Christ's commandment 'that ye resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek turn to him the other also' that is not the opposite of what Moses said. But the former is greater and an order of highest morality⁶. Because those words of the O.T. have been ordered so that men act not at all - for those thirsting blood could not gladly hear to suffer - and these words of the N.T. in order to suffer eagerly. It is good to do no evil, but it is better to suffer eagerly⁷. c) Let it be noted too, that in Christ's stadium there is a different law for crowning than in Olympic games. Because Christ legislated that the one struck be crowned, not the striker⁸. Because there, the striker and beater is crowned; here, the one struck and made to suffer is worthy of elevation; there, the retaliator and here one who turns the other cheek is proclaimed as a victor in the theatre of the angels. For victory is decided not by defence but ἐν τῷ φιλοσοφεῖν

1. *ibid.* 737A.

2. IV 122, 1195C (V 139 is identical).

3. Ἰνα, τῷ δέξει τοῦ παθεῖν ὁ δρῶσιν, ἀπέχωνται τοῦ τολμᾶν.

4. II 432, 576AB.

5. IV 86, 1148B.

6. Isidore's letter has 'Philosophy' instead of 'morality'. But as 'Philosophy' in Isidore hardly means philosophy, we think that 'morality' in this case stands well.

7. II 133, 576C; Καλὸν μὲν γὰρ τὸ μὴ δρᾶν τι κακόν, κρεῖττον δὲ τὸ καὶ προσθίμῳ πάσχειν». See I 98, 249B.

8. II 169, 621A.

i.e. by suffering¹. This is a new order for crowning, since the way of struggles is also new². d) If now we wish to compare the above mentioned two commandments, we say that of both Testaments one is the Legislator. But the Law prohibited only the bad acts because the Jews were refractory. The Gospel, legislating to the spiritually improved, suspends even the bad thoughts, rightly chastising not only sins, but by all means preventing bad thoughts from becoming works³.

Another example of a Biblical passage interpreted in the same way by Isidore, is Matt. 6, 1-3 concerning almsgiving: «a) Who is charitable? He mainly is charitable who on the one hand does good and on the other hand does not uncover the stranger's misfortunes⁴. b) Secrecy is possible as to the inner disposition: Is it possible for the charitable to remain secret? I say that this verse examines the inner disposition of the charitable. For everyone who gives alms does not do that necessarily wanting it to be apparent. And even if the giving of alms cannot be hidden, however the charitable one must not be exhibited. For he who is doing it, humiliates the receiver and preaches the payment and commendation of himself⁵. c) Secrecy is put in order that vanity, ostentation and love of honour may be torn out: When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; Why? For, after doing well, vanity, and ostentation follow. Hence, Christ says, nothing good has to be done passionately and no proud thought must follow it. But if you do good acts you have also to be without parade or pride and have not to seek here congratulations but to expect the future wreath⁶. Jesus tears up by the roots everywhere the love for honour, ordering that almsgiving be not published and even that one of the two hands be ignorant of it⁷. By this verse Christ suspends ambition and ostentation and turns the love for honour from men to that of seeing God⁸. d) Almsgiving with ostentation. Those who give alms with ostentation, do not act it by love for virtue or by good will, but uncover the stranger's misfortunes, since they wish to be called charitable⁹. And, finally, almsgiving with ostentation is better than not giving at all¹⁰.

1. III 126, 828B.

2. *ibid.* 828C; IV 175, 1265C.

3. IV 209, 1303A.

4. IV 41, 1092C.

5. IV 227, 1321BC.

6. I 84, 241A.

7. III 142, 837D—40A.

8. IV 159, 1244C; III 34, 756B.

9. IV 159, 1245A.

10. IV 41, 1093A.

Concerning 'Our Father', Matt. 6, 9-13 Isidore gives us an excellent interpretation, especially from the point of view of edification. a) Characterization as to the content: «The prayer which the Lord taught to His disciples includes no earthly things but all heavenly things and is aiming at the benefit of the soul. For it does not teach us to obtain either authority or wealth or beauty or strength or anything which is easily decayed. Because it is useless to seek the enjoyment of something which if we possessed it we should be demanded to abstain from it»¹. b) Concerning its shortness: «I was always admiring and I Just now am wondering about the wondrous philosophy of 'Our Father' which is short. For, if the utterance of the words is simple it does not happen that the meaning of the words is also simple, because he who is only a listener cannot recite this prayer, but he can who is the hearer and the maker»². c) Who have the right to recite the 'our Father' and who have not:

The text:	Those have the right:	He has not the right:
Our Father	Who prove the genuineness of the son	Who does not act properly to the esteemed son
Hallowed be thy name	Who do nothing accursed	Who does such things which defame the sublime name
Thy kingdom come	Who avoid all these acts giving pleasure to the devil	Who is in the comradeship of the tyrant (i. e. devil)
Thy will be done	Who denote it by acts	Who does nothing which God wants and who pretends virtue.
Give us this day our daily bread	Who are separated from luxury and gluttony and yet deny them	Who lives in luxury and dissipation and has before hand gathered many supplies not only for food, but for gluttony too
and forgive us our debts	Who forgive those who have offended them	Who is implacable and cruel
as we forgive our debtors	(no interpretation)	Who bears a grudge and immensely defends himself

1. II 284, 742BC: ὅτι γὰρ καὶ παρόντων ἀπέχεσθαι κελεύεσθαι, τούτων ἀπόντων αἰτεῖν τὴν ἀπόλαυσιν, περιττόν.

2. IV 24, 1073A.

and lead us not into
temptation

Who are leading nei-
ther themselves nor
others into temptation

Who is casting him-
self into temptation
and crossing every way
which leads to risks.
Because he seemingly is
ridiculous and rather
worthy of indignation

but deliver us from
evil

Who fight relentlessly
against Satan

Who is eagerly follow-
ing the devil. For it
exceeds every irony

for thine is the king-
dom and the power
and the glory.

Who fear His words
and demonstrate them
by works»¹.

Who despises Him
who is the source of e-
very power and glory»².

d) Some more elucidations of 'bread' and 'this day': «Bread. It has seemed to some wise men that it had been said rather for the divine word which feeds the incorporeal soul and which, as it were, is in the essence of soul and is joined with it. And for this reason has been said ἐπιούσιος bread, since the word essence relates to the soul rather than to the body. And even if it has been said for daily bread which relates to the synthesis of the body, this becomes in the same manner spiritual too. For, to seek nothing more than bread alone, it might be a characteristic of a spiritual and brilliant and philosophical mind³. Our 'ἐπιούσιος bread', i.e. what is proper either to the soul or is self-sufficient for the body⁴. 'This day': It means the daily economy⁵.

As adultery (Matt. 5,28) is a thorn in Isidore's flesh so is fornication. We better understand it if we bear in mind that he interpreted i Cor. 6,18: 'He that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body', in ten ways or rather he gave us ten interpretations of the same passage. «Explaining this line, says Isidore, we can give ten interpretations: a) Paul did not say that he who commits fornication sins by the body but he sins against his own body; he injures his body, he contaminates it, he renders it accursed. b) The apostle used this phrase in order to correct the fornicator and perhaps he exaggerated the sin a bit, as we do when we wish to correct a sinner and we say 'this sin is the worst' not because it really is, but because we wish to deliver him from it. c) As a man who throws wheat or any other seed into the sea sins against the seed for he prevents it coming to birth, so he who

1. ibid. 1076AB.

2. ibid. 1073AD.

3. II 281, 712C.

4. IV 24, 1073C.

5. ibid.

throws his sperm into a concubine, sins against his own body, for the concubine not only destroys the sperm but she also prevents it from being born. d) The fornicator sins against his own body since he fornicates and suffers from it¹. For if he did not endure, he would not have been destroyed; and if he had been destroyed, he had also been corrupted; and if he had been corrupted, he had been disgraced. e) Again, if a child will be born to him who had intercourse with a concubine, this child will be educated to fornication. f) If someone will have intercourse with a slave, the child born will be a slave; then, how does he not sin who studies to bring forth a slave? g) For, even the child born is injured, since it is called illegitimate and becomes dishonoured everywhere, and if it will enter a council-chamber or a court it will be put away; and because of this expulsion the fornicator is ashamed. For he left a memorial to his lewdness. h) Inasmuch as the fornicator becomes one with the prostitute woman since he makes his members a concubine's members, he really sins against himself. j) Inasmuch as the Church is a body and we are members in particular, the fornicator sins against all. For his transgression goes to the members of the Church and because of this Paul ordered him to be cut off until he repents. k) Inasmuch as those who are married become one body by law (Gen. 2,24; i Cor. 7,4), reasonably a man who commits prostitution sins against his wife, i.e. against his own body; and a woman who commits prostitution sins against her body. i.e. against her husband who became her body².

Finally we cite our last example of 'alternative interpretation' concerning the office of a bishop, i Tim, 3, 1-6. a) The greatness of the office: «This office is too great and everyone cannot correspond with it, because it is higher than reigning. For a bishop rules divine things and a king rules earthly things»³. b) What must a bishop be: «Those who wish to be bishops must differ from those who will be their congregation as much as a shepherd differs from sheep. He who has got the office of a bishop must everywhere be seen to be as a statue of every philosophy»⁴. c) «Do the candidates for this office possess the proper qualifications? That is to say, are they vigilant to such a degree that they have the eye of their soul wakeful? Have they the necessary sobriety

1. Καθ' ὃ δρᾷ καὶ πάσχει. This reminds us that of Sophocles (Frag. 209): «Τὸν δρῶντα γάρ τε καὶ παθεῖν ὀφείλεται».

2. IV 129, 1208A-1212A.

3. III 216, 896A.

4. ibid. 896BC.

not only for themselves, but for others as well? Have they modesty so that they could amaze by their walking, look and voice those who behold them? Are they hospitable so as to give hospitality to unknown and ungrateful poor men? Did they understand the teaching of the Lord by study and, therefore, has the grace descended upon them so that the sources of spiritual speeches dwell in their tongues? Have they leniency so that they would never insult anyone? Are they so ἀφιλάργοι as to give even these which they rightly gather to those who need them? Are they so forbearing so that they could endure those who accuse and insult them without reason? Have they all the other qualifications which Paul described?»¹. d) A bishop cares for everything about his flock: «All the needs of the flock of the bishop are hung upon him. What are these needs? The difficulties of his clergymen, the food for those who are hungry, the drinks for the thirsty, the clothes for those who are naked, the protection of those who are injured, the care of those who cry their orphanhood, the help of widows, the combat against those who injure, the reproof of those who try to get unlawfully the authority, the healing of ill men, the restoration of those who have been scandalized by strong desires, the emancipation of those who are in prisons, the consolation of those in suffering, the correction of those who make mistakes»². e) «The episcopate is not authority or rest or luxury as some people thought³, but it is work, not rest. It is care, not luxury. It is a responsible function, not an unexamined ruling. It is fatherly guardianship, not tyrannical independence. It is an economic protection, not an unexamined ruling»⁴. f) I praise with high esteem the work of episcopate for it is divine; but I do not praise the strong desire for it, for this desire is fallacious. I do not say that if a man desires the office of a bishop he acts well. Because even the best men must not have this desire; even they have to expel it from themselves»⁵. g) Those who desire the office of a bishop must see the pains of it and see if they can face them. They must see the risks and not only the honour; they must see the deaths, not the luxury; they must see the plots and cares, and not expect rest; they must learn that if a man will get this throne, he is ordained to combat legally and not to live in luxury without danger»⁶.

1. *ibid.* 896BD.

2. *ibid.* 897BC.

3. *ibid.* 897C.

4. *ibid.* 900A.

5. *ibid.*

6. *ibid.* 900BC.

Six examples of 'alternative interpretations' have been cited. They are enough to prove that Isidore is a skilful and prolific Exegete. The fact that he was an admirer and follower of laconicism and that he was simply writing letters and was not dealing systematically with Exegesis, along with the fact that he gave us such examples of alternative interpretations oblige us to put Isidore in his right position, which is the position among the other great Exegetes of his age. It is a pity that he did not leave us systematic Biblical expositions.

e) Unsuccessful Interpretations.

We are not surprised that among Isidore's N.T. interpretations are some examples which could be characterised as unsuccessful. These, compared with the total number of Isidore's interpretations are but few. Besides, in some cases, not only Isidore but other Fathers too, interpreted in the same way; even in these cases Isidore appears to follow the ecclesiastical Tradition. Here we try to discuss the unsuccessful examples of Isidore's N.T. interpretations.

Matt. 3,4 concerning the locusts and the wild honey of John the Prophet. Isidore says: «The locusts on which John the Prophet was feeding were not animals looking like scarabs as some men being ignorant of the matter think; God forbid. But they were ends of herbs or plants. And the wild honey was not any grass or herb, but it was mountain honey, made by wild bee, which was most bitter and hostile to every taste»¹.

With regard to the ἀκρίδες eaten by John the Baptist, Isidore is evidently wrong. The word ἀκρίς means the insect locust. Niemeyer² thinks that «omnem vero operam perdidit ea explicaturus quae de Joannis Baptistae cibo tradiderunt evangelistae. Itaque verbum ἀκρίς paroxytonon, et ἀκρίς oxytonon commutavit inter sese». Rosenmueler³ also thought that the ἀκρίδες were insects. Isidore's opinion was probably formed from the fact that he did not want John to eat animals, which, although excused by the Law⁴, were still animals, whereas John the Baptist was for Isidore the perfect example of fasting and dress especially for monks. This opinion of Isidore's is however, represented by the great majority of the Fathers⁵ which means that Isidore keeps the

1. I 132, 269C; cf also I 5, 184A.

2. loc. cit. p. 99.

3. ibid.

4. Levit. 11,22.

5. See: Henry Grégoire: Les sauterelles de saint Jean-Baptiste in Byz. V. p. 109-128.

Tradition. Lucien Gautier¹ says that «an ancient tradition of the Christian Church held that the locusts eaten by the Baptist were not insects, but the pods of husks of a tree, the carob or locust tree» and that in our times Cheyne resuscitated this old interpretation. But although we agree that Isidore is here wrong, we do not think that he confused the words ἄκρις and ἀκρίς. For the word ἄκρις means the summit of a mountain or highlands² and therefore there is no connection of ἄκρις and food.

Referring to the μέλι ἄγριον Isidore says that it was not any grass or herb. L. Gautier³ sees in the 'wild honey' the designation of a vegetable and nutritive substance, because «to collect nourishment of this kind in the thickets along the Jordan would have been an easier task for the Baptist, and would have required less time, than to hunt for the honey of bees». This 'wild honey' could be a kind of a honey from a tree, but we agree with Isidore that «it was mountain honey made by wild bee». Even if the supposition of Gautier that the honey of trees was more easily obtained were true, we are not obliged to accept the fact that John was feeding on such honey. We do not think that John was hunting for honey!

Matt. 5,25: 'Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him'. There was not any reason for interpreting this verse allegorically. Isidore however interpreted it in this way: «the Lord divinely called 'adversary' ἀντίδικον the will of the body against the spirit; 'way', ὁδόν the life which our generation passes inconstantly; and 'good will' εὐνοίαν towards the body, the consciousness of its revolution»⁴. Apart from the allegorical interpretation of this verse - Christ's words ought to be interpreted here literally - we think that even Isidore's thought that 'ἀντίδικος' is the will of the body against the Spirit, is not correct⁵. The interpretation is unsuccessful⁶.

Niemeyer⁷ with whom Diamantopoulos⁸ agreed, thinks that Isidore's interpretation of Matt. 12,40 is unsuccessful and that Isidore

1. DCG II p. 44.

2. See e. g. Liddell-Scott, loc. cit. I 93.

3. loc. cit. I p. 446-7 note.

4. I 80, 237C.

5. cf. e. g. V 329, 1525C: «The body is not opposite to the soul, but it is soul's organ and guitar».

6. cf. Diamantopoulos N.S: 1926 p. 623.

7. loc. cit. p. 98-9.

8. loc. cit. 1926/626.

proved the opposite from what he tried to prove and that he did not understand it. We think that Niemeyer and Diamantopoulos are wrong. Isidore's interpretation here is good and remarkable. His opinions are correct. More precisely speaking, Isidore is to elucidate the verse: 'As Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth'. Two things in this verse need elucidation: a) That Christ really fulfilled the model of Jonah, and b) that He remained in the sepulchre three days and three nights. Let us follow Isidore's exposition which will enable us to judge whether he succeeded or not:

First explanation: «He who promised to fulfil the Jonah's model, τύπον, which He knew accurately (for He was present with Jonah when he was thrown into the bottom and when he was cast up from the bottom) He had surely fulfilled it having remained in the grave as long as Jonah in the whale's belly. Second explanation: Christ had been crucified at the sixth hour of the Friday. From the sixth hour unto the ninth hour there was darkness; it was night. Again, from the night hour it became light; it was day. Again, the night of Friday. Again the Sabbath; the night of Sabbath. The dawn of Sunday. Third explanation; Christ died on Friday; it is one day. He was in the sepulchre all the Sabbath. He rose from the sepulchre at the end of the Sabbath as the first day of the week began to dawn; and this is a day; because the whole is understood from its part... Moreover, if the Lord had risen in a time less than He was promising, He, by all means, will be adored by everyone»¹.

We are not examining only one letter but all Isidore's letters. Thus, despite Niemeyer's opinion² we can easily use also the letter II 212 which is on the same subject, although Isidore here seems to interpret John 2,19 because Matt. 12,40 does not occur in this letter. In this second letter Isidore says among others: «If a debtor promised to his creditor that he would pay the loan to him after three days and we see him paying earlier than he promised, will we judge him as a liar or will we admire him as telling the truth more than properly? I think we must admire him and so by all means will those who deny that Christ fulfilled the model of Jonah. Then, what is the fault if even Christ told that he would raise himself up in three days and he did it earlier in order to show his power, to mortify those who were guarding Him and to muzzle the Jews? ... He said that He would raise Himself up on the third day.

1. I 114, 257D-60A.

2. loc. cit. p. 98.

You have Friday, you have also Saturday until the setting of the sun; He raised himself up after Saturday, having touched both and completed the intermediate day. Because He said that He will raise himself up in three days, not a f t e r three days; 'destroy this temple, He says, and in three days I will raise it up' (John 2,19). And the Prophet foretelling: 'after two days will he revive us; in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight' (Hosea 6,2). And if those who deny that Christ fulfilled the model of Jonah allege the phrase 'three days and three nights' I should say that Christ fulfilled the promise by touching these days and nights. For, twenty four hours are called one day. And if one is born either at the first or at the last hour, or if he dies, the whole day is numbered for him. For example: If someone is born when the sun is to set on the first day of the month we say that he was born on the first day of the month. And if another person is born shortly after the sun sets¹, we say that he was born on the second day of the month. How do we say that the one was born on the first day and the other on the second day, since only one hour, and perhaps even not a complete hour, has passed? Thus it becomes clear and lucid to everyone that the former completed the whole first day and the latter the second day which are completed by twenty four hours, only by touching these days. Then, if even the accurate understanding of the time cries loudly that Christ remained three days and three nights in the sepulchre why do those who insist that the promise has not been fulfilled vex themselves?²

To sum up all that Isidore says of the three days and nights of Christ in the sepulchre and of the fulfilment of the model of Jonah, two things are really proved: a) That Christ by having remained in the sepulchre, fulfilled the model of Jonah, and b) that Christ remained in the sepulchre three *ἡμερονύκτια* by having touched Friday, Saturday and Sunday. This corollary is true even if we do not accept the three hours of Friday-from the sixth to the ninth-as a night, as Isidore among other things suggested. On the whole we think that Isidore's interpretation on Matt. 12,40 is very successful and remarkable.

The interpretation of Matt. 13,33 is judged by Diamantopoulos³ as unsuccessful. Isidore's interpretation of the parable of leaven is as

1. Note that Isidore enumerates the day in accordance with the Jewish custom, derived from Gen. I 5: «the evening and the morning were one day».

2. II 242, 652C-53C.

3. loc. cit. 1926/621.

follows: «The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, that is our Lord Saviour's sinless incarnation which leavened the whole world and the hypostasis of the body which had been taken from our substance and from the Theotokos Mary, and which renewed mankind, as it existed from the beginning, to recreation»¹. As the expression 'the kingdom of heaven or of God' has many² meanings in the N.T., it was most natural that many Fathers interpreted this expression in many ways, depending on the particular usage of the expression. One interpretation of Matt. 13, 33 among many others is that of Isidore. We do not insist that this interpretation is very successful, but also we deny the opinion that it is unsuccessful. It is just an opinion, worthy, however, of mention.

Isidore's interpretation of Matt. 17, 27 concerning the stater, a piece of money³, is a combination of allegorical and literal interpretation. Diamantopoulos⁴ citing only the allegorical interpretation in order to state that Isidore here did not succeed, is wrong. Besides, not only the letter I 206, but I 48 also supplies us with material appropriate for interpreting the passage. On the whole we think that the interpretation of Matt. 17, 27 is successful.

Niemeyer⁵ thinks that Isidore's interpretation of Matt. 20, 23 is unsuccessful. Diamantopoulos⁶ is against Niemeyer. We also think that Isidore's interpretation of Matt. 20, 23 is good. Here is what Isidore says: «The Lord avoids fulfilling the application of the mother of Zebedee's children, not because it is impossible for him; what He wills He can; but He refused it because it was absurd... It is not mine to give reward to those who merely seek it, but to those who take pains with it; for a righteous judge does not overlook the pains so that the indolent are recompensed»⁷. Don't you agree that this interpretation is successful?

Matt. 22, 21: 'Render unto Gaesar the things which are Gaesar's; and unto God the things that are God's'. Isidore interprets this verse as

1. I 204, 312B.

2. See e. g. George H. Gilbert, DCG I 932-5.

3. V. Supra chapter IV § 3C.

4. loc. cit. 1926/621.

5. loc. cit. p. 97.

6. loc. cit. 1926/626.

7. I 137, 273A. Cf Didymus the Blind, Adversus Eunomium IV 3 in Garnier's edition of St. Basil's works I 413D. Τῶν λαβανόντων οὐκ ἔστιν ἄξιους ἑαυτοὺς ποιῆσαι τῆς ἐκ δεξιῶν καὶ εὐωνύμων καθέδρας τοῦ Κυρίου, οὐ τοῦ δυναμένου διδόναι, καὶ ἄδικος ἢ ἀλτήσις ᾗ»

follows: «The Lord wills us to consider that if there is something materialistic or an amount of error or if indolence which is in us introduced by any idol of illusion, these are from the creator of malice and we have to attribute them to him. On the contrary, if there is any symbol of virtue or a sign of modesty or any gain of vigilance and safety, we have to consider that they are gifts of God, and we must bring to Him the proper praise for them»¹. What Isidore says is true and good, but the allegorical interpretation of Matt. 22,21 is not successful. Balanos² and Diamantopoulos³ agree.

Matt. 24,19 is allegorically interpreted by Isidore⁴. The Biblical verse itself is a parabolical⁵ expression and everyone can interpret it only allegorically. Is Isidore's interpretation here good? Diamantopoulos³ thinks that it is not; but if he interpreted this verse, he would give us an interpretation at least equally strange. We must then understand that Isidore's interpretation is just an opinion which we cannot judge as unsuccessful.

We have already said⁷ that the allegorical interpretation of Matt. 26, 70-4 is unsuccessful.

Trying to elucidate the meaning of the name 'tetrarch' attributed to Herod, Mark 6,18 Isidore thinks that «Herod has been called tetrarch not only because he was reigning in a quarter of the paternal kingdom but also because the four general kinds of vice (i. e. adultery, injustice, murder and inconsiderate oath) prevailed upon him»⁸. In other words Isidore knows the historical reason why Herod has been called tetrarch and his opinion here is correct. But the other interpretation of the term tetrarch is really forced. He does not succeed here.

1. I 209, 316A.

2. loc. cit. p. 60 note.

3. loc. cit. 1926/621.

4. V. Supra chapter IV § 3b.

5. Christ is here speaking about His future coming and the end of the world. When everything will be destroyed and we 'shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye' (i Cor. 15. 52) there will not be any need for anyone to fly into the mountains or to get anything out of his house or to return back from the field to take his cloths. It is evident that all these are 'signs' (Matt. 24,3) which have the purpose of describing how terrible and fearful that day will be. Compare the whole 24th chapter of Matthew and note especially the 32d verse: ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς συκῆς μάθετε τὴν παραβολήν: Not a parable as AV and Moffat's translation have, have but the parable, that is the parabolical meaning of what I say, says Christ.

6. loc. cit. 1926/622.

7. V. Supra, chapter IV 3c.

8. IV 96, 1157BC.

The interpretation of Mk 13,32 (or Matt. 24,36) is according to us good. Isidore says: «The Lord was not ignorant of that day and hour, but He was refusing to declare some futile problems. For how was it possible for Him who created the day and hour and in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom? It was not because He did not know how to foretell the signs and fearful things of the last day, but, as I said, He did not declare the answer to one futile question»¹. Niemeyer² who thinks that this interpretation is not good, is evidently wrong. Diamantopoulos³ is also against Niemeyer. It was especially L. Bober⁴ who answered Niemeyer's objection.

Lk 1,20: on the deafening of Zacharias, has been unsuccessfully interpreted by Isidore⁵. There is no need for interpreting this passage allegorically.

Diamantopoulos⁶ thinks that Isidore's interpretation of Lk 2,23 is «strange and opposite to the usual conception of the O.T.», but unfortunately he does not state the place of the O.T. to which Isidore's interpretation is opposite. We do not think that Isidore's conception is opposite to Exod. 13,2 or 13, 12-5 or to Numbers 18,15-6. On the contrary we think that Isidore's interpretation of Lk 2,23 is clever and indicates his good erudition. He says: «That 'every male that openeth the womb...' has not been said for every πρωτότοκον i.e. first-born - let not those who are illiterate think so-but only for the one (that) which opened the womb ἐν τῷ ἔκτεσθαι i.e. in the time of his birth. For coition and carnal union opens every womb; but our Lord Jesus Christ having been conceived immaculately opened προσερχόμενος i.e. by passing her who brought forth Him, and after that He again left her locked»⁷.

Lk 6,1 concerning the second Sabbath after the first. Niemeyer⁸, whom Diamantopoulos⁹ follows thinks that Isidore's interpretation of this passage is unsuccessful because ~~he distinguished the Passover and the feast of Unleavened bread.~~ We have a different opinion. Isi-

1. I 117, 261A.

2. loc. cit. p. 97.

3. lo. cit. 1926/626.

4. loc. cit. p. 93 footnote 4.

5. V. Supra p. 240-41.

6. loc. cit. 1926/624.

7. I 23, 196D-97A.

8. loc. cit. p. 98

9. loc. cit. 1926/623.

dore says that every feast is called by the Jews 'Sabbath' and that, therefore, the δευτερόπρωτον Σάββατον was the second day of the Passover and its proof is the fact that the Apostles were accused for they 'plucked the ears of corn and did eat' a job which they were not allowed to do during the feast according to the Law. Isidore does not distinguish Passover and the feast of Unleavened bread, but he says that Jews were sacrificing the lamb on the evening of the Passover and on the next day they were celebrating the feast (or the days) of Unleavened bread, which are true. «The feast proper began with the evening of the 14th Nisan... and was succeeded by the days of unleavened bread which some times gave a name to the whole festival (Lk 22,1)»¹. Apart from that, contemporary Scholars do not agree as to what Sabbath it was². We think that Isidore's testimony is good evidence for elucidating the whole subject and for the writing δευτερόπρωτον which also occurs in many ancient MSS³. Let us now cite the interpretation: «This Sabbath is called δευτερόπρωτον 'the second after the first' for it was the second after Passover and the first of the unleavened bread. Because (the Jews) sacrificing on the evening of Passover, were celebrating on the next day the feast of the unleavened bread which they were calling δευτερόπρωτον, 'second after the first'. And the fact that the Apostles were accused of plucking the ears of corn and eating, proves that this opinion is true... And if this day is called 'Sabbath' do not be astonished, for the Jews called every feast Sabbath»⁴.

Neither is the interpretation of John 10,30 unsuccessful as Niemeyer thought⁵. Isidore interprets this passage successfully. But of course we have to understand that 'hypostasis' here means 'person': «It is of great foolishness or rather of insanity, writes Isidore, to say that one hypostasis of the Father and of the Son appears in the Bible...It had been said 'I and my Father are one' not I and my Father am one. Then the word 'one' signifies the one substance; the word 'are' means the two hypostasis»⁶. Diamantopoulos also disagrees⁷ with Niemeyer.

John 14,31: 'Arise, let us go hence': Isidore says: «The Saviour said

1. J. T. L. Maggs, DCG II 325.

2. See e. g. F. E. Robinson, DCG II 541.

3. Al. Souter, loc. cit., in loc.

4. III 110, 816BC.

5. loc. cit. p. 97.

6. I 138, 273BC.

7. loc. cit. 1926/626.

these words in order that we, remaining attached on earth because of a preconception or rather prejudice which is a dangerous passion and which cannot be easily healed, might not be prevented from the heavenly prizes¹. There is no need to interpret this passage allegorically. We think that Isidore's interpretation is here unsuccessful.

Finally Niemeyer² is not content with the interpretation of Isidore on i Cor. 6, 18 because he did not interpret it in ten ways but rather tried to defend in ten ways Paul's statement: 'He that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body'. It is true that Isidore also defends what the apostle Paul said, but at the same time he also interprets the Biblical verse if not in ten ways, he undoubtedly does it sufficiently and successfully³.

We have examined in this section seventeen of Isidore's N.T. interpretations alleged to be unsuccessful. We think that only seven interpretations are not successful. And hence, since Isidore interpreted 340 N.T. passages, he is a skilful and important Exegete.

(Continued)

1. IV 48, 1097D-1100A.

2. loc. cit. p. 99-100.

3. V, Supra chapter IV § 3d,