

these in this place? And he said to me: They are those who say that Christ has not risen from the dead and that this flesh does not rise.¹²⁶ And I asked and said: Sir, is there neither fire nor heat in this place? And he said to me: In this place there is nothing other than cold and snow. And again he said to me: Even if the sun were to rise over them they would not become warm because of the excessive coldness of the place and the snow.

When I heard this, I stretched out my hands and wept and with a sigh I said again: It would be better for us if we who are all sinners had not been born.

43. However when those who were in this very place saw me weeping with the angel, they cried out and themselves wept, saying: O Lord God, have mercy on us! And after that I saw heaven opened and the archangel Michael coming down from heaven, and with him the whole host of angels, and they came to those who were placed in the punishments. And seeing him they cried out again with tears, and said: Have mercy on us, archangel Michael, have mercy on us and on the human race, for because of your prayers the earth continues. We have now seen the judgment and known the Son of God. It was impossible for us to pray for this¹²⁷ previously before we came to this place. For we did hear that there was a judgment before we came forth from the world, but tribulations and a worldly-minded life did not allow us to repent. And Michael answered and said: Listen when Michael speaks: It is I who stand in the presence of God every hour.¹²⁸ As the Lord lives,¹²⁹ in whose presence I stand, for one day or one night I do not cease from praying continually for the human race, and I pray for those who are (still) on earth. They, however, do not stop committing iniquity and fornication and they do not help me in what is good while they are placed on earth. And the time during which you ought to have repented you used up in vanity. But I have always thus prayed and now I beseech that God may send dew and that rain may be appointed over the earth, and I continue to pray until the earth bring forth its fruit; and I say that if anyone has done even only a little good I will strive for him and protect him until he escapes the judgment of punishments. Where are your prayers? Where is your repentance? You have squandered time contemptibly. But now¹³⁰ weep, and I will weep with you, and the angels who are with me together with the dearly beloved Paul, if perchance the merciful God will show mercy and give you ease. And when they heard these words they cried out and wept much and said all together: Have mercy on us, Son of God. And I, Paul, sighed and said: Lord God, have mercy on what thou hast fashioned, have mercy on the children of men, have mercy on thine own image.

44. And I looked and I saw heaven move¹³¹ as a tree shaken by the wind. And they suddenly threw themselves on their faces before the throne; and I saw the 24 elders and the 4 beasts worshipping God,¹³² and I saw the altar and the veil and the throne, and all were rejoicing; and the smoke of a good odour rose up beside the altar of the throne of God, and I heard the voice

of one who said: For what reason do you pray, angels and ministers of ours? And they cried out and said: We pray because we see thy great goodness to the race of men. And after that I saw the Son of God coming down from heaven, and a diadem was on his head. And when those who were placed in the punishments saw him, they all cried out together: Have mercy on us, Son of the most High¹³³ God; it is thou who hast granted ease¹³⁴ to all in heaven and on earth; have mercy likewise on us; for since we have seen thee, we have had ease. And a voice went forth from the Son of God throughout all the punishments, saying: What¹³⁵ work have you done, that you ask me for ease? My blood was poured out for your sakes and even so you did not repent. For your sakes I bore the crown of thorns on my head;¹³⁶ for you I was slapped on the cheeks, and even so you did not repent. Hanging on the cross I begged for water, and they gave me vinegar mingled with gall;¹³⁷ with a spear they laid open my right side.¹³⁸ For my name's sake they killed my servants, the prophets and the righteous,¹³⁹ and in all these things I gave you the opportunity for repentance, and you were not willing. Now, however, for the sake of Michael, the archangel of my covenant, and the angels who are with him, and for the sake of Paul, my dearly beloved, whom I would not sadden, and for the sake of your brethren who are in the world and present offerings, and for the sake of your children, because my commandments are in them,¹⁴⁰ and even more for my own goodness - on the very day on which I rose from the dead I grant to you all who are being punished a day and a night of ease for ever.¹⁴¹ And they all cried out and said: We bless Thee, Son of God, because thou hast granted to us ease for a day and a night. For one day's ease is better for us than all the time of our life which we were on earth: and if we had clearly known that this (place) was appointed for those who sin we would have done no other work at all, have practised nothing,¹⁴² and have committed no evil. What need was there for us to be born into the world?¹⁴³ For here is our pride comprehended, which rose up out of our mouth against our neighbours. Discomfort and our exceptionally great anguish and tears and the worms which are under us, these are worse for us than the punishments which . . . us.¹⁴⁴ When they said this, the wicked angels and those in charge of the punishments were angry with them and said: How long have you wept and sighed? For you have shown no mercy. This indeed is the judgment of God on him who has shown no mercy. However you have received this great grace - ease for the day and night of the Lord's day for the sake of Paul, the dearly beloved of God, who has come down to you.

45. And after this the angel said to me: Have you seen everything? And I said: Yes, sir. And he said to me: Follow me and I will lead you into paradise, and the righteous who are there will see you: for behold, they hope to see you and are ready to come to meet you with joy and exultation. Impelled by the Holy Spirit I followed the angel and he transferred (*lit.* 'set')