



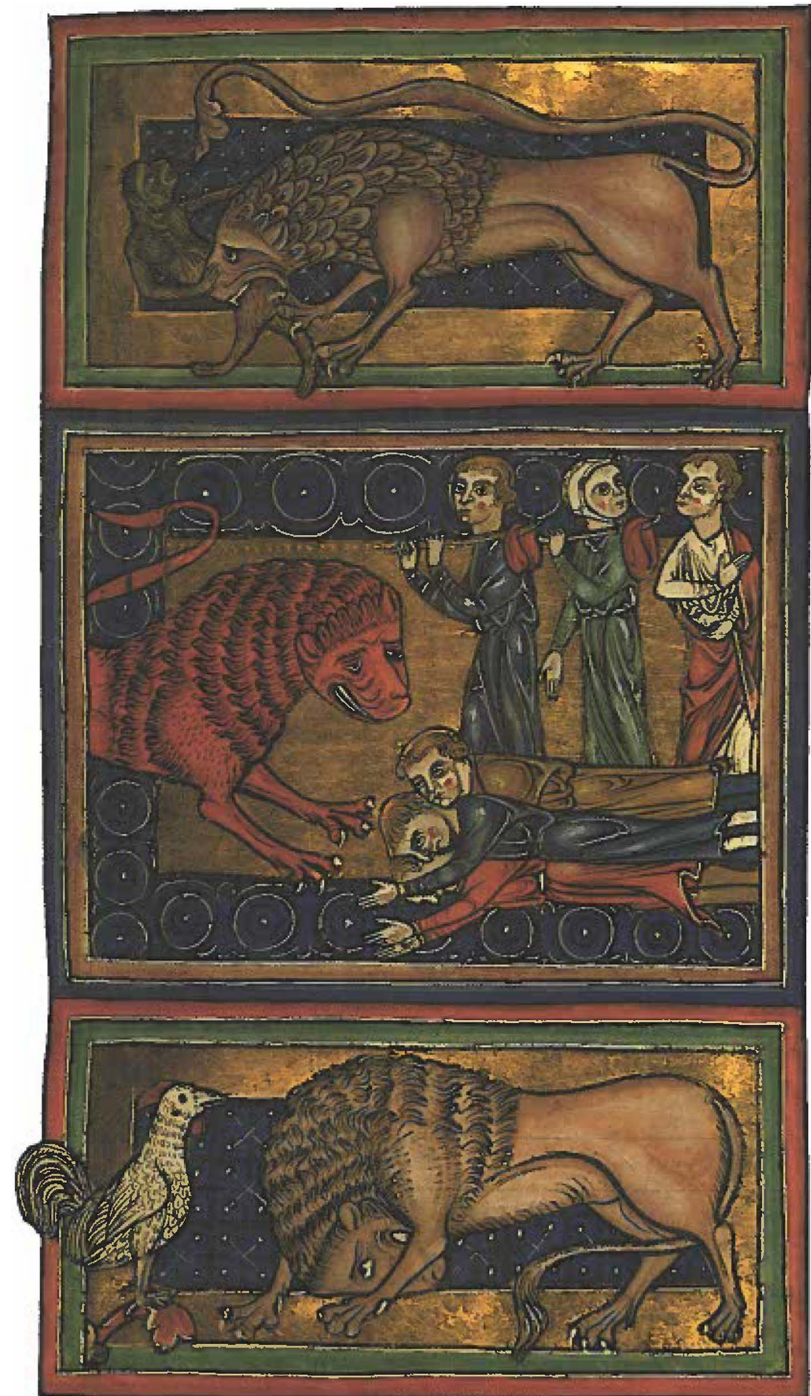
# ESTI ARY

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ADAM, AS THE FIRST MAN, GAVE TO ALL 19  
living beings a designation, calling each by a name  
which corresponded to the present order and accord-  
ing to their nature and function. The heathens,  
however, gave each beast a name in their own  
language. But Adam gave them names, not in Greek  
or Latin, nor in any of the languages of the barbar-  
ian peoples, but in that language which was com-  
mon to all peoples before the Flood, and which is  
called Hebrew. In Latin they are called animals or  
animate beings, because they are animated by life  
and moved by breath. Quadrupeds are so called  
because they go on four feet (*quatuor pedibus*);  
although they are like cattle, they are not under  
man's control. Quadrupeds are deer, fallow deer,  
wild asses and so on. But they are not wild beasts like  
lions, nor domestic animals which help men in their  
labours. Everything that lacks a human face and  
tongue we call cattle. In its strict sense, however,  
cattle is usually reserved for those beasts which are  
suitable for food, such as sheep and pigs, or which  
are used by men, such as horses and oxen. But there  
is a distinction between cattle in general (*pecora*)  
and edible cattle (*pecudes*). Men of old used the  
description cattle of all animals. 'Pecudes' are only  
those animals which you eat (*pecu edes*). All grazing

20 animals are called 'pecus' because they graze (a pascendo). Beasts of burden are so called because they bear our burdens by helping us to carry loads or to plough: oxen pull the loaded wagon and turn the hardest soil with the plough. Horses and asses carry men and ease their progress when they travel. So they are called beasts of burden, because they carry men's burdens. They are very strong beasts. Oxen are called yoke-cattle (armenta) because they are suited for arms, i.e. warfare, or because they are used in armed warfare. Others say it is because they plough (ab arando) or because they are 'armed' with horns. There is a distinction between yoke-cattle and herds. Horses and oxen belong to yoke-cattle, while herds are made up of goats and sheep.





## EASTS IN THE WILD

sense are creatures such as lions, panthers and tigers, wolves and foxes, dogs and apes, and all that roar and rage with their mouth or tongue, except for snakes.

They are called beasts because they possess their natural freedom and act as they themselves have willed. Their will is indeed free and they range hither and thither; where their instinct leads them, there they go. The name lion is of Greek origin, and was taken into Latin. In Greek the lion is called 'leon', and it is partly corrupted in Latin. For 'leo' in Greek means 'king' in Latin, and he is so called because he is the king of beasts. There are three kinds of lion; of these, the short ones with curly manes are peaceful, the long ones with smooth hair are fierce; their brow and tail show their temperament. Their courage is in their breast, their strength in their head. They fear the noise of wheels, but fire frightens them even more. The lion is proud by nature; he will not live with other kinds of beasts in the wild, but like a king

24 disdains the company of the masses. ¶Naturalists tell us that the lion has three chief characteristics. The first is that he loves to roam the mountain-tops. If it so happens that hunters come in search of him, the scent of the hunters reaches him and he wipes out his tracks behind him with his tail, lest the hunters follow him, find his lair, and take him. So our Redeemer, the spiritual lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of Jesse, the son of David, hid the tracks of His love in heaven, until, sent by the Father, He descended into the womb of the Virgin Mary, and redeemed lost mankind. And the devil, the enemy of mankind, did not know this and dared to tempt Him like an ordinary man. Even the angels in the height did not know it, and said to those who were with Him, as He ascended to the Father: 'Who is this King of Glory?' ¶His second characteristic is that he seems to have his eyes open when he sleeps. So our Lord, who fell asleep within the body on the Cross, and was buried while His Godhead kept watch, as it says in the Song of Songs: 'I sleep, but my heart waketh' [5:2]. And in the psalm: 'He who keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep' [121:4]. ¶His third characteristic is that when the lioness brings forth her cubs, they come into the world dead. She watches over them for three days, until on the third

25 day the father comes, blows in their faces, and awakens them to life. In the same way the Almighty Father awoke our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead on the third day, as Jacob says: 'He couched as a lion; who shall rouse him up?' [Genesis 49:9]. The nature of the lion is such that he is not enraged by men if he is not harmed by them. Unreasonable men should learn by this example; for men grow angry even when they are not harmed, and oppress the innocent, against the Christian commandment that even the guilty should go free. The merciful nature of lions is confirmed by numerous examples: they will spare men lying on the ground, and will lead captives whom they meet to their home. They will attack men rather than women. They only kill children if they are exceptionally hungry. Equally, they will abstain from eating to excess, particularly as they drink on one day, and take food on the next. And if they do not digest it, they refrain from eating for a day. And if they have difficulty with too much meat, they will put a paw in their mouth, and pull it out of their own free will. They do the same if they are full and have to take flight. You can tell an old lion by his lack of teeth. They mate face to face, as also do the lynx, camel, elephant, and rhinoceros. When a lioness gives birth for the first time, she gives

26 birth to five cubs. Each year the number grows less, and when she has given birth to only one, she is no longer fertile, and remains sterile from then on. The lion rejects yesterday's food and turns away from food which he himself has left from a previous meal. Which animal dares to resist him whose voice is by its nature terror itself, so that many animals who could escape him by virtue of their speed are so terrified by his roaring that they are already vanquished? A sick lion will seek out an ape and devour it in order to be cured. The lion fears cocks, especially white cocks. Although the lion is the king of beasts, he is terrified of the tiny sting of a scorpion, and can be killed by a snake's poison. We call certain very small creatures 'lion-killers': they are caught and burnt, and that meat which is smeared with their ashes and left at a crossroads will kill lions even if they only eat a little of it. For this reason lions pursue 'lion-killers' as their natural



27 enemies, and if they possibly can, they avoid biting them, but trample them underfoot.

¶The lioness stands for the human mind when Job says: 'You have caught me because of my pride, like a lioness.' The divine dispensation uses everything around us for its own purposes, and allows our flesh to be harried by adversity lest in security our minds become presumptuous and puffed up with pride, and so that while we are in trouble, we place greater faith in the help of our Creator alone. Hence it is well said: 'You have caught me because of my pride, like a lioness.' For the lioness, when she seeks food for her cubs, lurks in ditches to capture her prey. In various places it is reported that men dig a pit on her accustomed path and place a sheep in it, in order to tempt the lioness's appetite. The pit is narrow and steep-sided, so that once the lioness is in it there is no way in which she can jump out. A second deep pit is dug adjoining the first, and the sheep is placed at the opposite end. There is also a cave in it, because when the lioness falls in the other pit, the sheep is terrified and willingly hides in the cave. And it comes to no harm, but is retrieved safely by shutting off the cave.

¶Thus the human mind, while seeking to feed carnal appetites, is caught in the trap which is concealed by freedom of choice, just as the lioness seeks food



for her cubs and is killed in the pit intended to deceive her, because her enemies persuade her to reach out her paw for forbidden food.

¶The tiger is named after its swift flight; the Persians, Greeks and Medes call it 'the arrow'. It is a beast with colourful spots, of extraordinary qualities and swiftness, after which the River Tigris is named because it is the swiftest of all rivers. The chief home of the tiger is around the Caspian Sea. If a tigress finds her lair robbed of its cubs, she sets out at once in pursuit of the thief. When the latter, even if he is mounted on a swift horse, realises that he is being overtaken by the speed of the beast, and has no other means of escape, he will use this ingenious deception. As soon as he sees that the tigress is near him, he throws down a glass sphere. The tigress is deceived by the image in it, and believes it is her cub. She halts in her tracks and tries to pick up the cub. Delayed by the false appearance, she redoubles her speed in pursuit of the rider, spurred on by her fury. But he throws down another sphere, which delays her again, because the memory of the deception is overcome by her maternal instinct. She turns the hollow image and sits down as if to suckle her cub. So the intensity of her motherly love betrays her, and deprives her of both her revenge and her cub.



¶There is an animal called the panther, which is brightly coloured, very beautiful and tame. Natural historians say that his only enemy is the dragon. When he has eaten and is full, he hides in his lair and sleeps. After three days he rouses himself from sleep, and lets forth a great roar; and out of his mouth comes a very sweet smell that seems to contain every kind of scent. When the other animals hear his voice they gather from far and near, and follow him wherever he goes on account of the sweetness of his breath. Only the dragon, hearing his voice, hides in terror in the bowels of the earth. There it lies in a daze, because it cannot bear the sweet smell, and remains motionless, as if it were dead. The other animals follow the panther wherever he goes. ¶Thus our Lord Jesus Christ, the true panther, descended

31  
from heaven and saved us from the power of the devil. 'When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men' [Ephesians 4:8]. The panther's bright colours remind us what Solomon said of Christ, who is the wisdom of God the Father: 'An understanding spirit, holy, one only, manifold, subtle, lively, clear, undefiled, plain, not subject to hurt, loving the thing that is good' [Wisdom 7:22]. It is a beautiful beast, just as David said of Christ: 'Thou art fairer than the children of men' [Psalm 45:2]. It is a tame beast, as Isaiah [Zechariah] said: 'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion: shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee' [9:9]. As soon as He is sated, He conceals his true self in the mockery of the Jews, the floggings, blows, injustice, scorn and thorns; He is hung from the cross by His hands, pierced with nails, given gall and vinegar to drink and wounded with the lance. He falls asleep and rests in the grave, and descends to the underworld, where He chains the great dragon. On the third day He rises from sleep and sends out a great cry and pours out sweetness, as David says: 'Then the Lord awakened as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine' [Psalm 78:65]. And He cries with a loud voice, so that the sound is heard in all the world, His words

32 carry to the ends of the earth. And just as sweet breath issues from the panther's mouth and all the animals gather from far and near and follow him, so the Jews, who sometimes thought like animals but were near to Him through their law, also heard Him, and the heathens too, far off and beyond the Law; they all heard Christ's voice and followed Him, saying with the prophet: 'How sweet are Thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth' [Psalm 119:103]. It was also said of Him: 'Grace is poured into Thy lips; therefore God hath blessed Thee for ever' [Psalm 45:2]. And Solomon said: 'How much better is ... the smell of Thine ointments than all spices!' [Song of Songs 4:10]. And again: 'We follow the sweet scent of Thine ointments'; and a little later: 'The King hath brought me into His chamber' [Song of Songs 1:4]. We must pursue the sweet scent of Christ's commandments as quickly as we can, like the young girls who are the souls received in baptism; and we must turn from earthly to heavenly things, so that the King leads us into His place, into Jerusalem, the city of the Lord of hosts, the mountain of all the saints. ¶The panther is a beast marked with little circles of colour, like eyes with yellow, white and black circles. The female only gives birth once, for a good

reason. Once the three cubs have grown within their mother's body until they are strong enough to be born, they hate having to stay there any longer. They scratch with their claws at the womb which is laden with its fruit, as if it prevented them from being born. The mother, overcome with pain, pushes them out and after this the seed which penetrates into the scarred and distorted womb does not take root, but flows out again unused. Pliny says that animals with sharp claws cannot bear cubs often because they are badly wounded internally by the movement of their young.



¶There is an animal called the antelope, with very keen hearing, so that no hunter can approach it. It



“The unicorn, which is also called rhinoceros in Greek, has this nature: it is a little beast, not unlike a young goat, and extraordinarily swift. It has a horn in the middle of its brow, and no hunter can catch it. But it can be caught in the following fashion: a girl who is a virgin is led to the place where it dwells, and is left there alone in the forest. As soon as the unicorn sees her, it leaps into her lap and embraces her, and goes to sleep there; then the hunters capture it and display it in the king’s palace. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the spiritual unicorn of whom it is

said: ‘My beloved is like the son of the unicorns’ [Song of Songs 2:9]; and in the psalm: ‘My horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn’ [92:10]; and Zacharias said: ‘He hath raised up an horn of salvation for us, in the house of His servant David’ [Luke 1:69]. The single horn on the unicorn’s head signifies what He Himself said: ‘I and my Father are one’ [John 10:30]; according to the Apostle, ‘The head of Christ is God’ [I Corinthians 11:3]. He is called very swift, for neither principalities nor powers, nor thrones nor lordships could capture Him; the underworld could not hold Him, and not even the most cunning devil could understand Him. But by the will of the Father alone He descended into the Virgin’s womb to save us. He is called an insignificant creature because He humbled Himself in the flesh: He Himself said: ‘Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart’ [Matthew 11:29]. The unicorn often

fights elephants; it wounds them in the stomach and kills them.



¶The lynx is so called because it is counted as a kind of wolf (lupus). It is a beast marked with spots on its back like those of a pard, but it resembles a wolf: its urine is said to harden into a valuable jewel called ligurius. The lynxes know that this is valuable, as is proved by the exceptional care with which they cover it with sand: they are naturally jealous, and cannot bear it to fall into the hands of man. Pliny says that lynxes only bear cubs once. This beast typifies envious men who, in the hardness of their hearts, would rather do harm than good and are intent on worldly desires: even things for which they have no use and which might benefit others they render useless.



¶The gryphon is at once feathered and four-footed. It lives in the south and in mountains. The hinder part of its body is like a lion; its wings and face are like an eagle. It hates the horse bitterly and if it comes face to face with a man, it will attack him.



¶There is an animal called the elephant, which has no desire to mate. The Greeks believe that the name

40 of the elephant comes from the size of his body, because he looks like a mountain: 'elephio' is the Greek for mountain. The Indians call him 'barro' (bhri) from the sound of his voice: 'barritus' means the roar of an elephant, and 'ivory' the teeth of the elephant. His nose is called a trunk because he uses it to put food in his mouth; the trunk is like a snake and is protected by a rampart of ivory. There is no beast greater than this. The Persians and Indians put wooden towers on his back and fight with arrows as if they were on top of a wall. Elephants have a lively intelligence and memory. They move about in herds, flee from mice, and mate with their backs to each other. Pregnancy lasts for two years; nor do they give birth more than once, and never to several young, but to only one. They live for three hundred years. If, however, they want to have offspring, they go to the east, near the earthly paradise, where a tree called mandragora grows. The elephant and his mate go there, and she picks a fruit from the tree and gives it to him. And she seduces him into eating it; after they have both eaten it, they mate and the female at once conceives. When the time comes for her to give birth, she goes to a pond, and the water comes up to her udder. The male elephant guards her while she gives birth, because

41 the dragon is the enemy of the elephant. If the elephant finds a snake he will kill it by trampling on it until it is dead. The elephant strikes terror into bulls, and yet is terrified by a mouse. His nature is such that, if he falls down, he cannot stand up again. Yet he will fall if he leans against a tree in order to sleep. For he has no joints in his knees, and the hunter cuts a little way into the tree, so that as soon as the elephant leans against it, he falls with the tree. When he falls, he trumpets loudly, and at once a huge elephant comes, but is unable to lift him. Then they both trumpet together, and twelve elephants come, and are unable to lift him. They all trumpet, and at once a little elephant appears and puts his trunk under the large elephant, and lifts him up. The little elephant has the following characteristic: wherever some of his hair and bones are burnt, nothing evil can do harm, not even a dragon. ¶ The elephant and his wife represent Adam and his wife, who pleased God in the flesh before their sin, and knew nothing of mating or of sin. When the woman ate of the tree, that is, gave the herb mandragora which brought understanding to her husband, she became pregnant and for that reason left paradise. For as long as they were in paradise, Adam did not know her in the flesh. For it is written: 'And Adam

42 knew Eve his wife; and she conceived' [Genesis 4:1] and bore a son amid the waters of shame of which the prophet says: 'Save me O God, for the waters are come in unto my soul' [Psalm 69:1]. And at once they were seduced by the dragon and banished from their haven, that is, they were no longer pleasing to God. Then the great elephant came, namely the Law, and could not help him to rise, any more than the priest could help the man who fell among thieves [Luke 10:30]. And even the twelve elephants (that is, all the prophets) could not help him, like the Levite and the wounded man of whom we spoke. But the cunning elephant, that is our Lord Jesus Christ, although He was greatest of all, became very small, in that He humbled Himself before death, in order to raise mankind up, a true compassionate Samaritan who set the man who had fallen among thieves on his beast of burden. For He Himself was wounded, and took upon Himself our weaknesses and bore our sins: the Samaritan means a guardian. But where God is present, the devil cannot come near. "Whatever an elephant picks up in its trunk it breaks, and what it tramples underfoot it crushes to death beneath the debris of a giant ruin. They never fight over their females, because adultery is unknown among them. The goodness of mercy is within them.

43 For when they see men wandering in the desert, they lead them back into familiar ways, and when they meet a flock of sheep huddling together they protect them on their journey, so that no missile kills any of them. If they fight in a battle, they always take great care of the weary and the wounded.

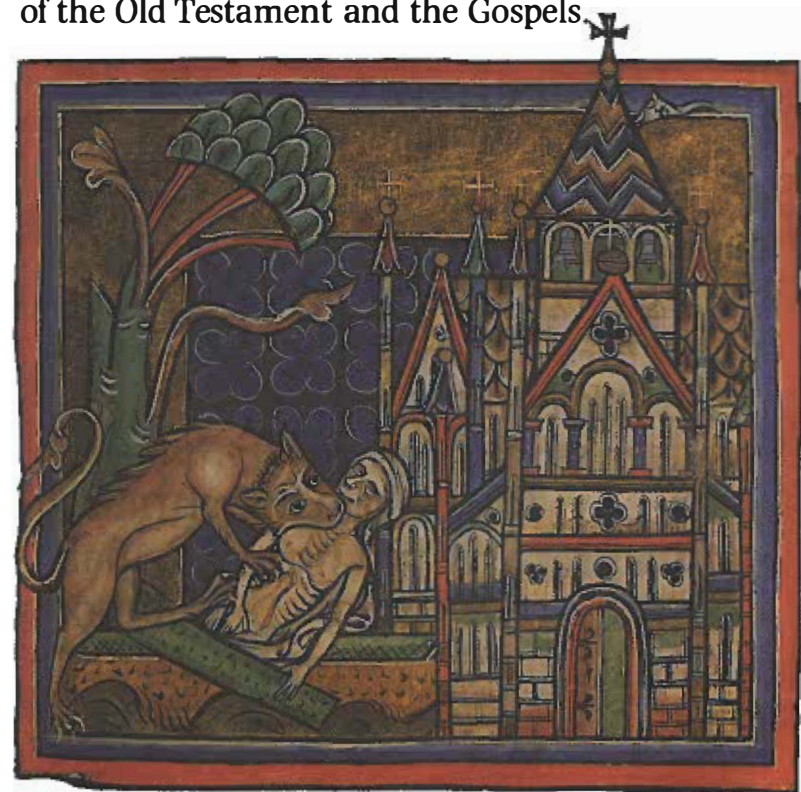


There is an animal called the beaver, which is quite tame, whose testicles are excellent as medicine. The naturalists say of it that when it realises that hunters are pursuing it, it bites off its testicles and throws them down in front of the hunters, and thus takes flight and escapes. If it so happens that another hunter follows it, it stands up on its hind legs and

44 shows its sexual organs. When the second hunter sees that it has no testicles, he goes away. In like fashion everyone who reforms his life and wants to live chastely in accordance with God's commandments should cut off all vices and shameless deeds and throw them in the devil's face. Then the devil will see that that man has nothing belonging to him and will leave him, ashamed. That man will live in God, and will not be taken by the devil, who says: 'I will overtake, I will divide the spoil' [Exodus 15:9]. The beaver (castor) is so called because it castrates itself.



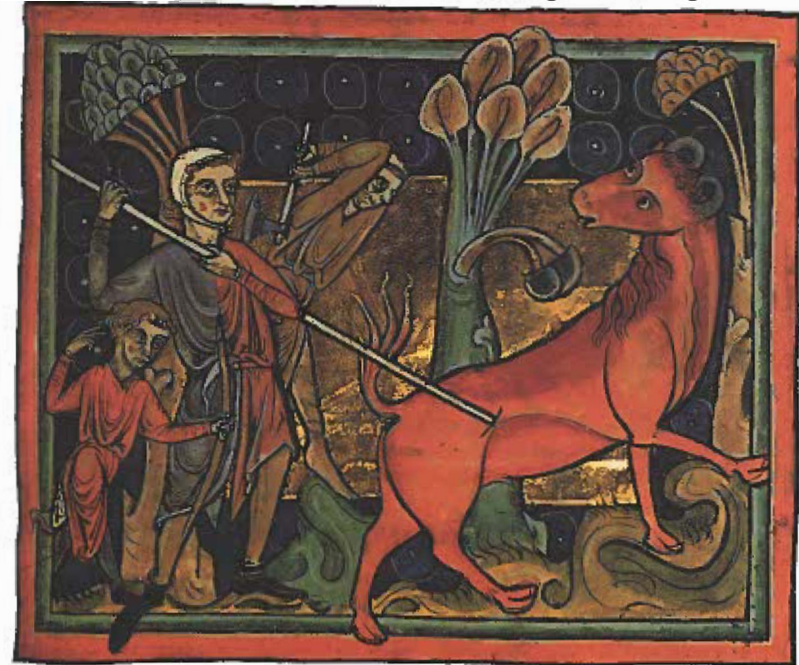
45 ¶There is an animal called the ibex. This creature has two horns, which are so strong that if it falls from a high mountain down a precipice, its horns bear the whole weight of its body and it escapes unhurt. This beast represents those learned men who understand the harmony of the Old and New Testaments, and if anything untoward happens to them, they are supported as if on two horns by all the good they have derived from reading the witness of the Old Testament and the Gospels.



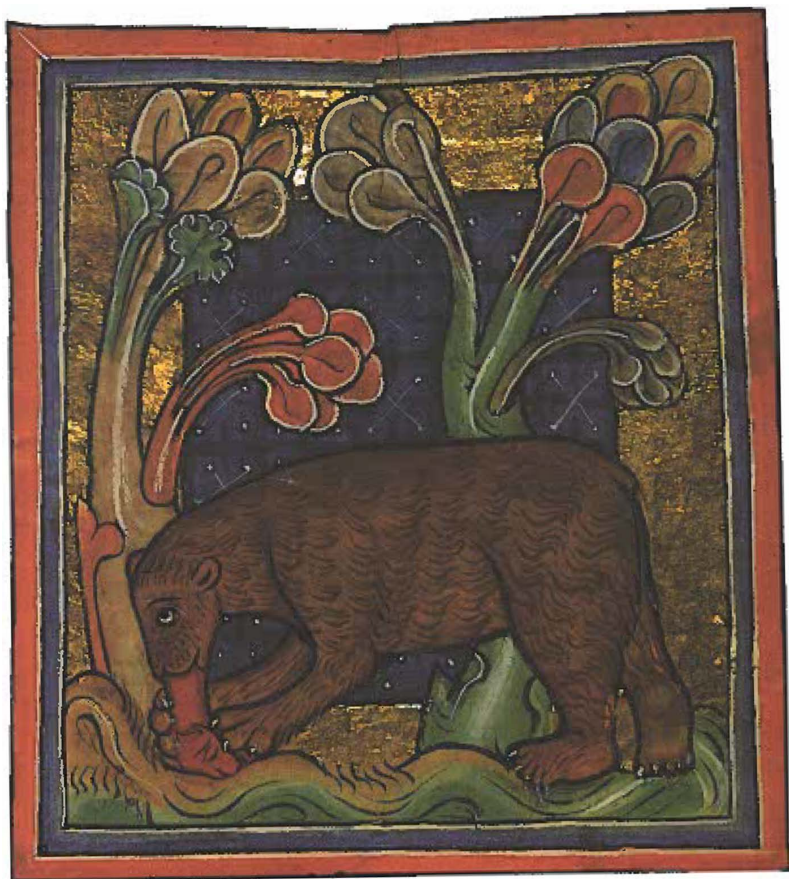
¶There is an animal called the hyena, which lives in the graves of dead men and feeds on their bodies. By

nature it is sometimes masculine, sometimes feminine, and for that reason it is an unclean beast. It has a rigid spine, all in one piece, so it can only turn round by using its whole body. Solinus relates many marvellous things about this beast. First, it follows the shepherds when they move their sheepfolds, and creeps round men's houses at night. By dint of constant listening, it learns to call out and can imitate the human voice, so that it cunningly lures men outside and falls on them at night. It counterfeits human vomit and makes sounds like a man being sick to lure out dogs, so that it can devour them. If hounds happen to come into its shadow while hunting, they lose their voices and cannot give tongue. These hyenas dig up graves in their search for buried corpses. ¶The children of Israel are like this beast; at first they served the living God but later fell prey to riches and easy living and worshipped idols. Hence the prophets likened the Jewish people to an unclean beast, saying: 'Mine heritage is become as the hyena's lair' [Jeremiah 12:8]. Every one among us who serves riches and an easy life is like this animal, for they are neither men nor women, that is, neither believers nor unbelievers, but certainly belong to those of whom Solomon [St James] says 'a double-minded man, unstable in all

his ways' [James 1:8]. The Lord said of them: 'Ye cannot serve God and Mammon' [Matthew 6:24]. ¶This monster has a stone in its eye called 'hyenia' which, if someone puts it under his tongue, enables him to foretell the future. An animal that the hyena has looked at three times cannot move. It is said to be very cunning. In Ethiopia it mates with lions, and a monster called a 'crocodile' results: this too makes human sounds. It never moves from its chosen territory, but is always found in the same place. It has no gums in its mouth. It has only one tooth which never changes and is covered with a kind of capsule so that it does not get damaged.



¶In Asia there is an animal called the bonnacon



¶The bear gets its Latin name 'ursus' because it shapes its cubs with its mouth, from the Latin word 'orsus'. For they are said to give birth to shapeless lumps of flesh, which the mother licks into shape. The bear's tongue forms the young which it brings forth. But this is because they are born before they are mature: the birth is only thirty days after conception. and this hasty fertility creates unformed young. The bear's head is weak, and its greatest power is in its arms and loins; for this reason they

often walk upright. They do not neglect the healing arts: if they are seriously injured and afflicted with wounds, they know how to heal themselves by applying mullein to their sores, which heals them as soon as it touches them. A sick bear will eat ants. The bears in Numidia have longer hair than any others. They mate in the same way wherever they are found, not in the fashion of other four-footed beasts, but embracing each other in human fashion. Winter awakes their desire. The males respect the pregnant females, and if they live in the same cave, they occupy separate lairs. The time of childbirth is accelerated with them, because the womb is freed of its burden after thirty days. And this rapid pregnancy produces formless creatures. They give birth to little formless lumps of flesh, white in colour and without eyes. They shape them by gradually licking them with their tongue, warming them in the meanwhile on their breast, so that the heat of the embrace brings them to life. They eat no food during this time, at least not during the first fortnight. The males fall into such a deep sleep that they do not even wake if they are wounded, and the females stay in hiding for three months after the birth. When they emerge into the daylight they find the light so harsh that you would think they had been blinded.

60 ¶They love to attack beehives, and are very partial to honeycombs, since there is nothing they like to eat so much as honey. If they eat the apples of the mandrake plant, they must die, but they counter this mortal danger by swallowing ants in order to recover their health. If they attack bulls, they know just where to wound them, and concentrate on the horns and the nostrils, because the nostrils are very tender and the pain is all the greater. The bear signifies the devil, ravager of the flocks of our Lord, and unjust rulers; in the book of Kings, the boys who taunted Elisha were eaten by two bears who came out of the woods; they signify the two Roman emperors, Vespasian and Titus, who devoured the Jews who taunted our Saviour and crucified Him on Calvary. Also, 'The lion and the bear shall come and take the ram from the flock' [I Samuel 17:34].



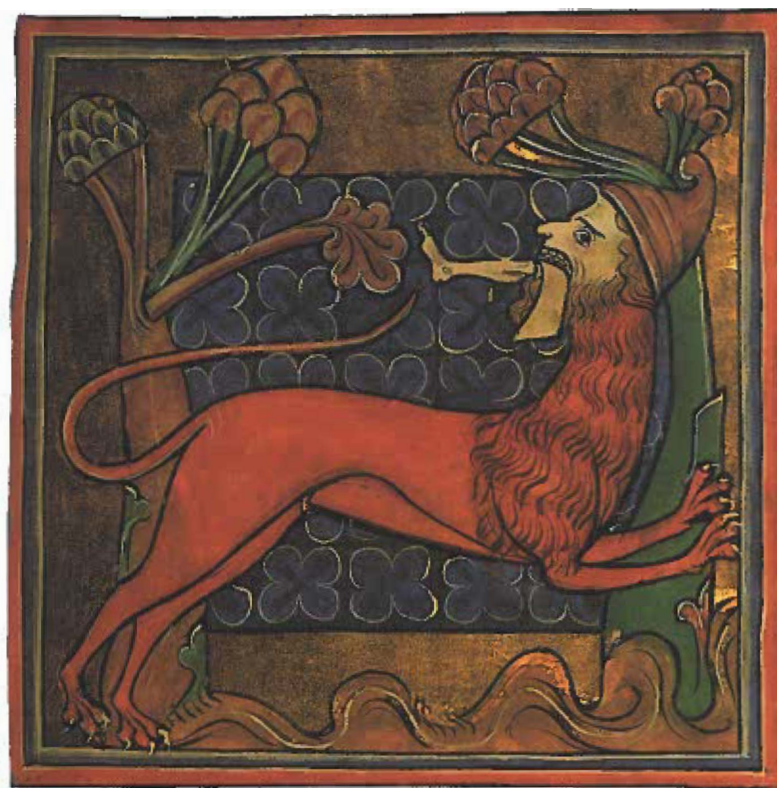
61 ¶In India there is a beast called leucrota, swifter than all other wild beasts. It is as big as an ass; it has the hindquarters of a stag, the chest and legs of a lion, the head of a horse and cloven hooves. Its mouth stretches from ear to ear. Instead of teeth it has a continuous bone. So much for its shape; with its voice it imitates the sound of speech.



¶The crocodile is so called from the colour of crocuses. They live in the River Nile, four-footed animals equally at home on land or in the water

62 and more than twenty cubits long. The crocodile is armed with monstrous teeth and claws and has such a tough skin that however hard you throw a stone at it, it will not hurt the beast. It goes into the water at night and rests by day on the land. It lays its eggs on land, and both male and female take it in turns to hatch them. A certain kind of fish whose serrated spines tear open the soft part of their belly kills them. Alone among animals they can move their upper jaw and hold the lower one still. From their dung is made an ointment with which old women and faded whores anoint their faces, and appear beautiful until their sweat washes it off. ¶The crocodile represents the hypocrite or luxurious liver and miser, who, although he is puffed up with the froth of pride, spotted with the corruption of luxury and beset by the sickness of avarice, nonetheless makes himself appear strict and without fault in upholding the laws in men's sight. The crocodile lives at night in the water and by day on the land; although the hypocrites live a depraved life, they nonetheless enjoy the reputation of a holy and upright life. They move the upper part of their mouths, because they present to others the teachings of the Holy Father, while by no means practising what they preach. Their dung is used as an ointment:

the wicked are often praised by inexperienced men, 63 and this praise is like a salve which makes their misdeeds heroic acts. When the just judge is moved in his wrath to strike them for their evil deeds, then all the splendour of this praise vanishes like smoke.



In India there is a beast called the mantichore. It has a triple row of teeth, the face of a man, and grey eyes; it is blood-red in colour and has a lion's body, a pointed tail with a sting like that of a scorpion, and a hissing voice. It delights in eating human flesh. Its feet are very powerful and it can

64 jump so well that neither the largest of ditches nor the broadest of obstacles can keep it in.

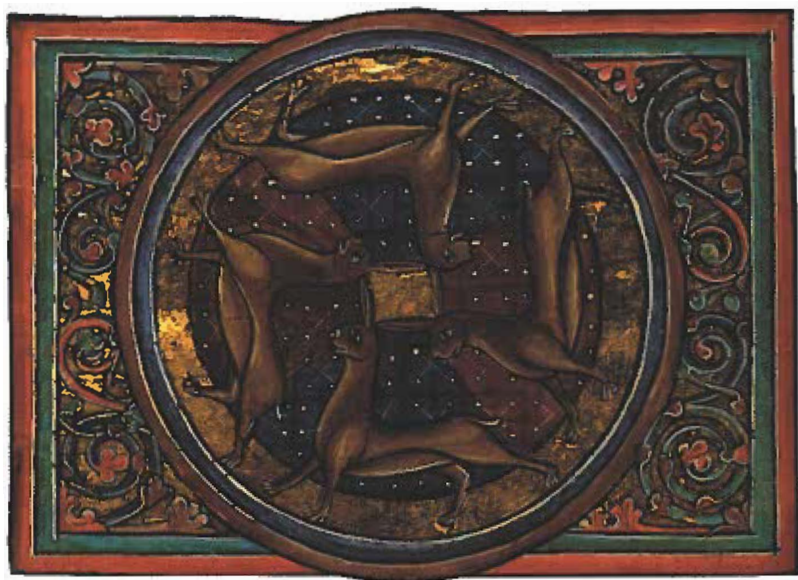


¶ Ethiopia is the home of a creature called the parander, as large as an ox, with the footprints of an ibis, branching horns, the head of a stag, the colouring of a bear and the same thick pelt. They say that the parander can change its shape when it is frightened, and if it conceals itself it becomes like whatever it is near, whether it is a white stone or green foliage, or whatever else it may happen to be.



¶ The fox has very supple feet and never runs in a straight line but always in devious ways. It is a clever, cheating animal. If it is hungry and cannot find anything to eat, it rolls in red earth, so that it seems as if it is spotted with blood, and lies on the ground holding its breath, so that it is hardly breathing. The birds see that it is not breathing, and is lying there spotted with blood with its tongue hanging out, and think it is dead. They fly down to perch on it, and it seizes them and devours them. The fox is the symbol of the devil, who appears to be dead to all living things until he has them by the throat and punishes them. But for holy men he is truly dead, reduced to nothing by faith. Those who wish to do

66 his deeds shall die, as the Apostle says: 'For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live' [Romans 8:13]. David says: 'They shall go into the lower parts of the earth; they shall fall by the sword; they shall be a portion for foxes' [Psalm 63:10].



¶The hare (lepus) is called light-footed (levipes) because it runs so swiftly. It is a swift creature, and fairly timid. The hare represents men who fear God, and who put their trust not in themselves but in the Creator. So we read Solomon's words: 'The hares are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks' [Proverbs 30:26]. Whence the Psalmist says: 'The high hills are a refuge for the hedgehogs; and the rocks for the hares' [104:18].

67 For the rock is Christ. It is written of Moses that he, the hare of the Lord, shall stand in the cleft of the rock, because he hoped for salvation through the passion of our Redeemer. The hedgehog is a very timid animal, but always provided by nature with armour: its skin is covered with very thick, sharp bristles. But it does not rely only on its natural armour; lest any harm should come to it it always hides among the stones. It may fairly be likened to the man who, fearing to be judged for his sins, knows that he has a firm refuge in the rock of Christ.



¶The chameleon is not all of one colour, but is multi-coloured, like the pard. It is able to vary the colours of its body very easily, whereas the bodies of other

68 animals cannot readily be changed in this way. The chameleon-pard is so called because while it is like the pard in having white spots, its neck is like that of a horse, its feet like those of an ox, but its head is like that of a camel. It is a native of Ethiopia.



¶There is a beast called an eale, as large as a horse, with an elephant's tail; it is black in colour and has the tusks of a wild boar as well as exceptionally long horns which are adapted to every kind of movement. For they are not rigid but can be moved as needed when it fights. It puts one out in front in a combat, so that if it loses its tip from a blow, it can bring the other one forward.



¶The Latin word for wolf comes from the Greek; 'lupus' in Latin is 'likos' in Greek, which derives from their word for biting, because wolves kill everything they find when they are ravenous. Others say that the word comes from the Greek 'leopos', lion-footed, because, as with lions, their strength is in their feet. Nothing on which they trample can survive. Just as the wolf gets its name from its rapacity, so we call whores 'she-wolves', because they destroy the wealth of their lovers. The wolf is a ravenous beast, and thirsts for blood. Its strength is in its chest and muzzle, not in its legs. It cannot bend its neck backwards. It is said to live sometimes on prey, sometimes on earth, and occasionally on wind. The

70 she-wolf only bears cubs in May, when it thunders. Its cunning is such that it does not catch prey near to its lair to feed its young, but fetches it from afar off. If it has to hunt its prey by night, it slinks up to the sheepfold like a lame dog, and, so that the dogs do not catch its scent and wake the shepherds, it goes upwind. And if a twig breaks under its foot and makes a noise, it punishes that foot by biting it. Its eyes shine in the night like lanterns; its nature is such that if it sees a man before the man catches sight of it, it can deprive him of his voice, and it will then take no notice of him because it has won this victory over his voice. Equally, if the wolf thinks that it has been seen first, it loses its wildness and cannot run away. Solinus, who tells us much about the nature of things, says that there is a little patch of hair on its tail which is a love-charm: if the wolf is afraid that it will be caught, it tears it off with its teeth of its own accord. The hair has no effect if it is not taken from the wolf while it is still alive. The wolf is the devil, who is always envious of mankind, and continually prowls round the sheepfolds of the Church's believers, to kill their souls and to corrupt them. The fact that it only gives birth in May when it thunders reminds us of the devil, who fell from heaven in the first flush of his pride. And the wolf's

71 strength in its forequarters and weakness in its hindquarters remind us that the devil was at first an angel in heaven, but then turned apostate. Its eyes shine in the night like lanterns because many of the devil's works seem to blind and foolish men like beautiful and wholesome deeds. ¶The wolf only mates on twelve days in each year. They can bear hunger for a long time, and after a lengthy fast they will devour a huge meal. Ethiopia produces wolves with coloured manes, so varied that no colour is missing from them. The Ethiopian wolves can jump so high that they can move as quickly in a series of jumps as if they were running. They never attack men. In winter they are hairy, but in summer they are naked. The Ethiopians call them 'theas'.

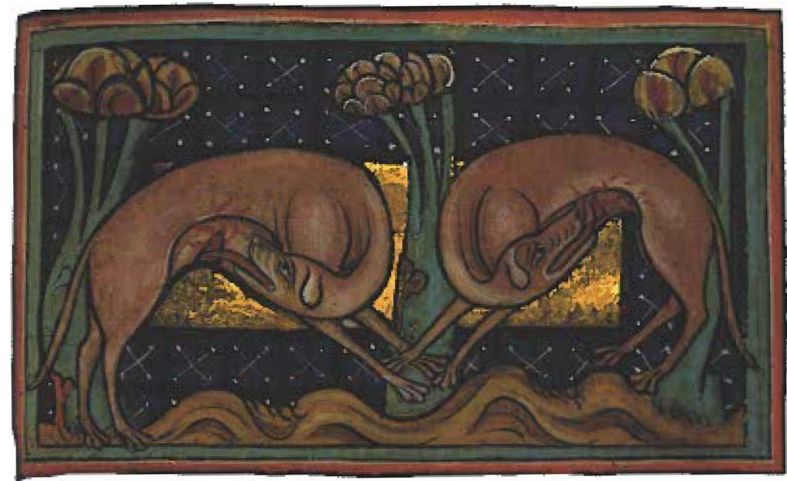


72 ¶The dog may get its Latin name, 'canis', from the Greek 'cenos'. It is believed that this name comes from the sound (canore) of its barking: when it does this, it is also said to sing (canere). There is no creature cleverer than the dog; they have more understanding than any other beast. They also know their name and love their master. Dogs are of various kinds; some track wild beasts in the forests, others guard flocks of sheep from the attacks of wolves, others guard the houses and wealth of their master, lest they are robbed at night by thieves, and will lay down their lives for their master. They go willingly to hunt with him and will guard his dead body, never leaving it. In short, their nature is such that they cannot live without human company.



73 ¶We read how dogs love their masters very greatly, as in the case of King Garamantes, who was captured by his enemies and led into captivity; but two hundred hounds forced their way in a body through the enemy line and brought him back, resisting all opposition. When Jason was killed, his dog refused all food, and died of hunger. The dog of King Lysimachus hurled itself into the flames when its master's funeral pyre was lit. When a dog could not be separated from its condemned master in the days of the consul Apius Iunius Pictimus, it accompanied him to prison, and when he was executed soon

afterwards it followed him to the scaffold, barking loudly. The people of Rome took pity on it, and gave it food, but it took the food to its master's mouth. Finally the corpse was thrown into the Tiber, and the dog tried to bring it ashore. If a dog follows the track of a hare or a stag and comes to where the paths divide or to a crossroads, he will look silently at the ways, and will decide rationally on the evidence of his keen sense of smell. Either the animal went this way, he says to himself, or that way, or it hid in this rocky cleft. But I know that it did not go in these directions, so it must have taken this path; by rejecting false trails he arrives at the truth.



¶After a murder has been committed, dogs have often provided persuasive evidence which has led to the conviction of the criminal, and their silent testimony can usually be believed. There is a story that in a remote quarter of Antioch a man who had a dog with him was murdered in the evening twilight by a soldier intent on robbery. Under cover of darkness, he fled elsewhere. The body lay unburied, and a crowd of spectators gathered. The dog howled by its side, lamenting his master's fate. The soldier, cunningly thinking that by mingling with the crowd and appearing confident he would prove his innocence, approached the corpse as if he was showing his sympathy for the dead man. The dog ceased to howl for a moment and sought his revenge, seized the man and took up his dirge again, moving all who saw it to tears. And because he fastened on this man

76 alone among many, he proved his case, because in the end the soldier was bewildered by such a clear proof, and could not argue that he had been accused out of hate, enmity or envy. So he had to confess his crime and submit to punishment because he could think of nothing to say in his defence. ¶A dog's tongue will heal a wound if he licks it. His way of life is temperate. The tongues of puppies are a very good cure for wounds of the intestines. A dog's nature is such that it returns to its vomit and eats it again. If a dog swims across a river and has meat or something else in its mouth, he will open his mouth if he sees its shadow, and by trying to seize this imaginary piece of meat loses the real one that he is carrying. In such ways, the dogs are like the preachers who by warnings and by righteous living turn aside the ambushes of the devil, lest he seize God's treasure, namely the souls of Christians, and carry it off. As the dog's tongue heals a wound when he licks it, so the wounds of sin are cleansed by the instruction of the priest when they are laid bare in confession. The dog's way of life is said to be moderate, as he who is set above others must be watchful in the study of wisdom and avoid all kinds of inebriation, for Sodom perished from an excess of good things. For gluttony is the way by which the devil most

easily corrupts men. When the dog returns to its vomit, it signifies those who fall into sin again after they have confessed. The dog who lets go of the meat in the river because he is chasing its shadow signifies foolish men who abandon what is rightfully theirs because ambition makes them pursue the unknown. Wolf-dogs are dogs which are born of wolves and dogs, when they chance to mate. In India, bitches are tied up at night in the forests, where wild tigers find them and mate with them; the result is a very swift dog which is so strong that it can pull down lions and overcome them.

77



¶The sheep is a soft animal with wool, a defenceless body, and a peaceful nature; it gets its Latin name, 'ovis', from oblations or offerings, because the men of old when they first made sacrifices did not



¶ There is an animal called the badger which is also known as the melot. It bites and is unclean, inhabiting mountains and rocky places. It makes holes underground by scraping and digging with its feet. Some badgers are born to be servants to the others. They lie on their backs and pile on their bellies soil which the others have dug out. Then they hold a piece of wood in their mouth and clutch the soil with their four feet. The others sink their teeth into the wood and drag them backwards out of the holes, to the astonishment of anyone who sees it.



¶ This creature is called mouser because she kills mice. The common word is cat because she captures them. They have such sharp sight that the brightness of their glance overcomes the darkness of night. 'Catus' is the Greek word for cunning.

¶ The mouse is a feeble little creature, which gets its name because mice are born from the dampness of the earth; the mouse



comes from the humus. Their liver grows at the full moon, like some sea creatures, and diminishes as the moon wanes. The shrew (sorex) gets its Latin name because it gnaws and cuts like a saw (serra). Mice represent greedy men who seek earthly goods, and make the goods of others their prey.

¶The weasel, 'mustela', is a sort of long mouse; 'telon' means long in Greek. It is very cunning; when it gives birth to its young in a house,



it carries them from one place to another and puts them somewhere different each time. It attacks serpents and mice. There are two kinds of weasel: one lives in the woods and is rather bigger – the Greeks call them 'ictidas' – and the other lives in houses. Some people say that they conceive through their ear and give birth through their mouth, and others that it is the opposite way round, that they conceive through their mouth and give birth through their ear. They are said to be skilled in healing, so that if they find that their young have been killed, they can bring them to life again. They signify those men who readily listen to the seed of the divine word but, held back by the love of worldly things, neglect it and do not want to know more about what they have heard. The weasel signifies a thief, as in Leviticus.



¶The mole is so called because it is condemned to perpetual darkness because of its blindness. It has no eyes, always digs the earth

and turns it over, and eats the roots. The mole, condemned to perpetual blindness, is the image of pagan idols, blind, deaf and dumb; or even their worshippers, wandering in the eternal darkness of ignorance and folly. Isaiah writes of them: 'In that day a man shall cast his idols . . . to the moles, and to the bats' [2:20], that is, the blind shall worship the blind. The mole is also the symbol of heretics or false Christians who, like the eyeless mole which digs in the earth, heaping up the soil and eating the roots beneath the crops, lack the light of true knowledge and devote themselves to earthly deeds. They serve the desires of the flesh zealously, and succumb to the lure of pleasure, while they try in every way possible to gnaw at the roots of all that is good.

¶The dormouse (glis) is so called because sleep makes it fat; 'gliscere' means to grow. They sleep all winter, and lie motionless, as if dead. In the summer-



time, they come to life again. They signify those who are rendered useless by the sluggishness of sloth and do not want to work usefully. It is written of such men: 'The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest and

have nothing' [Proverbs 20:4], for the person who is now idle and inactive in earthly life will beg in vain at the Judgement Day, when the harvest is gathered in. Such a man cannot share with the just in the joys of heavenly life.



¶The hedgehog is an animal which is covered in spines. It gets its name because it curls up when it closes itself in its spikes, which are the defence which protects it from its enemies. For as soon as it senses

danger, it curls up and rolls into a ball and retreats behind its armour. It is quite clever: if it picks a grape off the vine, it rolls on it and spears it with its spines in order to carry it home to its young. It is also called 'echinus'; this creature has the foresight to equip its den with two holes for ventilation. When it notices that the north wind has started to blow, it blocks the north entrance; as soon as it notices that the south wind drives the mists into the air it goes to the north entrance to avoid the wind from this direction, which comes from dangerous lands. For in mystical terms the hedgehog is a sinner full of vices like spines, skilled in wicked cunning, and in deceits and robberies. He cheats others of the fruits of their labours and takes their food for himself. Of them it is written: 'There shall the hedgehog make her nest and nourish her young' [Isaiah 34:15]. In the Psalms we find that 'the rocks are the refuge of the hedgehog'. It is the most timid of animals, always bearing the armour provided for it by nature: very sharp and densely packed bristles, like stakes, fortify its hide. But it does not trust solely to its native defence; so that it cannot be seized by a trick, it hides among the rocks. It is like the man bristling with sins, who fears the judgement to come, and takes very secure refuge in the rock of Christ.



¶The ant (formica) is so called because it carries grains (micas) of spelt: it is a very shrewd creature. It thinks of the future, and prepares its provisions for winter in the summer. At harvest time it seeks out wheat, and will not touch barley; if it rains on the grain it has stored, the ant will throw it all out. They say that in Ethiopia there are ants in the shape of dogs, which root out grains of gold with their feet and guard them so that no one can steal them. If they detect a thief, they hound him to death. The ant has three habits. The first habit is that they march in order, each carrying a grain of corn in its mouth. Those who have no corn do not say to the others, 'Give me your grain,' but follow the tracks of those who have gone out earlier until they find corn, and then they take it to their nest. This should be a good reminder of clever men, who collect like the ants in order to receive their reward in the future. Its second habit is that when it stores grain in its nest, it divides the store in two, in case the winter rains soak it and make it germinate, so that the ant dies of hunger. In

the same way you, O men, should keep the word of the Old and New Testaments separate, that is, distinguish between the carnal and the spiritual, lest the letter kill you: for the Law is spiritual, as the Apostle says: 'For the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life' [II Corinthians 3:6]. For the Jews paid attention only to the letter of the Law and ignored its spiritual meaning; therefore they perished of hunger. The third habit of the ant is this: at harvest time it wanders through the cornfields, and tests the blades with its mouth, to see if they are barley or wheat. If it is barley, it goes to another blade and smells it, and if it finds that it is wheat, it climbs up the stalk, takes the corn and carries it home. Barley is food for ordinary animals. Hence Job's saying: 'Barley grew for me instead of wheat' [31:40], that is, the teachings of heretics, for these are only barley and you should keep them far from you, because they corrupt men's souls and destroy them. O Christian, flee from all heretics, whose teachings are false and enemies of the truth. For the Holy Scripture says: 'Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways and be wise' [Proverbs 6:6]. For the ant has never been taught, and has no one to command it, and no master to teach it how to find food. It gathers its harvest from your labours; while you often go

116 hungry, it is never in need. It has no locked chests, no impregnable guard, no unapproachable fortress. The watchman has to look on as thieves break in, and dare not stop them; the owner suffers harm, without being able to revenge himself. Their booty is carried in a dark procession across the fields, the paths teem with their comings and goings, and what they do not carry in their little mouths they load on to their backs. The ant knows how to use fine weather. If it sees that its corn is damp or wet from rain, it scents the air to see if mild weather can be expected; if it is, then it opens its storehouse and carries the grain outside on its shoulders, so that the corn can dry out in the sunshine.

¶Frogs are so called from their chattering, because they croak among the marshes where they are born, and utter harsh cries



with their voices. In the Apocalypse, frogs represent demons: 'And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon' [Revelation 16:13]. For frogs signify the heretics and their demons who linger at the banquet of the decadent senses, and do not cease to utter their vain chatter.



117 ¶There is an animal called the dea, in Greek 'salamander' or 'stellio' in Latin. It is a small feeble creature, of which Solomon says: 'The salamander is in kings' palaces' [Proverbs 30:28]. The naturalists say of it that if it falls by chance in the glowing coals in the grate, or in the fire beneath the furnace, or into any other fire, it at once puts it out. They are as marvellous to all men as Ananias, Azarias and Misael (Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego), who were put in the burning fiery furnace, and the flames did not touch them: Daniel declares that they came forth untouched and unblemished from the fire. Elsewhere it is said of salamanders that they stop up the mouths of lions, and put an end to the rule of fire. And whoever believes in the Lord with his whole heart, and perseveres in good works, shall go through the fire of Gehenna, and the flames shall not touch him: the prophet Isaiah says: 'Thou shalt go through the fire and it shall not burn thee'.



¶The eagle is so called because it is eagle-eyed. Its sight is so sharp that it can glide over the sea, beyond the ken of human eyes; from so great a height it can see the fish swimming in the sea. It will plunge down

like a thunderbolt and seize its prey, and bring it ashore. When it grows old, its wings grow heavy and its eyes cloud over. Then it seeks out a fountain and flies up into the atmosphere of the sun; there its wings catch fire and the darkness of its eyes is burnt away in the sun's rays. It falls into the fountain and dives under water three times: at once its wings are restored to their full strength and its eyes to their former brightness. ¶So you, O man, whose clothes are old and the eyes of whose heart are darkened, should seek out the spiritual fountain of the Lord, and lift the eyes of your mind to God, who is the fount of justice; and then you will renew your youth like the eagle. It is also said of the eagle that it tests its young by putting them into the sun's rays while it holds them in its claws in mid-air. In this way the young eagle which looks fearlessly at the sun without harming its eyesight proves that it is the true offspring of its race. If it looks away, however, it is at once dropped, because it is a creature unworthy of so great a father: just as it was unworthy of being carried up, so it is unworthy of being reared. The eagle carries out the sentence without any bitterness in its nature, but as an impartial judge. He does not turn from his own young, but refuses to accept a stranger.

The Latin name of the swan is 'olor', the Greek 'cignus'. It is called olor because it has completely white feathers, and no one has seen a black swan;



'olon' is Greek for 'complete'. It is called cignus from its singing, because it produces sweet songs with a well-tuned voice. It is said that swans can sing so sweetly because they have a long curved neck, and to produce a good singing tone the voice must travel down a long curving path to give a variety of notes. It is said that in the far north, when the bards sing to stringed instruments, numbers of swans gather and sing together in harmony. Sailors regard them as a good sign; as Ovid's friend Aemilius Macer wrote: 'When you are telling omens by the appearance of birds, to see a swan always means joy; sailors love it because it never dives beneath the waves'. In moral terms, the white-plumaged swan represents successful deception; just as the white feathers hide black flesh, so dissimulation hides a sinful heart.

When the swan swims on a river it holds its neck high, like a proud man drawn along by the vanity of the world, who glories for a brief time in his possessions. The story of the swans gathering around the bards reminds us that those who live for their desires seek out the company of like-minded men to satisfy their lusts. But when at length the swan dies, it sings very sweetly. In the same way, when the proud man has to leave this life, he still delights in the sweetness of secular things, and remembers all the evil he has done as he dies. When the swan is plucked of its white feathers, its black flesh can be seen, and it is roasted. In the same way, when the proud rich man dies, he is stripped of worldly pomp and goes down into the flames of hell, where he is plagued with every torment: he who living used to enjoy food is in turn made the food of the flames.



¶The halcyon is a sea-bird which brings up its young on the shore, and lays its eggs in the sand, around midwinter. It considers this to be the best time



to bring up its young, when the sea is at its highest, and its waves crash on to the coasts more wildly, because the bird's special quality can shine out all the better. For however fiercely the waves rage they will suddenly subside as soon as the eggs are laid, and the storm-winds will die down to a gentle breeze: the sea and the wind are calm when the halcyon hatches its eggs. They take seven days to hatch, after which the young come out, and the bird can leave the nest. It spends another seven days feeding them until they have grown. Do not marvel at such a brief period of feeding when the hatching takes so little time. This little bird has such magic that sailors can be certain that the calm weather will last a fortnight. These are called the 'halcyon days' and no trace of storm or tempest will darken them.

¶The phoenix is a bird from Arabia, so called either because its colour is like the dye from Phoenicia, or because it is unique in the



whole world. It lives for five hundred years, and when it feels itself growing old, it collects twigs from aromatic plants and builds itself a pyre, on which it sits and spreads its wings to the rays of the sun, setting itself on fire. When it has been consumed a new bird arises next day out of the ashes. It is a symbol of our Lord Jesus Christ, who says: 'I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again' [John 10:18]. If the phoenix has the power to kill itself and bring itself to life, why, O foolish man, do you grow angry at the word of God who is the true Son of God. For our Saviour descended from heaven, and unfolded His wings, which were filled with the sweet scent of the Old and New Testament. He sacrificed Himself to God the Father on the altar of the cross, and rose again on the third day.



¶The phoenix is known to live in certain places in Arabia and to live for five hundred years. When it knows that the end of its life is approaching, it builds a chrysalis of frankincense and myrrh and other spices, and when it is about to expire it goes into the chrysalis and dies. From its flesh a worm emerges, which gradually grows up: in due course it grows wings and appears in the form of the previous bird. This bird teaches us by its example to believe in the Resurrection, for the Resurrection is an event without parallel, without the benefit of reason. The phoenix produces all the signs of the Resurrection; for the birds are there to teach man, not man to teach the birds. It is therefore an example to us that

the Author and Creator of birds does not suffer His saints to die eternally, but wishes to restore them by using His own life-force. Who then has announced to this bird the day of its death, so that it makes its chrysalis and fills it with sweet scents and goes into it and dies, so that the scents can overcome the stench of death? O man, make your chrysalis, and putting off the old Adam, and all his deeds, clothe yourself in the new man. Your chrysalis and sheath is Christ, who will protect you and shelter you in the evil hour. Do you not wish to know why the chrysalis is a protection? He said: 'I have protected you with my quiver' [Isaiah 49:2]. Your chrysalis is therefore faith; fill it with the sweet soul of your virtues, that is, with charity, mercy and justice, and enter its depths, filled with the odour of your good deeds. The end of your life should find you clothed in this faith; so that your bones are as full of sap as a luxuriant garden, in which seeds are produced again and again. Know therefore the day of your death, just as Paul knew his when he said: 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith' [II Timothy 4:7]. And he entered into his chrysalis like a true phoenix, filling it with the odour of his martyrdom.

146 ¶When it sees its parents growing old and their eyes growing dim, the bird called the hoopoe pulls out their feathers, licks their eyes, and warms them until they are rejuvenated. It is as if it wanted to say: 'Just as you brought me up, so I want to do the same for you.' If beasts, without reason, do as much for each other, how much more should men, endowed with reason, care for their parents in return for their care in bringing them up, for the Law says: 'And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death' [Exodus 21:17].



¶The pelican is an Egyptian bird which lives in the solitary places of the River Nile; and this is where it gets its name, because Canopus is the same as Egypt.

It shows exceeding love towards its young. If it has brought offspring into the world, when these grow up they strike their parents in the face. The parents strike back and kill them. After three days, their mother opens her own breast and side, and lies on her young, pouring all her blood over the dead bodies, and thus her love brings them back to life. So our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the author and originator of all creatures, begot us, and, when we did not exist, He made us. But we struck Him in the face; as Isaiah said: 'I have begotten sons and raised them up, but they have despised me'. Christ ascended the Cross and was struck in the side: blood and water came forth for our salvation, to give us eternal life.

¶The night-owl is so called because it flies around at night; it cannot see by day. As soon as it sees the splendour of the sunrise, it grows weak. The night-owl



is the same as the screech-owl, but the screech-owl is bigger. The night-raven is the same as the night-owl, and loves the night. It is a bird which flees from light and cannot bear the sight of the sun.

148 This bird signifies the Jews, who, when our Lord came to save them, rejected Him, saying: 'We have no king except Caesar', and preferred the darkness to the light. Then our Lord turned to the Gentiles, and shed light on those who sat in the shadows and in the shadow of death, of whom it is said: 'A people whom I have not known shall serve me.'

¶The screech-owl gets its name from the sound of its cry. It is a bird associated with death, burdened with feathers, but bound by a heavy laziness, hovering



around graves by day and night, and living in caves. Ovid says of it 'A sluggish screech-owl, a loathsome bird, which heralds impending disaster, a harbinger of woe for mortals.' [Metamorphoses v.550]: For among the augurs it was said to foreshadow evil. The screech-owl is an image of all those who yield to the darkness of sin and flee the light of justice. Hence it is counted among the unclean creatures in Leviticus. The screech-owl is the symbol

149 of all sinners. ¶The screech-owl gets its name from its cry because its mouth speaks what overflows in its heart; what it thinks inwardly, it utters in its voice. It is known as a loathsome bird because its roost is filthy from its droppings, just as the sinner brings all who dwell with him into disrepute through the example of his dishonourable behaviour. It is burdened with feathers to signify an excess of flesh and levity of spirit, always bound by heavy laziness, the same laziness which binds sinners who are inert and idle when it comes to doing good. It lives by day and night in graveyards, just like sinners who delight in their sin, which is the stench of human flesh. It lives in caves; nor does the sinner cast off darkness but hates the light of truth. If other birds see it, they set up a great clamour, and it is vexed by their fierce onslaughts. So when a sinner is recognised in full daylight he becomes an object of mockery for the righteous. And if others catch him in flagrante delicto he will be severely reprimanded by them. They tear out his feathers and wound him with their beaks, because the righteous hate the carnal deeds of the sinner and curse his excesses. The screech-owl is called unhappy, because it is a truly unhappy creature through its habits which we have just described.



¶Sirens, so the naturalists tell us, are deadly creatures, which from the head down to the navel are like men, but their lower parts down to their feet are like birds. Their music is a song with the sweetest melody, so that if seafaring men hear it afar off, they leave their true course and are lured towards the sirens. The sweetness of the sound enchants their ears and senses and lulls them to sleep. As soon as they are fast asleep, the sirens attack them and devour their flesh, and so the lure of their voices brings ignorant and imprudent men to their death. In the same way all those who delight in the pomp and vanity and delights of this world,

and lose the vigour of their minds by listening to comedies, tragedies and various musical melodies, will suddenly become the prey of their enemies.

¶The partridge gets its name from its call. It is a cunning and unclean bird. For the males mount each other and forget their sex in the grip of their lust. They are so treacherous



that one bird will steal another's eggs; but this betrayal is altogether fruitless. For as soon as the young hear their true mother's voice, their natural impulse is to leave their foster-mother and return to their true mother. The devil imitates their example, trying to rob the eternal Creator of His offspring, and if he succeeds in gathering round a few fools who do not know what they are doing, he nourishes them with carnal delights. But as soon as they hear Christ's voice, they spread their spiritual wings and commend themselves to Christ.

¶ Partridges equip their nests with elaborate defences. They clothe their dwelling with thorn twigs, so that any animal which attacks them is held back by the sharpness of the brambles. The partridge covers its eggs with dust, and returns to its nest by different ways lest it should give away its whereabouts. The females often carry off their young elsewhere to deceive the males, who very frequently attack the young if the females pay too much attention to them. They fight at mating time, and the loser must submit to sexual intercourse like a female. The females are so lustful that the scent of the males borne on the wind will make them pregnant. If a man approaches their nest, the mothers will come out and pretend to be wounded in their feet or wings, so that they move slowly and appear to be easy to catch. By this trick they manage to hold off attackers and delude them into moving away from the nest. The young are equally cautious: when they are afraid of being discovered, they fall on their backs and lift little pieces of earth in their



claws, and so defend themselves by concealing themselves so well that they lie hidden from detection.

¶ Magpies or pies might be called poets, because they can speak words with different sounds, like men. They hang in the branches of trees,



calling with importunate chatterings, and even if they cannot form a language for speech, they can imitate the sound of the human voice. Someone once said, very much to the point: 'I, the chattering magpie, greet you as Lord with a steady voice; if you do not see me, you will deny that I am a bird' [Martial xiv.76]. The magpie is called 'Picus', after Saturn's son, because he used them in foretelling the future. It is said that this bird has something divine about it. The proof is that if a magpie is nesting in a tree, a nail or other fastening will not stay long in it, because it falls out as soon as the bird alights in the tree; but you can think what you like of this story. The sound of its voice may mean either the loquacity of heretics or the discussion of philosophers, as we said about the crow.

¶The peacock gets its name from the sound of its voice; its flesh is so hard that it scarcely putrefies, and it is very difficult to cook; someone once said of it: 'You



marvel, whenever it opens its jewelled wings, how anyone could be so hard-hearted as to give this bird to a cook' [Martial xiii.70]. Solomon brought a peacock from distant lands, with varied colours in its feathers; it signifies the Gentiles, coming from the ends of the earth to Christ, who adorns them with the grace and splendour of many virtues.



¶The screech-owl (ulula), 'apo toi olozin' in Greek, is so called from its mourning and lamentation. When it cries it imitates either weeping or groaning.

So augurs held that when it lamented it foretold disaster; if it was silent, it heralded prosperity.

This bird signifies the wailing of sinners in hell, and, as the prophet says when he speaks of the destruction of Babylon: 'Their houses shall be full of doleful creatures, and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there' [Isaiah 13:21].

¶The Greeks call the bird hoopoe because it lives among human dung and feeds on filth and excrement. It is an altogether revolting bird,



with a distinctive crest; it is always digging around in graves and human dung. If you smear yourself with its blood before you go to sleep, you will see demons that will threaten to suffocate you. ¶Rabanus says that this bird signifies evildoers, men who love to dwell in the filth of sin. The hoopoe is said to love sorrow, because the sorrow of the world brings about the death of the spirit; and for this reason all who love God must always rejoice and pray without ceasing, give thanks in all things, because joy is the fount of the spirit. The naturalists tell us that when the hoopoe grows old and cannot fly, its offspring

comes to it and plucks out the old feathers from its parent's body. It does not cease to care for its parent and feeds it until the new feathers grow, as the Scriptures say; once its strength is restored, it can fly again. It is an example to perverse men, who, when their parents grow old, throw them out of their own houses and refuse to maintain those, old and now feeble, who nourished them when they themselves were young and weak. A thoughtful man should learn from this thoughtless creature, which (as we have described) supports its parents in old age, the duty that he owes to his father and mother.

The cock gets its name because it is sometimes castrated. This is the only bird whose testicles are cut off; the ancients used to call eunuchs cockerels. They say that



its limbs, if they are mixed with liquid gold, will be eaten away by it. The crowing of the cock is a pleasant sound at night, and not only pleasant but useful, because, like a good neighbour, it wakes the sleeper, encourages the downhearted, and comforts the traveller, by charting the progress of the night with its melodious voice. When it crows, the robber

leaves his ambush, the morning star itself awakes and lights the sky. The anxious sailor no longer fears for his life, and the storms which the winds of evening often arouse die down again. The devout go to their prayers at cock-crow, and can read their books once more. When the cock crew thrice, the rock of the Church was cleansed of the guilt he had incurred by his denial of Christ before cock-crow. Its song brings hope back to everyone, eases the pain of the sick, cools the fevered brow, brings faith back to those who have lapsed. Jesus watches over those who stray, and brings the wanderers back to the path; He looked at Peter and his sin at once vanished and his denial was forgotten in the penitent recognition. For we are taught that nothing happens by chance, but everything is done by the will of the Lord. [This passage is based on the hymn 'Aeternarum conditur' from the Breviary.]



¶The boas is a snake found in Italy. It is very heavy and follows the flocks of sheep and cattle, and hangs from their udders. It sucks them dry and kills them; because it slays oxen (boves) it is called boas.

¶The iaculus is a flying serpent, mentioned by Lucan [Pharsalia ix.720].

They perch in trees and when their prey approaches, they throw themselves down on it and kill it; so they are called iaculi, or 'throwing-snakes'.



¶In Arabia there are white serpents with wings, called sirens, which run faster than horses, and are also said to fly. Their poison is such that the victim is dead before he feels the pain of their bite.



¶The seps is a small snake, whose poison does not consume just the body, but the bones too. The poet depicted it thus: 'the wasting seps, dissolving bones and body together' [Pharsalia ix.723].



¶The dipsa is said to be such a small snake that you do not even see it when you tread on it; its poison kills before you feel it. Those who die this instant death have no trace of sadness on their faces. The poet says: 'Aulus ... was bitten by the dipsa on which he trod, its head thrown back, and he felt hardly any pain, nor did he feel the bite of its teeth' [Pharsalia ix.737].



¶The lizard is called a kind of reptile, but it has limbs. There are many kinds of lizards, such as the botrox, the salamander and the newt. The frog-lizard is so called because it has a frog's face and the Greeks call frogs 'botraca'.



¶The salamander is so called because it is proof against fire; it is the most poisonous of all poisonous creatures. Others kill one at a time; this creature kills several at once. For if it crawls into a tree, all the apples are infected with its poison, and those who eat them die. In the same way, if it falls in a well, the water will poison those who drink it. It is the enemy of fire and alone among animals can put out flames. It lives in the midst of flames without pain and without being consumed; not only does it not burn, but it puts out the flames.

¶The saura is a lizard which, when it grows



old, goes blind. It creeps into a crack in the wall and looks towards the east, into the rising sun, and by this means regains its sight.



¶The newt (stellio) gets its name from its colouring, because its back is covered in shining spots like stars (stellae). Ovid says of it: 'It bears a name . . . derived from the multi-coloured spots which star its body' [Metamorphoses v.461]. It is such an enemy of scorpions that the very sight of it strikes terror into

them and they are transfixed. ¶There are other kinds of serpents such as admoditae, elephantia, camedracontes. There are as many names for them as they have different kinds of deadly poison. All serpents are by nature cold, and can only harm when they become warm. For as long as they are cold, they will not touch anyone. So their poison is more harmful by day than by night. In the frost of the night they lose their strength, because they become cold in the dew at night. They gather the vapour in their bodies, for they are pests which are cold and freezing by nature. Hence in winter they sleep in nests, and go out in summer. So if anyone is overcome by a snake's poison, he is at first stupefied and then, as the poison warms up and begins to take effect, it at once kills him. Venom is so called because it runs in the veins. When the poison is injected into the veins, it is increased by the natural action of the body, and disturbs the spirit. Hence venom can only harm when it is mixed with the blood. Lucan says: 'The poison of the serpent destroys when it mixes with blood' [Pharsalia ix.614]. All venom is cold, and so the soul, which is fiery, flees the coldness of the venom: the sharpness of the serpent's senses stands out. We read in Genesis: 'Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field' [3:1].

¶The snake has three habits; the first of these is that when it grows old its eyes grow dim and if it wants to renew them, it starves itself and fasts for many days until its skin grows loose. Then it looks for a narrow crevice in the rocks. It wriggles into it and sloughs its old skin. And we through many tribulations put off the old Adam for Christ's sake and seek Christ the spiritual rock, and find a narrow fissure, that is, the strait gate. ¶Its second habit is that when it comes to a river to drink water, it does not take its poison with it, but leaves it behind in a pit. When we come together to hear the heavenly word of God in church, we must leave behind our earthly body, that is, earthly and evil desires. ¶Its third habit is that if it sees a naked man, it is frightened, but if it sees him clothed, it attacks him. In spiritual terms, the serpent was unable to attack the first man, Adam, for as long as he was naked in paradise, but when he was clothed, that is, his body became mortal, then it attacked him.



¶The scorpion is a land worm; it belongs with worms rather than serpents; it is armed with a sting; and it gets its name from



Greek, because it stings with its tail and spreads its poison in a gaping wound. The scorpion has this property, that it stings the palm of the hand. ¶The scorpion signifies the devil or those who serve him. Hence the saying in the Gospel: 'Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy' [Luke 10:19]. And the Lord also said: 'If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?' [Luke 11:11-12]. There are three things needful to us, faith, hope and charity: faith, so that we truly believe; hope, so that we always await with due patience those things that God has promised us; charity, so that we love Him eagerly and zealously, with all our hearts and minds and all our strength, and our neighbours as

198 ourselves. The fish is the sign of faith, the egg that of hope, and the bread that of charity; on the other side, the stone is harshness, the serpent faithlessness and the scorpion despair. In the water of baptism we receive faith; hope is like an egg, for we cannot see the chick inside it and yet we expect it to hatch; and charity, because it is all-powerful, is like bread.

¶The horned serpent is a snake which gets its name from the horns on its head, which are like those of rams. It is called 'cerastes' in Latin from the



Greek word 'cerasta' meaning horns. For it has four little horns, and by pretending that they are something which can be eaten, it kills animals. For it buries its whole body in the sand, and gives no clue as to its whereabouts except for those horns, with which it lures and captures birds and animals. It is more flexible than other snakes, and does not appear to have a spine. The cerastes lies in the road and bites the heels of horses, so that they rear up, and their riders fall off.

¶The worm is an animal which is born of flesh or wood or any material thing without mating: but nonetheless worms are born from eggs. But they are either of the earth, of water, of air, of flesh, of leaves, of wood or of clothing. Spiders are worms of the air, so called because they live on air, which produce from their slender bodies long threads, and, always busy with weaving, they never cease from their labours, perpetually occupied with their craft. The land centipede is so called because of its many feet; they roll up into a ball and live in jars. The leech is a water-worm which gets its name ('sanguissuga', bloodsucker) because it sucks blood, and lies in wait for those who are thirsty. When it attaches itself to the mouth or any other part of the body, it sucks blood, and when it cannot hold any more, it spits out what it has swallowed in order to suck fresh blood.

The silkworm is a leaf-worm, out of whose weaving silk is made; it is so called because it empties itself while it makes the thread, and only air remains inside it. The caterpillar is a leaf-worm found on cabbages or vines; it is called 'eruca' because it erodes the leaves. It rolls itself up and does not fly around like a locust, rushing hither and thither and leaving things half-eaten, but remains until the fruit has been destroyed and as it crawls slowly on its way

200 it eats everything in small mouthfuls. The Greeks call a kind of woodworm 'teredo' because they eat as they bore (tereo). We call them termites, but in Latin they are called woodworms, and they hatch from fallen trees at unfavourable times. The worm found in clothes is called a moth; it tunnels into them until it can find somewhere to eat holes. Then there are the worms that come from flesh. 'Enigramus' is a worm in the head; 'lumbicus', the stomach-worm, is a tapeworm, so called because it is found in the lumbar region. Lice are worms of the flesh, and get their name (pediculi) because they have feet (pedes). Fleas or 'pulices' get their name because they come from dust (ex pulvere). The tarnius is found in pork. Ricinus is a worm that attacks dogs, and fastens itself to their ears; 'kynos' is the Greek for a dog. The usia is found in pigs; it irritates them (urit) and this gives it its name. The place where it bites is so irritated that blisters form. The bug is so called because it is like a plant which has the same unpleasant smell; but it is really a worm that is born of rotten flesh. A worm does not move with ordinary steps or by using its scales like a snake, because it has no spine, unlike the snake. Instead it moves by stretching its body out and then pulling it together, repeating this movement as it goes.



¶ Fishes (pisces) get their name, like cattle (pecus), from the word for grazing (pascere). They are reptiles which swim, and are called reptiles because they have the same appearance and nature. Although

202 they can dive into the depths, they still move in a creeping motion as they swim; for this reason David says: 'So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable' [Psalm 104:25]. Some kinds of fish are amphibians, which can walk on the land and swim in the sea. 'Amphi' in Greek means both: they live on both sea and land, like seals, crocodiles, and hippopotamuses. ¶Cattle and the beasts of the field and of the air were given names by men before fishes, because they saw them first. As men learnt little by little about the kinds of fishes they were given names, often from their similarity to creatures on land, such as frogs, calves, lions, blackbirds and peacocks with many-coloured backs and necks, and thrushes with white and other colours. Other fishes were so called because their ways were like those of creatures on land: dogfish were called after dogs, because they bite; wolves got their name because they pursue other fish voraciously. Others were named after their colour: shad, because they are the colour of shadows, dories because they are golden (French, 'doré'), varies, from their variety of colour, which common folk call trout. Some got their name from their shape, like the orb, a round fish which is nothing but a head, and the sole which is like the sole of a shoe.

