

Of the Morals of the Catholic Church

By Saint Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430)

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Written by St. Augustine of Hippo in A.D. 388, and translated by the Rev. Richard Stothert.

It is laid down at the outset that the customs of the [holy](#) life of the Church should be referred to the chief good of [man](#), that is, God. We must seek after God with supreme affection; and this doctrine is supported in the [Catholic Church](#) by the authority of both Testaments. The four [virtues](#) get their names from different forms of this [love](#). Then follow the duties of [love](#) to our neighbor. In the [Catholic Church](#) we find examples of continence and of [true Christian](#) conduct.

Chapter 1.—How the Pretensions of the Manichæans are to Be Refuted. Two Manichæan Falsehoods

1. Enough, probably, has been done in our other books in the way of answering the [ignorant](#) and profane attacks which the [Manichæans](#) make on the law, which is called the [Old Testament](#), in a spirit of vainglorious boasting, and with the approval of the uninstructed. Here, too, I may shortly touch upon the subject. For every one with average intelligence can easily see that the explanation of the [Scriptures](#) should be sought for from those who are the professed teachers of the [Scriptures](#); and that it may happen, and indeed always happens, that many things seem absurd to the [ignorant](#), which, when they are explained by the learned, appear all the more excellent, and are received in the explanation with the greater pleasure on account of the obstructions which made it difficult to reach the meaning. This commonly happens as regards the [holy](#) books of the [Old Testament](#), if only the man who meets with difficulties applies to a [pious](#) teacher, and not to a profane critic, and if he begins his inquiries from a desire to find [truth](#), and not in rash opposition. And should the inquirer meet with some, whether [bishops](#) or [presbyters](#), or any officials or ministers of the [Catholic Church](#), who either avoid in all cases opening up [mysteries](#), or, content with simple [faith](#), have no desire for more recondite [knowledge](#), he must not despair of finding the [knowledge](#) of the [truth](#) in a case where neither are all able to teach to whom the inquiry is addressed, nor are all inquirers worthy of learning the [truth](#). Diligence and [piety](#) are both necessary: on the one hand, we must have [knowledge](#) to find [truth](#), and, on the other hand, we must deserve to get the [knowledge](#).

2. But as the [Manichæans](#) have two tricks for catching the unwary, so as to make them take them as teachers,—one, that of finding fault with the [Scriptures](#), which they either misunderstand or wish to be misunderstood, the other, that of making a show of [chastity](#) and of notable abstinence,—this book shall contain our doctrine of life and morals

according to [Catholic](#) teaching, and will perhaps make it appear how easy it is to pretend to [virtue](#), and how difficult to possess [virtue](#). I will refrain, if I can, from attacking their weak points, which I [know](#) well, with the [violence](#) with which they attack what they [know](#) nothing of; for I wish them, if possible, to be cured rather than conquered. And I will quote such testimonies from the [Scriptures](#) as they are bound to [believe](#), for they shall be from the [New Testament](#); and even from this I will take none of the passages which the [Manichæans](#) when hard pressed are accustomed to call spurious, but passages which they are [obliged](#) to acknowledge and approve. And for every testimony from apostolic teaching I will bring a similar statement from the [Old Testament](#), that if they ever become willing to wake up from their persistent dreams, and to rise towards the light of [Christian faith](#), they may discover both how far from being [Christian](#) is the life which they profess, and how [truly Christian](#) is the [Scripture](#) which they cavil at.

Chapter 2.—He Begins with Arguments, in Compliance with the Mistaken Method of the Manichæans

3. Where, then, shall I begin? With authority, or with reasoning? In the order of nature, when we learn anything, authority precedes reasoning. For a reason may seem weak, when, after it is given, it requires authority to confirm it. But because the [minds](#) of [men](#) are obscured by familiarity with darkness, which covers them in the night of [sins](#) and [evil](#) habits, and cannot perceive in a way suitable to the clearness and purity of reason, there is most wholesome provision for bringing the dazzled eye into the light of [truth](#) under the congenial shade of authority. But since we have to do with people who are perverse in all their thoughts and words and actions, and who insist on nothing more than on beginning with argument, I will, as a concession to them, take what I think a wrong method in discussion. For I like to imitate, as far as I can, the gentleness of my Lord Jesus Christ, who took on Himself the [evil](#) of death itself, wishing to free us from it.

Chapter 3.—Happiness is in the Enjoyment of Man's Chief Good. Two Conditions of the Chief Good: 1st, Nothing is Better Than It; 2d, It Cannot Be Lost Against the Will

4. How then, according to reason, ought man to live? We all certainly desire to live happily; and there is no human being but assents to this statement almost before it is made. But the title [happy](#) cannot, in my opinion, belong either to him who has not what he loves, whatever it may be, or to him who has what he loves if it is hurtful or to him who does not [love](#) what he has, although it is [good](#) in perfection. For one who seeks what he cannot obtain suffers torture, and one who has got what is not desirable is cheated, and one who does not seek for what is worth seeking for is diseased. Now in all these cases the mind cannot but be unhappy, and [happiness](#) and unhappiness cannot reside at the same time in one man; so in none of these cases can the man be [happy](#). I find, then, a fourth case, where the [happy](#) life exists,—when that which is man's chief good is both

loved and possessed. For what do we call enjoyment but having at hand the objects of [love](#)? And no one can be [happy](#) who does not enjoy what is man's chief good, nor is there any one who enjoys this who is not [happy](#). We must then have at hand our chief good, if we think of living happily.

5. We must now inquire what is man's chief good, which of course cannot be anything inferior to man himself. For whoever follows after what is inferior to himself, becomes himself inferior. But every man is bound to follow what is best. Wherefore man's chief good is not inferior to man. Is it then something similar to man himself? It must be so, if there is nothing above man which he is capable of enjoying. But if we find something which is both superior to [man](#), and can be possessed by the man who loves it, who can [doubt](#) that in seeking for [happiness](#) man should endeavor to reach that which is more excellent than the being who makes the endeavor. For if [happiness](#) consists in the enjoyment of a good than which there is nothing better, which we call the chief good, how can a man be properly called [happy](#) who has not yet attained to his chief good? or how can that be the chief good beyond which something better remains for us to arrive at? Such, then, being the chief good, it must be something which cannot be lost against the will. For no one can feel confident regarding a good which he [knows](#) can be taken from him, although he wishes to keep and cherish it. But if a man feels no confidence regarding the good which he enjoys, how can he be [happy](#) while in such [fear](#) of losing it?

Chapter 4.—Man—What?

6. Let us then see what is better than man. This must necessarily be hard to find, unless we first ask and examine what man is. I am not now called upon to give a definition of man. The question here seems to me to be,—since almost all agree, or at least, which is enough, those I have now to do with are of the same opinion with me, that we are made up of [soul](#) and body,—What is man? Is he both of these? or is he the body only, or the [soul](#) only? For although the things are two, [soul](#) and body, and although neither without the other could be called man (for the body would not be man without the [soul](#), nor again would the [soul](#) be man if there were not a body animated by it), still it is possible that one of these may be held to be man, and may be called so. What then do we call man? Is he [soul](#) and body, as in a double harness, or like a centaur? Or do we mean the body only, as being in the service of the [soul](#) which rules it, as the word lamp denotes not the light and the case together, but only the case, yet it is on account of the light that it is so called? Or do we mean only the [mind](#), and that on account of the body which it rules, as horseman means not the man and the horse, but the man only, and that as employed in ruling the horse? This dispute is not easy to settle; or, if the [proof](#) is plain, the statement requires time. This is an expenditure of time and strength which we need not incur. For whether the name man belongs to both, or only to the [soul](#), the chief good of man is not the chief good of the body; but what is the chief good either of both [soul](#) and body, or of the [soul](#) only, that is man's chief good.

Chapter 5.—Man's Chief Good is Not the Chief Good of the Body Only, But the Chief Good of the Soul

7. Now if we ask what is the chief good of the body, reason obliges us to admit that it is that by means of which the body comes to be in its best state. But of all the things which invigorate the body, there is nothing better or greater than the [soul](#). The chief good of the body, then, is not bodily pleasure, not absence of pain, not strength, not beauty, not swiftness, or whatever else is usually reckoned among the goods of the body, but simply the [soul](#). For all the things mentioned the [soul](#) supplies to the body by its presence, and, what is above them all, life. Hence I conclude that the [soul](#) is not the chief good of [man](#), whether we give the name of man to [soul](#) and body together, or to the [soul](#) alone. For as according to reason, the chief good of the body is that which is better than the body, and from which the body receives vigor and life, so whether the [soul](#) itself is man, or [soul](#) and body both, we must discover whether there is anything which goes before the [soul](#) itself, in following which the [soul](#) comes to the perfection of good of which it is capable in its own kind. If such a thing can be found, all uncertainty must be at an end, and we must pronounce this to be really and [truly](#) the chief good of man.

8. If, again, the body is man, it must be admitted that the [soul](#) is the chief good of man. But clearly, when we treat of morals,—when we inquire what manner of life must be held in order to obtain [happiness](#),—it is not the body to which the precepts are addressed, it is not bodily discipline which we discuss. In short, the observance of good *customs* belongs to that part of us which inquires and learns, which are the prerogatives of the [soul](#); so, when we speak of attaining to [virtue](#), the question does not regard the body. But if it follows, as it does, that the body which is ruled over by a [soul](#) possessed of [virtue](#) is ruled both better and more honorably, and is in its greatest perfection in consequence of the perfection of the [soul](#) which rightfully governs it, that which gives perfection to the [soul](#) will be man's chief good, though we call the body man. For if my coachman, in [obedience](#) to me, feeds and drives the horses he has charge of in the most satisfactory manner, himself enjoying the more of my bounty in proportion to his good conduct, can any one deny that the good condition of the horses, as well as that of the coachman, is due to me? So the question seems to me to be not, whether [soul](#) and body is man, or the [soul](#) only, or the body only, but what gives perfection to the [soul](#); for when this is obtained, a man cannot but be either perfect, or at least much better than in the absence of this one thing.

Chapter 6.—Virtue Gives Perfection to the Soul; The Soul Obtains Virtue by Following God; Following God is the Happy Life

9. No one will question that [virtue](#) gives perfection to the [soul](#). But it is a very proper subject of inquiry whether this [virtue](#) can exist by itself or only in the [soul](#). Here again arises a profound discussion, needing lengthy treatment; but perhaps my summary will serve the purpose. God will, I trust, assist me, so that, notwithstanding our feebleness, we may give instruction on these great matters briefly as well as intelligibly. In either case, whether [virtue](#) can exist by itself without the [soul](#), or can exist only in the [soul](#), undoubtedly in the pursuit of [virtue](#) the [soul](#) follows after something, and this must be either the [soul](#) itself, or [virtue](#), or something else. But if the [soul](#) follows after itself in the

pursuit of [virtue](#), it follows after a foolish thing; for before obtaining [virtue](#) it is foolish. Now the height of a follower's desire is to reach that which he follows after. So the [soul](#) must either not wish to reach what it follows after, which is utterly absurd and unreasonable, or, in following after itself while foolish, it reaches the folly which it flees from. But if it follows after [virtue](#) in the desire to reach it, how can it follow what does not exist? or how can it desire to reach what it already possesses? Either, therefore, [virtue](#) exists beyond the [soul](#), or if we are not allowed to give the name of [virtue](#) except to the habit and disposition of the wise [soul](#), which can exist only in the [soul](#), we must allow that the [soul](#) follows after something else in order that [virtue](#) may be produced in itself; for neither by following after nothing, nor by following after folly, can the [soul](#), according to my reasoning, attain to wisdom.

10. This something else then, by following after which the [soul](#) becomes possessed of [virtue](#) and wisdom, is either a wise man or God. But we have said already that it must be something that we cannot lose against our will. No one can think it necessary to ask whether a wise man, supposing we are content to follow after him, can be taken from us in spite of our unwillingness or our persistence. God then remains, in following after whom we live well, and in reaching whom we live both well and happily. If any deny God's [existence](#), why should I consider the method of dealing with them, when it is doubtful whether they ought to be dealt with at all? At any rate, it would require a different starting-point, a different plan, a different investigation from what we are now engaged in. I am now addressing those who do not deny the [existence](#) of [God](#), and who, moreover, allow that human affairs are not disregarded by Him. For there is no one, I suppose, who makes any profession of religion but will hold that [divine Providence](#) cares at least for our [souls](#).

Chapter 7.—The Knowledge of God to Be Obtained from the Scripture. The Plan and Principal Mysteries of the Divine Scheme of Redemption

11. But how can we follow after Him whom we do not see? or how can we see Him, we who are not only men, but also men of weak understanding? For though God is seen not with the eyes but with the [mind](#), where can such a [mind](#) be found as shall, while obscured by foolishness, succeed or even attempt to drink in that light? We must therefore have recourse to the instructions of those whom we have reason to think wise. Thus far argument brings us. For in human things reasoning is employed, not as of greater certainty, but as easier from use. But when we come to divine things, this faculty turns away; it cannot behold; it pants, and gasps, and burns with desire; it falls back from the light of [truth](#), and turns again to its wonted obscurity, not from choice, but from exhaustion. What a dreadful catastrophe is this, that the [soul](#) should be reduced to greater helplessness when it is seeking rest from its toil! So, when we are hasting to retire into darkness, it will be well that by the appointment of adorable Wisdom we should be met by the friendly shade of authority, and should be attracted by the wonderful character of its contents, and by the utterances of its pages, which, like shadows, typify and attemper the [truth](#).

12. What more could have been done for our [salvation](#)? What can be more gracious and bountiful than [divine providence](#), which, when man had fallen from its [laws](#), and, in just retribution for his [coveting](#) mortal things, had brought forth a mortal offspring, still did not wholly abandon him? For in this most righteous government, whose ways are strange and inscrutable, there is, by means of unknown connections established in the creatures subject to it, both a severity of punishment and a mercifulness of [salvation](#). How beautiful this is, how great, how worthy of [God](#), in fine, how [true](#), which is all we are seeking for, we shall never be able to perceive, unless, beginning with things human and at hand, and holding by the [faith](#) and the precepts of [true](#) religion, we continue without turning from it in the way which God has secured for us by the separation of the patriarchs, by the bond of the law, by the foresight of the [prophets](#), by the [witness](#) of the [apostles](#), by the blood of the [martyrs](#), and by the subjugation of the [Gentiles](#). From this point, then, let no one ask me for my opinion, but let us rather hear the oracles, and submit our weak inferences to the announcements of [Heaven](#).

Chapter 8.—God is the Chief Good, Whom We are to Seek After with Supreme Affection

13. Let us see how the Lord Himself in the gospel has taught us to live; how, too, [Paul](#) the apostle,—for the [Manichæans](#) dare not reject these Scriptures. Let us hear, O Christ, what chief end Thou dost prescribe to us; and that is evidently the chief end after which we are told to strive with supreme affection. "You shall [love](#)," He says, "the Lord your God." Tell me also, I [pray](#) You, what must be the measure of [love](#); for I [fear](#) lest the desire enkindled in my heart should either exceed or come short in fervor. "With all your heart," He says. Nor is that enough. "With all your [soul](#)." Nor is it enough yet. "With all your mind." [Matthew 22:37](#) What do you wish more? I might, perhaps, wish more if I could see the possibility of more. What does [Paul](#) say on this? "We [know](#)," he says, "that all things issue in good to them that [love](#) God." Let him, too, say what is the measure of [love](#). "Who then," he says, "shall separate us from the [love](#) of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or [persecution](#), or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword?" We have heard, then, what and how much we must [love](#); this we must strive after, and to this we must refer all our plans. The perfection of all our [good](#) things and our perfect good is [God](#). We must neither come short of this nor go beyond it: the one is dangerous, the other impossible.

Chapter 9.—Harmony of the Old and New Testament on the Precepts of Charity.

14. Come now, let us examine, or rather let us take notice,—for it is obvious and can be seen, at once,—whether the authority of the [Old Testament](#) too agrees with those statements taken from the gospel and the apostle. What need to speak of the first statement, when it is clear to all that it is a quotation from the law given by [Moses](#)? For it is there written, "You shall [love](#) the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your [soul](#), and with all your mind." [Deuteronomy 6:5](#) And not to go farther for a passage of the

[Old Testament](#) to compare with that of the apostle, he has himself added one. For after saying that no tribulation, no distress, no [persecution](#), no pressure of bodily want, no peril, no sword, separates us from the [love](#) of [Christ](#), he immediately adds, "As it is written, For Your sake we are in suffering all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." The [Manichæans](#) are in the [habit](#) of saying that this is an interpolation,—so unable are they to reply, that they are forced in their extremity to say this. But every one can see that this is all that is left for men to say when it is [proved](#) that they are wrong.

15. And yet I ask them if they deny that this is said in the [Old Testament](#), or if they hold that the passage in the [Old Testament](#) does not agree with that of the apostle. For the first, the books will prove it; and as for the second, those prevaricators who fly off at a tangent will be brought to agree with me, if they will only reflect a little and consider what is said, or else I will press upon them the opinion of those who judge impartially. For what could agree more harmoniously than these passages? For tribulation, distress, [persecution](#), famine, nakedness, peril, [cause](#) great suffering to man while in this life. So all these words are implied in the single quotation from the law, where it is said, "For Your sake we are in suffering." The only other thing is the sword, which does not inflict a painful life, but removes whatever life it meets with. Answering to this are the words, "We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." And [love](#) could not have been more plainly expressed than by the words, "For Your sake." Suppose, then, that this testimony is not found in the [Apostle Paul](#), but is quoted by me, must you not prove, you [heretic](#), either that this is not written in the old law, or that it does not harmonize with the apostle? And if you dare not say either of these things (for you are shut up by the reading of the manuscript, which will show that it is written, and by common sense, which sees that nothing could agree better with what is said by the apostle), why do you [imagine](#) that there is any force in accusing the [Scriptures](#) of being corrupted? And once more, what will you reply to a man who says to you, This is what I understand, this is my view, this is my belief, and I read these books only because I see that everything in them agrees with the [Christian faith](#)? Or tell me at once if you will venture deliberately to tell me to the face that we are not to [believe](#) that the [apostles](#) and [martyrs](#) are spoken of as having endured great sufferings for [Christ's](#) sake, and as having been accounted by their persecutors as sheep for the slaughter? If you cannot say this, why should you bring a charge against the book in which I find what you acknowledge I ought to [believe](#)?

Chapter 10.—What the Church Teaches About God. The Two Gods of the Manichæans

16. Will you say that you grant that we are bound to [love God](#), but not the God worshipped by those who acknowledge the authority of the [Old Testament](#)? In that case you refuse to worship the God who made heaven and earth, for this is the God set forth all through these books. And you admit that the whole of the world, which is called heaven and earth, had God and a good God for its author and maker. For in speaking to you about God we must make a distinction. For you hold that there are two gods, one good and the other bad.

But if you say that you worship and approve of worshipping the God who made heaven and earth, but not the God supported by the authority of the [Old Testament](#), you act impertinently in trying, though vainly, to attribute to us views and opinions altogether unlike the wholesome and profitable doctrine we really hold. Nor can your silly and profane discourses be at all compared with the expositions in which learned and [pious](#) men of the [Catholic Church](#) open up those Scriptures to the willing and worthy. Our understanding of the law and the [prophets](#) is quite different from what you suppose. Mistake us no longer. We do not worship a God who repents, or is [envious](#), or needy, or cruel, or who takes pleasure in the blood of men or beasts, or is pleased with guilt and crime, or whose possession of the earth is limited to a little corner of it. These and such like are the silly notions you are in the [habit](#) of denouncing at great length. Your denunciation does not touch us. The fancies of old [women](#) or of children you attack with a vehemence that is only ridiculous. Any one whom you persuade in this way to join you shows no fault in the teaching of the [Church](#), but only proves his own [ignorance](#) of it.

17. If, then, you have any human feeling,—if you have any regard for your own welfare,—you should rather examine with diligence and [piety](#) the meaning of these passages of Scripture. You should examine, unhappy beings that you are; for we condemn with no less severity and copiousness any [faith](#) which attributes to God what is unbecoming Him, and in those by whom these passages are literally understood we correct the mistake of [ignorance](#), and look upon persistence in it as absurd. And in many other things which you cannot understand there is in the [Catholic](#) teaching a check on the belief of those who have got beyond mental childishness, not in years, but in [knowledge](#) and understanding—old in the progress towards wisdom. For we learn the folly of believing that God is bounded by any amount of space, even though [infinite](#); and it is held unlawful to think of [God](#), or any part of Him, as moving from one place to another. And should any one suppose that anything in God's substance or nature can suffer change or conversion, he will be held guilty of wild profanity. There are thus among us children who think of God as having a human form, which they suppose He really has, which is a most degrading idea; and there are many of full age to whose mind the majesty of God appears in its inviolableness and unchangeableness as not only above the [human](#) body, but above their own mind itself. These ages, as we said, are distinguished not by time, but by [virtue](#) and discretion. Among you, again, there is no one who will picture God in a human form; but neither is there one who sets God apart from the contamination of human [error](#). As regards those who are fed like crying babies at the breast of the [Catholic Church](#), if they are not carried off by [heretics](#), they are nourished according to the vigor and capacity of each, and arrive at last, one in one way and another in another, first to a perfect man, and then to the maturity and hoary hairs of wisdom, when they may get life as they desire, and life in perfect [happiness](#).

Chapter 11.—God is the One Object of Love; Therefore He is Man's Chief Good. Nothing is Better Than God. God Cannot Be Lost Against Our Will

18. Following after God is the desire of [happiness](#); to reach God is [happiness](#) itself. We follow after God by loving Him; we reach Him, not by becoming entirely what He is, but in nearness to Him, and in wonderful and immaterial contact with Him, and in being inwardly illuminated and occupied by His [truth](#) and [holiness](#). He is light itself; we get enlightenment from Him. The greatest commandment, therefore, which leads to [happy](#) life, and the first, is this: "You shall [love](#) the Lord your God with all your heart, and [soul](#), and mind." For to those who [love](#) the Lord all things issue in good. Hence [Paul](#) adds shortly after, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor [angels](#), nor [virtue](#), nor things present, nor things future, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the [love](#) of [God](#), which is in [Christ Jesus our Lord](#)." [Romans 8:38-39](#) If, then, to those who [love](#) God all things issue in good, and if, as no one doubts, the chief or perfect good is not only to be loved, but to be loved so that nothing shall be loved better, as is expressed in the words, "With all your [soul](#), with all your heart, and with all your [mind](#)," who, I ask, will not at once conclude, when these things are all settled and most surely [believed](#), that our chief good which we must hasten to arrive at in preference to all other things is nothing else than God? And then, if nothing can separate us from His [love](#), must not this be surer as well as better than any other good?

19. But let us consider the points separately. No one separates us from this by threatening death. For that with which we [love](#) God cannot die, except in not loving [God](#); for death is not to [love God](#), and that is when we prefer anything to Him in affection and pursuit. No one separates us from this in promising life; for no one separates us from the fountain in promising water. Angels do not separate us; for the mind cleaving to [God](#) is not inferior in strength to an [angel](#). Virtue does not separate us; for if what is here called [virtue](#) is that which has power in this world, the mind cleaving to [God](#) is far above the whole world. Or if this [virtue](#) is perfect rectitude of our mind itself, this in the case of another will favor our union with [God](#), and in ourselves will itself unite us with [God](#). Present troubles do not separate us; for we feel their burden less the closer we cling to Him from whom they try to separate us. The promise of future things does not separate us; for both future good of every kind is surest in the promise of [God](#), and nothing is better than God Himself, who undoubtedly is already present to those who [truly](#) cleave to Him. Height and depth do not separate us; for if the height and depth of [knowledge](#) are what is meant, I will rather not be inquisitive than be separated from [God](#); nor can any instruction by which [error](#) is removed separate me from Him, by separation from whom it is that any one is in [error](#). Or if what is meant are the higher and lower parts of this world, how can the promise of heaven separate me from Him who made heaven? Or who from beneath can frighten me into forsaking [God](#), when I should not have [known](#) of things beneath but by forsaking Him? In fine, what place can remove me from His [love](#), when He could not be all in every place unless He were contained in none?

Chapter 12.—We are United to God by Love, in Subjection to Him

20. "No other creature," he says, separates us. O man of profound [mysteries](#)! He thought it not enough to say, no creature: but he says no other creature; teaching that with which

we [love](#) God and by which we cleave to [God](#), our [mind](#), namely, and understanding, is itself a creature. Thus the body is another creature; and if the mind is an object of intellectual perception, and is [known](#) only by this means, the other creature is all that is an object of sense, which as it were makes itself [known](#) through the eyes, or ears, or smell, or taste, or touch, and this must be inferior to what is perceived by the [intellect](#) alone. Now, as God also can be [known](#) by the worthy, only intellectually, exalted though He is above the intelligent mind as being its Creator and Author, there was danger lest the human [mind](#), from being reckoned among invisible and immaterial things, should be thought to be of *the same* nature with Him who created it, and so should fall away by [pride](#) from Him to whom it should be united by [love](#). For the mind becomes like [God](#), to the extent vouchsafed by its subjection of itself to Him for information and enlightenment. And if it obtains the greatest nearness by that subjection which produces likeness, it must be far removed from Him by that presumption which would make the likeness greater. It is this presumption which leads the mind to refuse [obedience](#) to the [laws](#) of [God](#), in the desire to be sovereign, as God is.

21. The farther, then, the mind departs from [God](#), not in space, but in affection and [lust](#) after things below Him, the more it is filled with folly and wretchedness. So by [love](#) it returns to [God](#),—a [love](#) which places it not along with [God](#), but under Him. And the more ardor and eagerness there is in this, the happier and more elevated will the mind be, and with God as sole governor it will be in perfect liberty. Hence it must [know](#) that it is a creature. It must [believe](#) what is the [truth](#),—that its Creator remains ever possessed of the inviolable and immutable nature of [truth](#) and wisdom, and must confess, even in view of the [errors](#) from which it desires deliverance, that it is liable to folly and [falsehood](#). But then again, it must take care that it be not separated by the [love](#) of the other creature, that is, of this visible world, from the [love](#) of God Himself, which sanctifies it in order to lasting [happiness](#). No other creature, then,—for we are ourselves a creature,—separates us from the [love](#) of God which is in [Christ Jesus our Lord](#).

Chapter 13.—We are Joined Inseparably to God by Christ and His Spirit

22. Let this same [Paul](#) tell us who is this [Christ Jesus our Lord](#). "To them that are called," he says, "we preach Christ the [virtue](#) of [God](#), and the wisdom of [God](#)." [1 Corinthians 1:23-24](#) And does not Christ Himself say, "I am the [truth](#)?" [John 14:6](#) If, then, we ask what it is to live well,—that is, to strive after [happiness](#) by living well,—it must assuredly be to [love virtue](#), to [love wisdom](#), to [love truth](#), and to [love](#) with all the heart, with all the [soul](#), and with all the mind; [virtue](#) which is inviolable and immutable, wisdom which never gives place to folly, [truth](#) which [knows](#) no change or variation from its uniform character. Through this the Father Himself is seen; for it is said, "No man comes unto the Father but by me." To this we cleave by sanctification. For when sanctified we burn with full and perfect [love](#), which is the only security for our not turning away from [God](#), and for our being conformed to Him rather than to this world; for "He has [predestinated](#) us," says the same apostle, "that we should be conformed to the image of His [Son](#)." [Romans 8:29](#)

23. It is through [love](#), then, that we become conformed to [God](#); and by this conformation, and configuration, and [circumcision](#) from this world we are not confounded with the things which are properly subject to us. And this is done by the [Holy Spirit](#). "For hope," he says, "does not confound us; for the [love](#) of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the [Holy Spirit](#), which is given unto us." [Romans 5:5](#) But we could not possibly be restored to perfection by the [Holy Spirit](#), unless He Himself continued always perfect and immutable. And this plainly could not be unless He were of the nature and of the very substance of [God](#), who alone is always possessed of immutability and invariableness. "The creature," it is affirmed, not by me but by [Paul](#), "has been made subject to vanity." [Romans 8:20](#) And what is subject to vanity is unable to separate us from vanity, and to unite us to the [truth](#). But the [Holy Spirit](#) does this for us. He is therefore no creature. For whatever is, must be either God or the creature.

Chapter 14.—We Cleave to the Trinity, Our Chief Good, by Love

24. We ought then to [love God](#), the Trinity in unity, Father, Son, and [Holy Spirit](#); for this must be said to be God Himself, for it is said of [God](#), [truly](#) and in the most exalted sense, "Of whom are all things, by whom are all things, in whom are all things." Those are [Paul's](#) words. And what does he add? "To Him be [glory](#)." [Romans 11:36](#) All this is exactly [true](#). He does not say, To them; for God is one. And what is meant by, To Him be [glory](#), but to Him be chief and perfect and widespread praise? For as the praise improves and extends, so the [love](#) and affection increases in fervor. And when this is the case, [mankind](#) cannot but advance with sure and firm step to a life of perfection and bliss. This, I suppose, is all we wish to find when we speak of the chief good of [man](#), to which all must be referred in life and conduct. For the good plainly exists; and we have shown by reasoning, as far as we were able, and by the divine authority which goes beyond our reasoning, that it is nothing else but God Himself. For how can any thing be man's chief good but that in cleaving to which he is blessed? Now this is nothing but [God](#), to whom we can cleave only by affection, desire, and [love](#).

Chapter 15.—The Christian Definition of the Four Virtues

25. As to [virtue](#) leading us to a [happy](#) life, I hold [virtue](#) to be nothing else than perfect [love](#) of [God](#). For the fourfold division of [virtue](#) I regard as taken from four forms of [love](#). For these four [virtues](#) (would that all felt their influence in their minds as they have their names in their mouths!), I should have no hesitation in defining them: that [temperance](#) is [love](#) giving itself entirely to that which is loved; [fortitude](#) is [love](#) readily bearing all things for the sake of the loved object; [justice](#) is [love](#) serving only the loved object, and therefore ruling rightly; [prudence](#) is [love](#) distinguishing with sagacity between what hinders it and what helps it. The object of this [love](#) is not anything, but only [God](#), the chief good, the highest wisdom, the perfect harmony. So we may express the definition thus: that [temperance](#) is [love](#) keeping itself entire and incorrupt for [God](#); [fortitude](#) is [love](#)

bearing everything readily for the sake of [God](#); [justice](#) is [love](#) serving God only, and therefore ruling well all else, as subject to man; [prudence](#) is [love](#) making a right distinction between what helps it towards God and what might hinder it.

Chapter 16.—Harmony of the Old and New Testaments

26. I will briefly set forth the manner of life according to these [virtues](#), one by one, after I have brought forward, as I promised, passages from the [Old Testament](#) parallel to those I have been quoting from the [New Testament](#). For is [Paul](#) alone in saying that we should be joined to God so that there should be nothing between to separate us? Does not the [prophet](#) say the same most aptly and concisely in the words, "It is [good](#) for me to cleave to God?" Does not this one word *cleave* express all that the apostle says at length about [love](#)? And do not the words, It is [good](#), point to the apostle's statement, "All things issue in good to them that [love](#) God?" Thus in one clause and in two words the [prophet](#) sets forth the power and the fruit of [love](#).

27. And as the apostle says that the [Son of God](#) is the [virtue](#) of [God](#) and the wisdom of [God](#),—[virtue](#) being understood to refer to action, and wisdom to teaching (as in the gospel these two things are expressed in the words, "All things were made by Him," which belongs to action and [virtue](#); and then, referring to teaching and the [knowledge](#) of the [truth](#), he says, "The life was the light of men" [John 1:3-4](#)),—could anything agree better with these passages than what is said in the [Old Testament](#) of wisdom, "She reaches from end to end in strength, and orders all things sweetly?" For reaching in strength expresses [virtue](#), while ordering sweetly expresses skill and method. But if this seems obscure, see what follows: "And of all," he says, "God loved her; for she teaches the [knowledge](#) of [God](#), and chooses His works." Nothing more is found here about action; for choosing works is not the same as working, so this refers to teaching. There remains action to correspond with the [virtue](#), to complete the [truth](#) we wish to prove. Read then what comes next: "But if," he says, "the possession which is desired in life is [honorable](#), what is more [honorable](#) than wisdom, which works all things?" Could anything be brought forward more striking or more distinct than this, or even more fully expressed? Or, if you wish more, hear another passage of the same meaning. "Wisdom," he says, "teaches sobriety, and [justice](#), and [virtue](#)." Sobriety refers, I think, to the [knowledge](#) of the [truth](#), or to teaching; [justice](#) and [virtue](#) to work and action. And I [know](#) nothing comparable to these two things, that is, to efficiency in action and sobriety in [contemplation](#), which the [virtue](#) of [God](#) and the wisdom of [God](#), that is, the [Son of God](#), gives to them that [love](#) Him, when the same [prophet](#) goes on to show their value; for it is thus stated: "Wisdom teaches sobriety, and [justice](#), and [virtue](#), than which nothing is more useful in life to man."

28. Perhaps some may think that those passages do not refer to the [Son of God](#). What, then, is taught in the following words: "She displays the nobility of her birth, having her dwelling with God?" [Wisdom 8:3](#) To what does birth refer but to parentage? And does not dwelling with the Father claim and assert equality? Again, as [Paul](#) says that the [Son of God](#) is the wisdom of [God](#), [1 Corinthians 1:24](#) and as the Lord Himself says, "No man [knows](#) the Father save the only-begotten Son," [Matthew 11:27](#) what could be more

concordant than those words of the [prophet](#): "With You is wisdom which [knows](#) Your works, which was present at the time of Your making the world, and [knew](#) what would be pleasing in Your eyes?" [Wisdom 9:9](#) And as Christ is called the [truth](#), which is also taught by His being called the brightness of the Father [Hebrews 1:3](#) (for there is nothing round about the sun but its brightness which is produced from it), what is there in the [Old Testament](#) more plainly and obviously in accordance with this than the words, "Your [truth](#) is round about You?" Once more, Wisdom herself says in the gospel, "No man comes unto the Father but by me;" [John 14:6](#) and the [prophet](#) says, "Who [knows](#) Your [mind](#), unless Thou givest wisdom?" and a little after, "The things pleasing to You men have learned, and have been healed by wisdom." [Wisdom 9:17-19](#)

29. [Paul](#) says, "The [love](#) of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the [Holy Spirit](#) which is given unto us;" [Romans 5:5](#) and the [prophet](#) says, "The [Holy Spirit](#) of [knowledge](#) will shun guile." [Wisdom 1:5](#) For where there is guile there is no [love](#). [Paul](#) says that we are "conformed to the image of the [Son of God](#);" [Romans 8:29](#) and the [prophet](#) says, "The light of Your countenance is stamped upon us." [Paul](#) teaches that the [Holy Spirit](#) is [God](#), and therefore is no creature; and the [prophet](#) says, "You send Your Spirit from the higher." [Wisdom 9:17](#) For God alone is the highest, than whom nothing is higher. [Paul](#) shows that the Trinity is [one God](#), when he says, "To Him be [glory](#);" [Romans 11:36](#) and in the [Old Testament](#) it is said, "Hear, O [Israel](#), the Lord your God is one God." [Deuteronomy 6:4](#)

Chapter 17.—Appeal to the Manichæans, Calling on Them to Repent

30. What more do you wish? Why do you resist [ignorantly](#) and obstinately? Why do you pervert untutored minds by your mischievous teaching? The God of both Testaments is one. For as there is an agreement in the passages quoted from both, so is there in all the rest, if you are willing to consider them carefully and impartially. But because many expressions are undignified, and so far adapted to minds creeping on the earth, that they may rise by human things to divine, while many are figurative, that the inquiring mind may have the more profit from the exertion of finding their meaning, and the more delight when it is found, you pervert this admirable arrangement of the [Holy Spirit](#) for the purpose of deceiving and ensnaring your followers. As to the reason why [divine Providence](#) permits you to do this, and as to the [truth](#) of the apostle's saying, "There must needs be many [heresies](#), that they which are approved may be made manifest among you," [1 Corinthians 11:19](#) it would take long to discuss these things, and you, with whom we have now to do, are not capable of understanding them. I [know](#) you well. To the consideration of divine things, which are far higher than you suppose, you bring minds quite gross and sickly, from being fed with material images.

31. We must therefore in your case try not to make you understand divine things, which is impossible, but to make you desire to understand. This is the work of the pure and guileless [love](#) of [God](#), which is seen chiefly in the conduct, and of which we have already said much. This [love](#), inspired by the [Holy Spirit](#), leads to the [Son](#), that is, to the wisdom

of [God](#), by which the Father Himself is [known](#). For if wisdom and [truth](#) are not sought for with the whole strength of the [mind](#), it cannot possibly be found. But when it is sought as it deserves to be, it cannot withdraw or hide itself from its lovers. Hence its words, which you too are in the [habit](#) of repeating, "Ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:" [Matthew 7:7](#) "Nothing is hid which shall not be revealed." [Matthew 10:26](#) It is [love](#) that asks, [love](#) that seeks, [love](#) that knocks, [love](#) that reveals, [love](#), too, that gives continuance in what is revealed. From this [love](#) of wisdom, and this studious inquiry, we are not debarred by the [Old Testament](#), as you always say most [falsely](#), but are exhorted to this with the greatest urgency.

32. Hear, then, at length, and consider, I [pray](#) you, what is said by the [prophet](#): "Wisdom is [glorious](#), and never fades away; yea, she is easily seen of them that [love](#) her, and found of such as seek her. She prevents them that desire her, in making herself first [known](#) unto them. Whoso seeks her early shall have no great travail; for he shall find her sitting at his doors. To think, therefore, upon her is perfection of wisdom; and whoso watches for her shall quickly be without care. For she goes about seeking such as are worthy of her, shows herself favorably unto them in the ways, and meets them in every thought. For the very [true](#) beginning of her is the desire of discipline; and the care of discipline is [love](#); and [love](#) is the keeping of her [laws](#); and the giving heed unto her [laws](#) is the assurance of incorruption; and incorruption makes us near unto [God](#). Therefore the desire of wisdom brings to a kingdom." [Wisdom 6:12-20](#) Will you still continue in dogged hostility to these things? Do not things thus stated, though not yet understood, make it evident to every one that they contain something deep and unutterable? Would that you could understand the things here said! Forthwith you would abjure all your silly legends and your unmeaning material imaginations, and with great alacrity, sincere [love](#), and full assurance of [faith](#), would betake yourselves bodily to the shelter of the most [holy](#) bosom of the [Catholic Church](#).

Chapter 18.—Only in the Catholic Church is Perfect Truth Established on the Harmony of Both Testaments

33. I could, according to the little ability I have, take up the points separately, and could expound and prove the truths I have learned, which are generally more excellent and lofty than words can express; but this cannot be done while you bark at it. For not in vain is it said, "Give not that which is [holy](#) to dogs." [Matthew 7:6](#) Do not be [angry](#). I too barked and was a dog; and then, as was right, instead of the food of teaching, I got the rod of correction. But were there in you that [love](#) of which we are speaking, or should it ever be in you as much as the greatness of the [truth](#) to be [known](#) requires, may God vouchsafe to show you that neither is there among the [Manichæans](#) the [Christian faith](#) which leads to the summit of wisdom and [truth](#), the attainment of which is the [true happy](#) life, nor is it anywhere but in the [Catholic](#) teaching. Is not this what the [Apostle Paul](#) appears to desire when he says, "For this [cause](#) I bow my knees to the Father of [our Lord Jesus Christ](#), from whom the whole [family](#) in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant unto you, according to the riches of His [glory](#), to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man: that Christ may dwell in your hearts by [faith](#); that you, being rooted and

grounded in [love](#), may be able to comprehend with all [saints](#) what is the height, and length, and breadth, and depth, and to [know](#) the [love](#) of [Christ](#), which passes [knowledge](#), that you may be filled with all the fullness of God?" [Ephesians 3:14-19](#) Could anything be more plainly expressed?

34. Wake up a little, I beseech you, and see the harmony of both Testaments, making it quite plain and certain what should be the manner of life in our conduct, and to what all things should be referred. To the [love](#) of God we are incited by the gospel, when it is said, "Ask, seek, knock;" [Matthew 7:7](#) by [Paul](#), when he says, "That ye, being rooted and grounded in [love](#), may be able to comprehend;" [Ephesians 3:7](#) by the [prophet](#) also, when he says that wisdom can easily be [known](#) by those who [love](#) it, seek for it, desire it, watch for it, think about it, care for it. The [salvation](#) of the mind and the way of [happiness](#) is pointed out by the concord of both Scriptures; and yet you choose rather to bark at these things than to [obey](#) them. I will tell you in one word what I think. Do you listen to the learned men of the [Catholic Church](#) with as peaceable a disposition, and with the same [zeal](#), that I had when for nine years I attended on you: there will be no need of so long a time as that during which you made a fool of me. In a much, a very much, shorter time you will see the difference between [truth](#) and vanity.

Chapter 19.—Description of the Duties of Temperance, According to the Sacred Scriptures

35. It is now time to return to the four [virtues](#), and to draw out and prescribe a way of life in conformity with them, taking each separately. First, then, let us consider [temperance](#), which promises us a kind of integrity and incorruption in the [love](#) by which we are united to [God](#). The office of [temperance](#) is in restraining and quieting the [passions](#) which make us pant for those things which turn us away from the [laws](#) of [God](#) and from the enjoyment of His goodness, that is, in a word, from the [happy](#) life. For there is the abode of [truth](#); and in enjoying its [contemplation](#), and in cleaving closely to it, we are assuredly [happy](#); but departing from this, men become entangled in great [errors](#) and sorrows. For, as the apostle says, "The root of all [evils](#) is [covetousness](#); which some having followed, have made shipwreck of the [faith](#), and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows." [1 Timothy 6:10](#) And this [sin](#) of the [soul](#) is quite plainly, to those rightly understanding, set forth in the [Old Testament](#) in the transgression of Adam in Paradise. Thus, as the apostle says, "In Adam we all die, and in Christ we shall all rise again." [1 Corinthians 15:22](#) Oh, the depth of these [mysteries](#)! But I refrain; for I am now engaged not in teaching you the [truth](#), but in making you unlearn your [errors](#), if I can, that is, if God aid my purpose regarding you.

36. [Paul](#) then says that [covetousness](#) is the root of all [evils](#); and by [covetousness](#) the old law also intimates that the first man fell. [Paul](#) tells us to put off the old man and put on the new. [Colossians 3:9-10](#) By the old man he means Adam who [sinned](#), and by the new man him whom the [Son of God](#) took to Himself in consecration for our redemption. For he says in another place, "The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven, heavenly. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the

heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, let us also bear the image of the heavenly," [1 Corinthians 15:47-49](#)—that is, put off the old man, and put on the new. The whole duty of [temperance](#), then, is to put off the old man, and to be renewed in [God](#),—that is, to scorn all bodily delights, and the popular applause, and to turn the whole [love](#) to things divine and unseen. Hence that following passage which is so admirable: "Though our outward man perish, our inward man is renewed day by day." [2 Corinthians 4:16](#) Hear, too, the [prophet](#) singing, "Create in me a clean heart, O [God](#), and renew a right spirit within me." What can be said against such harmony except by blind barkers?

Chapter 20.—We are Required to Despise All Sensible Things, and to Love God Alone

37. Bodily delights have their source in all those things with which the bodily sense comes in contact, and which are by some called the objects of sense; and among these the noblest is light, in the common meaning of the word, because among our senses also, which the mind uses in acting through the body, there is nothing more valuable than the eyes, and so in the [Holy Scriptures](#) all the objects of sense are spoken of as visible things. Thus in the [New Testament](#) we are warned against the [love](#) of these things in the following words: "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are [eternal](#)." [2 Corinthians 4:18](#) This shows how far from being [Christians](#) those are who hold that the sun and moon are to be not only loved but worshipped. For what is seen if the sun and moon are not? But we are forbidden to regard things which are seen. The man, therefore, who wishes to offer that incorrupt [love](#) to God must not [love](#) these things too. This subject I will inquire into more particularly elsewhere. Here my plan is to write not of [faith](#), but of the life by which we become worthy of [knowing](#) what we [believe](#). God then alone is to be loved; and all this world, that is, all sensible things, are to be despised,—while, however, they are to be used as this life requires.

Chapter 21.—Popular Renown and Inquisitiveness are Condemned in the Sacred Scriptures

38. Popular renown is thus slighted and scorned in the [New Testament](#): "If I wished," says St. [Paul](#), "to please men, I should not be the servant of [Christ](#)." [Galatians 1:10](#) Again, there is another production of the [soul](#) formed by imaginations derived from material things, and called the [knowledge](#) of things. In reference to this we are fitly warned against inquisitiveness to correct which is the great function of [temperance](#). Thus it is said, "Take heed lest any one seduce you by [philosophy](#)." And because the word [philosophy](#) originally means the [love](#) and pursuit of wisdom, a thing of great value and to be sought with the whole [mind](#), the apostle, with great [prudence](#), that he might not be thought to deter from the [love](#) of wisdom, has added the words, "And the elements of this world." [Colossians 2:8](#) For some people, neglecting [virtues](#), and [ignorant](#) of what God is, and of the majesty of nature which remains always the same, think that they are engaged

in an important business when searching with the greatest inquisitiveness and eagerness into this material mass which we call the world. This begets so much [pride](#), that they look upon themselves as inhabitants of the heaven of which they often discourse. The [soul](#), then, which purposes to keep itself chaste for God must refrain from the desire of vain [knowledge](#) like this. For this desire usually produces delusion, so that the [soul](#) thinks that nothing exists but what is material; or if, from regard to authority, it confesses that there is an immaterial [existence](#), it can think of it only under material images, and has no belief regarding it but that imposed by the bodily sense. We may apply to this the precept about fleeing from [idolatry](#).

39. To this [New Testament](#) authority, requiring us not to [love](#) anything in this world, [1 John 2:15](#) especially in that passage where it is said, "Be not conformed to this world," [Romans 12:2](#)—for the point is to show that a man is conformed to whatever he loves,—to this authority, then, if I seek for a parallel passage in the [Old Testament](#), I find several; but there is one book of Solomon, called Ecclesiastes, which at great length brings all earthly things into utter contempt. The book begins thus: "Vanity of the vain, says the Preacher, vanity of the vain; all is vanity. What profit has a man of all his labor which he takes under the sun?" [Ecclesiastes 1:2-3](#) If all these words are considered, weighed, and thoroughly examined, many things are found of essential importance to those who seek to flee from the world and to take shelter in [God](#); but this requires time and our discourse hastens on to other topics. But, after this beginning, he goes on to show in detail that the vain are those who are deceived by things of this sort; and he calls this which deceives them vanity,—not that God did not create those things, but because men choose to subject themselves by their [sins](#) to those things, which the divine law has made subject to them in well-doing. For when you consider things beneath yourself to be admirable and desirable, what is this but to be cheated and misled by unreal goods? The man, then, who is temperate in such mortal and transient things has his rule of life confirmed by both Testaments, that he should [love](#) none of these things, nor think them desirable for their own sakes, but should use them as far as is required for the purposes and duties of life, with the moderation of an employer instead of the ardor of a lover. These remarks on [temperance](#) are few in proportion to the greatness of the theme, but perhaps too many in view of the task on hand.

Chapter 22.—Fortitude Comes from the Love of God

40. On [fortitude](#) we must be brief. The [love](#), then, of which we speak, which ought with all [sanctity](#) to burn in desire for [God](#), is called [temperance](#), in not seeking for earthly things, and [fortitude](#) in bearing the loss of them. But among all things which are possessed in this life, the body is, by God's most righteous [laws](#), for the [sin](#) of old, man's heaviest bond, which is well known as a fact but most incomprehensible in its [mystery](#). Lest this bond should be shaken and disturbed, the [soul](#) is shaken with the [fear](#) of toil and pain; lest it should be lost and destroyed, the [soul](#) is shaken with the [fear](#) of death. For the [soul](#) loves it from the force of habit, not [knowing](#) that by using it well and wisely its resurrection and reformation will, by the divine help and decree, be without any trouble made subject to its authority. But when the [soul](#) turns to God wholly in this [love](#), it [knows](#) these things, and so will not only disregard death, but will even desire it.

41. Then there is the great struggle with pain. But there is nothing, though of iron hardness, which the fire of [love](#) cannot subdue. And when the mind is carried up to [God](#) in this [love](#), it will soar above all torture free and [glorious](#), with wings beautiful and unhurt, on which chaste [love](#) rises to the embrace of [God](#). Otherwise God must allow the lovers of gold, the lovers of praise, the lovers of [women](#), to have more [fortitude](#) than the lovers of Himself, though [love](#) in those cases is rather to be called passion or [lust](#). And yet even here we may see with what force the mind presses on with unflagging energy, in spite of all alarms, towards that it loves; and we learn that we should bear all things rather than forsake [God](#), since those men bear so much in order to forsake Him.

Chapter 23.—Scripture Precepts and Examples of Fortitude

42. Instead of quoting here authorities from the [New Testament](#), where it is said, "Tribulation works patience; and patience, experience and hope;" [Romans 5:3-4](#) and where, in addition to these words, there is [proof](#) and confirmation of them from the example of those who spoke them; I will rather summon an example of patience from the [Old Testament](#), against which the [Manichæans](#) make fierce assaults. Nor will I refer to the man who, in the midst of great bodily suffering, and with a dreadful disease in his limbs, not only bore human [evils](#), but discoursed of things divine. Whoever gives considerate attention to the utterances of this man, will learn from every one of them what value is to be attached to those things which men try to keep in their power, and in so doing are themselves brought by passion into bondage, so that they become the slaves of mortal things, while seeking [ignorantly](#) to be their masters. This man, in the loss of all his [wealth](#), and on being suddenly reduced to the greatest poverty, kept his mind so unshaken and fixed upon [God](#), as to manifest that these things were not great in his view, but that he was great in relation to them, and God to him. [Job 1:2](#) If this mind were to be found in men in our day, we should not be so strongly cautioned in the [New Testament](#) against the possession of these things in order that we may be perfect; for to have these things without cleaving to them is much more admirable than not to have them at all.

43. But since we are speaking here of bearing pain and bodily sufferings, I pass from this man, great as he was, indomitable as he was: this is the case of a [man](#). But these Scriptures present to me a [woman](#) of amazing [fortitude](#), and I must at once go on to her case. This [woman](#), along with seven children, allowed the tyrant and executioner to extract her vitals from her body rather than a profane word from her mouth, encouraging her sons by her exhortations, though she suffered in the tortures of their bodies, and was herself to undergo what she called on them to bear. What patience could be greater than this? And yet why should we be astonished that the [love](#) of [God](#), implanted in her inmost heart, bore up against tyrant, and executioner, and pain, and sex, and natural affection? Had she not heard, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His [saints](#)?" Had she not heard, "A patient man is better than the mightiest?" [Proverbs 16:32](#) Had she not heard, "All that is appointed you receive; and in pain bear it; and in abasement keep your patience: for in fire are gold and silver tried?" [Sirach 2:4-5](#) Had she not heard, "The fire tries the vessels of the potter, and for just men is the trial of tribulation?" [Sirach 27:6](#)

These she [knew](#), and many other precepts of [fortitude](#) written in these books, which alone [existed](#) at that time, by the same divine Spirit who writes those in the [New Testament](#).

Chapter 24.—Of Justice and Prudence

44. What of [justice](#) that pertains to God? As the Lord says, "You cannot serve two masters," [Matthew 6:24](#) and the apostle denounces those who serve the creature rather than the Creator, [Romans 1:25](#) was it not said before in the [Old Testament](#), "You shall worship the Lord your [God](#), and Him only shall you serve?" [Deuteronomy 6:13](#) I need say no more on this, for these books are full of such passages. The lover, then, whom we are describing, will get from [justice](#) this rule of life, that he must with perfect readiness serve the God whom he loves, the highest good, the highest wisdom, the highest peace; and as regards all other things, must either rule them as subject to himself, or treat them with a view to their subjection. This rule of life, is, as we have shown, confirmed by the authority of both Testaments.

45. With equal brevity we must treat of [prudence](#), to which it belongs to discern between what is to be desired and what to be shunned. Without this, nothing can be done of what we have already spoken of. It is the part of [prudence](#) to keep watch with most anxious vigilance, lest any [evil](#) influence should stealthily creep in upon us. Thus the Lord often exclaims, "Watch;" [Matthew 24:42](#) and He says, "Walk while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you." [John 12:35](#) And then it is said, "Do you not [know](#) that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?" [1 Corinthians 5:6](#) And no passage can be quoted from the [Old Testament](#) more expressly condemning this mental somnolence, which makes us insensible to destruction advancing on us step by step, than those words of the [prophet](#), "He who despises small things shall fall by degrees." [Sirach 19:1](#) On this topic I might discourse at length did our haste allow of it. And did our present task demand it, we might perhaps prove the depth of these [mysteries](#), by making a mock of which profane men in their perfect [ignorance](#) fall, not certainly by degrees, but with a headlong overthrow.

Chapter 25.—Four Moral Duties Regarding the Love of God, of Which Love the Reward is Eternal Life and the Knowledge of the Truth

46. I need say no more about right conduct. For if God is man's chief good, which you cannot deny, it clearly follows, since to seek the chief good is to live well, that to live well is nothing else but to [love](#) God with all the heart, with all the [soul](#), with all the mind; and, as arising from this, that this [love](#) must be preserved entire and incorrupt, which is the part of [temperance](#); that it give way before no troubles, which is the part of [fortitude](#); that it serve no other, which is the part of [justice](#); that it be watchful in its inspection of things lest craft or fraud steal in, which is the part of [prudence](#). This is the one perfection of [man](#), by which alone he can succeed in attaining to the purity of [truth](#). This both Testaments enjoin in concert; this is commended on both sides alike. Why do you

continue to cast reproaches on Scriptures of which you are [ignorant](#)? Do you not see the folly of your attack upon books which only those who do not understand them find fault with, and which only those who find fault fail in understanding? For neither can an enemy [know](#) them, nor can one who [knows](#) them be other than a friend to them.

47. Let us then, as many as have in view to reach [eternal](#) life, [love](#) God with all the heart, with all the [soul](#), with all the mind. For [eternal](#) life contains the whole reward in the promise of which we [rejoice](#); nor can the reward precede desert, nor be given to a man before he is worthy of it. What can be more [unjust](#) than this, and what is more just than God? We should not then demand the reward before we deserve to get it. Here, perhaps, it is not out of place to ask what is [eternal](#) life; or rather let us hear the Bestower of it: "This," He says, "is life [eternal](#), that they should [know](#) You, the [true God](#), and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." [John 17:3](#) So [eternal](#) life is the [knowledge](#) of the [truth](#). See, then, how perverse and preposterous is the character of those who think that their teaching of the [knowledge](#) of God will make us perfect, when this is the reward of those already perfect! What else, then, have we to do but first to [love](#) with full affection Him whom we desire to [know](#)? Hence arises that principle on which we have all along insisted, that there is nothing more wholesome in the [Catholic Church](#) than using authority before argument.

Chapter 26.—Love of Ourselves and of Our Neighbor

48. To proceed to what remains. It may be thought that there is nothing here about man himself, the lover. But to think this, shows a want of clear perception. For it is impossible for one who loves God not to [love](#) himself. For he alone has a proper [love](#) for himself who aims diligently at the attainment of the chief and [true](#) good; and if this is nothing else but [God](#), as has been shown, what is to prevent one who loves God from loving himself? And then, among [men](#) should there be no bond of mutual [love](#)? Yea, verily; so that we can think of no surer step towards the [love](#) of God than the [love](#) of man to man.

49. Let the Lord then supply us with the other precept in answer to the question about the precepts of life; for He was not satisfied with one as [knowing](#) that God is one thing and man another, and that the difference is nothing less than that between the Creator and the thing created in the likeness of its Creator. He says then that the second precept is, "You shall [love](#) your neighbor as yourself." [Matthew 22:39](#) Now you [love](#) yourself suitably when you [love](#) God better than yourself. What, then, you aim at in yourself you must aim at in your neighbor, namely, that he may [love](#) God with a perfect affection. For you do not [love](#) him as yourself, unless you try to draw him to that good which you are yourself pursuing. For this is the one good which has room for all to pursue it along with you. From this precept proceed the duties of human society, in which it is hard to keep from [error](#). But the first thing to aim at is, that we should be benevolent, that is, that we cherish no [malice](#) and no [evil](#) design against another. For man is the nearest neighbor of man.

50. Hear also what [Paul](#) says: "The [love](#) of our neighbor," he says, "works no ill." [Romans 13:10](#) The testimonies here made use of are very short, but, if I mistake not, they are to the point, and sufficient for the purpose. And every one [knows](#) how many and how

weighty are the words to be found everywhere in these books on the [love](#) of our neighbor. But as a man may [sin](#) against another in two ways, either by injuring him or by not helping him when it is in his power, and as it is for these things which no loving man would do that men are called [wicked](#), all that is required is, I think, [proved](#) by these words, "The [love](#) of our neighbor works no ill." And if we cannot attain to good unless we first desist from working [evil](#), our [love](#) of our neighbor is a sort of cradle of our [love](#) to [God](#), so that, as it is said, "the [love](#) of our neighbor works no ill," we may rise from this to these other words, "We [know](#) that all things issue in good to them that [love](#) God." [Romans 8:28](#)

51. But there is a sense in which these either rise together to fullness and perfection, or, while the [love](#) of God is first in beginning, the [love](#) of our neighbor is first in coming to perfection. For perhaps divine [love](#) takes hold on us more rapidly at the outset, but we reach perfection more easily in lower things. However that may be, the main point is this, that no one should think that while he despises his neighbor he will come to [happiness](#) and to the God whom he loves. And would that it were as easy to seek the good of our neighbor, or to avoid hurting him, as it is for one well trained and kind-hearted to [love](#) his neighbor! These things require more than mere good-will, and can be done only by a high degree of thoughtfulness and [prudence](#), which belongs only to those to whom it is given by [God](#), the source of all good. On this topic—which is one, I think, of great difficulty—I will try to say a few words such as my plan admits of, resting all my hope in Him whose gifts these are.

Chapter 27.—On Doing Good to the Body of Our Neighbor

52. Man, then, as viewed by his fellow-man, is a rational [soul](#) with a mortal and earthly body in its service. Therefore he who loves his neighbor does good partly to the man's body, and partly to his [soul](#). What benefits the body is called medicine; what benefits the [soul](#), discipline. Medicine here includes everything that either preserves or restores bodily health. It includes, therefore, not only what belongs to the art of medical men, properly so called, but also food and drink, clothing and shelter, and every means of covering and protection to guard our bodies against injuries and mishaps from without as well as from within. For hunger and thirst, and cold and heat, and all [violence](#) from without, produce loss of that health which is the point to be considered.

53. Hence those who seasonably and wisely supply all the things required for warding off these [evils](#) and distresses are called compassionate, although they may have been so wise that no painful feeling disturbed their mind in the exercise of compassion. No [doubt](#) the word compassionate implies suffering in the heart of the man who feels for the sorrow of another. And it is equally [true](#) that a wise man ought to be free from all painful emotion when he assists the needy, when he gives food to the hungry and water to the thirsty, when he clothes the naked, when he takes the stranger into his house, when he sets free the oppressed, when, lastly, he extends his charity to the dead in giving them burial. Still the epithet compassionate is a proper one, although he acts with tranquillity of [mind](#), not

from the stimulus of painful feeling, but from motives of benevolence. There is no harm in the word compassionate when there is no passion in the case.

54. Fools, again, who avoid the exercise of compassion as a [vice](#), because they are not sufficiently moved by a sense of duty without feeling also distressful emotion, are frozen into hard insensibility, which is very different from the calm of a rational serenity. [God](#), on the other hand, is properly called compassionate; and the sense in which He is so will be understood by those whom [piety](#) and diligence have made fit to understand. There is a danger lest, in using the words of the learned, we harden the [souls](#) of the unlearned by leading them away from compassion instead of softening them with the desire of a charitable disposition. As compassion, then, requires us to ward off these distresses from others, so harmlessness forbids the infliction of them.

Chapter 28.—On Doing Good to the Soul of Our Neighbor. Two Parts of Discipline, Restraint and Instruction. Through Good Conduct We Arrive at the Knowledge of the Truth

55. As regards discipline, by which the health of the mind is restored, without which bodily health avails nothing for security against misery, the subject is one of great difficulty. And as in the body we said it is one thing to cure diseases and wounds, which few can do properly, and another thing to meet the cravings of hunger and thirst, and to give assistance in all the other ways in which any man may at any time help another; so in the mind there are some things in which the high and rare offices of the teacher are not much called for,—as, for instance, in advice and exhortation to give to the needy the things already mentioned as required for the body. To give such advice is to aid the mind by discipline, as giving the things themselves is aiding the body by our resources. But there are other cases where diseases of the [mind](#), many and various in kind, are healed in a way strange and indescribable. Unless His medicine were sent from heaven to [men](#), so heedlessly do they go on in [sin](#), there would be no hope of [salvation](#); and, indeed, even bodily health, if you go to the root of the matter, can have come to men from none but [God](#), who gives to all things their being and their well-being.

56. This discipline, then, which is the medicine of the [mind](#), as far as we can gather from the sacred Scriptures, includes two things, restraint and instruction. Restraint implies [fear](#), and instruction [love](#), in the person benefited by the discipline; for in the giver of the benefit there is the [love](#) without the [fear](#). In both of these God Himself, by whose goodness and mercy it is that we are anything, has given us in the two Testaments a rule of discipline. For though both are found in both Testaments, still [fear](#) is prominent in the Old, and [love](#) in the New; which the apostle calls bondage in the one, and liberty in the other. Of the marvellous order and divine harmony of these Testaments it would take long to speak, and many [pious](#) and learned men have discoursed on it. The theme demands many books to set it forth and explain it as far as is possible for man. He, then, who loves his neighbor endeavors all he can to procure his safety in body and in [soul](#),

making the health of the mind the standard in his treatment of the body. And as regards the [mind](#), his endeavors are in this order, that he should first [fear](#) and then [love](#) God. This is [true](#) excellence of conduct, and thus the [knowledge](#) of the [truth](#) is acquired which we are ever in the pursuit of.

57. The [Manichæans](#) agree with me as regards the duty of loving God and our neighbor, but they deny that this is taught in the [Old Testament](#). How greatly they [err](#) in this is, I think, clearly shown by the passages quoted above on both these duties. But, in a single word, and one which only stark [madness](#) can oppose, do they not see the unreasonableness of denying that these very two precepts which they commend are quoted by the Lord in the [Gospel](#) from the [Old Testament](#), "You shall [love](#) the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your [soul](#), and with all your mind;" and the other, "Thou shall [love](#) your neighbor as yourself?" Or if they dare not deny this, from the light of [truth](#) being too strong for them, let them deny that these precepts are salutary; let them deny, if they can, that they teach the best morality; let them assert that it is not a duty to [love God](#), or to [love](#) our neighbor; that all things do not issue in good to them that [love God](#); that it is not [true](#) that the [love](#) of our neighbor works no ill (a two-fold regulation of human life which is most salutary and excellent). By such assertions they cut themselves off not only from [Christians](#), but from [mankind](#). But if they dare not speak thus, but must confess the divinity of the precepts, why do they not desist from assailing and maligning with horrible profanity the books from which they are quoted?

58. Will they say, as they often do, that although we find these precepts in the books, it does not follow that all is [good](#) that is found there? How to meet and refute this quibble I do not well see. Shall I discuss the words of the [Old Testament](#) one by one, to prove to stubborn and [ignorant](#) men their perfect agreement with the [New Testament](#)? But when will this be done? When shall I have time, or they patience? What, then, is to be done? Shall I desert the [cause](#), and leave them to escape detection in an opinion which, though false and impious, is hard to disprove? I will not. God will Himself be at hand to aid me; nor will He suffer me in those straits to remain helpless or forsaken.

Chapter 29.—Of the Authority of the Scriptures

59. Attend, then, you [Manichæans](#), if perchance there are some of you of whom your [superstition](#) has hold so as to allow you yet to escape. Attend, I say, without obstinacy, without the desire to oppose, otherwise your decision will be fatal to yourselves. No one can [doubt](#), and you are not so lost to the [truth](#) as not to understand that if it is [good](#), as all allow, to [love](#) God and our neighbor, whatever hangs on these two precepts cannot rightly be pronounced bad. What it is that hangs on them it would be absurd to think of learning from me. Hear Christ Himself; hear Christ, I say; hear the Wisdom of God: "On these two commandments," He says, "hang all the law and the [prophets](#)." [Matthew 22:40](#)

60. What can the most shameless obstinacy say to this? That these are not Christ's words? But they are written in the [Gospel](#) as His words. That the writing is false? Is not this most profane [blasphemy](#)? Is it not most presumptuous to speak thus? Is it not most foolhardy? Is it not most criminal? The worshippers of [idols](#), who [hate](#) even the name of [Christ](#),

never dared to speak thus against these Scriptures. For the utter overthrow of all literature will follow, and there will be an end to all books handed down from the past, if what is supported by such a strong popular belief and established by the uniform testimony of so many men and so many times, is brought into such suspicion, that it is not allowed to have the credit and the authority of common history. In fine, what can you quote from any writings of which I may not speak in this way if it is quoted against my opinion and my purpose?

61. And is it not intolerable that they forbid us to [believe](#) a book widely [known](#) and placed now in the hands of all, while they insist on our believing the book which they quote? If any writing is to be suspected, what should be more so than one which has not merited notoriety, or which may be throughout a [forgery](#), bearing a false name? If you force such a writing on me against my will, and make a display of authority to drive me into belief, shall I, when I have a writing which I see spread far and wide for a length of time, and sanctioned by the concordant testimony of churches scattered over all the world, degrade myself by doubting, and, worse degradation, by doubting at your suggestion? Even if you brought forward other readings, I should not receive them unless supported by general agreement; and this being the case, do you think that now, when you bring forward nothing to compare with the text except your own silly and inconsiderate statement, [mankind](#) are so unreasonable and so forsaken by [divine Providence](#) as to prefer to those Scriptures not others quoted by you in refutation, but merely your own words? You ought to bring forward another manuscript with the same contents, but incorrupt and more correct, with only the passage wanting which you charge with being spurious. For example, if you hold that the Epistle of [Paul](#) to the Romans is spurious, you must bring forward another incorrupt, or rather another manuscript with the same epistle of the same apostle, free from [error](#) and corruption. You say you will not, lest you be suspected of corrupting it. This is your usual reply, and a [true](#) one. Were you to do this, we should assuredly have this very suspicion; and all [men](#) of any sense would have it too. See then what you are to think of your own authority; and consider whether it is right to [believe](#) your words against these Scriptures, when the simple fact that a manuscript is brought forward by you makes it dangerous to put [faith](#) in it.

Chapter 30.—The Church Apostrophised as Teacher of All Wisdom. Doctrine of the Catholic Church

62. But why say more on this? For who but sees that men who dare to speak thus against the [Christian](#) Scriptures, though they may not be what they are suspected of being, are at least no [Christians](#)? For to [Christians](#) this rule of life is given, that we should [love](#) the Lord Our God with all the heart, with all the [soul](#), and with all the [mind](#), and our neighbor as ourselves; for on these two commandments hang all the law and the [prophets](#). Rightly, then, [Catholic Church](#), most [true](#) mother of [Christians](#), do you not only teach that God alone, to find whom is the happiest life, must be worshipped in perfect purity and [chastity](#), bringing in no creature as an object of adoration whom we should be required to serve; and from that incorrupt and inviolable [eternity](#) to which alone man should be made

subject, in cleaving to which alone the rational [soul](#) escapes misery, excluding everything made, everything liable to change, everything under the power of time; without confounding what [eternity](#), and [truth](#), and peace itself keeps separate, or separating what a common majesty unites: but you also contain [love](#) and charity to our neighbor in such a way, that for all kinds of diseases with which [souls](#) are for their [sins](#) afflicted, there is found with you a medicine of prevailing efficacy.

63. Your training and teaching are childlike for children, forcible for youths, peaceful for the aged, taking into account the age of the mind as well as of the body. Thou subjectest [women](#) to their husbands in chaste and faithful [obedience](#), not to gratify passion, but for the propagation of offspring, and for domestic society. Thou givest to men authority over their wives, not to mock the weaker sex, but in the [laws](#) of unfeigned [love](#). Thou dost subordinate children to their [parents](#) in a kind of free bondage, and dost set [parents](#) over their children in a godly rule. Thou bindest brothers to brothers in a religious tie stronger and closer than that of blood. Without violation of the connections of nature and of choice, you bring within the bond of mutual [love](#) every relationship of kindred, and every alliance of affinity. Thou teachest servants to cleave to their masters from delight in their task rather than from the necessity of their position. Thou renderest masters forbearing to their servants, from a regard to God their common Master, and more disposed to advise than to compel. Thou unitest citizen to citizen, nation to nation, yea, man to [man](#), from the recollection of their first [parents](#), not only in society but in fraternity. Thou teachest kings to seek the good of their peoples; you counsel peoples to be subject to their kings. Thou teachest carefully to whom [honor](#) is due, to whom regard, to whom reverence, to whom [fear](#), to whom consolation, to whom admonition, to whom encouragement, to whom discipline, to whom rebuke, to whom punishment; showing both how all are not due to all, and how to all [love](#) is due, and how injury is due to none.

64. Then, after this human [love](#) has nourished and invigorated the mind cleaving to your breast, and fitted it for following [God](#), when the divine majesty has begun to disclose itself as far as suffices for man while a dweller on the earth, such fervent charity is produced, and such a flame of divine [love](#) is kindled, that by the burning out of all [vices](#), and by the purification and sanctification of the man, it becomes plain how divine are these words, "I am a consuming fire," and, "I have come to send fire on the earth." [Luke 12:49](#) These two utterances of one God stamped on both Testaments, exhibit with harmonious testimony, the sanctification of the [soul](#), pointing forward to the accomplishment of that which is also quoted in the [New Testament](#) from the Old: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your sting? Where, O death, is your contest?" Could these [heretics](#) understand this one saying, no longer [proud](#) but quite reconciled, they would worship God nowhere but with you and in your bosom. In you, as is fit, divine precepts are kept by widely-scattered multitudes. In you, as is fit, it is well understood how much more heinous [sin](#) is when the law is [known](#) than when it is unknown. For "the sting of death is [sin](#), and the strength of [sin](#) is the law," [1 Corinthians 15:56](#) which adds to the force with which the consciousness of disregard of the precept strikes and slays. In you it is seen, as is fit, how vain is effort under the law, when [lust](#) lays waste the [mind](#), and is held in check by [fear](#) of punishment, instead of being overborne by the [love](#) of [virtue](#). Yours, as is fit, are the many hospitable, the many

friendly, the many compassionate, the many learned, the many chaste, the many [saints](#), the many so ardent in their [love](#) to [God](#), that in perfect continence and amazing indifference to this world they find [happiness](#) even in solitude.

Chapter 31.—The Life of the Anachoretēs and Cœnobites Set Against the Continence of the Manichæans

65. What must we think is seen by those who can live without seeing their fellow-creatures, though not without loving them? It must be something transcending human things in contemplating which man can live without seeing his fellow-man. Hear now, you [Manichæans](#), the customs and notable continence of perfect [Christians](#), who have thought it right not only to praise but also to practise the height of [chastity](#), that you may be restrained, if there is any shame in you, from vaunting your abstinence before uninstructed minds as if it were the hardest of all things. I will speak of things of which you are not [ignorant](#), though you hide them from us. For who does not [know](#) that there is a daily increasing multitude of [Christian](#) men of absolute continence spread all over the world, especially in the East and in [Egypt](#), as you cannot help [knowing](#)?

66. I will say nothing of those to whom I just now alluded, who, in complete seclusion from the view of [men](#), inhabit regions utterly barren, content with simple bread, which is brought to them periodically, and with water, enjoying communion with [God](#), to whom in purity of mind they cleave, and most [blessed](#) in contemplating His beauty, which can be seen only by the understanding of [saints](#). I will say nothing of them, because some people think them to have abandoned human things more than they ought, not considering how much those may benefit us in their minds by [prayer](#), and in their lives by example, whose bodies we are not permitted to see. But to discuss this point would take long, and would be fruitless; for if a man does not of his own accord regard this high pitch of [sanctity](#) as admirable and [honorable](#), how can our speaking lead him to do so? Only the [Manichæans](#), who make a boast of nothing, should be reminded that the abstinence and continence of the great [saints](#) of the [Catholic Church](#) has gone so far, that some think it should be checked and recalled within the limits of humanity,—so far above men, even in the judgment of those who disapprove, have their minds soared.

67. But if this is beyond our tolerance, who can but admire and commend those who, slighting and discarding the pleasures of this world, living together in a most chaste and [holy](#) society, unite in passing their time in [prayers](#), in readings, in discussions, without any swelling of [pride](#), or noise of contention, or sullenness of [envy](#); but quiet, modest, peaceful, their life is one of perfect harmony and devotion to [God](#), an offering most acceptable to Him from whom the power to do those things is obtained? No one possesses anything of his own; no one is a burden to another. They work with their hands in such occupations as may feed their bodies without distracting their minds from [God](#). The product of their toil they give to the decans or tithesmen,—so called from being set over the [tithes](#),—so that no one is occupied with the care of his body, either in food or clothes, or in anything else required for daily use or for the common ailments. These

decans, again, arranging everything with great care, and meeting promptly the demands made by that life on account of bodily infirmities, have one called "father," to whom they give in their accounts. These fathers are not only more saintly in their conduct, but also distinguished for divine learning, and of high character in every way; and without [pride](#) they superintend those whom they call their children, having themselves great authority in giving orders, and meeting with willing [obedience](#) from those under their charge. At the close of the day they assemble from their separate dwellings before their meal to hear their father, assembling to the number of three thousand at least for one father; for one may have even a much larger number than this. They listen with astonishing eagerness in perfect silence, and give expression to the feelings of their minds as moved by the words of the preacher, in groans, or tears, or signs of [joy](#) without noise or shouting. Then there is refreshment for the body, as much as health and a sound condition of the body requires, every one checking unlawful appetite, so as not to go to excess even in the [poor](#), inexpensive fare provided. So they not only abstain from flesh and wine, in order to gain the mastery over their [passions](#), but also from those things which are only the more likely to whet the appetite of the palate and of the stomach, from what some call their greater cleanness, which often serves as a ridiculous and disgraceful excuse for an unseemly taste for exquisite viands, as distant from animal food. Whatever they possess in addition to what is required for their support (and much is obtained, owing to their industry and frugality), they distribute to the needy with greater care than they took in procuring it for themselves. For while they make no effort to obtain abundance, they make every effort to prevent their abundance remaining with them,—so much so, that they send shiploads to places inhabited by poor people. I need say no more on a matter [known](#) to all.

68. Such, too, is the life of the [women](#), who serve God assiduously and chastely, living apart and removed as far as propriety demands from the men, to whom they are united only in [pious](#) affection and in imitation of [virtue](#). No young men are allowed access to them, nor even old men, however respectable and approved, except to the porch, in order to furnish necessary supplies. For the [women](#) occupy and maintain themselves by working in wool, and hand over the cloth to the brethren, from whom, in return, they get what they need for food. Such customs, such a life, such arrangements, such a system, I could not commend as it deserves, if I wished to commend it; besides, I am afraid that it would seem as if I thought it unlikely to gain acceptance from the mere description of it, if I considered myself [obliged](#) to add an ornamental eulogium to the simple narrative. You [Manichæans](#), find fault here if you can. Do not bring into prominence our tares before men too blind to discriminate.

Chapter 32.—Praise of the Clergy

69. There is not, however, such narrowness in the moral excellence of the [Catholic Church](#) as that I should limit my praise of it to the life of those here mentioned. For how many [bishops](#) have I [known](#) most excellent and [holy](#) men, how many [presbyters](#), how many [deacons](#), and ministers of all kinds of the divine [sacraments](#), whose [virtue](#) seems to me more admirable and more worthy of commendation on account of the greater difficulty of preserving it amidst the manifold varieties of [men](#), and in this life of turmoil! For they preside over men needing cure as much as over those already cured. The [vices](#)

of the crowd must be borne with in order that they may be cured, and the plague must be endured before it is subdued. To keep here the best way of life and a [mind](#) calm and peaceful is very hard. Here, in a word, we are among people who are learning to live. There they live.

Chapter 33.—Another Kind of Men Living Together in Cities. Fasts of Three Days

70. Still I would not on this account cast a slight upon a praiseworthy class of [Christians](#),—those, namely, who live together in cities, quite apart from common life. I saw at Milan a lodging-house of [saints](#), in number not a few, presided over by one [presbyter](#), a man of great excellence and learning. At Rome I [knew](#) several places where there was in each one eminent for weight of character, and [prudence](#), and divine [knowledge](#), presiding over all the rest who lived with him, in [Christian](#) charity, and [sanctity](#), and liberty. These, too, are not burdensome to any one; but, in the Eastern fashion, and on the authority of the [Apostle Paul](#), they maintain themselves with their own hands. I was told that many practised [fasts](#) of quite amazing severity, not merely taking only one meal daily towards night, which is everywhere quite common, but very often continuing for three days or more in succession without food or drink. And this among not men only, but [women](#), who also live together in great numbers as [widows](#) or [virgins](#), gaining a livelihood by spinning and weaving, and presided over in each case by a [woman](#) of the greatest judgment and experience, skilled and accomplished not only in directing and forming moral conduct, but also in instructing the understanding.

71. With all this, no one is pressed to endure hardships for which he is unfit; nothing is imposed on any one against his will; nor is he condemned by the rest because he confesses himself too feeble to imitate them: for they bear in mind how strongly Scripture enjoins charity on all: they bear in mind "To the pure all things are pure," [Titus 1:15](#) and "Not that which enters into your mouth defiles you, but that which comes out of it." [Matthew 15:11](#) Accordingly, all their endeavors are concerned not about the rejection of kinds of food as polluted, but about the subjugation of inordinate desire and the maintenance of brotherly [love](#). They remember, "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats; but God shall destroy both it and them;" [1 Corinthians 6:13](#) and again, "Neither if we eat shall we abound, nor if we refrain from eating shall we be in want;" [1 Corinthians 8:8](#) and, above all, this: "It is [good](#), my brethren, not to eat flesh, nor drink wine, nor anything whereby your brother is offended;" for this passage shows that [love](#) is the end to be aimed at in all these things. "For one man," he says, "believes that he can eat all things: another, who is weak, eats herbs. He that eats, let him not despise him that eats not; and let not him that eats not judge him that eats: for God has approved him. Who are you that you should judge another man's servant? To his own master he stands or fails; but he shall stand: for God is able to make him to stand." And a little after: "He that eats, to the Lord he eats, and gives God thanks; and he that eats not, to the Lord he eats not, and gives God thanks." And also in what follows: "So every one of us shall give account of himself to [God](#). Let us not, then, any more judge one another: but judge this rather, that you place no stumbling-block, or [cause](#) of offence, in the way of a brother. I

[know](#), and am confident in the [Lord Jesus](#), that there is nothing common in itself: but to him that thinks anything to be common, to him it is common." Could he have shown better that it is not in the things we eat, but in the [mind](#), that there is a power able to pollute it, and therefore that even those who are fit to think lightly of these things, and [know](#) perfectly that they are not polluted if they take any food in mental superiority, without being [gluttons](#), should still have regard to charity? See what he adds: "For if your brother be grieved with your meat, now you do not walk charitably." [Romans 14:2-21](#)

72. Read the rest: it is too long to quote all. You will find that those able to think lightly of such things,—that is, those of greater strength and stability,—are told that they must nevertheless abstain, lest those should be offended who from their weakness are still in need of such abstinence. The people I was describing [know](#) and observe these things; for they are [Christians](#), not [heretics](#). They understand Scripture according to the apostolic teaching, not according to the presumptuous and fictitious name of apostle. Him that eats not no one despises; him that eats no one judges; he who is weak eats herbs. Many who are strong, however, do this for the sake of the weak; with many the reason for so doing is not this, but that they may have a cheaper diet, and may lead a life of the greatest tranquillity, with the least expensive provision for the support of the body. "For all things are lawful for me," he says; "but I will not be brought under the power of any."

[1 Corinthians 6:12](#) Thus many do not eat flesh, and yet do not superstitiously regard it as unclean. And so the same people who abstain when in health take it when unwell without any [fear](#), if it is required as a cure. Many drink no wine; but they do not think that wine defiles them; for they [cause](#) it to be given with the greatest propriety and moderation to people of languid temperament, and, in short, to all who cannot have bodily health without it. When some foolishly refuse it, they counsel them as brothers not to let a silly [superstition](#) make them weaker instead of making them holier. They read to them the apostle's precept to his [disciple](#) to "take a little wine for his many infirmities."

[1 Timothy 5:23](#) Then they diligently exercise [piety](#); bodily exercise, they [know](#), profits for a short time, as the same apostle says. [1 Timothy 4:8](#)

73. Those, then who are able, and they are without number, abstain both from flesh and from wine for two reasons: either for the weakness of their brethren, or for their own liberty. Charity is principally attended to. There is charity in their choice of diet, charity in their speech, charity in their dress, charity in their looks. Charity is the point where they meet, and the plan by which they act. To transgress against charity is thought criminal, like transgressing against God. Whatever opposes this is attacked and expelled; whatever injures it is not allowed to continue for a single day. They [know](#) that it has been so enjoyed by Christ and the [apostles](#); that without it all things are empty, with it all are fulfilled.

Chapter 34.—The Church is Not to Be Blamed for the Conduct of Bad Christians, Worshippers of Tombs and Pictures

74. Make objections against these, you [Manichæans](#), if you can. Look at these people, and speak of them reproachfully, if you dare, without [falsehood](#). Compare their [fasts](#) with your [fasts](#), their [chastity](#) with yours; compare them to yourselves in dress, food, self-restraint, and, lastly, in charity. Compare, which is most to the point, their precepts with yours. Then you will see the difference between show and sincerity, between the right way and the wrong, between [faith](#) and imposture, between strength and inflatedness, between [happiness](#) and wretchedness, between unity and disunion; in short, between the sirens of [superstition](#) and the harbor of religion.

75. Do not summon against me professors of the [Christian](#) name, who neither [know](#) nor give evidence of the power of their profession. Do not hunt up the numbers of [ignorant](#) people, who even in the [true](#) religion are superstitious, or are so given up to [evil passions](#) as to forget what they have promised to [God](#). I [know](#) that there are many worshippers of tombs and pictures. I [know](#) that there are many who drink to great excess over the dead, and who, in the feasts which they make for corpses, bury themselves over the buried, and give to their [gluttony](#) and [drunkenness](#) the name of religion. I [know](#) that there are many who in words have renounced this world, and yet desire to be burdened with all the weight of worldly things, and [rejoice](#) in such burdens. Nor is it surprising that among so many multitudes you should find some by condemning whose life you may deceive the unwary and seduce them from [Catholic](#) safety; for in your small numbers you are at a loss when called on to show even one out of those whom you call the elect who keeps the precepts, which in your indefensible [superstition](#) you profess. How silly those are, how impious, how mischievous, and to what extent they are neglected by most, nearly all of you, I have shown in another volume.

76. My advice to you now is this: that you should at least desist from [slandering](#) the [Catholic Church](#), by declaiming against the conduct of men whom the Church herself condemns, seeking daily to correct them as [wicked](#) children. Then, if any of them by good will and by the help of God are corrected, they regain by repentance what they had lost by [sin](#). Those, again, who with [wicked](#) will persist in their old [vices](#), or even add to them others still worse, are indeed allowed to remain in the field of the Lord, and to grow along with the good seed; but the time for separating the tares will come. Or if, from their having at least the [Christian](#) name, they are to be placed among the chaff rather than among thistles, there will also come One to purge the floor and to separate the chaff from the wheat, and to assign to each part (according to its desert) the due reward.

Chapter 35.—Marriage and Property Allowed to the Baptized by the Apostles

77. Meanwhile, why do you rage? why does party spirit blind your eyes? Why do you entangle yourselves in a long defence of such great [error](#)? Seek for fruit in the field, seek for wheat in the floor: they will be found easily, and will present themselves to the inquirer. Why do you look so exclusively at the dross? Why do you use the roughness of the hedge to scare away the inexperienced from the fatness of the garden? There is a proper entrance, though [known](#) to but a few; and by it men come in, though you

disbelieve it, or do not wish to find it. In the [Catholic Church](#) there are [believers](#) without number who do not use the world, and there are those who "use it," in the words of the apostle, "as not using it," [1 Corinthians 7:31](#) as was [proved](#) in those times when [Christians](#) were forced to worship [idols](#). For then, how many [wealthy](#) men, how many peasant householders, how many merchants, how many military men, how many leading men in their own cities, and how many senators, people of both sexes, giving up all these empty and transitory things, though while they used them they were not bound down by them, endured death for the salutary [faith](#) and religion, and [proved](#) to unbelievers that instead of being possessed by all these things they really possessed them?

78. Why do you reproach us by saying that men renewed in [baptism](#) ought no longer to beget children, or to possess fields, and houses, and money? [Paul](#) allows it. For, as cannot be denied, he wrote to [believers](#), after recounting many kinds of [evil](#)-doers who shall not possess the kingdom of God: "And such were you," he says: "but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the [Lord Jesus Christ](#) and by the Spirit of our God." By the washed and sanctified, no one, assuredly, will venture to think any are meant but [believers](#), and those who have renounced this world. But, after showing to whom he writes, let us see whether he allows these things to them. He goes on: "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Meat for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. But God raised up the Lord, and will raise us up also by His own power. Do you not [know](#) that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of [Christ](#), and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. Do you not [know](#) that he which is joined to an harlot is made one body? for the twain, says He, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Whatever [sin](#) a man does is without the body: but he that commits fornication [against his own body](#). [Do you not know](#) that your members are the temple of the [Holy Spirit](#) which is in you, which you have of [God](#), and you are not your own? For you are bought with a great price: glorify [God](#), and carry Him in your body." [1 Corinthians 6:11-20](#) "But of the things concerning which you wrote to me: it is [good](#) for a man not to touch a [woman](#). Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every [woman](#) have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife has not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband has not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that you may have leisure for [prayer](#); and come together again, that [Satan](#) tempt you not for your incontinency. But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment. For I would that all [men](#) were even as I myself: but every man has his proper gift of [God](#), one after this manner, and another after that." [1 Corinthians 7:1-7](#)

79. Has the apostle, think you, both shown sufficiently to the strong what is highest, and permitted to the weaker what is next best? Not to touch a [woman](#) he shows is highest when he says, "I would that all [men](#) were even as I myself." But next to this highest is conjugal [chastity](#), that man may not be the prey of fornication. Did he say that these people were not yet [believers](#) because they were married? Indeed, by this conjugal

[chastity](#) he says that those who are united are sanctified by one another, if one of them is an unbeliever, and that their children also are sanctified. "The unbelieving husband," he says, "is sanctified by the believing wife, and the unbelieving [woman](#) by the believing husband: otherwise your children would be unclean; but now are they [holy](#)."

[1 Corinthians 7:14](#) Why do you persist in opposition to such plain [truth](#)? Why do you try to darken the light of Scripture by vain shadows?

80. Do not say that [catechumens](#) are allowed to have wives, but not [believers](#); that [catechumens](#) may have money, but not [believers](#). For there are many who use as not using. And in that sacred washing the renewal of the new man is begun so as gradually to reach perfection, in some more quickly, in others more slowly. The progress, however, to a new life is made in the case of many, if we view the matter without hostility, but attentively. As the apostle says of himself, "Though the outward man perish, the inward man is renewed day by day." [2 Corinthians 4:16](#) The apostle says that the inward man is renewed day by day that it may reach perfection; and you wish it to begin with perfection! And it were well if you did wish it. In reality, you aim not at raising the weak, but at misleading the unwary. You ought not to have spoken so arrogantly, even if it were [known](#) that you are perfect in your childish precepts. But when your [conscience knows](#) that those whom you bring into your [sect](#), when they come to a more intimate acquaintance with you, will find many things in you which nobody hearing you accuse others would suspect, is it not great impertinence to demand perfection in the weaker [Catholics](#), to turn away the inexperienced from the [Catholic Church](#), while you show nothing of the kind in yourself to those thus turned away? But not to seem to inveigh against you without reason, I will now close this volume, and will proceed at last to set forth the precepts of your life and your notable customs.