

*THE FATHERS
OF THE CHURCH*

A NEW TRANSLATION

VOLUME 56

THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH

A NEW TRANSLATION

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*SAIN*T *AUGUSTINE*
THE CATHOLIC AND
MANICHAEAN WAYS OF
LIFE

(DE MORIBUS ECCLESIAE CATHOLICAE
ET DE MORIBUS MANICHAEORUM)

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*THE CATHOLIC AND
MANICHAEAN WAYS OF
LIFE*

(DE MORIBUS ECCLESIAE CATHOLICAE
ET DE MORIBUS MANICHAEORUM)



INTRODUCTION

THE DE MORIBUS ECCLESIAE CATHOLICAE and the *De Moribus Manichaeorum* (written in 388 and revised in 390) belong to the first period of St. Augustine's literary activity as a Christian, extending from the time of his conversion in 386 to that of his ordination in 391. It was during this period also that St. Augustine wrote the so-called philosophical dialogues, such as the *De beata vita* (386) and the *De magistro* (389). Paulinus of Nola referred to the two books on moral teaching and practices, together with the *De libero arbitrio* (388-395), the *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* (388-390), and the *De vera religione* (389-391) as the *Pentateuchum contra Manichaeos* of St. Augustine.¹ Other important works in which Augustine treats the doctrines of the Manichaeans include *De utilitate credendi* (391-392), *De duabus animabus contra Manichaeos* (391-392), *Disputatio contra Fortunatum* (392), *Contra Adimantum Manichaei discipulum* (393-396), *Contra epistolam Manichaei quam vocant fundamenti* (397), *Contra Faustum Manichaeum XXXIII* (400), *De actis cum Felice Manichaeo* (404), *De natura boni contra Manichaeos* (405), and *Contra Secundinum Manichaeum* (405-406).² The dates indicate that St. Augustine continued to refute this formidable heresy (which he also treats briefly in *De haeresibus ad Quodvultdeum*, dated 428) long after his consecration to the episcopate in 396.

It is difficult to find an adequate equivalent for the word *mores* in the title of the two treatises here translated. The connotations conveyed by such expressions as 'morals,' 'moral

¹ Cf. V. J. Bourke, *Augustine's Quest of Wisdom* (Milwaukee 1945) 118.

² E. Portalié, *A Guide to the Thought of Saint Augustine* (Chicago 1960) 8-12 and 47-50.

practices,' and 'customs' make them unsatisfactory. 'Customs' is too weak, 'morals' too narrow. The term 'mores' in English is fraught with modern socio-cultural and ethical implications. What Augustine intends to convey is best rendered in our opinion by 'way of life.' He is, if you will, expounding the virtue or strength of one way of life and exposing the weakness or essential vice of another. And since these two treatises are companion-pieces and have been considered historically as constituting a unity, we shall refer to them under the one title, *The Catholic and Manichaeian Ways of Life*.

St. Augustine refers to this work in his *Retractationes* (1.7) where he says: 'When I was in Rome after my baptism, being unable to bear in silence the boastings of the Manichaeians about their false and fraudulent continence or abstinence, which, for the purpose of deceiving the uninstructed, they claim to be superior to that of true Christians, to whom they cannot be compared, I wrote two books, one on the way of life of the Catholic Church, the other on the way of life of the Manichaeians.'

Though not in dialogue form, these books possess some general features in common with the dialogues. Augustine, who had been teaching the liberal arts in the schools of rhetoric in North Africa and Italy, displays his powers as dialectician and rhetorician in confuting the errors of the Manichaeians and in exposing the hypocrisy of their moral life. Moreover, the contents of these books reveal, as do the dialogues, his interest in metaphysical questions and his indebtedness to Neo-Platonic philosophy and to the writings of the Roman philosophers.³ *The Catholic and Manichaeian Ways of Life* is, however, unlike the philosophical dialogues in significant respects. It is not primarily an inquiry into questions concerning the nature of reality considered in the light of reason. While St. Augustine emphasizes at the outset of this work that his principal reliance is upon reason inasmuch as the Manichaeians did not accept the authenticity of

³ Cf. n. 7 below.

all parts of the Old Testament canon, yet he does rely as well upon the authority of Scripture.⁴ Indeed, in this work the burgeoning student of Holy Writ attempts to defend the harmony of the Old and New Testaments and to expose the inconsistencies of the Manichaeans concerning the Bible.

The Catholic and Manichaean Ways of Life is, like the *Contra academicos* (386) and the works of St. Augustine's later life against the Donatists and other heretics, the refutation of a redoubtable adversary whom he is determined to overthrow for the protection of his fellow Christians. Even a rapid glance at its contents is sufficient to show its character as a polemical work in which he contrasts one religious view of God, man and the world with another. In the first book, we are provided with a treatise on Christian morality, written, we must always bear in mind, by one received into the Church not two years before. It establishes that God is the Supreme Good. It shows the meaning of union with Him in charity. It explains the four cardinal virtues in terms of love, and particularly in terms of the love of God. Finally, it holds up for our admiration and emulation the Christian virtues of the religious, clergy, and laity. The way of life of the Catholic Church thus portrayed by Augustine embodies in his view a lofty ideal, but one that is livable by individuals in all states of life and in various stages of progress in virtue.

The second book describes and refutes the teaching of the Manichaeans on the nature and origin of evil, their false ascetical practices, and their doctrines concerning the three symbols of the mouth, the hands, and the breast. In conclusion, Augustine denounces, on the basis of personal knowledge or first-hand reports, the scandalous conduct of the members of the Manichaean Elect. Throughout this book, he is concerned, not merely to expose the errors and excesses of the sect, including the shameful behavior and hypocrisy of certain of its leaders, but the absurdities and even depravity to which men are led by a way of life that is essentially unlivable. What-

⁴ Cf. I, 2, 3.

ever may be claimed for the austerities of the more sincere and ascetic members of the Manichaean sect, a religion that corrodes human nature and castigates its natural functioning as evil, cannot be good. Such is St. Augustine's ultimate judgment upon Manichaeism, and he expresses it with eloquence and invective.

For fifteen centuries, the writings of St. Augustine have nourished the minds and hearts of Christian men and women. *The Catholic and Manichaean Ways of Life*, though an early work and devoted in large measure to the detailed refutation of an historically important but now dead religion, is no exception. It abounds in famous passages containing thoughts worth pondering. There are the definitions of man and the discussion of his nature springing from the Platonic tradition, but transcending it in the recognition of the true unity of human nature.⁵ There is the definition of the cardinal virtues and the location of their nature and unity in the love of God, a doctrine inspired, as Augustine points out, by Sacred Scripture as well as the Hellenistic tradition.⁶ There is what we might call a little treatise on being in which Augustine sets forth the principles pertaining to good and evil which he was later to develop in *De natura boni*.⁷ There is the declaration of a prime philosophical principle in the moral order, viz., that all men wish to be happy, derived from the Greco-Roman tradition but transformed by Augustine into a deeper truth with a Christian and creationist orientation.⁸ Above all, there is the magnificent apostrophe to the Church, teacher of wisdom and true mother of Christians, which was quoted by

5 1.27.52. Etienne Gilson says that this definition of man, 'in which the emphasis is definitely placed on the soul's hierarchic transcendence over the body, is in keeping with Augustinism's deepest tendencies' (*The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, New York 1960, 45). Cf. also p. 271. Augustine refers to man in a similar way in *De quantitate animae* 13.22; in *De civitate Dei* 13.24, he speaks of man as a *conjunctum*.

6 1.14.24 to 1.15.25.

7 2.1.1-18. Cf. 1.14.24.

8 1.3.4. Cf. Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, 249.

Pope Pius XI in his Encyclical on Christian Education (*Divini illius magistri*).⁹

While Book One of this work possesses a more positive character and, consequently, a greater degree of interest for the present-day reader than does Book Two, St. Augustine's treatment of the way of life of the Manichaeans is of considerable importance to the scholar. It provides historical information regarding the beliefs and moral practices of the Manichaeans as Augustine knew them during the period of nine years in which he was a member of the sect. In his effort to refute these heretics, he goes into elaborate detail about their practices, even to their culinary habits. As he says: 'We must discuss good and evil with you as cooks and bakers rather than as scholars and writers (2.16.41).' At times, he makes the Manichaeans out to be not only inconsistent, but ridiculous as well. It should be remembered, however, that, while as a polemicist he does not hesitate to develop the extreme consequences, even the absurdities, to which his opponents were led by their unreasonable premises, he insists, at the same time, that he does not mean to exaggerate, but rather to stick to the facts as he knows them.¹⁰

Prosper Alfaric and others have maintained that, although Augustine's testimony on the Manichaeans furnishes us with valuable information, it should be received with prudent reservations.¹¹ Can we really believe, Alfaric asks, that the Manichaeans were as bad, or even as stupid, as Augustine sometimes depicts them? If they did fit such an unflattering description, what are we to think of his own participation in such a way of life? Isaac de Beausobre, the eighteenth-century

⁹ 1.30.62-63.

¹⁰ Cf. 1.1.2; 2.19.66.

¹¹ P. Alfaric, *L'évolution intellectuelle de S. Augustin. I. Du manichéisme au néoplatonisme* (Paris 1918) 92. Cf. also R. Stothert's preface to his translation of *Writings in Connection with the Manichaean Heresy* (Edinburgh 1872) xiv and xvi. In his introduction to Portalié's work (cited in n. 2 above), V. J. Bourke remarks that 'Augustine's reports on this religion were precise' (p. xxix). Cf. also L. H. Grondijs, 'Analyse du manichéisme numidien au IV^e siècle,' *Augustinus Magister* (Paris 1954) 3.391-410.

scholar, propounded a species of dilemma in which Augustine was allegedly trapped. If what we are told about the blasphemies and wicked deeds of the Manichaeans is true, he says, then Augustine was not ignorant of them while a Manichaean, from which it follows that he was without reason, conscience, or discernment in believing these blasphemies against the Divinity; otherwise, these blasphemies were not really taught and believed by the Manichaeans, yet Augustine says that they were. In short, Augustine was either a wicked or at least an utterly deluded participant in blasphemy, or else he was a liar.¹²

Anna Escher di Stefano and other scholars have shown, in our opinion, that the dilemma is merely apparent.¹³ It is urged that there is a psychological implausibility about the case of a gifted and well educated man adhering to a sect for nine years and then assailing its moral teachings and practices as wicked and absurd. The objection, however, assumes that Augustine adhered wholeheartedly to the Manichaean doctrine during this entire period. In point of fact, he was never admitted to the company of the Elect, and, throughout much of the period in question, he was intellectually dissatisfied with the beliefs he was asked to accept and was groping for a more adequate answer to the questions tormenting him. Nor should we forget that Augustine was morally bewildered as well as intellectually perplexed. The teaching of the Manichaeans that he was not altogether responsible for the sinful life he was leading afforded him some measure of consolation.¹⁴ It should be noted, furthermore, that this intellectual

12 I. de Beausobre, *Histoire critique de Manichée et du manichéisme* (Amsterdam 1734) 236. Cf. the remark St. Augustine himself makes about his knowledge of the sins of the Elect, 2.19.68.

13 A. Escher di Stefano, *Il manicheismo in S. Agostino* (Padua 1960) 202. 'Ma l'accusa del De Beausobre è senza alcun fondamento, nel senso che egli crede di prendere in fallo Agostino con delle parole che invece il santo ha ripetutamente rivolto a se stesso. Agostino non ha mai negato di considerare immorali e abominevoli i nove anni trascorsi nella fede manichea: basti pensare alle *Confessioni* che costituiscono tutto un atto di auto accusa.'

14 Cf. *Conf.* 4.15.24; 5.10.20; 7.4.4; *The Way of Life* 2.19.73.

giant whose powers were slowly maturing and who looked in vain for a first-class mind among the Manichaeans to help solve his difficulties is one of the few great thinkers of the Western World who had no great teacher. Aristotle had Plato, St. Thomas had St. Albert, but who was there for St. Augustine? St. Ambrose inspired and aided him in some measure at a critical phase of his life, but was never his teacher.

In the fourth-century Roman world Manichaeism seems to have exerted a peculiarly compelling attraction upon certain classes of people. What, then, was the secret of Manichaeism? We may even ask, if we recall the tendency of this fundamental attitude toward God and man's place in the world to recur in such forms as Catharism, Albigensianism, and various types of Puritanism, what is its perennial appeal? In the form of Manichaeism, with which we are here concerned and with which St. Augustine was familiar, its attraction was undoubtedly due to a combination of many factors. It was, as Henri-Charles Puech points out, a religion of the Book, in the sense that its scripture was written by its founder; it was universal and missionary in that it proclaimed itself the true religion and sought to win men to its cause.¹⁵ It united an ancient mythology and a materialistic dualism with a simple form of worship and a rigid morality enjoining a severe asceticism upon its adepts. It presented a seemingly profound yet simple and convenient solution for the problem of evil. It united and in a sense identified the cosmological and moral orders.¹⁶ For these reasons, the sect attracted a following, and it was only after familiarity with its teachings that the theoretical inconsistencies, as well as the practical impossibility of living its precepts, became apparent. Few of the members of the sect appeared able to match the ability and learning which eventually led Augustine to liberation.

Centuries after the age of St. Augustine, St. Thomas

¹⁵ H.-C. Puech, *Le manichéisme: son fondateur—sa doctrine* (Paris 1949) 59-92.

¹⁶ Cf. F. Cumont, *Recherches sur le manichéisme* (Brussels 1908). Cf. also article in *Encyclopædia Britannica* cited in Select Bibliography.

Aquinas, whose Dominican brethren had so vigorously combated the Albigensian heresy in southern France, was occupied in his turn with laying bare the fundamental flaw in the Manichaean metaphysics of good and evil.¹⁷ In our own day, G. K. Chesterton, in his meditation on the Manichees, names as their inmost lie the identification of purity with sterility.¹⁸ Since there is no indignation like that of a disillusioned devotee, when St. Augustine finally saw Manichaeism for what it was, not a way of life holding up a superhuman ideal of purity toward which all must strive, but rather one leading to the degradation and sterility of man, his indignation knew no bounds. Although bewildered and perplexed, he had not, at first, thought these teachings to be delusions and blasphemies; finally, he saw them for what they were, and he called them by their rightful names. In this perspective, we may perhaps understand the psychological plausibility of his different states of mind as a Manichaean and as a Christian believer.

Our translation of this work is based upon the Latin text of the Benedictine edition, as reprinted in the *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J. P. Migne, 32.1309-1378. The English, French, Italian, and Spanish translations listed in the Select Bibliography were consulted. The translation of quotations from Sacred Scripture follows the Challoner revision of the Douay Bible for the Old Testament and the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine Edition for the New Testament, with minor adaptations where St. Augustine's text could not be satisfactorily rendered by these versions.

17 Cf. for example, *Summa Theologiae* 1.65.1; in 1.65.5 St. Thomas refers to the Manichaeans by name.

18 G. K. Chesterton, *Saint Thomas Aquinas* (New York 1933) ch. IV.

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*THE WAY OF LIFE OF
THE CATHOLIC CHURCH*



BOOK ONE

THE WAY OF LIFE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Chapter 1

IN OUR OTHER BOOKS WE HAVE, I believe, adequately refuted the attacks of the Manichaeans upon the Law which is called the Old Testament—arguments which they propose with neither skill nor piety and publish abroad with empty boasting amid the applause of the unlearned.¹ I shall, therefore, treat this subject only briefly here. For what person of even ordinary intelligence cannot see that an explanation of the Scriptures should be sought from those who are by profession teachers of Scripture? It may happen, and in fact usually does, that things which at first seem absurd to the uninstructed appear to them praiseworthy when explained by learned men, and are more readily accepted because of the difficulties encountered in reaching the meaning. This frequently happens with the sacred books of the Old Testament, provided that he who is confused by them seeks out a God-fearing teacher rather than an impious critic, and is himself

¹ St. Augustine discusses the attacks of the Manichaeans upon the Old Testament in *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*. This work is dated 388-390; cf. Portalić, *A Guide to the Thought of St. Augustine* (Chicago 1960) 61, and *Retractationes* 1.10.1-3. Augustine was probably composing it around the same time that he was completing the present work.

imbued with a desire to discover the truth rather than to find fault.

And one who desires to learn these things ought not to despair of arriving at truth should he by chance meet up with those, whether bishops or priests, officials or ministers of the Catholic Church, who are either reluctant to unveil mysteries or are content with simple faith and do not care for more profound knowledge. For not all to whom inquiries are addressed are able to teach, nor are all who seek to learn worthy. Both diligence and piety are required; the one helps us to acquire knowledge, the other makes us worthy to know.

(2) However, since there are two pretexts in particular by which the Manichaeans entice the unwary into choosing them as teachers—first, that of finding fault with the Scriptures which they misinterpret or wish to have misinterpreted, and, second, that of feigning chaste lives and extraordinary continence—this book will contain our thought on the moral life in accordance with Catholic teaching and will perhaps make plain how easy it is to simulate virtue, yet how difficult it is to possess it.

I shall try not to attack the weaknesses of the Manichaeans, which are so well known to me, with the same violence that they employ in inveighing against things of which they are ignorant, for I prefer that they be cured, if possible, rather than vanquished. I shall quote, therefore, from Scripture only those passages which they are required to believe, that is, ones from the New Testament, and shall omit any of the texts which the Manichaeans, when hard pressed, are accustomed to call interpolations, emphasizing instead only ones they are bound to accept and approve. And to each text cited from the apostolic teaching, I shall compare a similar passage from the Old Testament, so that should they at last wake up and, setting aside their stubborn dreams, aspire to the light of Christian faith, they may realize that the way of life they boast of is far from being Christian and that the Scripture they malign is truly that of Christ.

Chapter 2

(3) How, then, shall I begin? With authority, or with reason? The order of nature is such that, when we learn anything, authority precedes reason; for reason may seem weak when, having stated its argument, it turns to authority for support.¹ And because the minds of men are obscured by the habitual darkness of sin and evil which enshrouds them and, as a consequence, lack the clarity of perception proper to reason, it has been beneficially provided that the dazzled eye be led into the light of truth beneath the boughs of authority. But since we are dealing with those who think, and speak, and act contrary to right order and insist that, first of all, a reason be given for everything, I shall give in to them and employ a method of discussion which I consider faulty. For I would like to imitate, as far as I am able, the gentleness of my Lord Jesus Christ who took upon Himself the evil of that very death from which He wished to deliver us.

Chapter 3

(4) Let us inquire, then, how according to reason man ought to live. Certainly, we all wish to live happily.¹ There is no human being who would not assent to this statement almost before it is uttered. However, in my opinion, neither he

¹ Augustine considers the relation between authority and reason in *De Ordine* (386) 2.9.26, and *Ep. 70 ad Consent.* 2-14. Cf. below 1.7.11; 2.17.55.

¹ Cf. above, n. 8 to the Introduction. In *De Beata Vita* (386) 1.10, the participants in the dialogue agree as though with one voice when this principle is invoked: *beatos esse nos volumus, inquam? Vix hoc ef-fuderam, occurrerunt una voce consentientes.* St. Augustine recurs to this theme frequently throughout his career. Cf. the profound and beautiful developments of it in *De Civitate Dei* 11.27 and *De Trinitate* 15.12.21. In the latter work, the *volo beatus esse* forms part of an extended analysis of the image of the Divine Trinity to be found in the mind of man.

who lacks what he loves can be called happy, whatever it be, nor he who has what he loves if it be harmful, nor he who does not love what he has although it be the best. For he who desires what he cannot obtain is tormented, and he who has attained what he should not have desired is deceived, while he who does not desire what he should seek to attain is diseased. To souls such as these, there remains nothing but misery, and since misery and happiness are not accustomed to dwell in the same man simultaneously, none of these men can be happy.

As I see it, however, a fourth alternative remains in which the happy life may be found—when that which is best for man is both loved and possessed. For what else is meant by enjoyment but the possession of what one loves? But no one is happy who does not enjoy what is supremely good for man, and whoever does enjoy it is not unhappy. We must possess our supreme good, therefore, if we intend to live happily.

(5) It follows that we must seek to discover what is man's supreme good, and it cannot, of course, be anything inferior to man himself; for whoever strives after something inferior to himself becomes himself inferior. But all men are obliged to seek what is best. Therefore, man's supreme good is not inferior to man.

Will it then perhaps be something similar to man himself? It might well be so, provided there is nothing superior to man that he can enjoy. If, however, we find something that is both more perfect than man and which can be attained by the one loving it, who would doubt that he should, in order to be happy, strive to possess this thing, which is more excellent than he himself who seeks it? For if happiness is the possession of a good than which there is no greater, and this is what we call the supreme good, how can a person be said to be happy who has not yet attained his supreme good? Or how can it be called the supreme good if there is something better that he can attain? Such being the case, it follows that one cannot lose it against his will, for no one can be confident of a good he knows can be snatched from him even though he wishes to keep and

cherish it. And if he lacks this confidence in the good which he enjoys, how can he, in such fear of loss, be happy?

Chapter 4

(6) Let us, then, attempt to discover what is better than man. And this will be very difficult unless we first discuss what man himself is.¹ But I do not think I should be expected to give a definition of man here. Rather, it seems to me that since nearly everyone agrees (or at least, and it is sufficient, those with whom I am now dealing agree) that we are composed of body and soul, what should be determined at this point is *what man himself is*. Of the two which I have mentioned, is he body alone or soul alone? For although they are two things, soul and body, and neither could be called man were the other not present (for the body would not be man if there were no soul, nor would the soul be man were there no body animated by it), it might happen, nevertheless, that one of these would be looked upon and be spoken of as man.

What do we call man, then? Is he soul and body like a centaur or two horses harnessed together? Or shall we call him the body alone in the service of a governing soul, as is the case when we give the name *lamp*, not to the vessel and flame together, but to the vessel alone on account of the flame within it? Or shall we say that man is nothing but the soul, inasmuch as it rules the body, just as we say that the horseman is not the horse and man together, but the man alone from the fact that he guides the horse? This is a difficult problem to solve, or, at any rate, even if its solution were simple, it would require a lengthy explanation involving an expense of time and labor which would not profit us here. For whether it be both body and soul or soul alone that goes by the name of man, that is not the supreme good of man which constitutes the supreme

1 Cf. I.27.52, and n. 5 to the Introduction.

good of the body. But whatever is the highest good either of body and soul together or of the soul alone, that is the supreme good of man.

Chapter 5

(7) If we ask what is the supreme good of the body, reason compels us to admit it is whatever causes the body to be at its best. But of all the things that give vigor to the body, none is better nor more important than the soul. Hence, the supreme good of the body is not sensual pleasure, nor absence of pain, nor strength, nor beauty, nor swiftness, nor whatever else is ordinarily numbered among the goods of the body, but the soul alone. For by its very presence, the soul provides the body with all the things we have enumerated and with that which excels them all besides, namely, life. Therefore, it does not seem to me that the soul is the supreme good of man, whether we call man soul and body together, or soul alone. For, as reason declares, the greatest good of the body is that which is better than the body and by which the body is given life and vigor, so, too, whether the body and soul together be man or the soul alone, we must still find out whether there is anything beyond the soul itself which, when sought after, makes the soul more perfect in its own order. If we can discover some such thing, all of our doubts will be removed, for it will unquestionably merit the name of the supreme good of man.

(8) If the body be man, it cannot be denied that the supreme good of man is the soul. But, surely, when it is a question of morals—when we ask what kind of life we must lead in order to attain happiness—the commandments are not for the body, and we are not concerned with bodily discipline. In a word, good morals pertain to that part of us which inquires and learns, and these are acts of the soul. Therefore, when we are dealing with the attainment of virtue, the ques-

tion is not one which concerns the body. But if it follows, as it does, that the body when ruled by a virtuous soul is ruled both better and more worthily and is at its best because of the perfection of the soul ruling it rightly, then that which perfects the soul will be man's supreme good even though we call the body man. For if at my command the charioteer feeds and properly manages the horses in his care, and enjoys my generosity in proportion as he is obedient to me, who can deny that not only the charioteer but the horses, too, owe their well being to me? And so, whether body alone, or soul alone, or both together be man, the important thing, it seems to me, is to discover what makes the soul perfect, for when this is attained, a man cannot but be perfect, or at least much better than if it were lacking to him.

Chapter 6

(9) No one disputes the fact that virtue perfects the soul,¹ but the question might well be asked as to whether virtue can exist by itself or only in the soul. This is another of those profound questions demanding lengthy discussion, but perhaps a summary will be adequate for our purpose. And I hope that God will grant His assistance, so that, to the extent our weakness of mind permits, we may treat this subject not only clearly but briefly as well.

Whichever it be—whether virtue can exist by itself without the soul, or whether it cannot exist except in the soul—doubtless, the soul seeks after something in order to attain virtue, and this must be either itself, or virtue, or some third thing. If the soul pursues itself in seeking virtue, it pursues something foolish, since the soul itself is foolish before it has acquired

¹ This maxim is another of the primary philosophic principles which Augustine learned from the masters of the Greco-Roman tradition and which he incorporated into the heritage of Christian wisdom. In the present work, it reaches its culmination in 1.15.25 where virtue and the soul's perfection are identified as the true love of God.

virtue. And since the supreme desire of all who seek is to attain what they are seeking, in this case either the soul must not wish to attain what it seeks, and there is nothing more absurd nor perverse than this, or, in pursuing its foolish self, it attains the very foolishness from which it flees. But if, in its desire to attain virtue, it seeks after it, how can it seek what does not exist? Or how can it desire to attain what it already has? Therefore, either virtue is outside the soul, or, if we must reserve the name of virtue only for that disposition or quality of the wise soul which cannot exist except in the soul, it remains that the soul must pursue something else in order that virtue may arise within itself. For neither by pursuing nothing nor by pursuing foolishness can the soul, in my opinion, reach wisdom.

(10) Consequently, this something else, through the seeking of which the soul becomes possessed of virtue and wisdom, is either a wise man or God. But as has been said above, it must be of such a nature that we cannot lose it against our will. Now who would hesitate to admit that a wise man, should we be satisfied to follow after him, can be taken from us, not only against our will, but even in spite of our resistance? Only God remains, therefore. If we follow after Him, we live well; if we reach Him, we live not only well but happily. As for those who may deny that God exists, I cannot concern myself with arguments by which to persuade them, for I am not even sure that we ought to enter into discussion with them at all. To do so, in any event, would necessitate starting out all over again with a different approach, a different method, and different arguments from those we have taken up at present.² I am now concerned only with those who do not deny God's existence and who, besides, acknowledge that He is not indifferent to human

² The second book of the *De Libero Arbitrio* (388-395), which is an *itinerarium mentis ad Deum*, contains one of the most elaborate Augustinian proofs for the existence of God. In *De Vera Religione*, which also dates from this early period, St. Augustine gives us one of the most fully developed proofs for God's existence to be found in his work. Cf. 29.52 to 31.58.

affairs. For I cannot believe there is anyone who considers himself religious who does not hold at least that Divine Providence looks after our souls.

Chapter 7

(11) But how are we to follow after Him whom we do not see? And how are we who are not only men but foolish men to see? For, although He is seen with the mind and not with bodily eyes, what mind can be found fit, while enveloped in a cloud of ignorance, to drink in or even attempt to drink in that light? We must have recourse, then, to the teachings of those who were in all probability wise. This is as far as reason can take us. For in human things, reason, although lacking the certitude of truth, is thought secure. But when it approaches divine things, it turns away unable to behold; it trembles, pants, and burns with love, and, driven back from the light of truth, returns, not from choice but from exhaustion, to its familiar darkness. What a dreadful thing it would be if the weary soul, seeking repose after such an experience, should suffer greater weakness! Ineffable Wisdom has so arranged it, therefore, that when we seek to retreat into the darkness, authority comes to our aid and appeals to us with the wonderful deeds and utterances of its sacred books, which like shadows make attractive the brightness of truth.

(12) What more could have been done for our salvation? What could be called more kind and generous than Divine Providence which, although man had fallen away from its laws and on account of his greed for mortal things had deservedly begotten a mortal offspring, did not altogether abandon him? For that most just Power, in marvelous and incomprehensible ways, exercises, through a certain secret ordering of the things it has created subject to Itself, both severity in punishment and mercy in forgiveness.

We shall never be able to understand how great, how admirable, and how worthy of God this providence is, nor finally, how true all that we are seeking for, that is, unless we begin with things human and familiar to us and, through faith in the true religion and the keeping of the commandments, proceed without forsaking the path that He has prepared for us by the appointment of the patriarchs, the bond of the law, the predictions of the prophets, the mystery of the Incarnation, the testimony of the apostles, the blood of the martyrs, and the conversion of the Gentiles. Let no one, then, ask for my opinion, but rather, let us all listen to the wisdom of authority and submit our paltry arguments to the divine pronouncements.

Chapter 8

(13) Let us see how the Lord Himself in the Gospel commands us to live, and also what Paul the Apostle says, for the Manichaeans do not dare to condemn these Scriptures. Let us hear, then, O Christ, what ultimate good you prescribe for us, and there is no doubt that it will be the end toward which You command us to strive with perfect love. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God,' He says. Tell me also, I beseech Thee, how much I must love my Lord, for I fear that the ardor of my desire and love for Him may be more or less than it ought. 'With thy whole heart,' He says. Nor is that enough. 'With thy whole soul.' Nor is even that enough. 'With thy whole mind.'¹ What more could you wish? Perhaps I might wish for more if I could see what more there might be.

What does St. Paul say about this? 'We know,' he says, 'that for those who love God all things work together unto good.' Let him tell us, too, what must be the measure of our love—'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or hunger, or nakedness, or

¹ Matt. 22.37.

danger, or the sword?"² We have heard now what we must love and how much we must love. Toward this end all our effort must be directed and all our plans referred. In God is to be found all that is best for us. God is our supreme good. We must not stop at anything below Him, nor seek anything beyond, for the first is fraught with danger and the second does not exist.

Chapter 9

(14) Now let us examine, or rather let us simply observe, since it is evident and not at all difficult to see, whether the authority of the Old Testament agrees with these texts drawn from the Gospel and the Apostle. Need I say anything of the first text when it is so obvious to all that it is taken from the law given by Moses? For there it is written: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind."¹ Nor is it necessary to seek further for a passage in order to compare the text of the Apostle with one from the Old Testament, since he himself provides it. For after stating that no tribulation, no distress, no persecution, no bodily need, no danger, no sword can separate us from the love of Christ, he immediately adds: "Even as it is written, "For thy sake we are afflicted all the day long. We are regarded as sheep for the slaughter." "² Having nothing that they can say against these texts, the Manichaeans are forced to call them interpolations made by corruptors of the Scripture. But who cannot see that this is all that remains for those to say who have been proved wrong?

(15) Nevertheless, I would like to ask them whether they deny that this text is in the Old Testament, or merely hold that it does not agree with the passage from the Apostle. The

² Rom. 8.28, 35.

¹ Cf. Deut. 6:5.

² Cf. Rom. 8.36; Ps. 43.23.

first point, I shall prove from the books themselves, and as for the second, if these men will stop making excuses and running away from the argument, and will instead reflect a moment and consider what is being said, I shall bring them around to my view. Otherwise, I shall urge upon them the opinion of those who judge impartially. For what could be more in harmony than these texts? Tribulation, distress, persecution, hunger, nakedness, and danger all affect man profoundly in this life. Therefore, all of these words are summed up in that one text from the Old Law where it says: 'For Thy sake we are afflicted.'³ All that remains is the sword, which does not inflict a life of pain and hardship, but takes away life altogether. To this corresponds the words: 'We are regarded as sheep for the slaughter.' And surely, the love of God could not have been better expressed than by the words, 'for thy sake.'

However, you may argue that this testimony is not found in the Apostle Paul, but is put forth by me. Then, do not you heretics have to prove either that it is not written in the Old Law or that it does not agree with the Apostle? And if you do not dare to say either of these (for you are hard pressed when a reading of the manuscript clearly shows that the text is there and that nothing could agree better with what the Apostle says), what makes you think it will profit you any to charge that the Scriptures are corrupted? And besides, what are you

³ Cf. *Retract.* 1.7.2: 'In the book on the way of life of the Catholic Church where the text was quoted that reads, "For thy sake we are afflicted all the day long. We are regarded as sheep for the slaughter," I was misled by a faulty manuscript, for at that time I was not as yet familiar with the Scriptures, and my memory of them was slight. The meaning derived from the other manuscripts is not "for thy sake we are afflicted," but "for thy sake we are afflicted unto death," or to put it in a single word, we are *killed*. That this is more accurate is shown by the Greek text of the Septuagint from which the Latin translation of the Old Testament was made. I have discussed the words, "For thy sake we are afflicted," at some length, and what I have said is not false in itself, but the harmony of the Old and New Testaments which I sought to prove is not actually proved by these words. My error came about in the way I have indicated above, and this harmony is certainly proved sufficiently later on from other texts.'

going to reply to a man who says to you: 'This is how I understand it, this is what I accept, this is what I believe, and I read these books for no other reason than that everything I see in them is in harmony with the Christian faith'? Would you dare to come right out and tell me that we do not have to believe that the apostles and martyrs are spoken of as having suffered great afflictions for the sake of Christ, and that they were regarded by their persecutors as sheep for the slaughter? If not, why should you maliciously attack the book in which I find what you admit I ought to believe?

Chapter 10

(16) Do you say you agree that we must love God, but not the God worshiped by those who accept the authority of the Old Testament? If so, then it is not the God who made heaven and earth that you say must be worshiped. For He it is who is proclaimed throughout these books. And yet you acknowledge that this whole world, which is called heaven and earth, had God and a good God as its author and maker. In discussing God with you, however, one must make a distinction. For you maintain there are two Gods, one good, the other evil. Now if you say that you worship, and that everyone is obliged to worship the God who made heaven and earth, but that He is not the one upheld by the authority of the Old Testament, you are shamelessly attempting, but in vain, to place upon our thoughts and opinions an interpretation alien to the wholesome doctrine we actually accept. For your fatuous and impious arguments can in no way compare with the discourses in which the holy and learned men of the Catholic Church explain the Scriptures to those who are interested and deserving.

The Law and the Prophets are understood by us far differently than you may think. Do not deceive yourselves any

longer; we do not worship a God who repents, or is jealous, or needy, or cruel, or who seeks pleasure in the blood of men and beasts, or is pleased with depravity and crime, or whose possession of the earth is limited to some small part. You are in the habit of inveighing against this kind of nonsense at great length. But your invectives do not touch us. It is rather against old wives' tales and childish fancies that you are inveighing, and with an oratory as absurd as it is vehement. Should anyone be influenced in this way and won over to you, he does no discredit to the teaching of the Church, but merely displays his ignorance of it.

(17) If you have any human feelings, then, or any concern for your own welfare, make a pious effort to find out what these texts really mean. Do some investigating, wretched men that you are, for we condemn, even more thoroughly and vigorously than you, a faith which attributes to God anything unbecoming his nature. And as for those who suppose these texts to be meant literally, we set their error straight and show how ridiculous their obstinacy is. And in many ways which you cannot appreciate, Catholic teaching prevents credulity in those who have advanced, not necessarily in years but in knowledge and understanding, beyond a certain childishness of mind toward the wisdom of age. For we are taught how absurd it is to believe that God is contained within the boundaries of any place although it be infinite; and to think of Him or any part of Him as passing or being moved from place to place is forbidden. And were anyone to hold that His substance or nature can suffer alteration or change in any way, he would be declared guilty of mad impiety.

Admittedly, there are to be found among us some children who picture God in human form and suppose Him to be actually that way. Nothing is more abject than this notion. But there are also many mature individuals who perceive that His majesty remains inviolable and unchangeable, not only above the human body, but even above the mind itself. In these two cases, age is not determined by years, but by virtue and wis-

dom, as we have already said. There may not be anyone among you who represents the divine substance in the form of a human body, but neither is there anyone who sets Him apart from the taint of human error. And as for those who, like whimpering babes, are nursed at the breast of the Catholic Church, unless they be carried off by heretics, they are nourished according to the strength and capacity of each, so that they come, each in his own way, first, to the fullness of manhood and, then, to the maturity and grey hairs of wisdom, thus achieving in the measure in which they desire it a life of perfect happiness.

Chapter 11

(18) To strive after God, then, is to desire happiness; to reach God is happiness itself. We strive after Him by loving Him; we reach Him, not by becoming altogether what He is, but by coming close to Him, touching Him in a wonderfully spiritual way, and being illuminated and pervaded utterly by His truth and holiness. He is the Light itself, whereas we receive our enlightenment from Him. The first and greatest commandment, therefore, that leads us to the happy life is: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind.'¹ For 'to those who love God all things work together unto good.'² And that is why St. Paul adds a little further on: 'I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor virtue, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'³

If, therefore, for those who love God all things work together unto good, and if, as no one doubts, the supreme or perfect good must not only be loved but be so loved that

¹ Matt. 22.37, 38.

² Rom. 8.28.

³ Rom. 8.38, 39.

nothing is loved more, as is indicated by the words: 'With thy whole soul, and with thy whole heart, and with thy whole mind,' who, may I ask, would doubt, since these things are all established and firmly believed, that what is best for us is God, and that we should put aside all else and hasten to reach Him? Moreover, if nothing can separate us from His love, what can be better or more certain than this good?

(19) Let us briefly consider each phrase singly. No one separates us from God in threatening us with death. For since that with which we love God cannot die except by not loving Him, death is in not loving Him, that is, in loving and seeking something else in preference to Him. No one separates us from God in promising life, for we are not drawn away from the fountain by the promise of water. No angel separates us from God, for there is no angel more powerful than our mind when it adheres to God. Virtue does not separate us from Him, for if by virtue is meant that which has a certain power in this world, the mind adhering to God is far above the whole world. If, however, by virtue is meant an upright disposition of mind, if this disposition be in someone else, it will favor our union with God, and if in us, it will itself unite us to Him. Present troubles do not separate us from God, for the closer we adhere to Him from whom they attempt to separate us, the lighter these burdens feel. The promise of future good does not separate us from Him, for His promise of future good is more certain than any other, and there is no greater good than God Himself who is already truly present to those who adhere to Him.

Height and depth do not separate us from God, for if these words are taken to mean the height and depth of knowledge, I will not be curious so as not to be separated from Him. Nor does any doctrine purporting to dispel error separate me from Him, for one errs only in separating oneself from Him. But if by height and depth are meant the upper and lower regions of the world, would anyone promise me heaven in order to separate me from the Maker of heaven? And could hell

frighten me into deserting Him, when I would never have known hell had I not already deserted Him? In short, can any place isolate me from His love when He would not be wholly present everywhere were He contained in any single place?

Chapter 12

(20) 'No other creature' separates us, says he.¹ O man of profound mysteries! He was not content to say no creature, but says no *other* creature, reminding us that that with which we love God and adhere to Him, that is, our soul and mind, is itself a creature. The body, therefore, is another creature, and if the soul is something immaterial—something known only by the intelligence—this creature, the body, includes everything sensible, that is to say, everything known to us through the eyes, or ears, or through the sense of smell, or taste, or touch, and this must be inferior to what is grasped by the intelligence alone.

Now, since God can be known by deserving souls only through the intelligence, although He is far superior to the mind as its Creator and Author, there was reason to fear that the human mind, inasmuch as it, too, is counted among invisible and immaterial beings, might consider itself to be of the same nature as its Creator, thus cutting itself off by pride from Him to whom it ought to be united by love. The mind becomes like God, to the extent this is given to it, when it humbly submits itself to Him for enlightenment. And while it achieves the greatest closeness by the submission which produces likeness, of necessity it is driven far from Him by the presumptuous desire for an ever greater likeness. It is this presumption that turns the mind from obedience to the laws of God, by making it desire to be its own master, as He is.

(21) Thus, the farther the mind departs from God, not in

¹ That is, St. Paul; cf. Rom. 8.39.

space but in fondness and greed for things inferior to Him, the more it is filled with foolishness and misery. And it returns to God by the love in which it does not regard itself as His equal, but rather subordinates itself to Him. The more fervently and earnestly the mind does this, the happier and more exalted it will be, and when ruled by God alone, will enjoy perfect liberty. That is why the mind must recognize that it is a creature. It must also believe the truth about its Creator—that He possesses eternally the inviolable and unchangeable nature of truth and wisdom—and must confess, in view of the errors from which it seeks to deliver itself, that it can fall victim to foolishness and deceit. Moreover, it must take care that through love of that other creature, that is, the world of sensible things, it is not separated from the love of God Himself by which it is sanctified so that it may abide in perfect happiness. No other creature, therefore, since we also are creatures, can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Chapter 13

(22) Let Paul tell us also who Christ Jesus our Lord is. 'To those that are called,' he says, 'we preach Christ, the virtue of God and the wisdom of God.'¹ And does not Christ Himself say: 'I am the truth'² If, then, we ask what it means to live rightly, that is, to strive for happiness by an upright life, it will most certainly mean to love virtue and wisdom and truth—to love with our whole heart and with our whole soul and with our whole mind the virtue which is inviolate and invincible, the wisdom which never gives way to folly, and the truth which is not altered but remains ever the same. It is by this that we come to see the Father Himself, for it has been said: 'No one comes to the Father but through me.'³ It is to

¹ Cf. I Cor. 1.24.

² Cf. John 14.6.

³ *Ibid.*

this we adhere by sanctification for, when sanctified, we are inflamed with that full and perfect love which prevents us from turning away from Him and causes us to be conformed to Him rather than to the world. 'He has predestined us,' as the Apostle says, 'to become conformed to the image of His Son.'⁴

(23) It is through love, then, that we are conformed to God, and being so conformed and made like to Him and set apart from the world, we are no longer confounded with those things which should be subject to us. But this is the work of the Holy Spirit. 'Hope,' he says, 'does not confound us, because the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.'⁵ We could not possibly be restored to perfection by the Holy Spirit, however, unless He Himself remained forever perfect and immutable, and this, of course, could not be unless He were of the very nature and substance of God, who alone is eternally immutable and, so to speak, irreversible. It is not I, but St. Paul who exclaims: 'For creation was made subject to vanity.'⁶ Now, what is subject to vanity cannot separate us from vanity and unite us to truth. But this the Holy Spirit does. He is, therefore, not a creature, for everything that exists must be either God or creature.

Chapter 14

(24) We ought, then, to love God the Trinity in unity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and this cannot be called anything other than Being Itself. For it is truly and above all else God, 'from whom and through whom and unto whom are all things.'¹ These are the words of St. Paul. And what does he

⁴ Rom. 8.29.

⁵ Rom. 5.5.

⁶ Rom. 8.19.

¹ Cf. Rom. 11.36.

add? 'To Him be glory.' What perfect exactitude! He does not say, 'to *Them* be glory,' for God is one. And what does he mean by 'to Him be *glory*,' if not the greatest and highest and most widespread renown? For the better and more widely God is proclaimed, the more fervently He is loved and esteemed. And when this comes about, the human race cannot but advance surely and steadfastly toward the life of perfect happiness.

In treating of human life and morality, I do not think it necessary to inquire further than this concerning the supreme good to which all else must be referred. We have shown both by reason, to the extent this is possible, and by divine authority which goes beyond reason, that the supreme good is nothing other than God Himself. For what can be a greater good for man than the possession of that in which he finds perfect happiness? And this good is God alone to whom we can adhere only by affection, love, and esteem.

Chapter 15

(25) If virtue leads us to the happy life, then I would not define virtue in any other way than as the perfect love of God. For in speaking of virtue as fourfold, one refers, as I understand it, to the various dispositions of love itself. Therefore, these four virtues—would that their efficacy were present in all souls as their names are on all lips—I would not hesitate to define as follows: temperance is love giving itself wholeheartedly to that which is loved, fortitude is love enduring all things willingly for the sake of that which is loved, justice is love serving alone that which is loved and thus ruling rightly, and prudence is love choosing wisely between that which helps it and that which hinders it. Now since this love, as I have said, is not love of things in general, but rather love of God, that is, of the supreme good, the supreme wisdom, and the

supreme harmony, we can define the virtues thus: temperance is love preserving itself whole and unblemished for God, fortitude is love enduring all things willingly for the sake of God, justice is love serving God alone and, therefore, ruling well those things subject to man, and prudence is love discriminating rightly between those things which aid it in reaching God and those things which might hinder it.

Chapter 16

(26) I shall describe briefly the way of life which corresponds to each of these virtues after comparing, as I have promised, the texts I have been using from the New Testament to similar ones from the Old Testament. For it is not St. Paul alone who says that we ought to be so united to God that nothing intervenes to separate us from Him. Does not the prophet express the same thing equally well and with the utmost brevity when he says: 'It is good for me to adhere to God'?¹ Is not all that the apostle says in detail about love contained here in the one word *adhere*? And do not the words, 'It is good,' correspond to the apostle's words: 'For those who love God all things work together unto good'?² Thus, in one short sentence and in two words, the prophet reveals both the power and the fruit of love.

(27) When St. Paul says that the Son of God is the virtue and the wisdom of God,³ virtue is evidently understood to refer to working and wisdom to teaching. Both of these things are signified by the evangelist when he says: 'All things were made through Him,' referring to working and to virtue, and: 'The life was the light of men,'⁴ referring to teaching and to the knowledge of truth.

1 Cf. Ps. 72.28.

2 Cf. Rom. 8.28.

3 Cf. 1 Cor. 1.24.

4 John 1.3, 4.

Could anything be more in harmony with these texts of the New Testament than what is said in the Old Testament of wisdom: 'She reacheth therefore from end to end mightily and ordereth all things sweetly'?⁵ To reach mightily refers primarily to virtue, while to order sweetly refers to art, as it were, and reason. But if this seems obscure, note what follows: 'And the Lord of all things hath loved her, for it is she that teacheth the knowledge of God and is the chooser of His works.'⁶ It is obvious that no further mention is made here of working, for to choose works is not the same as to work. Therefore, this text pertains to teaching. To complete the idea we wish to demonstrate, there remains, then, only the work of virtue.

Let us read what comes next. 'But if honorable be the riches desired in this life,' it says, 'what is more honorable than wisdom which maketh all things?'⁷ Could a clearer or more striking passage be cited than this, or one more full of meaning? If it does not satisfy you, however, listen to this other one of the same tenor: 'For wisdom teacheth sobriety and justice and virtue.'⁸ Sobriety, it seems to me, pertains to the knowledge of truth, that is, to teaching, while justice and virtue certainly pertain to action and to working. What these two things can be compared to, that is, efficacy in action and sobriety in contemplation, which the virtue and wisdom of God (in other words, the Son of God) gives to those that love Him, I do not know. But the prophet goes on to tell us how much they ought to be esteemed, when he declares: 'Wisdom teaches sobriety and justice and virtue which are such things as men can have nothing more profitable in life.'⁹

5 Cf. *Wisd.* 8.1.

6 Cf. *Wisd.* 8.3, 4.

7 *Wisd.* 8.5.

8 Cf. *Wisd.* 8.7.

9 Cf. *Retract.* 1.7.3: 'The text quoted from the book of Wisdom is from my manuscript where it is written, "Wisdom teaches sobriety and justice and virtue." I have, in discussing these words, said some things that while true were occasioned by my faulty text. What is more true than that wisdom teaches the truth of contemplation, which I believe is what the term sobriety signifies; and the excellence of action, which

(28) Perhaps some individuals may think that these texts do not refer to the Son of God. But what else can be meant by the words: 'She glorifieth the nobility of her birth, having her dwelling with God'?¹⁰ What does *nobility* of birth ordinarily signify but parentage, and what does *dwelling with God* proclaim but equality with the Father Himself? Hence, when St. Paul calls the Son of God the Wisdom of God¹¹ and when the Lord Himself says: 'No one knows the Father, except the Only Begotten Son,'¹² could the prophet say anything which would be more in accord than the words: 'And thy wisdom with thee which knoweth thy works, which was present when Thou madest the world and knew what was agreeable to thy eyes'?¹³ That Christ is the truth is also revealed when He is proclaimed the brightness of the Father, for what is there round about the sun but the brightness which it engenders?¹⁴ What, therefore, could we quote from the Old Testament which would be more plainly and unmistakably in agreement with this thought than the words: 'Thy truth is round about Thee'?¹⁵ Moreover, Wisdom Itself says in the Gospel of St. John: 'No one comes to the Father but through me.'¹⁶ The prophet, in turn, says: 'Who shall know thy thought except thou givest Wisdom?' and a little further on: 'Men have learned what is pleasing to Thee and have been healed by Wisdom.'¹⁷

(29) St. Paul says: "The charity of God is poured forth in

I understand by the two terms, justice and virtue? Better manuscripts have the same meaning: "It teaches sobriety, and wisdom, and justice, and virtue." For it is by these names that the Latin translator designates the four virtues about which philosophers are always talking. Sobriety stands for temperance, wisdom for prudence, virtue for fortitude, and justice alone is given its own name. Much later, we found these four virtues called by their proper names in the Greek text of the book of Wisdom.'

10 Cf. *Wisd.* 8.3.

11 Cf. *1 Cor.* 1.24.

12 Cf. *Matt.* 11.27.

13 Cf. *Wisd.* 9.9.

14 Cf. *Hebr.* 1.3.

15 Cf. *Ps.* 88.9.

16 *John* 14.6.

17 Cf. *Wisd.* 9.17-19.

our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.¹⁸ And the prophet says: 'The Holy Spirit of discipline will flee from the deceitful.'¹⁹ For where there is deceit, there is no charity. St. Paul says: 'We have become confirmed to the image of the Son of God.'²⁰ And the prophet says: 'The light of Thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us.'²¹ St. Paul shows that the Holy Spirit is God and, therefore, not a creature, and the prophet says: 'Thou sendest Thy Holy Spirit from above.'²² For God alone is most high and nothing is higher than He. St. Paul shows that the Trinity is but one God when he says: 'To *Him* be glory.'²³ And in the Old Testament it is written: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one God.'²⁴

Chapter 17

(30) What more proof do you wish? Why do you cling to your error so fiercely and impiously, and pervert uninstructed minds with your evil persuasions? The God of both Testaments is one. And just as the texts we have quoted agree, so do those that remain, as you would see were you willing to consider them carefully and with unbiased judgment. But because many things are expressed in the homely language accommodated to simple and uncultivated minds, so that they might rise through human things to the divine; and other things are expressed figuratively, so that the zealous mind, having exerted itself to discover their meaning, might rejoice more fully having found it, you abuse this admirable purpose of the Holy Spirit in order to deceive and ensnare your followers. Why Divine Providence permits you to do this, as the apostle fore-

18 Rom. 5.5.

19 Cf. Wisd. 1.5.

20 Cf. Rom. 8.29.

21 Cf. Ps. 4.7.

22 Cf. Wisd. 9.17.

23 Rom. 11.36.

24 Cf. Deut. 6.4.

told when he said: "There must be many heresies, so that those who are approved may be made manifest among you,"¹ would take too long to explain and would be beyond your comprehension. I know you all too well. You approach the consideration of divine things, which are more sublime than you suppose, with minds dull and sick from a poisonous diet of corporeal images.

(31) For this reason, the way to deal with you is not to try to make you understand divine things now, which is impossible, but to make you eventually wish to understand them. Only the pure and sincere love of God which manifests itself especially in one's way of life, and of which we have already said much, can bring this about. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, this love leads to the Son, that is, to the wisdom of God through whom the Father Himself is known. If wisdom or truth is not desired with all the powers of the soul, it shall not be found at all, but if it is sought after as it deserves to be, it cannot withhold itself nor hide from those who love it. This is but to say what you yourselves have ever on your lips: "Ask and it shall be given you; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed."² It is love that asks, love that seeks, love that knocks, love that discloses, and love, too, that abides in that which has been disclosed. We are not deterred by the Old Testament from the love of wisdom and the zealous pursuit of it, as you have falsely claimed, but are vehemently exhorted to it.

(32) Listen, then, for once without obstinacy, I beg you, and hear what the prophet says: "Wisdom is glorious and never fadeth away, and is easily seen by them that love her, and is found by them that seek her. She preventeth them that covet her, so that she first showeth herself unto them. He that awaketh early to seek her shall not labor, for he shall find her sitting at his door. To think, therefore, upon her is perfect

¹ Cf. 1 Cor. 11.19.

² Matt. 7.7; 10.26.

understanding, and he that watcheth for her shall quickly be secure. For she goeth about seeking such as are worthy of her, and she showeth herself to them cheerfully in the ways and meeteth them with all providence. For the beginning of her is the most true desire of discipline. And the care of discipline is love, and love is the keeping of her laws, and the keeping of her laws is the firm foundation of incorruption, and incorruption bringeth near to God. Therefore, the desire of Wisdom bringeth to the kingdom.³

Why do you not give up your ranting? Do not such words, even when not yet understood, suggest to all that they contain something sublime and ineffable? Would that you could understand them! You would straightway repudiate your ridiculous fables and vain corporeal imaginings, and would hasten with sincere love and unwavering faith to throw yourselves whole and entire into the sacred arms of the Catholic Church.

Chapter 18

(33) I could develop at length and prove, to the extent that my meager ability permits, each of the points I have taken up, although words fail for the most part to express the exalted character and excellence of these truths. But as long as you continue to bark, this cannot be done, for it is not in vain that it has been said: 'Do not give to dogs what is holy.'¹ Do not be angry. I, too, barked and was a dog, and received during that time, quite appropriately, not the bread of doctrine, but the rod of correction. If, however, you possessed the love of which we are speaking, or if ever you should possess it in the measure that the greatness of the truth to be understood demands, then God would show you that the Catholic faith which leads to the heights of wisdom and truth, the en-

³ Cf. Wisd. 6.13-20.

¹ Matt. 7.6.

joyment of which is nothing other than the happy life, is not to be found among the Manichaeans, nor anywhere else but in the Catholic teaching.

Is this not what the Apostle Paul seems to desire when he says: 'For this reason I bend my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom all fatherhood in heaven and on earth receives its name, that He may grant you from His glorious riches to be strengthened with power through his Spirit unto the progress of the inner man; and to have Christ dwelling through faith in your hearts; so that being rooted and grounded in love, you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know Christ's love which surpasses knowledge, in order that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God'² Could anything be stated more plainly?

(34) Arouse yourselves a little, I implore you, and observe how both Testaments agree, setting down quite clearly and teaching what our moral conduct ought to be and the end to which all things should be referred. The Gospel incites us to the love of God when it says: 'Ask, seek, knock.'³ St. Paul incites us to it when he says: 'That being rooted and grounded in love, you may be able to comprehend,'⁴ and the prophet does so when he tells us that wisdom can be known without difficulty by those who love it, seek after it, desire it, watch for it, meditate upon it, and cherish it.⁵ The salvation of the soul and the way to happiness is pointed out in the agreement of the two Scriptures, yet you would rather bark at these things than obey them. Let me tell you briefly what I am convinced of. Listen to the learned men of the Catholic Church with the same agreeable disposition and willingness with which I listened to you, and it will not take as long as the nine years during which you hoodwinked me, for in a much shorter time

² Eph. 3.14-19.

³ Cf. Matt. 7.7.

⁴ Eph. 3.17, 18.

⁵ Cf. Wisd. 6.13-20.

than that you will have come to see the difference between truth and trickery.

Chapter 19

(35) But it is time to return to the four virtues and, by exploring each of them, to determine the manner in which we ought to live. Let us, then, turn our attention first to temperance which promises us a certain integrity and incorruptibility in the love that unites us to God. The function of this virtue is to restrain and still the passions which cause us to crave the things that turn us away from the laws of God and the enjoyment of His goodness, that is to say, from the happy life. For it is here that truth resides. In contemplating it joyfully and adhering to it unreservedly, our happiness is assured, but, in turning away from it, we become caught up in countless griefs and errors. As the apostle says: 'Covetousness is the root of all evils, and those who have followed it have shipwrecked their faith and involved themselves in many troubles.'¹ This sin of the soul is signified quite plainly in the Old Testament, to those capable of understanding, in the transgression of the first man in paradise. 'In Adam we all die, and in Christ we shall all rise again,'² says the apostle. O sublime mysteries! But I must restrain myself, for I am not endeavoring at present to teach you what is right, but only to make you unlearn what is wrong, if possible, that is, if God favors my intention on your behalf.

(36) Paul, then, says that covetousness is the root of all evil, and the Old Law indicates that it was through this sin that the first man fell. Paul exhorts us to strip off the old man and put on the new.³ By the old man, he means Adam, the sinner, and by the new man, the Son of God who in the sacred mystery assumed a human nature in order to redeem us, for in another

¹ Cf. 1 Tim 6.10.

² Cf. 1 Cor. 15.22.

³ Cf. Col. 3.9, 10.

place he says: 'The first man was of the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven, heavenly. As was the earthy man, such also are the earthy; and as is the heavenly man, such also are the heavenly. Therefore, even as we have borne the likeness of the earthy, let us bear also the likeness of the heavenly.'⁴ In other words, strip off the old man and put on the new.

The whole work of temperance, therefore, is to make us strip off the old man and be renewed in God, that is, to disdain all bodily delights and popular acclaim and to turn our love wholly to things invisible and divine. Hence, this passage so admirably expressed: 'Though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.'⁵ And listen to this song of the prophet: 'Create a clean heart in me, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.'⁶ Could anything be said against such harmony except by those who bark blindly like dogs?

Chapter 20

(37) The delights of the body arise from all those things with which the bodily senses come into contact, and which by some are called sensible objects. Of these, the most excellent is ordinary light, since, among the senses which the soul makes use of through the body, none is more important than the eyes. It is for this reason that all sensible objects together are spoken of in the Sacred Scriptures as visible things. Thus, in the New Testament, we are forbidden to love such things in these words: 'While we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen. For the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal.'¹

⁴ 1 Cor. 15.47-49.

⁵ 2 Cor. 4.16.

⁶ Cf. Ps. 50.12.

¹ 2 Cor. 4.18.

We can understand from this how far from being Christians those individuals are who believe that the sun and moon ought not only to be loved but also worshipped. For what do we see if not the sun and moon? But we are forbidden to look to the things that are seen. He who wishes to offer to God that incorruptible love, therefore, must not love such things either. However, I shall have to take up this subject more fully elsewhere. My intention now is not to treat of faith, but of the way of life which makes us worthy of knowing what we believe. God alone is to be loved, then, and this entire world, that is, all sensible things, are to be contemned, although they must be made use of for the necessities of life.

Chapter 21

(38) Human glory is thus repudiated and looked upon with disdain in the New Testament: 'If I were trying to please men,' says St. Paul, 'I should not be a servant of Christ.'¹ And there are also certain corporeal images conceived by the mind and called natural science. With reference to such knowledge, we are forbidden to be curious, and this is one of the main tasks of temperance. Thus it is said: 'See to it that no one deceives you by philosophy.'² But because the very name of philosophy, taken in itself, signifies something so excellent that it should be desired with one's whole soul—if it be the love and zeal for wisdom—the apostle, so as not to appear to deter us from the love of wisdom, is careful to add: 'and the elements of this world.' For there are some individuals who, having abandoned virtue and not knowing what God is nor the majesty of His eternal and immutable nature, suppose themselves to be engaged in a great enterprise when they busy themselves with intense and eager curiosity exploring that universal mass of matter we call the world. Such pride is en-

¹ Gal. 1.10.

² Col. 2.8.

gendered in them in this way, that they imagine themselves dwelling in the very heaven they so often discuss. Let the mind, therefore, refrain from desiring this vain sort of knowledge if it wishes to keep itself chaste for God. For it is by such desire that the soul is deceived into thinking that nothing but matter exists, or else, if it be moved by authority to acknowledge the existence of an incorporeal being, it cannot but think of this being in terms of corporeal images, and falsely believes it to be as the bodily senses represent. The commandment warning us against idols is also relevant here.

(39) In support of the text from the New Testament commanding us not to love anything in this world,³ there is in particular the one that says: 'Be not conformed to this world,'⁴ for it is being pointed out that each man is conformed to the thing he loves. If I seek a passage from the Old Testament to compare with this, I find several, but there is a book of Solomon called Ecclesiastes which shows at great length how all earthly things are to be held in utter contempt. It begins: 'Vanity of the vain, said Ecclesiastes: vanity of the vain and all is vanity. What hath a man more of all his labor that he taketh under the sun?'⁵ Were we to examine all these words and ponder them carefully, we would find many things of utmost importance to those who desire to flee this world and take refuge in God, but it would be time consuming, and we must hurry on to other things.

However, after this beginning, Ecclesiastes⁶ goes on to explain that the vain are those who allow themselves to be deceived by things of this sort. And the things that deceive them he calls vanity⁷—not that God did not create them, but be-

³ Cf. 1 John 2.15.

⁴ Rom. 12.2.

⁵ Cf. Eccles. 1.2, 3.

⁶ Implied from context.

⁷ Cf. *Retract.* 1.7.3: 'The words which I quoted from the book of Solomon, "Vanity of the vain, said Ecclesiastes," I read in many manuscripts, but not in the Greek which has "vanity of vanities." This I discovered later, and I found that the better Latin manuscripts have *vanities*, not *vain*. What this faulty text led me to say appears, nevertheless, to be true.'

cause men through sin choose to enslave themselves to things which the divine law made subject to them when they act rightly. For what is it to look upon things beneath yourself as desirable and worthy of admiration, but to be deceived and led astray by false goods? Concerning mortal and transitory things, then, the temperate man has this rule of life which is confirmed by both Testaments: he must love none of them nor look upon them as desirable for their own sake, but he must utilize them, in the measure that his life and duties require, with the moderation of a user rather than the passion of a lover. These remarks on temperance are brief considering the magnitude of the subject, but perhaps more lengthy than necessary for our present purpose.

Chapter 22

(40) Concerning fortitude not much need be said. The love of which we have been speaking, which ought to burn with holy ardor for God, is called temperance in not desiring worldly things and fortitude in giving them up. But of all the things possessed in this life, the body of man is, in accordance with God's supreme justice, his heaviest yoke because of original sin. This is a well known fact, but there is none more difficult to comprehend. The soul is tormented by the fear of hardship and pain which follows when this yoke is injured or disturbed, and by fear of death when it is taken away or destroyed. For the soul loves the body by force of habit, little realizing that if it uses the body prudently, after its resurrection and transformation, the body will, by God's power and decree, be placed, without burdensomeness, under its control. But when the soul turns wholly to God in this love, it will then not only disdain death, but even desire it.

(41) There still remains the great struggle against pain. But there is nothing, however hard or unyielding, which can-

not be conquered by the fire of love. And when borne by love toward God, the soul will soar free and glorious above all torment on the beautiful and unblemished wings with which chaste love rises to the embrace of God. Were this not so, God would permit those who love gold, those who love praise, and those who love women to have more fortitude than those who love Him, although this is more properly termed cupidity or lust than love. Yet, even in these instances, we can see how vehemently and indefatigably the soul strives despite all difficulties after what it prizes. The fact that these men are willing to endure so much in order to forsake God is reason enough why we ought to suffer anything so as not to forsake Him.

Chapter 23

(42) At this point, therefore, instead of selecting texts from the New Testament where it is said: "Tribulation works patience, and patience trial, and trial hope,"¹ and where these words are not merely spoken but confirmed and proved by the example of those who said them, I shall cite an example of patience from the Old Testament which the Manichaeans so savagely attack. I do not have in mind the man who suffered great bodily torment and a horrible disease in his limbs, yet bore up under these human ills, and even discoursed of things divine. Every one of that man's utterances, if it be considered dispassionately, reveals the worth of those things over which men wish to gain power, and to which they are so attached by cupidity that they become slaves to mortal things in the very moment that they clumsily seek to be lords. Having lost all his riches and been reduced suddenly to destitution, he kept his soul so undisturbed and fixed upon God as to show that earthly things were not important in his sight, but that he was greater than they and God greater than he.² If the men

¹ Cf. Rom. 5.3, 4.

² Cf. Job. 1, 2.

of our day could be of such mind, we would not have to be so strongly prohibited in the New Testament from possessing these goods in order that we might become perfect. For to possess such things without clinging to them is much more admirable than not to possess them at all.

(43) But since we are concerned here with the endurance of pain and bodily torment, I take leave of this man, great and unconquerable as he was, yet, nevertheless, a man. For the Scriptures offer me the example of a woman of astounding fortitude and oblige me now to speak of her.³ This woman chose to give over to the tyrant and executioner every one of her seven sons, rather than to utter a single word of sacrilege. And after fortifying them with her exhortations, at the same time suffering cruelly in their tortures, she herself had to undergo what she had called upon them to endure. Could any patience be greater than this?

Yet what marvel is it that the love of God pervading her inmost soul should have withstood the tyrant and the executioner, and bodily pain, and the weakness of her sex, and her own human emotions? Had she not heard the words: 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints'?⁴ Had she not heard: 'The patient man is better than the mightiest'?⁵ Had she not heard: 'Take all that shall be brought upon thee, and in thy sorrow endure, and in thy humiliation keep patience. For gold and silver are tried in the fire'?⁶ And had she not heard: 'The furnace trieth the potter's vessels, and the trial of affliction just men'?⁷ She most assuredly knew these and many other divine precepts on fortitude written in the books of the Old Testament (which were the only ones then in existence) by the same Holy Spirit who wrote those in the New Testament.

³ Cf. 2 Mach. 7.1-42.

⁴ Cf. Ps. 115.6.

⁵ Cf. Prov. 16.32.

⁶ Cf. Sir. (Ecclus.) 2.4, 5.

⁷ Cf. Sir. (Ecclus.) 27.5.

Chapter 24

(44) What is to be said of justice in its relation to God? As the Lord says: 'No man can serve two masters,'¹ and the apostle rebukes those who serve the creature rather than the Creator,² so had it not been said before in the Old Testament: 'Thou shalt adore the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve?'³ But what need is there to say more about this here since the Scriptures are full of such texts? Justice, then, offers this rule of life to the lover we are describing: that he serve with gladness the Lord whom he loves, that is to say, the supreme good, the supreme wisdom, the supreme peace; and with respect to all other things, that he govern those which are subject to him and endeavor to subject the rest. This rule of life is confirmed, as we have shown, by the authority of both Testaments.

(45) We must be brief, too, concerning prudence, the function of which is to distinguish between that which ought to be sought and that which ought to be avoided. If prudence is lacking, none of the things we have spoken of can be accomplished. Its task is to keep a constant watch so that we are not led astray by the imperceptible working of an evil influence. Thus the Lord often exclaims: 'Watch.'⁴ And He says: 'Walk while you have the light, that darkness may not overtake you.'⁵ It has also been said: 'Do you not know that a little leaven ferments the whole lump?'⁶ But there is no passage in the Old Testament more opposed to that torpor of spirit which prevents us from sensing the gradual approach of the serpent of evil than this one spoken by the prophet: 'He that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little.'⁷ If we were not

1 Matt. 6.24.

2 Cf. Rom. 1.25.

3 Cf. Deut. 6.13.

4 Cf. Matt. 24.42.

5 John 12.35.

6 1 Cor. 5.6.

7 Cf. Sir. (Ecclus.) 19.1.

pressed for time, we might discuss this subject fully. And were it essential to our present task, we might also show the sublimity of the mysteries which ignorant and sacrilegious men ridicule, bringing about their own downfall, not little by little, but with sudden violence.

Chapter 25

(46) What more need be said about the moral life? For if God is the supreme good of man, which you cannot deny, it most assuredly follows, since to seek the supreme good is to live rightly, that to live rightly is nothing other than to love God with one's whole heart, with one's whole soul, and with one's whole mind. This means that our love for Him must be preserved whole and unblemished, which is the work of temperance; that it must not give way before misfortune, which is the work of fortitude; that it must serve no one but Him, which is the work of justice; and finally, that it be vigilant in its discernment of things so as not to be undermined gradually by trickery or deceit, and this is the work of prudence. Such love is the one human perfection by which alone man can come to enjoy the purity of truth. Both Testaments unite to sing its praise, both exhort us to it. Why, then, do you continue your malicious attacks on the Scriptures, knowing so little of them? Can you not see the foolishness of railing away at books which only those find fault with who do not understand them, and which those alone fail to understand who find fault? For no enemy can come to know these books, nor in knowing them can anyone be other than a friend.

(47) Let those of us, then, who have resolved to attain eternal life love God with our whole heart, our whole soul, and our whole mind. For eternal life is the great reward, and its promise fills us with joy. But reward cannot precede merit nor be given to a man before he deserves it, for that would

be altogether unjust, and who is more just than God? Let us not, therefore, expect a reward before we become worthy to receive it.

Perhaps it would not be out of place here to ask what eternal life is. Let us hear the answer from Him who bestows it upon us: 'Now this is everlasting life, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Him whom thou hast sent, Jesus Christ.'¹ Eternal life, then, is the knowledge of truth itself. See then, from this how confused and perverse those individuals are who suppose that, by imparting to us a knowledge of God, they can make us perfect, when this knowledge is the reward of those who have attained perfection. What, then, must we do, what I ask, if we wish to know Him, if not to love Him first with complete devotion?² This brings us back to what we have insisted upon from the beginning, that there is no sounder principle in the Catholic Church than that authority should precede reason.

Chapter 26

(48) But let us go on, for it might seem that we have said nothing yet about man himself, that is, about the one who loves. Whoever thinks this, lacks clear perception, however, for it is impossible that one should love God and not love himself. In fact, he alone has a proper love of himself who loves God. Since a man can be said to have sufficient love for himself if he seeks earnestly to attain the supreme and perfect good, and this is nothing other than God, as what we have been saying shows, who can doubt that he who loves God loves himself? Ought there, then, to be no bond of love among men? Most

¹ John 17.3.

² Cf. *Retract.* 1.7.4: 'It would have been better to have said *sincere* rather than *complete* devotion, so as not to create the impression that the love of God will be no greater when we see Him face to face. By *complete*, then, we mean here that it cannot be greater while we walk in faith, for it will be greater, indeed altogether complete, but only through sight.'

assuredly, mutual love ought to exist among them, and we cannot believe that there is any surer step to the love of God than the charity of one man toward another.

(49) Let the Lord Himself give us that other commandment which he pronounced when questioned concerning the precepts of life. For, knowing that God is one thing and man another, and the difference is that between a creator and the being made to His image and likeness, He was not satisfied with one commandment. Therefore, He gave us a second: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as Thyself.'¹ Now you love yourself in a salutary manner only if you love God more than yourself. Therefore, what you do in your own behalf, you must do also for your neighbor, so that he, too, may love God with perfect love. But you do not love him as yourself unless you endeavor to lead him to the good which you yourself are pursuing. For this is the one good that is not diminished by the multitude striving to reach it with you. From this commandment, arise the duties pertaining to human society, about which it is difficult not to err. But we know that, above all, we must try to be benevolent, that is, we must entertain no malice or evil design against another. For who is more neighbor to man than man?

(50) Listen also to the words of St. Paul: 'Love does no evil to a neighbor.'² The texts I am utilizing here are very brief but, if I am not mistaken, are appropriate and suffice for the purpose. For everyone knows how numerous and how weighty are the words on love of neighbor scattered throughout the Sacred Books. But since there are two ways in which a man may sin against another, one by doing him harm, and the second by refusing to help him when one is able, and since it is on account of both of these that men are called wicked, although no one who loves would do either, I think the words: 'Love does no evil to a neighbor,' are ample to prove what we are saying. And if we cannot arrive at the good unless we

¹ Matt. 22.39.

² Rom. 13.10.

cease to do evil, our love of neighbor is a sort of cradle of our love of God, in the sense that by following the words: 'Love does no evil to a neighbor,' we can rise up to what is indicated in the words: 'For those who love God all things work together unto good.'³

(51) Whether these two loves come to the fullness of perfection together, or whether the love of God arises first but the love of neighbor is the first to come to perfection, this I do not know. Perhaps divine love takes hold upon us more quickly in the beginning, but we come to perfection more readily in lower things. Whichever way it be, the main point is that no one, while despising his neighbor, can believe he will arrive at happiness and the God whom he loves. Would that it were as easy to do something for one's neighbor's good or to avoid injuring him as it is for the kind-hearted and well-instructed individual to love him. But here good will alone does not suffice, for it is a work demanding great understanding and prudence, which no one can exercise unless they be given to him by God, the fountain of all good. Knowing how difficult this subject is, I shall, in attempting to say a few words about it for the task at hand, place all my hope in Him from whom alone we can receive these gifts.

Chapter 27

(52) Man as he appears to us is a rational soul, making use of a mortal and earthly body. Therefore, he who loves his neighbor does good partly for his body and partly for his soul. What benefits the body is termed medicine, and what benefits the soul, instruction. But I shall here call medicine anything at all which preserves or restores the health of the body. It includes, therefore, not only what pertains to the art of those properly called physicians, but also food and drink, clothing

³ Rom. 8.28.

and shelter, and all those things that protect the body against external blows or mishaps. For hunger and thirst, cold and heat, and every injury inflicted from without threaten the bodily health that we are now considering.

(53) Those who are prompted by human kindness to provide the things necessary so that others might resist evils and misfortunes of this sort are called merciful, even though they might be so wise that no anguish of soul disturbs them.¹ For who would not agree that the term *mercy* implies heart-felt distress over the suffering of another? Yet who would deny that the wise man ought to be free from all painful emotion when assisting those in need—when he gives food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty, when he clothes the naked, offers hospitality to the stranger and delivers those who are oppressed, and when in his kindness he even goes so far as to bury the dead? Although he performs these acts with a serene mind, impelled by the duty of kindness rather than the sting of pain, he ought still to be called merciful, for the word does not lose all meaning when the feeling of pain is absent.

(54) Some foolish individuals shun the exercise of mercy as though it were a vice because the sense of duty does not sufficiently move them if they are not, at the same time, moved by emotion. Consequently, they become frozen in a state of rigid insensibility rather than serene in the tranquility of reason. God, too, is called merciful, and much more appropriately, but in what sense this term applies to Him, I shall leave to those who by their piety and zeal have rendered themselves capable of understanding it. For I fear that, in employing the language of the learned ineptly, we might harden the hearts of simple men against mercy instead of leading them gradually to the desire for good works. Just as mercy, then, demands that we drive away these evils from others, so innocence forbids us to inflict them.

¹ Cf. *Retract.* 1.7.4: 'This must not be understood to mean that there are in this life such wise men, for I did not say "since there are," but "even though they might be" so wise.'

Chapter 28

(55) As for discipline, which restores health to the soul, without which bodily health can do nothing to preserve us from misery, it is the most difficult subject of all. We said, in speaking of the body, that it is one thing to cure diseases and heal wounds, which few men are competent to do, but another thing to relieve the distress of hunger and thirst and the other bodily needs, which any ordinary individual can do. Similarly, in the case of the soul, there are some things that require no remarkable skill or mastery, as for example when we exhort others to provide the necessities of life for the needy. When we ourselves do this, we aid the body through corporal works; when we teach others to do so, we aid the soul by way of instruction. But a great number and variety of spiritual maladies are cured only by an extraordinary and ineffable remedy. And if this medicine were not sent to the people of God, there would be no hope of salvation, so unrestrainedly do they continue to sin. Even the health of the body, if you wish to trace things to their cause, can only be explained as coming from God, to whom we must attribute both the being and well being of all things.

(56) This discipline which is the medicine of the soul is, as far as we can gather from the Sacred Scriptures, divided into two parts: coercion and instruction. Coercion implies fear, and instruction love, on the part of the one receiving the discipline; for he who offers assistance to another is not moved by fear, but only by love. In both of these, God Himself, to whose goodness and mercy we owe it that we exist at all, has given a rule of discipline in the Old and New Testaments. And although both are found in each Testament, fear predominates in the Old Testament and love in the New, the one being called by the apostle bondage and the other liberty.

On the wonderful order and divine harmony of the two Testaments, we could discourse at length, and many pious and

learned men have done so. Numerous volumes would be filled by the explanation and interpretation required to do justice to the subject, to the extent that man is capable of this. He who loves his neighbor, then, does all that he can to make him healthy in both body and soul, but the care of the body is always ordered to the health of the soul. He, therefore, endeavors to lead the soul gradually from fear of God to love of Him. This is the perfection of moral conduct by which we come to the knowledge of truth that we are striving for so earnestly.

(57) The Manichaeans agree that we must love God and our neighbor, but they deny that this is taught in the Old Testament. How greatly they err, however, is apparent from the texts which we have quoted above on these duties. But to add a few words of such nature that it would be sheer madness to disagree, do they not realize how unreasonable it is to deny that the very precepts which they themselves praise are quoted by our Lord in the Gospel from the Old Testament where it is written: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind"; and also: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"?¹

If, being restrained by the light of truth, they dare not deny this, let them attempt to deny that these precepts are salutary, or that they contain the perfection of moral conduct. Let them say that we do not have to love God or love our neighbor, and that all things do not work together unto good for those who love God; or let them say it is not true that love does no evil to a neighbor—the two precepts by which human life is ordered in the best and most salutary manner. If they say these things, they have nothing in common with Christians, nor with humanity itself. If, however, they do not dare to say them, but are forced to admit that these precepts are divine, why do they not cease their nefarious abuse of the books from which such precepts are quoted?

(58) Will they answer, as is their wont, that it does not

¹ Cf. Deut. 6.5; Lev. 19.18; Matt. 22.37-39.

follow that everything to be found in the books from which these precepts were drawn is good? What to reply to such quibbling or how one ought to refute it, I do not readily see. Shall I discuss the words of the Old Testament one by one to show these obstinate and ignorant men their complete agreement with the Gospels? Would we ever finish? And when would I have the time or they the patience for it? What then? Shall I abandon the cause and allow them to take refuge in an opinion which, although perverse and false, is difficult to disprove? I will not do so. God Himself, whose precepts I am defending, will be at my side and will not leave me in such straits, helpless and alone.

Chapter 29

(59) Let us have your attention, then, O Manichaeans, if by chance there are any among you still capable of escaping the superstition that has hold upon you. Listen, I say, without stubbornness and be not ready to object; otherwise, it will be the worse for you. Surely, no one doubts, nor are you so far removed from truth as not to understand, that if it is a good thing to love God and our neighbor, as all admit, then whatever depends on these two commandments cannot be rightfully decried. What does depend on them, it would be ridiculous to hope to learn from me. Listen rather to Christ Himself; listen to Christ, the Wisdom of God. 'On these two commandments,' He says, 'depend the whole Law and the Prophets.'¹

(60) What can even the most persistent obstinacy say to this? That these are not the words of Christ? But in the Gospel, they are written as His. That what is written is false? What more profane sacrilege, or more bold and shameless defiance can be found? The worshipers of idols, who hate the very name of Christ, never ventured to speak thus against the

¹ Matt. 22.40.

Scriptures. For the complete overthrow of all literature, and the repudiation of all books of the past, would result if what is supported by the religious belief of so many people, and confirmed by the common consent of men in all ages, were to be put in such doubt that it could not command even the credence and authority of ordinary history. And finally, what could you quote from any of the Scriptures that I could not treat in similar fashion, were it brought forward against my purpose or line of argument?

(61) But who can tolerate their wishing to prevent us from believing a book so widely known and now in the hands of all, and demanding that we believe the book which they themselves produce? If any writing is to be distrusted, it is most assuredly that which has gained no wide acceptance and might well be but a counterfeit. If you Manichaeans force such a book on me against my will, and by a display of authority try to make me believe it, would it not be deplorable were I to doubt what I see accepted without question everywhere and supported by the testimony of churches throughout the world? And would it not be even more deplorable if my doubt rested solely on your word? Even if you did produce other copies, I could accept them only if they were supported by general consent. But you have only your own foolish and unfounded opinion to offer. Do you consider the human race so altogether bereft of reason and abandoned by divine providence as to prefer to the Scriptures, not writings brought forward to refute them, but merely your own words?

You will have to provide another manuscript, one uncorrupted and more accurate, in which are lacking only those parts you claim to be interpolations. For example, if you allege that Paul's Epistle to the Romans is corrupt, produce an uncorrupted one, or rather offer another manuscript in which the Epistle of the same apostle appears genuine and free from error. You say you will not do this for fear that you might be accused of having tampered with the text yourself. This is your usual answer, and it is true, for were you to do so, even

the ordinary man would suspect nothing else, all of which shows the worth you place upon your own authority. Since, then, the very fact of your having brought forth a manuscript would make it rash for anyone to accept it, do you think one ought to put faith in your words against the Scriptures?²

Chapter 30

(62) But why belabor the point? Who does not see that those who would dare to speak in this way against the Christian Scriptures, while they may not be what men suspect, are certainly not Christians. For to us Christians, this rule of life has been given, that we should love the Lord our God with our whole heart, and our whole soul, and our whole mind and our neighbor as ourself, for: 'On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.'¹

It is with reason, then, O Catholic Church, true Mother of Christians, that you command that not only God, in the possession of whom we enjoy a life of supreme happiness, should be worshiped in perfect purity and chastity, but you set up no creature for us to adore or be required to serve, and you exclude from that incorruptible and inviolable eternity, to which alone man must subject himself and to which the human soul must adhere in order to escape wretchedness, all that has been made and is subject to time and change. You neither join together what eternity, and truth, and peace itself have separated, nor separate what a common majesty unites, but you also embrace such love and charity for the neighbor that there is found in you a powerful remedy for the many diseases with which souls are afflicted on account of their sins.

² Cf. *Contra epistolam Manichaei quam vocant Fundamenti* (397) 11.12-18 for a fuller explanation of the Manichaeans' teachings on this subject. Cf. also *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* (400) 20.23 and all of book 21 on the way of life of the Christians contrasted with that of the Manichaeans.

¹ Cf. Matt. 22.37-40.

(63) You teach and guide children with childlike simplicity, youths with firmness, and the aged with mild persuasion, taking into account the age of the mind as well as that of the body. You subject women to their husbands in chaste and faithful obedience, not for the gratification of passion, but for the begetting of children and the establishment of domestic society. You set men over their wives, not to make playthings of the weaker sex, but in accordance with the laws of pure and honest love. You bind children to their parents in a kind of free servitude, and give parents a pious rule over their children. You unite brother to brother in a religious bond stronger and closer than that of blood. While preserving the ties of nature and choice, you unite all those related by kinship or marriage in a bond of mutual love.

You teach servants to cleave to their masters from the joy of duty rather than the necessity of their condition. You cause masters to be patient with their servants out of regard for the supreme God who is their common Master, and dispose them to the use of persuasion rather than force. In recollection of their first parents, you join citizen to citizen, nation to nation, and all men to each other, not merely in society, but in a kind of brotherhood. You teach kings to look to the welfare of their people, and exhort people to be subject to their kings. You teach us sedulously to whom honor is due, to whom affection, to whom reverence, to whom fear, to whom comfort, to whom admonition, to whom encouragement, to whom instruction, to whom reproof, and to whom punishment, showing us that not all these are due to everyone, but that charity is due to all men and harm to none.

(64) When this human love has nourished and fortified the soul clinging to your breast and made it ready to follow God, and when the divine majesty has begun to reveal itself in the measure proper to man while an inhabitant of earth, then, such ardent charity is engendered, and such a flame of divine love bursts forth that all vices are burned away and man is purged and sanctified. The divine character of these words

then becomes apparent: 'I am a consuming fire';² and: 'I have come to cast fire upon the earth.'³ These two utterances of the one God, inscribed in both Testaments and proclaiming in harmonious testimony the sanctification of the soul, anticipate the accomplishment of what is also set forth in the New Testament but borrowed from the Old: 'Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?'⁴ Were our heretics capable of grasping this one truth, they would relinquish their pride and become reconciled, and would never again worship God anywhere but in your midst.

In you, as is fitting, the divine precepts are observed far and wide. In you, as is also fitting, it is well understood how much more grievous it is to sin knowing the law than ignoring it, for: 'the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the Law.'⁵ And, therefore, knowledge that a commandment has been disregarded brings with it a more violent destruction. In you, as is fitting, there is seen the vanity of a deed done in accordance with the law, when the soul is ravaged by passion and con-

2 Cf. Deut. 4.24. Cf. *Retract.* 1.7.5: 'The Pelagians may think I have said that perfection is attainable in this mortal life. But they should not think this. The fervor of charity, suitable for the following of God and great enough to consume all vices, can surely commence and grow in this life, but it does not follow that it can complete here what it was meant to do, so that there is no vice in man. Yet such a thing is accomplished by this same fervor of charity when and where it is possible, for just as the bath of regeneration purifies man from the guilt of all the sins attached to human birth and brought about by his wickedness, so this perfection may purify him from the stain of all the vices which human frailty is subject to in this world. It is in this way that we must understand the words of the Apostle, "Christ loved the church and delivered himself up for it, that He might sanctify it, cleansing it by the laver of water and the word of life, that He might present it to Himself, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing" (Eph. 5.25-27). For in this world, there is the laver of water by the word, by which the church is purified. But since the whole church as long as it is in this world says, "Forgive us our debts," it is, while here surely, not without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Yet from that which it receives here, it is led to the glory and perfection which are not here.'

3 Luke 12.49.

4 1 Cor. 15.54, 55.

5 1 Cor. 15.56.

strained by the fear of punishment rather than the love of virtue. To you belong the multitude of the charitable, the kind, the merciful, the learned, the chaste, the holy, and the many who love God with such ardor that, in their perfect continence and extraordinary contempt for this world, they find delight even in solitude.

Chapter 31

(65) What must those individuals behold who, while not ceasing to love their fellowmen, can, nevertheless, live without seeing them? Whatever it be, it must be far superior to all human things, since, in contemplating it, they are enabled to pass their lives in isolation from human society. Take in good part, then, you Manichaeans, what I have to say about the way of life and the remarkable continence of perfect Christians for whom total chastity is not only something to be praised, but something to be practiced as well. And if you have any shame, refrain from flaunting your abstinence so arrogantly before the uninformed as though it were the most difficult thing in the world. What I am about to say is nothing you do not already know, although you may wish to hide it. For who can be unaware that the multitude of Christians practicing perfect continence increases and spreads day by day, particularly in Egypt and in the East. This cannot possibly have escaped you.

(66) I shall say nothing of those I have just mentioned, who, having withdrawn themselves altogether from the sight of men, inhabit the most desolate places, and content themselves with water and a little bread brought to them from time to time. Rejoicing in their converse with God, they adhere to Him with pure minds and are completely happy in contemplation of His beauty, which can be perceived only by the understanding of saints. Of these I shall not speak, I say, be-

cause some individuals feel that they have gone to extremes in abandoning human things, not considering how much benefit we derive from the prayers of these souls and from the example of their lives, although their bodies are hidden from our view. But to discuss this point would be time consuming and would, it seems to me, be futile, for if one does not spontaneously regard so lofty a peak of sanctity worthy of admiration and honor, how are my words to make him do so? Let us remind those who foolishly boast of themselves, however, that the temperance and continence of the great saints of the Catholic faith has progressed to such a point that some people think it ought to be checked and brought back within human limits. That these souls have been so far elevated beyond men is, thus, acknowledged even by those whom it displeases.

(67) If a life such as this is beyond our own endurance, we cannot help but admire those who, despising and denying themselves the attractions of the world, and living together in perfect chastity and holiness, pass their time in prayer, reading, and spiritual conference. They are neither puffed up with pride, nor aroused by willfulness or spiteful envy, but are modest, humble, and long-suffering, offering to God, from whom they receive the power to live this way, and as a sacrifice agreeable to Him, a life of perfect harmony and devotion. None of them possesses anything of his own; no one is a burden to others. They work with their hands at tasks that will support their bodies without distracting their minds from God, and turn over the fruits of their labor to those called deans from the fact that each one has ten men under his care. No one, therefore, need preoccupy himself with the body, be it for food or clothing or any of the other things required for his daily life or the care of his health, for the deans take charge of all this, providing with great solicitude whatever the frailty of the body demands, and they render an account of their management to him whom they call the *father*. The fathers are men noted both for the holiness of their lives and for their extensive knowledge of divine doctrine. They excel

in every way. Over those in their charge, and whom they call their children, they exercise great authority without any display of pride, and receive in return a willing obedience.

At the end of the day while still fasting, the men assemble together from their individual dwellings to listen to the father, at least three thousand of them for each father, but sometimes many more. They attend his words in complete silence and with astonishing eagerness, giving vent to the sentiments which the discourse arouses in their souls either by groans or tears, or a restrained and quiet joy. They then take something to eat, allowing themselves only enough to maintain their health and bodily strength, thus preventing the appetite from satisfying itself, even on such poor and lowly fare as is provided. They abstain, not only from meat and wine in order that their bodily desires may be kept under control, but also from those foods considered by some to be purer since they are more stimulating to the palate and stomach—a ridiculous and disgraceful subterfuge by which such individuals seek to excuse their shameful desire for certain exquisite foods apart from meat.

Everything that remains over and above what is needed (and there is considerable surplus because of their manual labor and their abstemiousness), they distribute to the poor with greater pains than were expended in obtaining it for themselves. They make no effort at all to acquire an abundance of goods, and do everything they can to prevent a surplus from remaining, going so far as to send shiploads of provisions to places inhabited by poor people. There is no need to say more than this about so well known a fact.

(68) Many women serve God chastely and devoutly in the same manner, living in separate dwellings as far from the men as propriety demands, and united to them only in holy charity and in the imitation of their virtues. No young men are permitted to come near them, and the old men, even the most respected and irreproachable, come only to the entrance way for the purpose of bringing supplies. The women occupy themselves and provide for their bodily needs by weaving,

making the clothing of the brethren, in return for which they receive their food. I could not give worthy enough praise of this institution, or order, or way of life, if I wished to, and I am afraid that were I to try to embellish the simplicity of the story with flowery phrases in the manner of one delivering a panegyric, it would seem that I believed a mere recountal of the facts unimpressive. Criticize these things if you can, you Manichaeans, and be not so eager to expose our faults before those too blind or weak-minded to discriminate.

Chapter 32

(69) Moral excellence within the Catholic Church is not so limited, however, that only the lives of those I have just mentioned are deserving of praise. I have known many bishops who were men of great holiness, as well as many priests, and deacons, and ministers of the divine sacraments whose virtue seems to me the more commendable and worthy of admiration in that it is harder to preserve when one is surrounded by all sorts of people and subjected to the turmoil of life. For these men have in their care, not only the healthy, but those in need of cure, and the vices of the throng must be borne with in order that they may be cured, just as the plague must be tolerated until it is quelled. Under such circumstances, it is most difficult to live a holy life and preserve a tranquil mind. In a word, these men live among those who are learning to live the good life; the others are already living that life.

Chapter 33

(70) There is still another praiseworthy group of Christians whom I do not wish to slight, namely, those who dwell in the cities, yet lead a life altogether removed from the ordinary. I

myself saw at Milan a group of holy men, not inconsiderable in number, lodging together under the direction of an exemplary and learned priest. In Rome, I know of several houses where one person, distinguished for his sobriety, wisdom, and divine science, presides over the others, living with them in Christian charity, holiness, and liberty. So as not to be a burden to others, they follow the custom of the East and the authority of St. Paul in supporting themselves by the work of their hands.

I was told that many of these people practice incredible fasts, not even taking nourishment once a day towards evening, as is the common practice everywhere, but continuing for three whole days and often more without food or drink. And this is true, not only of men, but of women also, for many widows and virgins dwell together and support themselves by spinning and weaving, presided over by a woman of great dignity and experience who is skilled, not only in moral formation and guidance, but in instructing the mind as well.

(71) In these communities, no one is urged to undertake austerities beyond his tolerance, and nothing is imposed upon an individual against his will. Nor is he looked down upon by the others because he confesses himself unable to imitate them. For they remember how strongly the Scriptures recommend charity to all, keeping before their minds the words: 'For the clean all things are clean';¹ 'What goes into the mouth does not defile a man; but that which comes out of the mouth, that defiles a man.'² All of their efforts are, therefore, directed, not to rejecting certain kinds of food as corrupt, but to overcoming concupiscence and preserving brotherly love. They recall: 'Food for the belly and the belly for food, but God will destroy both it and them';³ and also: 'For neither shall we suffer any loss if we do not eat, nor if we do eat shall we have any advantage';⁴ but above all this: 'It is good, brethren, not

1 Tit. 1.15.

2 Matt. 15.11.

3 1 Cor. 6.13.

4 1 Cor. 8.8.

to eat meat and not to drink wine, nor to do anything by which thy brother is offended.'⁵

In this passage, St. Paul shows how all things must be ordered to the one end of charity. 'For one believes that he may eat all things,' he says, 'but he who is weak, let him eat vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. Who art thou to judge another's servant? To his own lord he stands or falls; but he will stand, for God is able to make him stand.' A little further on he says: 'He who eats eats for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God.' And in a subsequent passage: 'Therefore everyone of us will render an account for himself to God. Therefore, let us no longer judge one another, but rather judge this, that you should not put a stumbling block or hindrance in your brother's way. I know and am confident in the Lord Jesus that nothing is of itself unclean; but to him who regards anything as unclean, to him it is unclean.'⁶ Could it be more plainly shown that it is not in the things we eat, but in the soul itself that the force lies which can defile it? And that is why even those who are capable of disregarding all of these distinctions, and who know perfectly well that they will not contaminate themselves, if with good intentions and without inordinate appetite they eat a certain food, must still keep charity before their minds. Note what follows: 'If, then, thy brother is grieved because of thy food, no longer dost thou walk according to charity.'⁷

(72) Read the rest, for it is too long to quote in its entirety, and you will discover that those who can disregard these distinctions, that is, those who are stronger and are not troubled by scruples, are, nevertheless, commanded to abstain so as not to offend those who, on account of their weakness, still find abstinence necessary. The persons whom I have been describing know and follow these precepts, for they are Christians and

⁵ Rom 14.21.

⁶ Cf. Rom. 14.2-14.

⁷ Rom. 14.15.

not heretics. They understand the Scriptures according to the teaching of the apostles, and not according to that false and presumptuous name of Apostle.⁸ No one despises the individual who does not eat, no one judges the one who does eat, and the weak eat vegetables. However, many who are strong eat vegetables for the sake of the weak. Others do it, not for this reason, but because they prefer to get along on more common fare, living in complete peace of mind with the least expense for bodily sustenance. 'All things are lawful for me,' says St. Paul, 'but I will not be brought under the power of any.'⁹

Thus, many do not eat meat, yet they do not superstitiously consider it unclean. And the same individuals who abstain when healthy, take meat without qualm when sick, if it be required as a cure. Many do not drink wine; nevertheless, they do not think it would defile them. In fact, they show great sympathy and good judgment in seeing that it is provided for those who tend to be listless, and for all who cannot maintain bodily health without it. And in a brotherly way, they admonish those who foolishly refuse to take it, not to allow themselves to become weaker rather than more holy on account of a meaningless superstition. They quote to them the Apostle's advice to his disciple that he take a little wine for his frequent infirmities.¹⁰ Thus, they are diligent in the exercise of piety for they know that bodily discipline is of little profit, as the Apostle says.¹¹

(73) Those, then, who are able, and there are many of them, abstain from meat and wine for two reasons: either because of the weakness of their brethren, or in order to preserve their own liberty. Charity is safeguarded above all. It rules their eating, their speech, their dress, their countenance. It is

8 In *Contra epistolam Manichaei quam vocant Fundamenti* 5.6 to 9.10. St. Augustine argues against the claim of Manichaeus to be an apostle of Jesus Christ by the appointment of God the Father.

9 1 Cor. 6.12.

10 Cf. 1 Tim. 5.23.

11 Cf. 1 Tim. 4.8.

charity that brings them together and unites them. To violate charity is considered an offense against God. Anything that opposes charity is immediately attacked and cast out; it is not permitted to continue a single day. They know that charity is so esteemed by Christ and the apostles that if it alone be lacking, everything is done in vain, but if it be present all is fulfilled.

Chapter 34

(74) Find fault with these Christians if you can, you Manichaeans. Observe them and without lying speak abusively of them if you dare. Compare your fasts with their fasts, your chastity with their chastity, your garments with their garments, your food with their food, your self-restraint with their self-restraint, and your charity with their charity. And, what is most important, compare your precepts with theirs. You will then see the difference between pretense and sincerity, between the right way and the wrong, between honesty and deceit, between the solid and the puffed up, between happiness and misery, between unity and division; in short, between the siren's reefs of superstition and the haven of religion.

(75) Do not attempt to marshal against me those who, while professing the name of Christian, neither understand nor manifest the nature of the faith they profess. And do not bring up the throng of ignorant people who, even in the true religion, are either superstitious or so given over to sensuality that they have forgotten what they promised to God. I know that there are many who worship tombs and pictures. I know that there are many who drink to excess over the dead, and who, at the funeral banquets, bury themselves along with the buried, and call their gluttony and drunkenness by the name of religion. I know that there are many who in words have renounced this world, yet choose to be weighed down by worldly cares and rejoice in their burden. It is not surprising

that in such a great multitude of people you should be able to discover some whose lives you can condemn, and by so doing seduce the unwary from the security of the Catholic faith. Yet you are hard put to produce from among your small number even one of those you call the Elect who keeps the precepts which, in your unreasonable superstition, you seek to defend. How absurd, pernicious, and profane these precepts are, and how seldom observed by most, and, in fact, practically all, of you, I propose to show in another volume.

(76) My advice to you now is to stop maligning the Catholic Church by assailing the moral conduct of men whom she herself censures and strives daily to correct as bad children. Those among them, who through good will and the help of God are corrected, will regain by repentance what they lost by sin. Those who wickedly persist in their old vices, or add to them others still worse, will, it is true, be allowed to remain in the Lord's field and to grow with the good seed, but the time will come for the weeds to be separated. Or if, on account of their being called by the name of Christians, they are considered to belong with the chaff rather than the thorns, there will yet come One to clean the threshing floor, and He will separate the chaff from the grain, distributing to each in perfect justice according to his merits.¹

Chapter 35

(77) Meanwhile, why continue your outbursts? Why allow yourself to be blinded by party prejudice? Why involve yourself in a tedious defense of such errors? Seek for fruit in the field and grain on the threshing floor; they will be found without difficulty and will even offer themselves to the seeker. Why gaze so intently on the sweepings? Why frighten ignorant men away from the abundance of a fertile garden by pointing to

¹ Cf. Matt. 3.12; 13.24-43.

the roughness of the hedge? There is an unfailing entrance known only to a few by which one can come in, but you either do not believe it exists or do not wish to discover it. In the Catholic Church, there are great numbers of the faithful who do not use worldly goods; there are others who use them as though not using them, as the Apostle said,¹ and as has been proved in times when Christians were forced to worship idols. For how many men of wealth, how many rural householders, and merchants, and soldiers, how many civic leaders, and even senators, persons of both sexes, suffered for the true faith and religion, giving up all those vain and temporal goods which they used but were not enslaved to, thus proving to unbelievers that they possessed these goods and were not possessed by them.

(78) Why do you maliciously claim that the faithful who have been renewed in baptism ought no longer to beget children, or to possess lands or houses or money? St. Paul permits these things. For, it cannot be denied that he wrote to the faithful the following, after enumerating the various evil-doers who shall not possess the kingdom of God: 'And such were some of you, but you have been washed, you have been sanctified, you have been justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.'² Surely, no one would venture to understand by the washed and sanctified anyone but the faithful and those who have renounced this world.

But now that he has made it clear to whom he is writing, let us see whether or not he allows them these things. He goes on: 'All things are lawful for me, but not all things are expedient. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Food for the belly and the belly for food, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. Now God has raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power. Do you not know that your bodies are mem-

¹ Cf. 1 Cor. 7.31.

² 1 Cor. 6.11.

bers of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? By no means! Or do you not know that he who cleaves to a harlot, becomes one body with her? "For the two," it says, "shall be in one flesh." But he who cleaves to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee immorality. Every sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your members are the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought at a great price. Glorify God and bear him in your body.

'Now concerning the things whereof you wrote to me: It is good for man not to touch woman. Yet, for fear of fornication, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband render to the wife her due, and likewise the wife to the husband. The wife has not authority over her body, but the husband; the husband likewise has not authority over his body, but the wife. Do not deprive each other, except perhaps by consent, for a time, that you may give yourselves to prayer; and return together again lest Satan tempt you because you lack self-control. But this I say by way of concession, not by way of commandment. For I would that you all were as I am myself; but each one has his own gift from God, one in this way, and another in that.'³

(79) Does it not seem to you that the Apostle has both pointed out to the strong what is most perfect, and permitted to the weaker what is next best? For he shows that not to touch a woman is the most perfect way when he says: 'I would that you all were as I am myself.' However, the next best thing to this is conjugal chastity which saves a man from fornication. Did he ever say that these people were not to be counted among the faithful because they were married? What he says is that those who are united in conjugal chastity are sanctified by each other, should one of them be an unbeliever, and that the children born of them are also sanctified. 'For the un-

³ 1 Cor. 6.11-20; 7.1-7.

believing husband is sanctified by the believing wife,' he says, 'and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the believing husband; otherwise, your children would be unclean, but, as it is, they are holy.'⁴ Why do you clamor so persistently against these truths? Why do you try to obscure the light of the Scriptures with empty shadows?

(80) Do not say that the catechumens are permitted to have wives, but not the faithful; that the catechumens are permitted to have money, but not the faithful. For there are many who use these things as though not using them. The renewal of man, begun in the sacred bath of baptism, proceeds gradually and is accomplished more quickly in some individuals and more slowly in others. But many are in progress toward the new life if we consider the matter carefully and without prejudice. As the Apostle says: 'Even though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.'⁵ He says that the inner man is renewed day by day in order that he may become perfect, but you would have him begin with perfection. Would that you really did desire this! But you seek to lead the unwary astray rather than to raise up the weak.

You ought not to have spoken so boldly, even had you been thought perfect in observing those foolish precepts of yours, for you know in your conscience that those whom you have enticed into your sect will discover, when they have become more intimately acquainted with you, many things no one would suspect you of when you accuse others. What sort of insolence is it, then, to demand perfection of the weaker Catholics as an excuse for leading the unlearned away from the Church, and yet in no way to give evidence of such perfection in yourself to those whom you lead away? But so as not to give the appearance of pouring out all these things against you without reason, I shall bring this volume to a close and proceed next to a description of the precepts which guide your life and those remarkable practices of yours.

⁴ 1 Cor. 7.14.

⁵ 2 Cor. 4.16.

*THE WAY OF LIFE OF
THE MANICHAEANS*

BOOK TWO

THE WAY OF LIFE OF THE MANICHAEANS

Chapter 1



DO NOT BELIEVE ANYONE would hesitate to admit that the question of good and evil pertains to moral doctrine, and it is this which concerns us in the present discussion. Therefore, I wish that men would bring to this inquiry minds sufficiently clear and penetrating as to be able to see the supreme good than which nothing is better nor more sublime, and to which the pure and perfect rational soul is subject. For, if they had a perfect understanding of this good, they would recognize it at once as that which is most properly called the supreme and primary being. For that must be said to be in the highest sense of the word which remains always the same, is identical with itself throughout and cannot be corrupted or altered in any part, and which is not subject to time, nor different now from what it used to be. This is being in its truest sense. For the word *being* signifies a nature which subsists in itself and is altogether changeless. And this can be said of no other being than God, to whom there is absolutely nothing that is contrary, for the contrary of being is non-being. Therefore, there is no nature contrary to God. But since we approach the contemplation of these things with a mental vision impaired and made dim by foolish imaginings and a perverse will, let us do our best to come to some sort

of knowledge of this important matter, proceeding carefully step by step, not as men who are able to see, but as ones who are feeling their way.

Chapter 2

(2) You Manichaeans often, if not always, ask those whom you endeavor to win over to your heresy where evil comes from. Suppose that I had just met you for the first time. And here, if you do not mind, I request a favor—that you lay aside for the time being the impression that you already know the answer, and approach this great question as an untrained mind would approach it. You ask me where evil comes from, and I, in turn, ask you what evil is. Who is asking the right question, those who ask where evil comes from although they know not what it is, or he who thinks he must first ask what it is, so as not to perpetrate the greatest of all absurdities—seeking out the origin of an unknown thing?

You are quite correct in asking who is so blind mentally as not to see that the evil for any kind of thing is that which is contrary to its nature. But once this is established, your heresy is overthrown. For evil is not a nature if it is that which is contrary to nature. Yet you claim that evil is a certain nature and substance. Moreover, whatever is contrary to nature opposes nature and attempts to destroy it, seeking to make what is cease to be. For a nature is nothing else than that which a thing is understood to be in its species. And just as we call what a being is by the new word *essence* or, more often, *substance*, so the ancients who did not have these terms used the word *nature*. And, therefore, if you are willing to put aside all obstinacy, you will see that evil is that which falls away from essence and tends to non-being.

(3) When the Catholic Church declares that God is the author of all natures and substances, those who understand what this means, understand at the same time that God is not

the author of evil. For how can He who is the cause of the being of all things be at the same time the cause of their not being—that is, of their falling away from being and tending to non-being, which is precisely what sound reason declares evil to be. And how can that species of evil of yours, which you like to call the supreme evil, be contrary to nature, that is, to substance, when you claim that it is a nature and a substance? For if it acts against itself, it destroys its own being, and if it were even to succeed completely in this, it would then have reached the supreme evil. But this will not happen, inasmuch as you choose, not only to have it be, but to be eternal. Therefore, what is considered to be a substance cannot be the supreme evil.

(4) But what am I to do? I know that there are many among you who have no understanding whatever of these things. I know that there are also some who are acute enough to grasp them, but who, on account of their perversity of will and stubbornness—characteristics which will cause them to lose this very acuteness—seek rather to raise some objection that will impress the dull and weak-minded than to give their assent to the truth. Nevertheless, I shall not regret having written what may eventually cause one of you, after reading it with an unbiased mind, to give up your error, or what may prevent those who are able-minded and faithful to God, and as yet uncorrupted by your doctrines, from being led astray by your words.

Chapter 3

(5) Let us, therefore, pursue this question more carefully and, if possible, more precisely. I ask you once again, 'What is evil?' If you say it is that which is harmful, you will not be speaking falsely. But I beg of you to apply yourself earnestly, put aside all party spirit, and seek the truth in order to find it, not to fight it. Whatever is harmful deprives that to which

it is harmful of some good, for if no good is taken away, no harm whatever is done. What, may I ask, could be more obvious than this? What could be plainer or more easy to understand by a person of even ordinary intelligence, provided he were not stubborn? However, once this is granted, it seems to me that the consequences become apparent. Surely, no harm can come to anything in that order which you look upon as the supreme evil since nothing there is good.

But if you affirm that there are two natures, the realm of light and the realm of darkness, and you admit that the realm of light is God, to whom you concede a simple nature in which no part is inferior to any other, then you must grant something that is irreconcilably opposed to your position yet unavoidable, namely, that this nature, which you do not deny to be the supreme good and even vehemently proclaim to be so, is immutable, impenetrable, incorruptible, and inviolable. Otherwise, it would not be the supreme good, for the supreme good is that than which there is nothing better. Now, to such a nature no harm can come in any way. Therefore, if to harm is to deprive of good, no harm can be done to the realm of light because it is inviolable. To what, then, can the evil you speak of do harm?

Chapter 4

(6) Since you are unable to extricate yourself from this difficulty, observe how easily the problem is solved according to Catholic doctrine. There is one good in itself and in the highest sense, that is, by its own nature and essence and not by participation in some other good. And there is another good that is good by participation, deriving its good from the supreme good which, however, continues to be itself and loses nothing. This good, as we have said before, is a creature to whom harm can come through defect, but God is not the au-

thor of such defect, since He is the author of existence and, as I say, of being.

It becomes clear, then, how the term evil is to be employed, for it is properly applied, not to essence, but to privation. And it is apparent what nature it is to which harm can come. For this nature cannot be the supreme evil, since good is taken away from it when it suffers harm. Nor is it the supreme good, since it can fall away from good and is called good, not because it is good in its own being, but because it has goodness. And no thing which is spoken of as being made can be good by nature, since to be made means to receive goodness from another. Thus God is the supreme good, and the things which He has made are all good, although they are not as good as He who made them. For it would be madness to demand that the works be equal to the workman, the creatures equal to the Creator. What more do you Manichaeans want? Do you wish something even plainer than this?

Chapter 5

(7) Then let me ask you for the third time, 'What is evil?' You will perhaps reply, 'Corruption.' And who would deny that this pertains to evil in general, for corruption does not exist in itself; it exists in some substance which it corrupts, for corruption itself is not a substance. Therefore, the thing which it corrupts is not corruption, is not evil, for what is corrupted is deprived of integrity and purity. That which has no purity of which it can be deprived cannot be corrupted, while that which has purity is good by participation in purity.

Furthermore, what is corrupted is perverted, and what is perverted is deprived of order. But order is good. Therefore, what is corrupted is not devoid of good, and it is for this very reason that it can be deprived of good in being corrupted. Thus, if the realm of darkness were devoid of all goodness,

as you say it is, it could not be corrupted, for it would not have anything that corruption could take away, and if corruption takes nothing away, it does not corrupt. Now try to say, if you can, that God and the kingdom of God can be corrupted, when you have not even found a way in which the kingdom of the devil, as you describe it, can be corrupted.

Chapter 6

(8) What is the Catholic view on this subject? What do you suppose it is but the truth—that what is able to be corrupted is a created substance, for that which is not created (which is the supreme good) is incorruptible; and that corruption itself, which is the supreme evil, cannot be corrupted, since it is not a substance. If, however, you wish to know what corruption is, notice the state to which it tends to bring what it corrupts, for it affects these things in accordance with its own nature. By corruption all things cease to be what they were and are brought to non-permanence, to non-being, for being implies permanence. Hence, what is called the Supreme and Perfect Being is so called because it endures in itself. Anything that changes for the better changes, not on account of its permanence, but because it had been altered for the worse, that is, it had suffered a loss of essence, a loss which cannot be attributed to the being who produced the essence.

Some things, therefore, change for the better and in so doing tend toward being. They are not said to be perverted by the change, but rather reverted or converted, for perversion is the opposite of a setting in order. But those things which tend toward being, tend toward order, and, in attaining order, they attain being, so far as it can be attained by creatures. Order reduces whatever it orders to a certain harmony. To be, however, is nothing but to be one. And so, to the extent that a thing acquires unity, to that extent it has being, for unity

brings about the harmony and uniformity by which composite things have their measure of being. Simple things exist in themselves because they are one, but those which are not simple imitate unity through the harmony of their parts, and, in the measure that they achieve this harmony, they exist.

From all of this, we can conclude that order produces being, and disorder, which is also called perversion or corruption, produces non-being. And, therefore, whatever is corrupted tends by that very fact not to be. All you need do now in order that you may discover the supreme evil is to consider what corruption brings about, for it is the supreme evil that corruption seeks to achieve.

Chapter 7

(9) But the goodness of God does not permit a thing to be brought to this point. It disposes all things that fall away so that they occupy the place most suited to them until, by an ordered movement, they return to that from which they fell away.¹ And even the rational souls that fall away from Him, although they possess that immense power of free choice, are placed in the lower ranks of creatures where such souls ought to be. And thus, by the divine judgment, they are made to suffer since they are ranked in accordance with their merits.

From this we see the excellence of those words which you are always railing away at so vehemently: 'I make good things and create evil things.'² For to create means to order and arrange. And so in most manuscripts it is written: 'I make

1 St. Augustine clarifies this point in *Retract.* 1.7.6: 'This must not be taken to mean that all things return to that from which they fell away, as Origen held, but only all those that do return. For those who are punished in everlasting fire do not return to God from whom they fell away. Yet all who fall away are so ordered that they are where it is most fitting that they be, those who do not return being, as befits them, in punishment.'

2 Cf. Isa. 45.7.

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good things and order evil things.' To make is to give being to something that did not exist at all, but to order is to arrange something that already exists in such a way that it becomes greater and better. Thus, when God says: 'I order evil things,' He means those things which fall away, which tend to non-being, and not those which have attained their end. For it has been said that, owing to the Divine Providence, nothing is permitted to reach a state of non-being.

(10) We could expatiate upon this subject, but what we have said is sufficient for our purposes with you. For our object was to show you the door which you despair of finding and cause the uninstructed to despair of too. But nothing can lead you in except good will, that good will upon which the divine clemency bestows peace, as the Gospel tells us: 'Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth among men of good will.'³ It is enough if you have come to see that there is no way out of the religious problem concerning good and evil unless everything, insofar as it is, is from God, while, insofar as it falls away from being, it is not from Him, yet is so ordered by Divine Providence that it occupies its proper place in the universe. If you still do not see this, I do not know what else I can do except to treat what has already been said in more detail. For it is only piety and sincerity that can lead the mind to higher things.

Chapter 8

(11) What other reply can you give when I ask what evil is but that it is either what is contrary to nature, or what harms, or that it is corruption, or something of this sort? But since I have shown that your cause suffers shipwreck with each of these replies, you may, by chance, answer in the childish way you customarily employ when dealing with children, that evil is fire, or poison, or a wild beast, or some such thing. For

³ Luke 2.14.

one of the leaders of your heresy, whose informal discussions we frequently attended, used to say by way of an answer to anyone who maintained that evil is not a substance: 'I would like to put a scorpion in that man's hand and see whether he would not draw his hand away. If he did so, he would have proved conclusively, not by words but by the act itself, that evil is a substance since he would not deny that the animal is a substance.' He did not say this in front of the person himself, but to us when we, being disturbed by what the man had said, reported it to him.

Thus, as I said, he gave a childish answer to children. For who, with a modicum of knowledge, cannot see that such creatures are harmful because they are incompatible with our bodily composition, and that when the conditions are compatible, they do not harm and can even be quite beneficial? If the poison were evil in itself, the scorpion would be the first to suffer. Actually, however, if it were deprived of all its poison, the scorpion would most certainly die. Therefore, what it is evil for the scorpion to lose, it is evil for us to receive, and what it is good for the scorpion to have, it is good for us to be without. Does this mean that the same thing is both good and evil? By no means. Evil is that which is contrary to nature, and this is true both for the scorpion and for us. It is an incompatibility which is, of course, not a substance, but something harmful to substance. Where does it come from, then? Observe what it accomplishes and you will know, if there is any of the inner light within you. For it brings all that it attacks to a state of non-being. But God is the author of essence, and there is no essence which, inasmuch as it is, leads to non-being. Thus, we have said what incompatibility does not come from, since nothing can be said as to whence it comes.

(12) A certain woman criminal of Athens, as history tells us, succeeded in drinking, with little or no harm to her health, the usual quantity of poison given in executing the condemned, by drinking it a little at a time. Later on, when she herself was condemned to death, she took the prescribed

amount of poison like the others, but since she had habituated herself to it, she did not die with the rest. And as this was looked upon as something extraordinary, she was sent into exile. Now, if poison is evil, are we to think that she caused it not to be an evil to herself? What could be more absurd? Rather, since incompatibility is an evil, she made the poison compatible with her own body by habituating herself to it gradually. But how could she by any amount of cleverness have brought it about that an incompatibility would not harm her? How can this be accounted for? By the fact that what is really and properly an evil is harmful both always and to everyone. Oil is agreeable to our bodies, but to many of the six-legged animals it is very detrimental. And is not hellebore sometimes a food, sometimes a medicine, and sometimes a poison? Who would not admit that salt taken in excess is poisonous? And yet, how many beneficial effects it has on the body! Sea water harms land animals when they drink it, but is beneficial to many of them when they bathe their bodies in it; and to fish, it is healthful and pleasant both for drinking and for bathing. Bread is nourishing to man, but kills the hawk. And does not mud itself, although very injurious and offensive when swallowed or smelled, both cool the skin in hot weather and act as a remedy for burns? What could be more repugnant than dung or more worthless than ashes? Yet, these are of such value to the fields that Stercutio, who discovered their use as a fertilizer and from whose name the word for dung (*stercus*) was derived, was deemed worthy of divine honors by the Romans.

(13) But why go on with the endless number of such details I could mention? We would all agree that the four elements which are so much in evidence are beneficial to a nature when they are compatible with it, but very detrimental when incompatible. We who live in air perish when buried beneath either earth or water, while innumerable animals live and crawl about beneath the sand and loose earth, and fish die when exposed to the air. Fire destroys our bodies, but when

used properly, it revives one from cold and expels countless ills. That very sun before which you bow down in adoration and which is the most beautiful of all visible things, strengthens the eyes of the eagle, but dims and injures our eyes when we look at it; and yet, by habituating ourselves, we can fix our gaze upon it without ill effects. May we not be permitted, then, to compare it to the poison which habituation had rendered harmless to the Athenian woman? Consider the point carefully, therefore, and observe that, if any substance is evil because it injures someone, that light which you worship cannot be exempt from the same charge. Thus, it is better to think of evil as the incompatibility by which the sun's rays make our eyes dim, although nothing is more agreeable to the eyes than light.

Chapter 9

(14) I have mentioned these things so that, if it be at all possible, you will be forced to stop saying that evil is a region of immense depth and length; that it is a mind wandering through the region; that it consists of the five caves of the elements—one full of darkness, another of water, another of wind, another of fire, and another of smoke; that it includes the animals born in each of these elements—serpents in the darkness, swimming creatures in the waters, flying creatures in the winds, four-legged creatures in the fire, and two-legged ones in the smoke.

These things cannot possibly be as you describe them because all of them, so far as they exist, necessarily owe their being to the supreme God, for, so far as they exist, they are good. If pain and weakness are evil, the animals you speak of had such bodily strength that their abortive offspring, after the world was formed from them, as your sect holds, fell from heaven to earth and could not die. If blindness is an evil, they were able to see; if deafness, they were able to hear. If to lack

the power of speech is an evil, their speech was so clear and expressive, as you declare, that, having been persuaded by one of their members speaking in the assembly, they decided to wage war against God. If sterility is an evil, they showed great fecundity in the procreation of offspring. If exile is an evil, they occupied their own lands in their own territory. If servitude is an evil, some of them were rulers. If death is an evil, they lived and were so much alive that, according to your teaching, even after God was victorious, it was impossible for the mind ever to die.

(15) May I ask you why there are to be found in the supreme evil so many good things contrary to the evils I have mentioned? Or if these are not evils, then can any substance, so far as it is a substance, be evil? If weakness is not an evil, can a weak body be evil? If blindness is not an evil, can the dark be an evil? If deafness is not an evil, can a deaf man be evil? If sterility is not an evil, how can a sterile animal be an evil? If exile is not an evil, how can an animal that is exiled, or one sending another into exile, be an evil? If servitude is not an evil, how can an animal in servitude, or one forcing another into servitude, be an evil? If death is not an evil, how can a mortal animal be an evil, or one inflicting death? Or if these are evils, then how can bodily strength, sight, hearing, persuasive speech, fecundity, native land, liberty, and life not be good things? Yet you place all of them in the realm of evil and venture to call it the supreme evil.

(16) And finally, if incompatibility is evil (as no one has ever denied), what could be more compatible than those elements with their respective animals—darkness with serpents, water with animals that swim, wind with those that fly, fire with the more voracious animals, and smoke with those that soar? Such is the concord in the realm of discord, such the order in the seat of disorder, as you describe it.

If what causes harm is evil, then no harm can be done where no good exists. But if this potent argument which we have stated above seems obscure, I shall omit it. It is obvious, how-

ever, and all would agree with me at least in this, that what causes harm is evil. Now, the smoke in that region was not harmful to bipeds; it engendered them, and both nourished and sustained them without mishaps in their birth, their growth, and their rule. Yet now, after some good has been mixed with the evil, smoke has been made harmful, so that we who are certainly bipeds cannot tolerate it but are blinded, smothered, and killed by it. Could such fierceness have been brought to evil elements by the admixture of good? Is such disorder possible in the divine government?

(17) And as for the other things, why do we find that compatibility which deceived the founder of your sect and led him to invent such falsehoods? Why, may I ask, is darkness agreeable to serpents, water to beings that swim, and wind to those that fly, while fire burns quadrupeds and smoke chokes us? And also, do not serpents have very keen vision, and do they not delight in the sun and abound more where the air is still and there are few clouds? Now what could be more absurd than that those who inhabit and love the darkness should be most comfortable where they enjoy the brightest light? Or, if you say that it is the heat rather than the light that they enjoy, it would have been much more fitting had you said that the fast-moving serpent was born in the fire rather than the slow-going ass. Moreover, who would deny that the adder likes the light inasmuch as its eyes are compared to those of the eagle?

But let us give up discussing the lower animals, and let us, I beg you, consider our own selves, without obstinacy, putting out of our minds all foolish and pernicious fables. For how can one be so perverse as to say that in the realm of darkness where there is no admixture of light at all, the bipeds have such a keen and active, and even incredible power of vision that they can see what you regard as the pure light of the kingdom of God, and that this light is visible to them so that they can look upon it, contemplate it, delight in it, and desire it, and yet that our eyes after being mixed with light, with the