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The Following of Christ.

John Tauler





The Following of Christ

Author(s): Tauler, John (c. 1300-1361)

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Description: *Following of Christ* instructs Christians to follow the selfless life of poverty demonstrated by Jesus Christ. Tauler describes poverty as the adherence to God's authority over any earthly desire. God has created us as free individuals with the power and capacity to choose a life of service to Him. Tauler teaches Christians how to set aside material interests and instead seek God inwardly. When we surrender ourselves freely to God, He transforms us internally, giving us the grace to perform godly works. Once we have freed ourselves from earthly burdens, we are able to receive divine truth. *Following of Christ* is both spiritually and intellectually fulfilling. All audience will be enriched by the practical wisdom in Tauler's words.

Emmalon Davis
CCEL Staff Writer

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The Following of Christ

“If this little volume does not proceed from Tauler himself, it proceeds from one of that remarkable group of German mystics—‘Friends of God,’ as they called themselves, amongst whom the great Dominican preacher of Strasburg lived and worked. The contents of the little book, notwithstanding its forms and repetitions, are full of value. Therefore we may well say in this case with the *Imitation*,—which itself, also, issued from the deep religious movement felt in the Germanic lands along the Rhine in the fourteenth century—‘Ask not who wrote it, but attend to what it says.’ Mr. Morell’s translation is on the whole a sound and good one, with the signal merit of reproducing the plain and earnest tone characteristic of the original.

* * * * *

“The reader will recognise the strain of homage which from age to age successive generations of mystics have ever loved to uplift to ‘the eternal word’! I will not say that it is entirely satisfying, but at least it is always refreshing, consoling, and ennobling. Whoever turns to the little volume which Mr. Morell has translated, will find plenty in this strain to give him refreshment. But he will find more than this. He will find sentences fitted to abide in the memory, to be a possession for the mind and soul, to form the character.”

MATTHEW ARNOLD

(In the *Nineteenth Century*).



The Following of Christ

By

John Tauler

Done into English by J. R. Morell

T. Fisher Unwin

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PREFACE.

TAULER is by no means unknown to English readers, not only of the Catholic Church. Translations of many of his sermons have appeared as early as 1857, together with a *Life of Tauler* and a *Preface* by the Rev. Charles Kingsley.

For many interesting particulars relating to the great German Dominican of the fourteenth century we refer the reader to the work in question—"The History and Life of the Reverend Doctor John Tauler of Strasburg, with twenty-five of his Sermons, translated by Susanna Winkworth, and a Preface by the Rev. Charles Kingsley." This book is very readable, though recent researches, and especially those of Dr. Denifle, have corrected certain erroneous views associated with it.

Anything the translator of the present work can say in praise of the high spirituality and acute intellectual power of Tauler would be out of place with Catholics. Others will derive a high idea of his excellence from the work to which we have just alluded.

The "Following of Christ" appears to contain many of the special features and excellences of the great Dominican; and being almost entirely apart from any doctrinal, controversial, and formal questions, will commend itself as a book of great edification to a large number of Christians.

Many indeed will take exception to the spirit and tone of his teaching, which is diametrically contrary to, and condemnatory of, the spirit of the world at all times, and especially in our time.

But it is interesting to note that his exaltation of eternal views, and a life centred in them, to the depreciation of time and temporals, is a feature that Tauler shares not only with the most eminent Churchmen,¹ but even with the great thinkers of heathen antiquity, as the Stoics,² and many of modern times.

Passing to his method and language, I have to remark that the editions I have used are one in the original Middle High German, republished at Frankfort in 1833; another in early New High German, also published at Frankfort in 1670, and a modern version, published at Ratisbon in 1855. I have compared these earlier printed editions with that of Dr. Denifle, published at Munich in 1877, to which reference is made further on.

The form of the original Middle High German is peculiarly quaint and muscular, and has suffered considerable softening in the modern German edition. That of 1670 has retained much of the original strength.

1 He supports his principles primarily by Holy Writ, and secondly by the Fathers, but chiefly St. Austin, St. Gregory the Great, and St. Bernard.

2 Compare many passages of Epictetus, Seneca, and Marcus Aurelius.



In the preface to the latter we read thus: "The 'Following of Christ' was first printed at Tübingen in 1621, by Herrn Christophorum Besoldum, J. V. D., and Professor. In the title-page it is stated that this edition of 1621 was printed from a copy one hundred and seventy years old, and thus it has been faithfully, without falsifying, and word for word reprinted." Comparing this edition with the older Middle High German, reprinted at Frankfort in 1833, I am of opinion that the statement is correct, as the two editions agree in almost every respect. Dr. Denifle's edition has, however, afforded a different reading of certain passages, resulting from a careful comparison of all the known existing MSS. of the work.

It is further stated in the Frankfort edition (1670) that this edition has exactly followed the very old copy of 1448, without changing a single letter, and only adding a new division into chapters³ for the sake of convenience.

While treating of editions it may be added that the "Following of Christ" was translated into Latin by Laurentio Surio, a well-known Carthusian monk.

With regard to Tauler's method, it is interesting to note how the scholastic influence, and especially that of St. Thomas Aquinas, had imprinted itself on the mind of the writer, who moreover shows a considerable acquaintance with the philosophers of classical antiquity,⁴ and a readiness to introduce passages of Scripture at a time when it was more generally known and circulated than has been sometimes alleged.⁵

Tauler divides his argument invariably under heads, closely and logically connected. He presents the objections of adversaries to combat them, and uses frequent repetitions in matters which, savouring of mysticism, have to be frequently impressed that they may not escape the mind.

With regard to the language of the translation, it has appeared right and necessary to adopt much of the terseness and strength of the English of our early version in order to convey a proper idea of Tauler's expressions. To fritter him down to the dulcet style of Gibbon, or even the polished propriety of Macaulay, would have been incongruous and unseemly.

It has been necessary to employ terms which, to modern readers and thinkers, may present some difficulty, but a little consideration is sufficient to explain the writer's line of thought.

3 I have adopted that division of chapters, which seemed most convenient on a comparison of the three earlier editions, which, however, only differ slightly.

4 He often describes these as teachers.

5 The passages are naturally differently translated from versions that had not then appeared, but the sense is the same. "We give the chapter and verse in each case. With regard to the circulation of the Bible, in modern versions, during the fifteenth century, see "Geschichte des Deutschen Volkes," by J. Janssen (1883), vol. i. p. 51.

In speaking of the natural reason of man he often styles it “Bescheidenheit,” or the power of discretion, which corresponds to the Greek ἡγεμεονικόν of the Stoics. In one place he uses the term *synteresis* for the highest power of the mind, the term meaning the power of preservation.⁶ We have mostly translated these terms by reason and understanding, the sound Biblical expressions for those faculties. In speaking of the processes of the natural reason, he often dwells on that of distinction, which in modern times we describe as analysis and synthesis.

The objects presented to these faculties are styled images and forms, by which he evidently describes what in modern philosophy are termed representations, ideas, and conceptions (Anschauungen, Vorstellungen, Ideen, und Begriffe). With this explanation his meaning will become sufficiently clear.

It may be added that Tauler belonged to a great school of spiritual writers nourishing in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Germany and Holland, and including Thomas à Kempis, Süß, Ruysbrock, Seuse, and others. His writings have been commended by many Lutherans, though some of his sentiments were combated by Beza, who naturally, as a Calvinist, had objections to the great stress he lays on charity. Even John Eckius describes him as *circa fidem suspectum*. But this view was entirely confuted by Ludovicus Blosius.

From the middle of the thirteenth century two Orders in the Church, the Franciscans and the Dominicans, were chiefly instrumental in giving a rapid development to German prose, raising it to a position equal to that of the admirable early poetry of the Nibelungen Lied and the Minnesingers. After the middle of the thirteenth century, the Dominicans in particular occupy the first place, and in their sermons and learned treatises show that the German tongue of that time can do justice to the deepest and most difficult themes.

Most of the great Mystics issued from that Order in Germany, and had for nearly a century so great an influence that they almost effaced the poetry of the time. It is with reason that these thinkers have been called the sires of German speculation; for in them we trace the origin of an independent German philosophy, nay, the germs of many celebrated systems developed five centuries later on, in some cases fully outspoken in these early thinkers. Of these men, Eckhart, Seuse, and Tauler are the most striking individualities, and their writings, as well as those of Hermann von Fritzlar, Nicolaus von Strassburg, and David von Augsburg, are well entitled to careful study, and are now accessible to the student of Middle High German by the assiduous labours of modern critics.⁷ But as many are not conversant with that archaic tongue, the translator has thought it might be useful and interesting to not a

6 συντήρησις

7 Deutsche Mystiker des 14ten Jahrhunderts, herausgegeben von F. Pfeiffer (Leipzig, 1845-57); Die Deutsche Mystiker des 14ten Jahrhunderts, von Bischof Greith. 1861.

few of his countrymen to give an English version of one of the most remarkable of their works, rendering it as far as desirable in an older form of English necessary to convey the terse and quaint language of the original.

“The Following of the Poor Life of Christ, or the Book of Spiritual Poverty,” as Denifle would have it called, was presented to the German world in a perfect form by that able critic after a careful study and comparison of the best MSS. in the Leipzig, Munich, St. Gallen, and other collections.⁸ My translation is mainly in accordance with his published German edition (1877, Munich), though I have retained the earlier division into short chapters (of the editions of 1833 and 1670) as more convenient.

But I have added the division and headings of Denifle’s edition for comparison, and I have largely used his valuable notes in the Preface and Appendix.

Though differing from him in his view of the author and of the work, I readily admit our large debt of gratitude to him for his patient studies and admirable edition which, with its beautiful text and learned annotations, has been of the greatest service to me in the arduous labour of translation.

Though Denifle is inclined to dispute the authorship of the “Following” by Tauler, he gives the work a high antiquity (the fourteenth century), and admits that it was largely quoted by the Provincial of the Franciscans, Marcus of Lindau, about that time.⁹

He further admits that the work has much merit and many passages equal to anything to be found in the mystical writers.

At page liii. of his Introduction he says:—“Let it not be inferred from our representations that all teachings in this work are exaggerated and erroneous. Such a conclusion would not be just. Especially the sections on the Passion of Christ belong to the finest things that the Mystics have written on the subject. And when the author advances the sound normal doctrines of the other Mystics, he develops them always in an original manner, and his description is always supported by a high moral earnestness.”

It is very natural to find a member of the Mendicant Orders, when they were still in the early energy of the movement, stand forth as a powerful expositor of the great principle involved in it. But I propose to show how strongly the best Catholic commentators on the New Testament endorse the conditions of perfection held forth in this book.

8 Denifle enumerates the following MSS.:— 1. A. At the Leipzig University Library, No. 560, on parchment. Date 1429. 2. B. Graz, private property, derived from the Convent of Hasslach, on paper. Date 1434. 3. C. St. Gallen, Stiffs Library. Paper, fifteenth century (No. 962). 4. D a-f. Munich, Hof Library. Paper, fifteenth century. 4-9. Six MSS. Dates 1443, 1455, sixteenth century, 1477, sixteenth century, and fifteenth century, Nos. 263, 781, 782, 783, 4306, and 4415. Denifle made principal use of A. in his edition (1877).

9 Provincial of the Strassburg Franciscan Province, died August 15, 1392, used extensively the “Following” in his book on the Ten Commandments (Introduction to Denifle’s edition, p. lii.)



Thus basing my argument on far higher and more conclusive authority, I hope to establish that this work is worthy of the great name of Tauler.

The passage of Scripture most frequently recurring in the “Following,” and forming the master theme of the work, occurs in [Matt. xix. 16-30](#).

I shall now compare the view of this passage in the two great Catholic commentators with that taken by the author of the “Following.”

J. Maldonatus (Comment, in Matt., c. xix., p. 409, v. 24, Moguntiae, 1602), says: . . . “Apostoli mirabantur quasi nimis dura esset ac severa sententia; respondit Christus, eam, etiam atque etiam exaggerans, et severiorem reddens; atque hoc est quod ait: ‘iterum dico vobis,’ quasi dicat,” non solum quod modo dixi verum est, sed amplius etiam dico vobis, facilius esse camelum per foramen acus transire, quam divitem intrare in regnum coelorum . . . v. 26. “Apud homines hoc impossibile est . . . Christumque voluisse sententiam suam magis et magis exaggerando confirmare. Primo enim simpliciter dixit, difficile esse divitem in regno coelorum introire; secundo dixit, facilius esse camelum, etc.; tertio, impossibile omnino esse sed apud homines, non apud Deum.”



Cornelius a Lapide (Comment, in Matt., c. xix., pp. 265-267; Venetiis, 1761, v. 21-23), has: . . . “Tum quia cupido divitiarum facit eus coacervari per fas et nefas; tum quia eadem ita mentem auro alligat ut nequeat cogitare de coelo; tum quia divitiae sunt materia et stimulus ad superbiam, gulam, luxuriam, omniaque scelera.” “Et iterum Christus enim adaugendo quasi corrigit id quod dixit.” Dixi difficile esse divitem salvari; nunc addo quod amplius est, facilius esse camelum . . . Quemlibet divitem accipias.

“Rursum impossibile hie proprie capias; nam divitem salvari impossibile est apud homines (p. 267).—Humanae naturae viribus impossibile est diviti opibus suis intricato salutem consequi . . . imo ut non pauci iis relictis ambient et sequantur evangelicam Christi paupertatem; hoc enim fecere primo omnes Christiani, qui omnia habebant communia ut patet” (Act. Apost. iv. 32).



After this survey by those who accept Christian and Catholic teaching, it must be admitted that the argument of the “Following,” with reference to the condition of perfection, is founded on the words of Christ, as they are explained by the most competent and approved commentators of the Church.

It has appeared to us useful to show that the teachings in the “Following” are, in many cases, conformable with those of the Mystics of the fourteenth century, and with previous saints and doctors of the Church. But it would be as absurd to deny the author’s originality on this account, as to represent that Schelling and Hegel copied all their views from Fichte and Kant, or that Brown was a plagiarist of Dugald Stewart and Reid.

On the Doctrine of Poverty, in No. 9, p. 7, Part I., &c., and throughout the “Following,” compare Nicolaus von Strassburg in Pfeiffer’s edition, *Die Deutsche Mystiker, Predigten* (p. 301):

“We are on the way to the kingdom of heaven, and are always waiting for the end of the journey. But whosoever for a short way loadeth himself with much corn, becometh sooner weary, before he cometh to the end, and must suffer much trouble by the way. Thus Thou wishest, O Lord, that thy people be ready for the journey, and not overladen with earthly things. If they have something to carry, let them share this with their shipmates, who have not; thus their burthen is less, and they go quicker, and come thus earlier in the evening to the heavenly shelter. This hast Thou taught us with thy complete poverty, for whoso carrieth not much on the way, is the less frightened by robbers, for many a man hath lost his life on account of the burden he carried.”

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Again, at p. 314, “The seven Rules of Virtue:” “The third rule is that the spiritual man do sparingly use the things that are of the world, as far as his necessity alloweth in food, and clothing, and house, and all things. Our Lord Jesus Christ teacheth us this rule, who would not have so much from the world, as even where to lay His head. . . . The more sparingly a man useth the world’s goods and its lusts, the more readily he flieth to the height of the heavenly kingdom. . . . We have high to climb into the heavenly kingdom. . . . But whoso overloadeth himself with a heavy burden of earthly possession, he is stricken with much sorrow on the evening of his death, like the rich man in the Gospel, who enlarged his dwelling that he might lay in more store. When he comforted himself for many years, with an easy life in store for him, the Lord said, ‘Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.’ Such are they who treasure up here, and are not rich towards God. Thy treasure is what thou lovest more than the right.

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“Seneca saith: ‘If two words were not in the world, men would live in concord without any war: these words are “mine and thine.”’ These words were not in Christendom at first, where all earthly things were in common to them, but to each as his necessity required, not according to caprice and lust. Therefore they lived together in concord as if they had only one heart and one soul. This was to us a pattern of peace and Christian perfection.”

On the doctrine of essential virtue (Following, Part I. No. 7, p. 5; Part II. No. 72, p. 241), &c., see Eckhart (Pfeiffer’s edition), 524, 12; 571, 3, &c.

On suffering in God, see Eckhart (*op. cit.*) 4, 8; 6, 34; 8, 1; 16, 1; 15, 24; 23, 28, &c.

Respecting the drawing in of the powers (the lower powers into the higher), *op. cit.*, 3, 27; 13, 16, 39; 24, 33 (Part II. No. 112, p. 289, No. 98, p. 274).

If God speaks creatures must hush, *op. cit.*; 36, 30.

God worketh in the highest union the works of the soul, which is, as it were, an instrument, *op. cit.*, 127, 34; 402, 32; 515, 36; 526, 2 (Part II. No. 95, p. 272).

The spirit becomes divinised, or has a godlike form; *op. cit.*, 156, 5; 161, 26; 240, 14; 643, 19, 38 (Part II. No. 37, p. 193).

Man loses his name in this state (Part II. No. 37, p. 193), (*op. cit.*) 387, 12; 503, 4; 513, 20.

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The comparison of the sun and moon occurs (*op. cit.*), 505, 5; 509, 18 (Following, Part I. No. 148, p. 128).

The soul becomes, from knowing, knowingless; from loving, loveless; *op. cit.*, 491, 8; 504, 36; 509, 14 (Following, Part II. No. 20, p. 171).

The spirit loses itself in God, so that it knows nothing but God; see *op. cit.*, 519, 25. Even Dionys. in his *De Mystica Theolog.*, c. 1, § 3, says of the νοῦς . . . πᾶς ὧν τοῦ πάντων ἐπέκεινα καὶ οὐδενὸς οὔτε ἑαυτοῦ οὔτε ἑτέρου τῶ παντελῶς δὲ ἀγεώστῳ . . . ἐνοουμένος.

St. Bernard teaches: “Mens . . . quodammodo se sibi furatur, immo rapitur atque elabitur a seipsa, ut verbo fruatur.” (In Cant. Sermo, 85, p. 1244, ed. Mediol. 1851.) Confer Epist. 11, No. 8: De dilig. Deo. c. 12, No. 28.—And Richard of St. Victor (*De contemplatione*, v. 12, p. 321 says: “Cur non recte dicatur spiritus semetipsum non habere, quando incipit a semetipso deficere et a suo esse in supermundanum quemdam et vere plus quam humanum statum transire . . . ita ut ipse jam non sit ipse, eo duntaxat tempore quo Domino incipit altius inhaerere.”

Cod. Einsidl., No. 278, translates this passage thus: Book 7—compare c. 9, p. 318: “A semetipsa penitus deficit.”

David of Augsburg (*De septem processibus religiosi*, c. 15) explains: “Haec est hominis in vita sublimior perfectio ita uniri Deo ut tota anima cum omnibus potentiis suis et viribus in Deum collecta unus spiritus fiat cum eo, nihil meminerit nisi Deum, nihil sentiat et intelligat nisi Deum.”

Albert, M. (*De adhaerendo Deo*, c. 6): “Et sic transformatur quodammodo in Deum, quod nec cogitare nec intelligere nec amare nec memorari potest nisi Deum pariter et de Deo.” Therefore, says Seuse in his little book, of Truth (c. 6, p. 277, 3 edit, of Diepenbr.), the spirit loses itself in God.

The teaching that a man can scarcely fall after this elevation, is found in Eckhart, *op. cit.*, 10. 14 (Part II. No. 103, p. 280).

The doctrine that accidental reward attaches to external works, but essential reward attaches to merit, as it has its excellence from love or charity, is the ordinary Catholic teaching, and a quotation from St. Thomas suffices to show this:

“Labor exterior operatur ad augmentum proemii accidentalis; sed augmentum meriti respectu proemii essentialis consistit principaliter in charitate.” (2, 2, qu. 182, a. 2, ad 1. Comp. 4 dist. 49, qu. 5, a. 1, ad. 3; in Ep. ad Rom. 8, lect. 5.)

The doctrine of the communion of good works (Part I. No. 44, p. 34), in which Schmidt (*op. cit.* p. 131) sees a suppression of all differences, of all diversity in the spirit that has gone out of itself in union with God, is also the Catholic doctrine. Like the Mystics, St. Thomas also traces back this communion to love working in the Mystical Body of Christ: “Illud quod unus videtur specialiter haberi inter homines, quodammodo omnes communiter habent,



in quantum se per charitatem perfectam unusquisque bonum alterius suum reputat.” (1 c. e Libro in Sent. ad 4.)

Peter Blesensis says of the *communio sanctorum* in heaven: “Bonum; quod in Deo vel in proximo diligam, diligendo faciam meum. (Maxima Bibliotheca, P. P. tom. xxiv. Lugd. 1677, p. 1242.) Comp. Eckhart, 29, 23; 56, 5; 209, 2; and especially 552.

Denifle affirms that the great matter of the perfection of the will (Part II. No. 51, p. 214) is an older teaching than the Mystics. Compare St. Thomas, 2, 2, qu. 81, a. 6 ad 1.): “Laus virtutis in voluntate consistit, non autem in potestate, et ideo deficere ab aequalitate, quae est medium iustitiae propter defectum potestatis non diminuit laudem virtutis, si non fuerit defectus ex parte voluntatis.”

Hugo of St. Victor (De sacram. lib. 2, p. 14, c. 6, p. 498, ed. Mog. 1618): “Totum meritum voluntate est. Quantum vis, tantum mereris”—provided, as he explains, the will, without any fault on its part, is unable to come to work. (St. Thomas, 1, 2, qu. 20, a. 4 in fine.) This doctrine is, moreover, found in [Mark xii. 43](#), and in [2 Cor. viii. 12](#).



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Why Christ said, Blessed are the poor in spirit, as you cannot be perfect without poverty of temporal things? 113, 114

In the third place. Of the godly work and of three kinds of men.

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The other part of this little Book teacheth how a man can come by four means to a perfectly poor life.

In the first place, the teaching and the life of our Lord Jesus Christ impel a man to a poor life.

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How a man is to know if he have all virtues	5
If a man can have all virtue so that he need no more	6
In the second place, man must overcome and kill in himself the love of creatures with a poor life	7
In the third place, man must overcome bodily lust and kill it with continual internal contemplation of the Passion of our Lord Jesu Christ	8, 9



Of the fruit of the Passion of our Lord Jesu Christ	10
How the men, who contemplate the Passion of Christ internally, from the hot hunger which they have for God, run to the Holy Sacrament of the Body of our Lord that they may be satisfied	11, 12
They who contemplate internally the Passion of Christ with a steady earnestness, they are so overflowed by divine love that they would have nothing of self, either internally or externally, and will also love God with their whole heart, with their whole soul, with all their might, and all their mind	13
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In the fourth place, if man wisheth to follow Christ, he must leave himself and kill in himself all spiritual and natural lust which subsists in images and forms that are created. He must do this through the inspeaking of the eternal Word, that God the Father speaketh in the ground of the soul	15
Of an indwelling work and of an outflowing work of God	16
What use it is that man should work, since with his works he cannot come to God	17
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<i>In the second place, perfection of virtue driveth a man to a poor life.</i>	
If a man is weak by nature and keepeth the thing he needeth for his necessity, if that something hindereth perfection	24
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How a poor man must always die, since he sometimes appeareth quite cheerful with other men	25, 26
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If no one can come to this, that he fundamentally dieth, without external poverty 30-32

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If rich folk can also be bound with the bond of divine love, and if they can also have a contemplative life 33-34

How many men say, If our Lord were still on earth, He would not bid me leave all things externally, for it may be it doth not belong to me to do 35

Rich folk, who have not divine love, work from two kinds of love, from natural love, and from the love of grace 36

Eight uses lie in a contemplative life 37

If all those are contemplative men who give themselves to a poor life 38

Since a poor life and a contemplative life both stand in emptiness of all works, and in a pure suffering God to act, how can they then have works? 39



Four ways lead a man to a poor, perfect, contemplative life, seeing God inwardly. The first way is, that a man have a perfect will to give up all that is against God, that is not a matter of God and that is not solely God, and thereby you obtain all virtue.

To the man who hath obtained all virtue it is easy to turn inwards, and he can well wait in fasting, and hath also the greatest joy from within; and whoso hath not all virtue, he also hath not this 41

How can good people rejoice in this time since our Lord saith, Happy are they that weep and are troubled 41

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In two ways you should go through the humanity of Christ into His divinity. In the first place, man should clothe his outer man with the outer image of our Lord 43

Secondly, you should go through the humanity into His divinity, by man clothing himself inwardly with continual contemplation of the work and of the Passion of our Lord 44

- How the natural light of the heathen was as night to day compared 46
with the light that cometh to a Christian man, who turneth his
understanding entirely to Christ 
- How the will of man is perfected and united with God in the contem- 47
plation of the Passion of Christ
- What is the treasure hidden in the field, and how it shall be found, 47
and wherewith it may be bought
- Whoso were to know what noble fruit grows on the field of the Passion 47
of our Lord, he would make a trench round the field, and would
build a tower and sit in it, and would make a winepress in it; and
what this trench and this tower and this winepress are; and on
the field stand wine and corn, summer and winter; nor can the
hail destroy it, nor the frost freeze it up
- How God compelleth the will of man by the Passion of Christ, and 49
maketh it at once subject to Him, and maketh a man free of
himself
- By six signs shall a man know if his will is overcome by God 50
- If a man satisfieth in all that God willeth to have from him, then God 50
must satisfy him in what he willeth
- How a perfect will doeth as much with one good work, as an imperfect 51
will with many good works
- How the highest power of the soul, which is called synteresis, is also 52
brought to its highest nobility in the Passion of Christ
- Whoso cumbereth himself and considereth the most about the Passion 54
of Christ, he is the most blessed and the likest Christ
- Whoso adhereth to Christ and considereth His Passion, can be as 55
little abandoned by God as the Son can be abandoned by the
Father
- What is the cause why God letteth sinners live, and slew them more 55
swiftly under the Old Law 
- How the friends of God remain unknown by other men, who are not 56
like unto them, on account of seven things
- How it is the highest wisdom that a man can have, that he should 56, 57
know good men, and whoso winneth the grace that is in Christ,

to him all that is intermediate vanisheth, so that all things become known to him without medium

The third way of a poor, perfect life, when you contemplate God internally, is, that a man do not fly from what may kill him in spiritual things.

The man who shall be ready for a poor perfect life, wherein you see 58, 59
God internally, must endure all judgments that fall upon him,
and should omit no true virtue for the sake of any judgment

If man can give no cause of falling to his fellow-man by any kind of 60-64
virtue

A work of love hath four rules by which it should be worked 65

Whoso wisheth to receive the Lord worthily in the Blessed Sacrament, 66
must be like unto Him as far as can be

The man who shall be ready for a poor, perfect life, wherein you see 68, 69
God internally, must suffer all contradictions through God, and
how sufferings are very profitable to man

If the suffering that a man inflicteth on himself is better, or that which 70
others inflict upon him, or that God layeth upon him

If it be better that a man do not seek for suffering, and leave it to 71
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self-sought 

How suffering is like unto a press with which wine is pressed 72

How good people may always be cheerful, since our Lord saith, My 73
soul is sorrowful, even unto death

How good people may always have joy, since our Lord curseth them 74
who rejoiced in their time

Since good folk always rejoice, what suffering can they then have, since 75
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Secondly, man suffereth in the will 77-80

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Many men have rest and great pleasure in a rational distinction of truth through images, such as the heathen had; and we ought to part with this rest and pleasure and seek pleasure in God only	84
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To a God-living man all things are bitter that sever him from God, 104-106
for two reasons

The fourth way that leadeth a man into a poor, perfect, contemplative life, is a zealous avoidance of all that which can please men, whether it be spiritual or bodily, so that whatever it be, it be so received as not to mix up the soul with it.



What is the cause that we have unrest, and do not find God when we 107
seek Him; and of the external senses?

In what wise a man can best master and kill his senses 110

How the sensual men, who altogether live in the senses, have not a 111
right faith that could uphold them and save them, for they are
in their works like unto the heathen

Why the senses must turn inwardly into the internal man, since they 112
are not capable of receiving the most intimate truth

For three reasons man should draw in all his senses.

In the first place, man ought to draw in all his senses and quiet his 113, 114
powers, and only hear what God speaketh in the soul, if he
wisheth to have right godly love

Whoso worketh virtue on God-loving men worketh it most intimately 115
on God, and it may well be that God will never let such a man
be lost

How God-loving men ought properly to be hated, dishonoured, and 116, 117
scorned by the world

Why voluntary poor men are ordained for God, so that they should 118
wait on Him only and no one else

Whereby man can be right free 119, 120

In the second place, as the best part of man is within, therefore he 120
should draw in his senses and take heed of the internal man

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- How right inwardness is a quite perfect giving up of oneself, and all things, externally and internally 122, 123
- A question—“What is a poor, internal, mortified life?” 124
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TAULER'S

**FOLLOWING OF THE POOR
LIFE OF CHRIST.**

Part First.

This Book teacheth how we should follow the poor, despised, painful life of our Lord Jesu Christ, and, first, how Poverty is a state of Being detached from all creatures.

In the first place, this book teacheth how poverty is a (state of) being withdrawn (detached) from all creatures.

1.

POVERTY is a likeness with God. What is God? God is a Being, withdrawn from all creatures, a free power, a pure working. So also poverty is an existence withdrawn from all creatures. What is the meaning of withdrawn? What doth not adhere to anything. Poverty adheres to nothing, and nothing adheres to it.

2.

It might be said in answer: All things adhere to something, for all things are contained by something;—to what then doth a poor man adhere or hold on? A poor man adhereth to nothing that is under him, and only to Him who is raised above all things. St. Augustine saith: “The best of all things, that is, God.”¹ And this is what poverty seeketh, to which it adhereth, and to nothing else. And this is also the supreme nobleness of poverty, that it adheres only to the very highest, and entirely leaves the lowest as far as it is possible.



3.

Several say that the highest poverty and the most entire withdrawal consist in this, that a man becometh as he was when he did not yet exist. Then he understood nothing and willed nothing, then was he God with God.² This might be true, if it were possible. But inasmuch as man hath a natural being, he must also have a working; for in this lies his beatitude, that he know and love God, as St. John saith: “This is life eternal, to know Thee the Father, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.”³

4.

But how is man to know and love God, and yet remain poor or empty of all knowing and loving? He must know God by means of God, and love God by means of God, and

1 St. Augustin in [Psalm cxxxiv](#), No. 6: Confess. vii. 4, No. 6.

2 Do waz er got mit got. (Denifle’s text, p. 3, line 24, of his edition.)

3 [John xvii. 3](#).

otherwise he can neither know nor love Him, so as to attain to beatitude; and he of himself must thus be poor or wanting in all knowledge. What is the knowing of man? It is in images and forms which man draws in through the senses, and otherwise he is not able to know through nature. And if he wisheth to be blessed and saved he must be lacking in this knowledge and stand on the ground of genuine poverty.



5.

Here it may be objected: What use is there then in a man having in himself a rational power of distinguishing in images and forms, if this will not save him or bless him, and if, furthermore, he must become empty of this distinguishing faculty and thoroughly lacking in it. To this I reply: That a distinguishing power is useful, because man is not yet in thorough poverty, and because he is still burdened with manifold things. Hence he must put up with this aptitude to distinguish. In this imperfect condition the power of distinguishing must not be set aside, and has its use. But when man hath come to the point where his being is simplified and weaned from all that is manifold, and when he thus cometh into true poverty, then he must leave all distinction through images, and must transfer himself with One into One, without any distinction. For if he remained on the ground of distinctions, he would commit faults, and would not be thoroughly poor. Furthermore, to distinguish is useful, for man cannot be taught in any other way than through distinctions. Thirdly, because while man is in time, he hath a working in time, according to the outer man; and a clear rational distinction is necessary in order that man may not remain in time, and that the outer man may be in due subordination to the inner. Fourthly, distinction is useful, because man cannot remain long without manifold sinful impressions, and these man must resist by distinctions, so that he may remain pure and poor. And thus, therefore, is poverty a likeness with God; for it is a pure, simple Being, separate and apart from all creatures.



6.

The question now occurs: Shall then man be poor and lacking even graces and virtues, for grace is a creature, and virtues are creaturely? To this I answer: Grace is nothing else than a light which God draweth from Himself, and He poureth it into the soul, and the soul thereby passes from the bodily to the spiritual, from time to eternity, and from the manifold to the simple. Thus when the soul is raised above all the bodily over time and all that is manifold, so as to become a naked spirit, dwelling in eternity and uniting itself to the Only One—when come to this, grace is changed into God,⁴ so that God no longer draweth the

4 So wurt gnade gewandelt in got. (Denifle, p. 4, line 35.)

soul after the manner of a creature, but He leadeth it with Himself in a godlike manner. He leadeth it from Himself to Himself; as St. Augustine saith: "O Lord, give me another Thyself, that I may go from Thee to Thee." And arrived at this point, the soul is poor in grace and emptied of it.



7.

Next has a man to be poor in virtues? Virtues are creaturely in operation but Divine in intention, and God doth not accept virtue according to the working but according to the intention, and man has to work from a pure intention, that is, God: Behold now, virtue is no longer a creature but Divine, for all things work through the end in view. Thus therefore God shall be thy end, and nothing else; and hence virtue consists well with poverty. Again, man has to be poor in virtue in this sense, that he has so completely worked out all virtues that he hath lost the mere image of virtue, and he hath no longer virtue as an accident but in his essence, and not in a manifold direction but in unity; and he works virtue in unity. Arrived at this point again, virtue is no longer a creature but Divine. And as God comprehendeth all things in Himself, so also a purely poor man comprehendeth all the virtues in a simple love, and in love he worketh all virtues, and these virtues are essential, and they consist well with poverty. For a man can never become genuinely poor unless all the virtues make up his being.



8.

Another objection. Are we to understand by the term poverty of spirit, as some say, that it means when a man has what he requires bodily, he yet holds this possession, unwillingly, inwardly? And the question is if such a man hath virtue essentially in the same way as a poor man, lacking all things both outwardly and in the spirit. My answer is this: A man begins to enter into what is essential when he is empty of all that is accidental. For if he is empty of all accidents, this is a sign that Divine Love hath withdrawn from him all temporal things, and that he stands empty and naked, lacking all things, outwardly and inwardly. In this condition he hath not the faculty or property of working some virtues with materials, and can only let himself be in all virtue, given up with a simple will to God. Now another man cannot be thus, who is not yet emptied of all outward accidents, and from whom Divine Love hath not drawn away all external things, and who is not entirely stripped of all natural possession. Hence he cannot have virtue in essence but in accident. But what is accident? It is a thing which now is and then is not; and accordingly it now works virtue, but only as it occurs or presents itself to him. But a genuinely poor man worketh always virtue, and as his being is indestructible so also his virtue cannot be destroyed. For this reason it is called essential, for it is like or equal to being.

9.

It has been said: Whosoever hath one virtue hath all virtues.⁵ That is true. For all the good that a man can do outwardly or inwardly belongs to a virtue, which ought to be perfect. And if he turns all things to this virtue he thereby wins the essence of virtue, and with its essence he draws to himself all other virtues and makes them essential. If, then, a man hath not placed all things in virtue, the essence of virtue has escaped him; hence he cannot have all virtue essentially as he himself is not like unto its essence and being.



10.

From this it follows also that the perfection of man is not only to be taken as implying emptiness of the internal, but likewise of the external man; for a man is not only man through the soul, but also through the body. Hence man is not perfect only by lacking everything in the inner spiritual man, but he must also be entirely lacking in the outer man, as far as it is possible. When then a poor man hath turned all things into virtue outwardly and inwardly, then and then only is he perfect: for perfection stands founded on virtue.

11.

Some one may say: Supposing a man has withdrawn himself from all creatures and yet creatures turn to him with favour, would not this hinder poverty? My answer is: If man is in himself emptied of all things, whatsoever befalls him without his co-operation, is a gift of God, and is the best thing for man, whatever it be, be it grateful or painful, sour or sweet. For when a man turneth himself away from all things and holds on to God, God must needs go to meet him with all good, be it bodily or spiritual. He must take it all from God and not from creatures.



12.

But what shall a man do if too much or too little accrues to him? If too much accrues to him, he must not stand upon the ground of accidents, but take steps that he may always remain a poor man. If any one give him a hundred marks, let him take heed that he doth not become richer thereby; for his riches are God and not temporal things. Shall he then take all that is given to him? If he taketh it, he maketh himself laden with it and no longer empty. But if he refuses it, he has less reward than if he took it. But, supposing he who wishes to give it is himself poor,—or, again, if he is so rich in charity that he keeps nothing and

⁵ Compare St. Gregory, *Morals*, 22. c. 1.—St. Thomas, i. 2. qu. 65. a. 1.—St. Bonaventure, 3 dist. 36. qu. 1.

gives all away, or, further, if he wishes to give it thee from natural love,—then take it not, let him be cumbered with it, while you are empty and free. But if the giver be rich in goods but poor in love, and he giveth thee through God and you are in need of help, take; and if something over thy necessity give it to others. And if this puts on thee a burthen, it is not really such, but a work of God.

13.

If, again, too little falls to thy share, then seek to free thyself from thy necessity. If any one giveth thee, take it. If they do not give thee, suffer in patience. For want is sometimes as profitable as possession. For in want a man knoweth himself better than in having; for in the lack of temporal things man is prepared for the reception of everlasting things, and in the sickness of bodily power man gains much in spiritual strength, which surpasses all bodily powers; as St. Paul says: “Righteousness is made perfect in weakness.”⁶

14.

It may be inquired: Supposing a poor man addresses himself to rich people, can he find complete love and truth in them? I answer: No; and I will establish this with a little discourse. First, “Like cleaves to like,” a lesson of Aristotle, 17 Eth. Nic. 1165, b. 17.⁷ Hence where there is disparity there is no love. Secondly, they have not the true ground from which spring forth love and truth. Thirdly, what they do of charity to poor men is done from fear of hell and love of heaven; and this is not genuine charity or truth, for they love themselves in it. And if they could get to heaven without poor people they would not have much friendship for them. Fourthly, if they ever testify truth and love to a poor man, it is not thorough, but a part and a fraction, and is not perfect, for they do not learn to love all that belongs to it, but only a little, and that with difficulty and under much pressure. Fifthly, a poor man is removed from all creatures, and they are still laden with creatures, and therefore they cannot show with love that they cherish the poor man out of love, and thus he remaineth unloved by them. Sixthly, genuine love is a thorough going forth out of yourself and apart from all things; and hence if these people have not gone forth from themselves and all things they cannot have love. Seventhly, genuine love is spiritual, for it springs from the Holy Ghost,—and they are bodily, and hence they cannot show spiritual love. Therefore a really poor man doth not reckon much on rich people when he suffers want. Eighthly, a poor man is unknown by all rich people, therefore he is also unrequited, for the being ignored also

6 2 Cor. xii. 9.

7 Aristotle, Eth. Nic. 1165, b. 17: τὸ ὅμοιον τῷ ὁμοίῳ φίλον.

begets lack of love, as St. Augustine⁸ saith: “The things that we see we love them well, but other things that we don’t know or recognise, we also love them not.”

15.

God is a free capacity, so also is poverty a free capacity, unchained by any one; for its nobility is freedom. The soul, as long as it is laden with temporal and sinful things, is not free, but is a burthen. What makes a burden? Coarseness, blindness, the lack of virtue. Thus temporal things are coarse and blind, and make the soul unvirtuous. Therefore, if she wishes to be noble and free, she must empty herself of temporal things. Poverty is empty of all things, and therefore poverty is noble and free.



⁸ Is extensively illustrated by St. Augustin and explained: De Trinitate, lib. 8, c. 4, sq. lib. 10, c. 1, sq. lib. 13, c. 4.

In the next place, how true poverty is a free capacity or power (vermögen)

16.

The question here occurs: What is freedom? Freedom is a complete purity and detachment, which seeketh the Eternal; freedom is an isolated, a withdrawn being,⁹ identical with God, or entirely attached to God. Poverty is an isolated condition, an existence, withdrawn from all creatures, and therefore poverty is free. A free soul dismisses all defect and all created things, and penetrates into the increate good, that is, God,¹⁰ and acquires it with violence, as Christ saith: “The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the mighty take it.”¹¹ God is the kingdom of heaven to souls; if therefore she leaveth all things and clingeth to God alone, she acquireth God by constraint. For God cannot withhold Himself; He must give Himself to her, for it is His nature that He communicates Himself to the soul that is receptive of Him. To a free soul all things are equal—pleasure or pain, chiding or praise, riches or poverty, weal or woe, friend or foe. A free soul cloth not let itself be drawn away by anything that might separate it or mediate between it and God, as St. Paul saith: “Who shall separate us from God?”¹² All things rather further it to God, and she presseth forward through, all that intervenes to her first original. A free soul seizes and wins all virtue, and not only virtue, but also the essence of virtue; and nothing binds it except virtue, and the most intimate and purest virtue; but this is no bond, rather is it the way of freedom. And then is the soul thoroughly free, when she can only endure what is best and entirely abandons evil. For freedom does not consist in sins, but slavery; as St Paul saith: Whosoever committeth sin, he is the slave of sin, and not a free agent.¹³ Genuine freedom is so noble that no one giveth it save God the Father; for it is a power flowing immediately from God the Father into the soul, and giving all capacity to the soul; as St. Paul saith: “I am able to do all things in Him that strengtheneth me.”¹⁴



17.

The soul when she dives into herself perceives what she was, what she is, and what she is not; what she was after a sinful fashion, and this she comprehends with bitterness; and bitterness, remorse, distress, and displeasure, make her pure. Then in this purity springeth

9 Freiheit ist ein abgescheiden Wezen. (Denifle, p. 8, line 18.)

10 [Matthew xi. 12.](#) Regnum coelorum vim patitur, et violenti rapiunt illud.

11 [Matt. xi. 12.](#) This passage is further explained *page 15, No. 19, and Note 11.*

12 [Rom. viii. 35.](#)

13 [John viii. 34.](#)

14 [Phil. iv. 13.](#)

up a clear light, which showeth her all truth; and the Holy Ghost causeth the light to burn, intensely and hotly, and driveth the soul through it into all truth, which hath been shown to her, and by no means suffers her to return to her old sins, but leads her freely into all truth, without any necessity of further insight. And when she cometh thus into the truth, and is taken up with the truth, and freedom hath tasted the truth, this truth becomes to her so sweet and comforting that she leaveth all things and cleaveth to the truth, and then giveth up the freedom of her will and maketh herself poor. And on her going forth out of her own will, God receiveth her will, and clothes her with His will and makes it free, and gives it all capacity with Him; as St. Paul says: “Whoso cleaveth to God, he is one spirit with God.”¹⁵ And in the poverty of her will, this her will is ennobled and elevated, and not abased, but much rather set free as though she had not become emptied of her will. The Master of Nature¹⁶ says: “Everything that is most intimate with the first cause is the most noble.” Hence, when the soul hath united her will with the Divine Will, it becomes truly noble and free; and if the will is otherwise it is not free. And in the union of her spirit with the Divine Spirit, the soul is capable of all things freely; for “where the Spirit is, there is freedom,” as St. Paul saith.¹⁷ Hence poverty is a likeness with God; for with God it can do all things.

13

18.

14

I hear a voice say: If a man goes out of his own will, and gives himself into obedience to another man, does he not lose his freedom? To this I answer: That man gives himself up to another in four ways. First, inasmuch as he is ignorant, and is taught, he gives himself up to another. Secondly, inasmuch as he is not dead to all sins, and that he may the more readily die to all inequality in truth, he also giveth himself up to another. Thirdly, he gives himself up from genuine humility; he does not look to see if he understands the truth and

15 [1 Cor. vi. 17.](#)

16 “Master of Nature” (see Mönch von Heilbronn, ed. Menzdorf, p. 9) is identical with philosopher, but with the definite article it means ‘Aristotle,’ his name often occurring also in the margin of the MSS. But the passage in the text does not appear in this form in Aristotle, who only says, *Categ.* 14. b. 4: Τὸ Βέλτιον καὶ τὸ τιμιώτερον πρότερον εἶναι τῆ φύσει θεοκεῖ. The passage, as it occurs in the “Following,” is of Neo-Platonic origin, and was used by Dionys. *De div. nom.* v. § 3; and in the *Book de Causis*, lect. 10 (inter. opp. St. Thomae, ed. Antverp. 1612, tom. iv.); later on it became a fixed principle among the Schoolmen. Gulielmus Paris, *De immort. animae*, i. p. 332. a; Alex. Alens. *Summa Theol.* ii. qu. 62, membr 6; Albert. M. *In coelest. hierarch* c. 1. p. 10a. and c. 3. p. 33.—St. Bonaventure, 2. dist. 3. p. 1. dub. 2.—St. Thomas, 1. p. qu. 55. a. 3: *Ex hoc sunt in rebus aliqua superiora, quod sunt uni primo, quod est Deus, propinquiora et similia*, i. p. qu. 106. a. 3. ad 1.—Meister Eckhart, 133. 27; 277. i.

17 [2 Cor. iii. 17.](#)

is dead to sins, but holds himself to be nothing else than a sinner, and therefore he gives himself up to another and doth not trust himself. In the fourth place, he gives himself up to the commandments of the Holy Church; what he is told to do that he does willingly.

19.

But the case is different, as I will show, with a thoroughly perfect poor man, who has become empty of himself and of all things. First, he need not give himself over through ignorance, for a poor man is a pure man; now, where purity is, there is light; where there is light, it shineth and showeth what is hidden. A thoroughly poor man is a pure light in himself, in which he sees and recognises all truth, and need not go out of himself nor seek it elsewhere. For in this going forth he is easily led into intermediate and manifold distractions. Rather doth he go into himself, where he findeth all that he requires. For in this movement in which he really drops himself and all creatures, God must give Himself to him in all truth; then if he hath God, he needeth nothing more.¹⁸



20.

Furthermore, it is not needful for him to go out of himself for the sake of dying. For he is dead to all sins: he who is dead to them, has no need of further dying. But here it may be asked if a man can come to this in time, that he hath no more to die? Man certainly comes to this in time, that creatures find in him nothing more to kill, for he has gone out of himself and out of all creatures. In this state was St. Paul when he said: "I have reckoned all things as dung."¹⁹ Hence the deaths of a poor man are so subtle and hidden that few creatures can detect them. But man never comes to this in time; God always finds something to kill in him. Therefore, it is not necessary for a man who hath abandoned self, to give himself up to creatures; but he should at all times give himself up to God.

18 The same view occurs at No. 16, p. 11. Denifle considers the meaning to be simply this: If man has departed from himself and all things, then God fills him, because there is no more obstacle at hand. That God "must give Himself up" does not relate to *necessitas coactionis*, as St. Thomas calls it (1. 2. q. 112. a 3), but to the *necessitas infallibilitatis*; for the design of God would be defeated if He did not give Himself to a soul prepared to receive Him, as the preparation itself is His doing. Comp. No. 137.

19 [Phil. iii. 8.](#)

21.

In the third place: A poor and pure man need not give himself to any man through humility, for he hath in himself the roots of all humility. Nor is it, needful for him to show his humility to creatures, for God understandeth his heart well; as Christ saith “Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart.”²⁰ Have humility of heart, that is enough. An objection may be made that “it is not enough for man to have virtue in him, but he should manifest it, that people may be bettered.” I answer to this: If thou art gone out from thyself and quite withdrawn, people will be much more improved on thy account, if they wish it, through this thy withdrawal than through thy co-operation. It may, however, be urged: Granting that a man in himself understandeth all truth and hath overcome all sin, yet is it good that he should not assume this to himself, and it is better for him to trust another than himself. To this I say: He should not assume it, but give it to God, and to no creature; for no creature can give such truth and singleness, for God only giveth them.



22.

In the fourth place: A purely poor man is also not bound to take externally, like another man, all that is legally prescribed in holy Christianity; for those who do this are not wholly emptied of themselves. And that which holy Christianity worketh in an external manner the poor man worketh inwardly and essentially. For in manner and form enters the manifold, but essence is without manner or form. And the poor man is thus simplified in essence, and therefore he cannot mix himself with the manifold, as St. Paul saith: “All laws are not binding to the righteous.”²¹ For the law is only there to make people leave sin and win virtue. The really poor man hath left all sins and won all virtue. But how shall a thoroughly poor man hold himself under the law? He should in simplicity do all that he can and that appertaineth to him, and the rest he should leave; yet he should not despise it nor hold it to be evil but good; for all is good that holy Christianity hath set forth. And thus to the poor man abideth always his freedom, and yet he is very submissive and obedient.



23.

Now the question might occur: How is it then with the poor men, who are in a community, when one gives himself up to another and is obedient to him? Is not this against freedom? This is explained, because a poor man can give himself up in a threefold way.

20 [Matt. xi. 29.](#)

21 [1 Tim. i. 9.](#)

24.

First, from the necessity of the body, as to seek bread, through God, for his own wants or the necessity of his brother. And if he gains what is necessary for himself, he should give himself over to God and watch his heart and give God scope to work in him inwardly; and he should let God use the strength he has got from the food, and not let himself be led astray. For if he let himself fail at all in God's work he would not be thoroughly free. For it belongs to the nature of alms that they should be consumed in God. And whosoever consumes them otherwise, be it with external works or in idleness, he doth not make a proper use of his alms nor act according to the true principles of a poor life. If I am asked: Should then a poor man always watch his heart and not trouble himself about external things, such as spinning and other such work? and if he trouble himself with outer works, is this against poverty and freedom? I say: A thoroughly poor man owes no one anything, only God, and he should always hold himself so, if he wish to do the work of God, that God may find him ready. And if this relates to external works, he should leave them, nor consider the obedience to man, but he should satisfy God and not man. But if he consumes internally so that the body can no longer endure it, let him then certainly go forth to an external work of charity that may be nearest at hand.



25.

Secondly, a poor man may give himself up for the sake of virtue in himself and in his brethren. In himself this may happen in three ways: First, if his nature is burthened or sick, so that it cannot well take heed of the heart and turn inwardly to God, in this case he can very properly give himself to some work of charity. Then, again, if he hath not yet obtained the external virtues, he must exercise himself till he has adopted, the essence of virtue. Thirdly, to better his brother, that he may give him a good example and image, he should practise works of charity; and what he does he should do from pure love, and this does not take from freedom but increaseth it. Again, and further, a poor man should give himself up and practise acts of charity to his brother in three ways: First, when he is deficient in virtue and has no one who could help him, he should go out of himself and go to the help of his brother,—even if he were in the highest vision and contemplation that can exist in time, and did not come to help his brother, he would commit a sin. Then, again, he is the follower of our Lord, who exercised outward works of charity towards His disciples, and he ought to follow His image. Lastly, if he is to possess eternal life, as Christ saith, “Come to me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”²² And this means the acts of mercy that God will require from every man. And in this way a man can go out of himself



22 [Matt. xi. 28.](#)

and give himself up to works of charity. But this doth not hinder a man, nor take from him his freedom, but it helpeth in the closest manner and gains for him freedom. And the man is not pure and free simply if he is pure in virtue, but he ought to exercise himself in all virtues that belong to his state, and then he is pure and free, and then he can without any sin dive into himself and take heed of his heart.



26.

In the third place, a poor man ought to give himself up to an external work of charity when he is warned by God to do so, and he ought not to resist God; he should satisfy his Creator in this, and give himself up in all that God requireth of him.

27.

Here it might be objected: How is a man to understand if the motive to an external work be from the Evil Spirit, or from Nature, or from God? For internal works that God worketh in the soul are far better than external works of charity, and yet both must exist. I shall consider this distinction quite briefly, for much might be said on the subject, which I pass over at present. First, let us see how the Evil Spirit is to be recognised in the way in which he stimulates to acts of charity. First, if a man is stirred out of his internal recollection and moved to address himself to wealthy persons, and to give himself up to them and to satisfy them without any necessity of virtue, and if he wastes his time unprofitably with them and lives comfortably with them in much ease, in eating and in drinking, and if he fancies that his nature needeth his ease, that he may be stronger, and may serve God better, and if he grasps at more than his necessity, and becometh heavy laden and disturbed and given to manifold cares, so that he cannot so well enter again into his heart as if he had remained at home, this motive and tendency are from the Evil Spirit and from his bodily nature. For bodily nature also findeth its pleasure in these things. St. Paul saith: "The kingdom of heaven is not eating and drinking, but peace, joy, and righteousness."²³



28.

Further: Another motive proceedeth from the Evil Spirit if a man favours rich people and gives them what is due to poor people, as, for example, to invite them, and to live on a good footing with them, for in doing this such a man seeketh praise and honour, and that people should invite him again, and thereby he neglects virtue, and he gets no reward for

23 [Rom. xiv. 17.](#)

this conduct, but much tribulation. Christ saith: "If thou makest a feast, thou shalt not invite thy friends nor the rich, but thou shalt invite the poor, and thou shalt not have thy reward here, but in the kingdom of heaven."²⁴



29.

In the third place: If a man is by himself and God worketh works in him, and if he thinks he is too weak and he cannot suffer it, and turns himself outwardly into time, to unnecessary works of charity, and in the distraction of the senses, and of a bodily nature, if it be difficult to the body to be much recollected internally, this again is a temptation of the Evil One and of nature. In the fourth place, the motive is also inspired by the Evil Spirit if a man turns himself to external works of charity beyond all measure or necessity; for example, in excessive fasting and watching, and other severe practices, by which a man is unbalanced and his senses are in some degree perverted so that he becomes half foolish, and by which he departs so much from himself that he can never again revert to his own heart, and he becomes so seriously ill that for this reason he is obliged to give up many good works which God would have worked in him. Therefore St. Paul spoke in this connection, "Let your service be in moderation."²⁵



30.

Further, to discern if the external work of charity is dictated by Nature observe this: Whatsoever is turned to self or considers self in a work of charity, that is a work of Nature; for Nature always loveth and proposeth self. Again, if a man exerciseth himself in bodily joys, and testifieth love to them, that is also readily seen to be from Nature, for sinners also practise those things amongst one another. Thirdly, if rich people show trust and faith one to another that is also from Nature, for like adheres to like naturally: therefore if a poor man cumbers himself about rich folk, this is a sign that he hath a certain likeness with them, and hath not yet contemned all things; for if he had despised all things he would not hold much intercourse with rich people, for virtue would consist in only doing this as far as necessity directeth.

31.

In the third place, how is a man to discern if an external act of charity is prompted by God? To determine this observe: Man has to keep three things in view in his work. First,

²⁴ [Luke xiv. 12, 14.](#)

²⁵ [Rom. xii. 1.](#) Rationabile obsequium vestrum.

the necessity of the person whom he serves, if that person needs his services,—in which case he ought to come to the help of every man, friends or foes, bad or good. For in a case of necessity no one is excluded, as Christ saith: “Pray also for those who despitefully use you and do good to them that hate you, that ye may be children of your heavenly Father, who causeth His sun to shine on the evil and the good.”²⁶ And that is a divine work of charity if it is a case of necessity and is performed with modesty.



32.

Again, a man ought to keep in view the distinction of persons in his works of charity. He should be more prone to a good man, who consumeth all things in God, than to a man in whom he doth not recognise much good. For in a good man all things are fruitful and to the praise of God, and all things are in him referred to their first source. And although it be true that God at all times worketh in a good man, that he be strengthened so that he may be able to support the work of God, yet you should come to his help rather than to that of another man, in whom God does not work so purely or unimpeded. And also all things are more the property of a good man than of him who hath them; and therefore if a man wisheth to atone for his sins, he ought to impart to a good man that which he hath; and further, a good man can obtain much more for him for whom he prayeth, and God giveth ear to him sooner than to another man.



33.

In the third place: A man ought to keep in view, in his external act of charity, the proper ordering of time and of himself. In regard to time, in the morning a man ought to take special heed of his heart, and not cumber himself much about external works, unless a great necessity intervene. For things are easier to a man in the morning, and at that season he can more effectually turn to God than at any other time. And afterwards, in the afternoon, a man may very properly exercise himself in external acts of charity; but again, at vesper time, he should take heed of the state of his heart. Thus we see that he should keep order in the regulation of his time. He must also observe order in the management of himself. For if he feeleth himself well moved towards God, and if God driveth him from external things to Himself, he should give place to God, and suffer Him to work internally in him. And at such moments he may be quite empty of all external works, unless there be a case of great necessity. Afterwards, when God no longer worketh in him, and this internal working is withdrawn from him, he ought to give himself to external work in necessary works of charity, and for him thus to work is a divine act of charity.

²⁶ [Matt. v. 44, 45.](#)

34.



A man can also detect a divine work of charity, when he is always inspired by complete devotedness to the work, and when he proposeth nothing in it save the honour of God and the necessity of his fellow man, when he doth not seek any natural pleasure in it, nor any motive save the honour and glory of God. And such works of charity should be wrought by a poor man, and he should readily leave all other kinds of work, whether prompted by the evil spirit or by nature, and therefore poverty is a free property and power.

35.

I hear a voice saying: How then about an ill-regulated freedom, and how is a man to know if his freedom is regulated by God or not? Notice here: Godlike freedom springeth from true humility, and endeth in humility, and in patience, and in all virtues, and in God Himself. For if a divine poor man, who is free, be attacked either by man or by the evil spirit, he becometh more humble and patient, and draweth nigher to God, and committeth all things to Him, and he keepeth silence and suffereth and thanketh God. But freedom of a lower class springeth from pride and endeth in pride, and in anger, and in insolence, and in other vices. For if an imperfectly free man is attacked, he becometh wrathful, and seeketh revenge at once, and falls into arrogance, into hatred, judgment, and slander, against him who disputes with him, and he cannot contain himself, but must break out into revenge by means of vices. It may quite well happen that they wish to do this from a sense of justice, and they are so far free that they are not willing to depart from justice, and think they are giving honour to God in their opposition. But this justice is false, for it doth not spring from genuine humility, but from pride, as a teacher saith: "False justice hath hardness, but true justice hath pity and compassion."²⁷ In this manner, ill-regulated free men are to be recognised by their unvirtuous sallies, but just and free men by their humble silence, by their long-suffering and resignation to God. And their silence is not from fear, but because they perceive that their speech doth not bring fruit, therefore are they silent. If, however, God willeth that they do so, they speak without all fear. And they are able to endure much for the truth; but unjust free men are much troubled with the necessity and help themselves, as far as they are able, to get rid of the suffering, if possible.



36.

It also happens often that a just and free man is viewed as ill-regulated. Thus, when a thing is proposed to him that is good, and he recognises that it is not the best for him, and

²⁷ In the margin stands: Gregory, from whom the passage is taken. Homil. 34 in Evang. No. 2.

he turns to this best and is satisfied with it;—this, his conduct, is often held to be bad, and yet it is good. And an imperfectly free man is also often considered as well regulated; for example, when he ought to practise a virtue, which is a case of necessity, and he omits to do so, and wishes to be singly occupied with himself. This is often reckoned as good, and yet it is evil. For we ought to work virtues, if a necessity occur, and remain singly with ourselves, if that is also convenient and fitting.

28

37.

There are two kinds of ill-regulated freedom. One is bodily, the other spiritual.

38.

Bodily freedom cometh from temporal good, from honours and friends and power. For whosoever hath much property, honours, and friends, and is powerful, wishes to be the best, and wishes to be noble and free. And this freedom is not regulated, for it doth not spring from God. And it is seldom that a man is taken up and implicated in property and honours, or with friends or power, who is at the same time unembarrassed with imperfect freedom. But whosoever wishes to be thus perfectly free, must have departed from property, and honours, and friends, and power, and must have come to the true ground of humility. For in this ground springeth up true freedom, and from no other ground; for true freedom is a capacity for all virtue and an abandonment of all vice. An objection may be urged that no one is capable of all virtue, though he hath left the cause of all vice. Now temporal goods, worldly honour, friends, and power are a cause of vice and sins, therefore it must follow of necessity that he who wisheth to have genuine freedom in order that he may obtain all virtue, must leave and be empty of all temporal things, honours, power, and friends. Seneca alludes to this when he saith: “Whoso wisheth to be quite free in his mind must be poor and like a poor man.”²⁸ Poor men are accused of being irregularly free; but it is the rich who are so, who retain property in temporal goods, and try to vindicate themselves with subtle pretences, and wish to come to the same degree of perfection as a thoroughly poor man, and think they can obtain the best internally, without external poverty. It is good if this come to pass. But the Gospel saith not so. It saith indeed, “you should leave it and not keep it,”²⁹ and those who keep it, and yet wish to be perfect, belong to a lower class of freedom. Ill-regulated freedom has also this peculiarity, that it sins without punishment or fear, and assumes to itself virtue without acquiring it or accomplishing it, and places itself in seeming perfection, without having abandoned itself and all things.

29

28 Inter excerpta (spuria) ed. Lips. 1770, p. 1004: si vis vacare animo, aut pauper sis oportet, aut pauperi similis.

29 [Luke xviii. 22.](#)

39.

The other kind of ill-regulated freedom is spiritual. For it proceedeth from the spirit and is possessed by spiritual people and clerics, and it is brought forth in three fashions.

40.

First, when a man turns away from a sinful life and attacks his body with severity, and exercises himself in a penitential life, and works virtues externally, and doth not examine himself internally, and doth not perceive God in himself, and thus remains all along an external man,—this man remains unknown to himself. For true knowledge springeth from within and not from without. Since, therefore, they are external and not internal, the truth remains unknown to them, and they fall from blindness into an ignorance of themselves. If they carry on a great many exercises, they fancy themselves the best, and thus a kind of spurious freedom arises in them, leading them not to give way to any one, for they think themselves the best through the manifold nature of their works. These are, indeed, good men, but they cannot subsist without defects, for internal light is wanting to them. And thus they fall into an ill-regulated freedom, and into a despising and judging of others. And it is very distressing to live and move with such people, for these men, while they stand alone in their external works, never come to genuine humility. They may all show externally an humble carriage, but they are not so fundamentally. But the ground of genuine humility is born from within, and not only from without. Some one might say: What is the use of external observance, penance, &c., as they don't place a man in perfection, and even cause ill-regulated freedom to spring up in a man? To this I reply that external practices are good and useful if they are used in an orderly manner and in moderation; and if, over and above them, a man examines and watches himself internally, and giveth himself up to God. The outer life is imperfect without the inner, and, in like manner, the inner without the outer. They both belong together to the structure of perfection, and neither is sufficient without the other.

41.

Furthermore, an ill-regulated freedom is brought forth if a man hath exercised himself in external good works, and he then leaveth the manifold and turneth into himself, and remaineth within. For in this withdrawal into himself there springeth up a natural light in him, and this shows him the distinction of natural truth. And this distinction begets a great pleasure, and this pleasure drives him on to know still more truth, so that he becomes intel-

lectually developed; but the reason and intellect are from nature. Therefore he stands still in his natural light, and he comprehends what he will through distinction, and he fancies he has all truth and distinctions in him. Then he falls back with pleasure on himself, and he fancies that no one is equal to him, and that he is so free that he should give way to no one, for he weens that no one knoweth the truth which he understands, and therefore he forms judgments of other people, as that no one comprehends the truth as perfectly as he does, and a pride riseth up in him, and he takes pleasure in forming distinctions, which is so agreeable to him that he pays no attention to virtue and good works. And from this ariseth an ill-regulated freedom, so that he despiseth all the laws of holy Christianity. And inasmuch as he goeth into his natural light to recognise all things, it comes to pass that he willeth to know faith according to a figurative manner, and he cannot thus know it. And inasmuch as he thus stands in ignorance of faith, and yet would gladly know it, the evil spirit comes in, and presents a false light to him as a true one, and he gives himself up to it, and grasps it as a truth, and yet it is false, and he cometh thereby to fall. And his fall is in some degree like Lucifer's fall, for he is spiritual, and he can scarcely ever rise again, and all that he doeth he holds to be no sin at all. And for this reason the sin remains unpunished and unrepented. And no man can come to the help of this man, but God only. And these men are called free spirits. But it is an evil freedom, and it is never the freedom which hath been spoken of before, and which appertaineth to a pure, poor man. For it proceedeth from the evil spirit; but the other freedom is from God. And it is necessary to be very careful in intercourse with these men; and no man can recognise in time these persons except a perfect man, who is enlightened both with natural and with divine light.

42.

In the third place, an ill-regulated freedom is generated by visions, as when a man is ravished in ecstasy, and seeth something that was hidden from him before, and this does not happen without means, as St. Paul saith, and thereby a man cometh to think that he is in a very edifying state;³⁰ and thus a freedom that is often irregular springeth up in him; for it doth not originate in genuine humility. And, moreover, the evil spirit can deceive the man, for he may present to him a false image, which leads him to think he is very favoured, as St. Paul saith, that the evil angel may take on himself the likeness of a good angel;³¹ and therefore we ought not to believe in all spirits, for man is easily deceived. And these men will hardly endure that you chide them.

30 [2 Cor. xii. 7.](#)

31 [2 Cor. xi. 14.](#)

In the next place, how true poverty is a free capacity or power (vermög...



In the third place, how true poverty is a pure working.

43.

God is a pure working, therefore also is poverty a pure working; and each thing worketh according to its form. Poverty is a pure, simple working. Perhaps some one might say, What does pure signify? That is pure which is one, a unity, and severed from all else. Poverty is one, and severed from all difference, and therefore poverty is pure. That therefore which is pure worketh purely. What then is working? Working is nothing else than making something out of nothing, or making of one thing another, or making a thing better than it was before, or making into nothing something that is. And this mode hath poverty to itself.

44.

First, Poverty maketh something out of nothing. Thus when a man hath left all that is not God or godlike and cleaveth only to God, God must needs give himself and all things back again to such a man. Hence, what was not his before, becometh now his own, as, for example, the good works that other men work, and also those that Christ worked ever, and all the saints, and all good men have worked, or still work, and will work, these are the property of a pure man, as though he had worked them himself. For in the fact that he goeth out of himself and out of all things that are not God, and turneth to God with all love, he obtains thus a community with God and all things that are godlike; and what he is then incapable of doing by works he accomplisheth through love. What another doeth through works that he maketh his own through love, for "love appropriates other's virtues," as St. Gregory saith.³² And thus a poor man maketh out of nothing something. Further, a poor man's works are so widely spread, so broad, that in a moment he worketh all works. And internally and hi isolation he worketh all external and internal works that are good, and he worketh them not by accident but essentially; and as the essence of a thing is much nobler than accidents, thus the virtues of a poor man are much nobler than those of another man who worketh virtue in accidents.



45.

Secondly, poverty maketh out of one work another. For instance, when a man is overladen with time and creatures he hath also his working in time and with the creature, and he cannot be empty of them. When now he turneth himself from time and from creatures,

³² Quisquis charitatem habet etiam dona alia percipit; quisquis charitatem non habet, etiam dona quae percipisse videbitur amittit. Homil. 9 in Evang. No. 6.

and turneth to God and to eternity, he hath henceforth his working with God and in eternity, and no longer in time and with the creature; hence out of time he maketh eternity, and out of the creature, God. And this is what poverty seeketh, and therefore is its working pure.

46.

Thirdly, poverty changeth a good work into something better and more perfect; as, for example, when a poor man goeth on the way of God, and his going is always to something better and more intimate; as St. Gregory saith, “The going in the way of God is always a forward march.”³³ And thus a poor man goeth always in the truth, and increaseth, while he is in time; and therefore poverty is a pure working, as he maketh things continually better and still better.

47.

In the fourth place, poverty hath this, that it destroyeth one thing and maketh another in its stead. Thus a man has inherited from the fall of Adam that his nature is full of sinful inclinations; and to destroy these man must do it by virtues,—and in the stead of each sin must this man place a virtue;³⁴ and thus we must overcome vice with virtue. He who wisheth to cast out all vice must have all virtue, and in no other way can you overcome vice save by virtues. Hence poverty is a pure working, for it continually killeth vices and seizes hold of virtues and obtains them. Wherefore we must at all times exercise ourselves in virtues if we would be empty of vices; for whensoever a man is empty or idle with respect to virtues vice gains power over him. If, then, a poor man at all times worketh virtue hath no power over him. All things are a virtue to him if he proposeth God’s honour in all things. Of this St. Paul speaks when he saith, “To the pure all things are pure.”³⁵

48.

But some one might say: How can there be working in poverty, for poverty is a mere state of being, and what is mere or simple is immovable, whereas working is movable and takes place in movement? How then can poverty and working agree together? To this I answer

33 According to Denifle this teaching is the following: Not to advance on the way of the Lord is called to go back. St. Bernard developed this view most clearly in his Epistle 254. No. 4: “Nolle proficere deficere est.” Again, in Epistle 385, No. 1.—Tauler only cites him; but compare St. Gregory, Lib. past, curae, p. 3. admon. 35.

34 This passage, though different in other versions, has its justification in a sentence of St. Gregory, Hom. 32 in Evang. No. 1, where he says of God: Coelestis medicus singulis quibusque vitiis obviantia adhibet medicamenta.

35 [Titus i. 15.](#)

and say, that poverty is a likeness to God. Now God is in Himself immovable, and yet He moveth all things; so likewise is poverty in itself a stationary being, immovable and yet with God it moveth all things. For poverty is dissolved in God and united to Him; that then which is one hath one working. Now God and poverty are one, and therefore poverty worketh with God all things, and yet it remaineth pure and simple and immovable with God. Again, man is compounded of time and eternity. When, then, man is raised with the highest forces out of time into eternity, he becometh immovable, according to the highest forces; for eternity is immovable that, therefore, which is in eternity is immovable also. If man with his highest part is in eternity, he is immovable, and yet he moveth the lowest forces according to time. For poverty is to be taken according to the highest faculties, and the highest faculties are immovable. So, therefore, poverty is also immovable, and yet worketh with the highest forces in the lowest and not the lowest in the highest. A simile. The angel moveth heaven and the things that are in heaven, and yet he remaineth unmoved. So also is it here. Thus, then, is poverty a pure working and yet immovable.



In man is a natural work, a work of grace and a godly work. In the first place—

49.

There are three kinds of work in man, a natural work, and a work of grace, and a godlike work. The first man ought to make pure, the second worketh purely, the third is pure.

50.

First, man hath a natural work in him in three fashions; the first is bodily, the second is sensuous, the third is spiritual.

51.

The first natural work is the bodily, such as eating, and drinking, and sleeping; man should make all this pure, that he may not stray from God in it. And this is effected by three means. The first is that he should observe moderation and measure. And moderation consists in this, that is, neither too much nor too little. And man should thus take the necessity of the body, that he always remains in the middle or mean between excess and too little. And in this measure the work remaineth pure, and well regulated in God; but without this measure it is neither pure nor regulated. And if a poor man regulates all his works according to God, his works are pure. The other property that belongeth to a bodily work for it to remain pure, is that a man should take his necessity from truth and from the Holy Ghost; he should not help himself out with untruthfulness. What is this mendacious help? It is when a man asks for alms that he doth not need, and addresses himself to people and exaggerates his necessity; this is mendaciously seeking help and is unworthy; and a man must drop this if he wisheth his work to be pure. He must take his necessity from the Holy Ghost; that is, he must not be prompted by his own will, because people do not give him anything from natural charity, or for his service, or for his speeches, but the Holy Ghost alone must be the mover of the gifts that are bestowed on him, and in this fashion the work remaineth pure. Thirdly, it also belongeth to a pure bodily work, that what a man eateth or drinketh, he should consume in the Holy Ghost. For the heart of man ought to burn in the love of the Holy Ghost, and the strength which man hath taken from his meal, the Holy Ghost draweth to Himself and burneth it in the fire of charity, and maketh it altogether spiritual; and thus instead of the bodily force, man becometh a spiritual force, which surpasseth all bodily force. And these are genuinely spiritual men, and their eating is dearer to God than the fasting of other people, and those who eat so, eat God Himself. And that which they eat and drink, that consumeth God in them. A comparison. As with the sun, which shining hotly draweth the damp on the earth's surface to itself, and maketh the earth dry, so is it also here; when



the Divine Sun shineth in a pure heart, it draweth to itself all that is in the heart, and maketh the heart at the same time light and dry, which, thus escaping from man, exceedeth all force, yea, far more than if he had worked in a mine. And whoso strengtheneth this man, strengtheneth the work of God, in which God is well pleased, and in which God cleareth up all things in time. And if God did no longer work this work on earth, all that is in time would pass away. And this is a specially pure work, which, however, belongs quite essentially to a poor man.

52.

The second natural work is sensuous, such as seeing, hearing, and the other five senses, which man ought also to hold in such wise that he remains always pure. He should hold them always under the restraint of modesty, and only grant them the essentially necessary. For if the senses stretch forth beyond necessity, man becomes distracted, and can scarcely remain as pure as when his senses were gathered into one; for true purity is in unity and not in the manifold. When man is thus distracted, he wishes to see and hear all things, which cannot consist with purity. Man ought also to curb his senses, because the forces hang on one another. And when one works, the others are hindered and hampered. Thus, if while he is seeing and hearing outwardly, his internal sight and hearing should be led astray, that is an injury. Wherefore a man should only take his mere necessity from his senses and nothing beyond it, in which case he abideth pure, and he can always use them to the honour of God, and not for the pleasure and lust of the body. For God will demand an account of our five senses, and therefore we ought to direct them usefully.



53.

The third natural work is spiritual; such as to know, to love, and to think. And this ought a man also to use merely according to necessity; but how is this to be? Man has, doubtless, from nature the power of knowing, and this forms a distinction between him and other animals. But he ought to turn this natural knowing to God and to godlike things, and draw off from things which are not necessary. For if he turneth it to another thing that is not God or godlike, God remains unknown to him, and man goes astray. For if Lucifer had turned his natural understanding to God when he turned it on himself he would not have fallen; but, as he turned it to himself he must needs have fallen, for by mere force of nature he could not subsist. The case is still similar if a man turneth his reason and his understanding on himself and on other things that are not God; for in this case he must fall, even were he of as noble a nature as Lucifer. He must fall and he could not subsist; for by mere nature no one can subsist. But if he turneth his natural understanding in the light of faith to God, and to divine things, and if he liveth thus, then God changeth his natural understanding into a



divine understanding, and confirms him in it so that he may not fall. This is brought to pass in the angels, who dwell with Him, whom God strengtheneth in such wise that they can no more fall. For, at the same instant that they turn their understanding from themselves to God, God begets in them His divine nature,³⁶ and this draweth them at once out of themselves into God and confirms them. The same thing occurs with man. At the same instant that a man turneth his knowledge from himself into God he also becomes strengthened in Him. And this happened to the Apostles on the day of Pentecost; for whoso rightly knoweth God, he can never take pleasure in mortal sins. If Lucifer had rightly known God he might never have fallen. And in this way a man is no more possessed of a natural but of a godlike understanding. And what he then knoweth, that is from a divine light, and never from natural light.

54.

A comparison from the sun. As soon as he ariseth, he changeth all other lights into his light, so that there is no other light. For his light being above all other lights, and for that reason, as soon as he ariseth, all lesser lights must go down and the sun shineth alone with his light. So is it also in a pure soul; when the Divine Sun ariseth in it all other lights change into the Divine Light, so that no other light remaineth but the godlike light; for God is a Light above all lights. When He therefore shineth with His light, it is right and necessary that all other lights should set, whether they be natural or of grace; but not on that account does it follow that the natural light is destroyed. Nevertheless, though it burneth still and is not as a thing that doth not exist, it is, however, changed into a divine light and transfigured and glorified, just as when the sun ariseth, the moon's light is changed into the sun's light and is glorified and magnified. So is it also here. St. Augustine saith, "God is never a destroyer of nature, but He ordereth it and maketh it perfect."³⁷

55.

Several deny natural knowledge and several attribute it. And it must be both denied and attributed. It is to be denied, for though man's knowledge can run through all knowledge and distinction, and that man has a true distinction of all truth in himself, yet he must leave all distinction and carry himself inward with one and into one, and in this one he ought to abide. And he ought to contemplate this one with a simple and single sight. And then all natural knowledge should depart; for natural knowledge consists in images and forms, and man can never know God through images, but he must know Him without them, so that

36 On this teaching compare St. Thomas, 1. p. qu. 62. a. 5.

37 This is the scholastic doctrine: Deus non destruit naturam, sed perficit eam.

the spirit must be unclothed of all images; for a teacher saith, "Whoso wisheth to know God, he must be unclothed of all creaturely art."³⁸ And knowledge seeketh that which is unclothed, namely, the naked truth; and it is never satisfied in no natural fashion till it cometh in complete nakedness to see God and know Him without any medium. And when it cometh into nudity then all natural marks and signs fall away, and the soul becometh unoccupied, and sitteth and resteth in pure tranquillity; and then hath the spirit come to its true origin whence it flowed. And in this manner is natural knowledge to be denied, and this is necessary, that a man become empty of his natural knowledge if he wish to have genuine poverty. And in nakedness and poverty his knowledge is glorified with divine clarity, so that nothing remaineth to him of the knowledge that belongeth to him only naturally. And thus man knows all truth when he knoweth what is good or hurtful to him, and this man can no longer be deceived by any false light for he is removed from all falsity, and therefore falsity can no more have place in him. Wherefore Christ saith, To you shall be given the spirit of truth, which shall lead you into all truth.³⁹



56.

But natural knowledge must also be attributed to man, that is, when a man stands in doubt, and he is yet exposed to error in distinguishing the truth, he must then seek distinctions in himself and out of himself. For man can never live to the truth unless he has known it first. Hence if knowledge is wanting to a man life is also wanting. For a true life springeth from a pure knowledge. And as a man needeth distinctions and seeketh them not, this is to live like the beasts and not like a human being. For man desireth by nature to learn much, and therefore is he a man because he comprehendeth the truth, and what fails in him that ought he to seek. And in this sense natural knowledge is not to be denied but attributed to him. For natural knowledge, if he be willing, leadeth a man into the knowledge of grace, and knowledge of grace leadeth him to divine knowledge. And in this way a man cometh to perfection.

38 Eckhart, 513. 12. says: Whoso wisheth to know God as He is, must be empty or naked (bloss) of all art (Swer Got kennen wil als er ist, der muoz bloz sin von aller kunst.)

39 [John xvi. 13.](#)

57.

Perhaps some one will ask. What difference is there between natural knowledge and the knowledge of grace? Mark this. Natural knowledge seeketh distinction in created things, whether spiritual or bodily, and man by nature desireth to know all created things, and the distinction that he perceives in them is given to him by his natural knowledge. And to know begets in him great pleasure; and he abides in the pleasure, and the pleasure driveth him on to know more and more. And if a man remains on the ground of natural knowledge so that he cometh not to the knowledge of grace or to divine knowledge, he turns his knowledge on himself, and holds it as his property, and cometh not to a true and genuine self-denial. For mere nature bends itself back on itself, and seeketh her pleasure and delight.



58.

The question might occur, How can a natural man be recognised, whose knowledge is merely natural? Among other things he is to be recognised by three features. First, by his wishing to be always the most distinguished in speech and honours; he wishes also to have most of the talk, for he thinketh that no one can do it so well as himself. Secondly, he wishes always to have the right of a question, and holds that his words are the truest; and if people attempt to dispute his words, he becometh wroth, and grasps at any support of his own opinion, and will not listen to the opinion of any one else. Thirdly, he thinks right and proper all that people credit him with, for he thinks himself worthy of all things, and he considers a man to be devoid of reason and sense who finds anything more entitled to praise in another person than in himself.



59.

And in this way natural knowledge is hurtful if it abideth in self, and doth not come to true denial of self and all things. But man, who is by nature discreet, if he cometh to a true denial of self and of all things, to him his natural understanding is no injury but useful, for he cometh more easily to Divine truth than a man who is coarse and stupid by nature. For that which the stupid man seizes with much labour, and must seek from far, the intelligent man obtains in himself without much labour. For a well-regulated nature, if it have a good will, is a great help toward God; but if it have a perverse will and keeps to itself it falleth much sooner than a stupid nature. And this happened with Lucifer, who was of the noblest by nature, but because he kept to himself he was the first to fall. And this happeneth yet; and therefore is poverty very noble and useful, for the man standeth alone in poverty and in denial of himself and of all things.

In man is a natural work, a work of grace and a godly work. In the first...



Secondly, of the work and knowledge of grace.

60.

Next have we to speak of the knowledge which is by grace. This signifies that to man in that state is given the power of distinguishing the Holy Scriptures, so that he comprehend them in full truth, and that in bearing and reading he should understand them in the best and most profitable way. And this knowledge is by grace and not from nature; for by mere nature you cannot come to a true knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. For the Holy Scriptures are from the Holy Ghost, and therefore whoso wisheth to understand them properly he must be enlightened with the grace of the Holy Ghost. An objection might be made, that many understand the Holy Scriptures who have not much grace, nor walk in a holy life. That is true; but they only understand them according to the sense, and not rightly according to the foundation and groundwork thereof. For whoso wisheth to understand them on their right ground, that must issue from the life and from the divine grace. Hence it is that Holy Writ is understood in the light of grace, and not in the light of nature. For genuine poverty is full of grace, and therefore is Holy Writ understood by a genuinely poor man. Wherefore Christ said, "To the poor the Gospel,"⁴⁰ for they alone understand it rightly. And this is found in the Apostles, who preached the Gospel and converted the people, and did not do this by cleverness of natural knowledge. Rather did they it in the power of poverty, for therewith they overcame all things, and in it they understood all things. Doubtless grace is a flowing out from God, and it floweth into the soul, but into one that is empty and poor in all things that are not God. Then if Holy Writ is only to be understood by grace, and if a poor man is alone receptive of the grace of God, then a poor man only understandeth Holy Writ properly. Not that a poor man understandeth Holy Writ in all the ways in which it can be understood, but he understands it in its essence, and he understands the naked truth for which all Holy Writ hath been written. For a poor man hath understood the essence of all truth. Wherefore it is not needful for him to take the truth according to accidents, and that he should understand all figures of speech which are in Holy Writ. As Christ said to His disciples, "To you it is given to know the mystery of God, but to others it must be given in parables."⁴¹ He who understandeth the naked truth needeth not a parable. Therefore because a poor man is empty of all things that are not like the truth he thence understandeth the naked truth, and therewith he has enough.



40 [Matt. xi. 5.](#) Pauperes evangelizantur.

41 [Matt. xiii. 11-13.](#)

61.

The knowledge of grace is also in him the distinction of virtue and vice. For it is scarcely possible to leave vice and bring in virtue unless you understand them. And, therefore, it is of grace that man should understand virtue and vice thoroughly. Natural masters have written about virtues, but they never come to the true foundation of virtue. They write of virtues, how much pleasanter and sweeter they are in their nature, for virtues are undoubtedly and naturally a greater source of delight than vice. And in this way they sought their pleasure in virtue and nothing else; but they never get into virtue properly; for virtue consists in the denial of all natural lust, and they never possessed virtue thoroughly, because they sought themselves in it. Now, whosoever wisheth to have virtue in a hearty denial of himself, this must be of grace and not of nature; and virtue is quite at home there. For, whensoever a man has himself in view in virtue, that is not right virtue, it is natural virtue, but not of grace, for sinners have it also; but virtue in genuine self-denial they cannot have. When, therefore, a poor man stands in thorough denial of all natural lust, then he understandeth virtue quite in its groundwork. But the masters of nature could not come with vices to natural truth, and therefore they left vices through the power of natural knowledge. For no man can come to natural truth who is too heavily laden with the coarseness of sins. Hence these philosophers left vice through nature, and not by grace. For the virtue by grace is only for the sake of God, and not from natural knowledge, and therefore they did not come to the right knowledge of virtue; and this knowledge is of grace.



62.

This is also of grace, that a man should acknowledge his faults; as St. Gregory saith, “It is a great perfection that a man should know his imperfection, for sin blindeth a man, so that he may not understand his faults.” When then a man feeleth displeasure of sins, a light springeth up in him, showing him his defects, so that he knoweth what a sin is, and thus he leaveth his sins and turneth to virtue. And this understanding is of grace. When then a poor man feels a thorough disgust at all sins, he thereby has a divine light, showing him all sins,—and not only sins, but also the causes of sins,—and not only gross sins, but also spiritual and intellectual sins,—which occur in the reason and in the will. And a man must have very much light who understandeth all sins; and this knowledge can no one have save a singly and purely poor man, who stands there in denial of himself and of all things. He alone understandeth perfectly all sins, whether spiritual or bodily. For this reason is perfection placed in poverty, for in poverty alone is all truth understood, all good, all evil, without any doubt. In thorough poverty no one can be deceived, for deception is in a manner a cleaving



to and taking possession, whether it be of a spiritual or temporal good, or what seemeth a good. And it is in this point that we are liable to be deceived; but in true detachment and in genuine self-denial, and in essential truth, no one can be really deceived. When then a poor man hath given himself up to God, and has thoroughly denied himself, and he doth not take truth according to appearance, or show, or splendour, but in its essence, which is undisguisedly God or godlike, without all *this* or *that* (appendages), in this state he cannot be deceived, either in himself or in other men. A teacher saith, "That all men can be deceived, except he alone cannot be deceived in whom the heavenly Father begetteth His eternal Word." And this is only in the man who has given himself up entirely to God, and is thoroughly self-denying, and has gone out entirely from himself, and who has taken the being of things according to their essence and not according to appearance. And no deception can be hid in this, all is manifest, so that the man knows what is evil; and in this state he leaveth the evil and chooseth the good.

52

63.

This also is of grace, that man recognises what injury lies in sin. Such injury lies in it that no one can speak of it; for it robs man of all good, not only of natural good, but also of spiritual good. For sin degrades nature from its nobility and debases it to the ignoble, which all creatures hate; nay, even the devil hates it, and yet he can never be clear of it, and that is his hell. People say it is human to sin but it is not human, but devilish; for sin maketh of man a devil. For those who live conscious of it, in mortal sin, these are not men but devils, and are even more wicked than devils. For if the devil could come back he would not remain in sins; but these men, though they came back, they would do the same evil, therefore are they worse than devils. An inclination to sin is indeed human,⁴² for man has this from Adam's fall. But his actual sinning he does from an evil will, and is not from nature, for it is rather against nature. For nature is destroyed thereby, and degraded from its nobility. Whosoever wishes to come to a proper nature, must do it through virtues, and not through vices. For nature desires good and not evil, and whenever evil happens, it is a suffering to nature. In fact, nature is created for good and not for evil, and therefore it hateth all evil. As now sin is evil, sin is hated by nature. That men should love sin is not of nature, but it is of

53

42 C. Schmidt (Tauler, p. 103) finds in the doctrine developed here, a departure from the strict Augustinian view, according to which he affirms that sins are the unavoidable consequence of an eternal predestination:—"Works that come to pass slavishly in the service of Satan" (p. 106), as if St. Augustine and Calvin were identical. Schmidt continues "that Tauler in this book says that we sin, not from necessity, but always only from free will; that the sin of man is against nature," &c. (104). Compare also Bohringer, *Deutsche Mystiker*, p. 81. An opposite view is taken by J. Ernst, *Die werke und Tugenden der ungläubigen nach St. Augustin*, Freiburg 1871.

devilish wickedness, and it is worse than the devil. For the devil hateth sin naturally, and yet the fact of his loving it unnaturally, this maketh him a devil. Sin does alike; it maketh all who love it into devils.

64.

Several persons blame nature sorely, and these do not know what nature is; for nature is noble, and does what is right. Men should blame evil and not nature; for God loveth human nature so dearly, that He hath created all things for its service, and hath suffered even death in human nature, as in His death human nature is raised above the angels. Mention is made of natural men as if they were hurtful men, but I say that a thoroughly natural man is a pure man; for everything is to be taken according to its best. Now nature is good; but what is good is also pure, and is without any sinful accident. Thus, then, when a man stands in his genuine natural nobility, he is without any sinful accident, and that which is without any sinful accident is pure. Hence finally a thoroughly natural man is a pure man. That which maketh nature impure is a faulty accident of nature, and is not the essence of nature. Now just as accidental virtue regulates nature and leads to its true source and to its genuine essence, so in like manner vice destroyeth nature, and displaces it from its source, so that it never cometh to its true essence. And it is much more according to nature to work virtue than vice; for virtue places nature firmly and supports it, while vice displaces it.



65.

And this is found in the heathen, who, prompted by genuine nature, left vice and worked virtue. For they knew from nature that vice keeps man from happiness; as Seneca said: "Even if it were true that the gods did not know my sins, and did not avenge them on me, I would still leave sin and the soiling of sin."⁴³ But where natural men are to be blamed, is where they keep to themselves selfishly, and possess themselves in their own property and ease. And these are very hurtful men, for they change their human nature into a devilish nature. Lucifer, when he stood in his natural nobility when God had created him, was a pure, noble creature. But when he kept to self, and possessed himself as a property with his natural nobility, he fell, and became instead of an angel a devil. So also is it with man. If he cometh to the summit of his nature and stands empty of all accidents, his nature is very noble. But if he remaineth in himself and possesseth himself of his natural nobility as a property, he falleth, and becomes instead of a man a devil. And therefore is sin wicked, as it maketh out of an angel a devil, and maketh a man devilish.



43 Si scirem deos ignoscituros et homines ignoscituros, adhuc peccare dedignarer.

66.

If those who lived in sin only knew in what good they are wanting, yea, even natural good, they would suffer the greatest pain to be inflicted on them before they would commit a mortal sin. For sin is so bad that it robbeth man of all good. They who live in riches and in sin fancy it is right well with them, but they know not what woe it is to them. The devil prompts to the sins, and especially those of unchastity; but when you are unchaste, he flieth and will not have seen it, through the thorough wickedness and soiling there is in it. For though he is the root of all wickedness, yet for its very uncleanness he hateth this sin naturally. Therefore it is a great gain to know the injury of sin. Now no one can properly know this injury, save those who have been in sins, and have left sins and have come to grace; for it would be a torment of hell for them to fall in sins again. For they have more delight and joy in one day than all sinners have ever gained. Their labour is pleasanter than the rest of a sinner, who can really have none; they labour always and rest never, and yet their labour is unfruitful. But good men rest alway; not that they sit idly, but their labour is rest. For “they have in all things rest,” as Solomon saith.⁴⁴ But the sinner hath disquiet, unrest, in all things. Let him eat, or drink, or sleep, or wake, all is painful; let him do what he will, his heart will never be joyful. He showeth indeed a certain joy outwardly, so that people might fancy he were cheerful. But no joy is there; for the ground of joy, out of which joy springeth, is broken up, and he can have no joy. He indulges himself sometime, but that doeth also a dog.



67.

This is also of grace, that a man know each sin, according to its degree. One is called a fault, and another a debt, and another a sin, and one kind is called a venial sin and another a mortal sin, and one a capital sin, and another a sin against God the Father, and God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.



68.

In the first place, it is a fault for a man to know the good and for him to adhere negligently to what is less good; as when a man has a useless thought, or speaketh a useless word, or doeth a useless work, though he knows well there is a better one, and he doth not attend to it; now this is a fault.

44 In the margin Solomon. Compare [Eccl. xxiv. 11](#).

69.

Again, it is a debt, a measure of guilt, if you dwell with pleasure on a thing that is bad; as when an evil thought occurs to a man and he lingers on it rather too long and with pleasure. This pleasure is guilty, and he must suffer pain for it. Further, if he speaketh voluptuously improper words, and doeth works of this kind, this is guilt.

70.

In the third place, it is a sin if we do consciously a thing that is bad; as uttering a lie, which yet doth not injure any one; this is venial sin; or uttering abandoned words and indulging in abandoned gestures, so that people are rendered angry by it.

71.

Fourthly, it is a mortal sin, if man with evil and obstinate will doeth that which is forbidden; as he, for example, who breaketh the ten commandments, in which the seven deadly sins are forbidden. Thus, in the first commandment, “Thou shalt believe in the Lord thy God,” which condemns unbelief, for unbelief is a mortal sin. Then, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and thy neighbour;” in this envy and hatred are condemned. “Thou shalt observe high days and holidays;” in this indolence is condemned. “Thou shalt not covet any man’s wife,” in which unchastity is condemned. “Thou shalt not covet any man’s property,” in which greed and avarice are condemned. “Thou shalt not worship idols,” where gluttony is chastised. “Thou shalt not kill any man,” where anger is proscribed.⁴⁵ Furthermore, to break maliciously the commands which Holy Christianity hath set up, is also a mortal sin.

72.

Fifthly, it is a capital sin if you do what is unnatural and inhuman—as to kill, rob, and burn father and mother, and other sins that are against nature.

73.

Sixthly, you sin in God; and first, in God the Father. This occurs if a man is tempted, and in the resistance he is so rigid that he sinneth through sickness. This sin is in the Father. Again, a man sinneth in the Son, when a man sinneth unwittingly. Thirdly, you sin in the Holy Ghost, in five ways. First, if a man sinneth against God’s mercy; again, if a man having

⁴⁵ Deut. v. 6, 21.

sinned, despairs in God's compassion; thirdly, if a man entirely resists the counsel of the Holy Ghost, and destroyeth it in himself; fourthly, if a man attributes to himself the good that he hath from God, whether spiritual or bodily, and thinketh he hath it from his own worthiness, and doth not thank God for His goodness as he ought; fifthly, when the Holy Ghost wishes to do His work and man turneth away from Him, and will not make place for Him, and cumpers his heart about other things that are against God, and driveth out the Holy Ghost. And this is meant by sinning in the Holy Ghost, and is scarcely forgiven.

74.

It is therefore a great grace that man may know each sin, in its degree; for when he knows it, he can more easily guard against it and keep himself pure. Since, then, a poor man is full of grace, he has the light of grace, which shows him all faults, so that he can well guard himself against all defects, and thus he remains pure; and therefore is poverty a pure working, for no impurity can hide itself in it.

75.

It is also of grace that a man knoweth the distinction of spirits. There are four kinds of spirits that speak in man, and he must have very much light who wisheth to know them.

76.

First, the evil spirit speaketh in man, and his speaking is in one direction to sin, and in another direction to virtue; the third way is to perfection.

77.

First, he adviseth sins. That is, if a man finds himself inclined to bodily pleasure, he presenteth to his mind the sin with great sweetness and voluptuousness, so that the man thinketh that great delight and joy lie in the sin. And the body is inclined to luxury, and if the spirit inclineth to the body and the body to luxury, the man cometh to his fall and falleth into mortal sin; but if the spirit turneth from the body and the body remaineth in its inclination, and yet the spirit will not concede it to do any deadly sin, then the evil spirit counselleth the man to great venial sins, and thus he falleth into daily venial sins. But if it come to pass that the spirit of a man turneth from the body and the body wisheth to follow the spirit and do no sin, either mortal or venial, then the evil spirit attacketh the man in his belief; and thus it must happen that a man should have fighting and spiritual combat.



78.

If, in this condition, a man resist sturdily and invoketh God that He may help him to overcome the evil spirit, if he should then overcome the evil, this spirit of iniquity maketh himself like unto a good angel and counselleth to the man virtue. But this virtue is above the power of nature, and the evil one overdoeth this in order to destroy nature, and that man should come into a state of sickness, so as to lose his senses. For the virtue which the evil one counselleth is irregular and without measure; and the end of the virtue is evil, for it teacheth not the mean and stretcheth over it to grasp the end.⁴⁶ For example, fasting and watching without measure, and other such severe exercises, which result in a man getting ill, all this is neither useful to God nor to himself, nor any one, and has for its result that he must intermit in the performance of many good works. And this is what the evil one proposeth by his counsel, that a man should utterly perish.

79.

But in case a man entereth into himself and vieweth each virtue in its proper measure and worketh virtue according to it, he beginneth to go into perfection. And when man thus goeth from virtues to virtues he is purified from all faults; for the virtues purify a man. And in purity springeth up a light, and the light enlightened man in. distinguishing manifold truths; and in this distinction the evil one plunges to deceive him. For when man understandeth much truth, he cometh at last to a truth that he cannot well understand, and he would gladly understand it, and yet he is not able to understand it. Then cometh the evil spirit and presenteth a false image to him, and this image is against faith. Now if it happen that the man takes this image for a truth, as often occurreth, he is deceived by the evil spirit, and he maketh in that case a spiritual fall, which is very hurtful, for he knoweth it not; and if man is to be warned against this, it must come to pass through God without any other mediation.

80.

If now man hath been warned by God, so that it is given to him to know that the image is false, he then turneth away and perceiveth what is best and cleaveth to it. And thus when

⁴⁶ "Irregular and without measure." Here, according to Denifle, we have only the Aristotelian-Thomistic conception of virtue: Nic. Eth. 1106. b. 36: "Ἔστιν ἄρα ἡ ἀρετὴ ἕξις προαιρετικὴ ἐν μεσότητι οὐσα τῇ πρὸς ἡμᾶς ὠρισηνὴ λόγῳ καὶ ὡς ἂν ὁ φρόνιμος ὀρίσειεν μεσότης δὲ δύο κακιῶν τῆς μὲν καθ' ὑπερβολὴν τῆς δὲ κατ' ἔλλειψιν. St. Thom. I. 2. qu. 64. a. I. 2.

the man stands in perfection, so that he taketh all to be good that God willeth to have from him, then the evil one cometh again and works up pride in him, and makes the man think that all other men err and go astray, and that he alone liveth to the truth and understands it. If now man should resist this and overcome the evil one, and perceive what he is in himself, and that he is capable of nothing good without God, then he giveth to God the honour, and maketh himself poor, or empty of all truth.



81.

And with poverty he cometh to the ground and foundation of humility, and then the evil spirit can do him no harm, for he cannot come to him on the ground of humility, and therefore he cannot injure him. For true humility is a firm fastness which no one can capture; men attack it indeed and seek to storm it, but it is not to be taken. So also is it with true humility; in it man cannot be overcome. The evil spirit attacks him indeed in many ways, but he cannot injure the man of true humility. But if man stands on any other ground than true humility and detachment and poverty then the evil spirit can injure him, and can cast down his house, for the foundations are not laid deep enough. But true humility hath deep foundations, on which stands firm all that is built upon them; and without humility every building must fall. Then whoso wisheth to conquer the evil spirit let him place himself on the ground of humility, where no one can do him any harm. But now true poverty is true humility, and therefore you can do no harm to a poor man. He may be helped indeed, but he cannot be injured. For all things further him to God, yea, the evil spirit himself is even of use and no injury to him, as St. Paul saith, that he wrestled with him and tempted him grievously,⁴⁷ and the temptation placed him in true humility, as he himself said, “Strength is made perfect in weakness.”⁴⁸



82.

The other spirit that speaketh in man is natural, and its speech is in images and forms, and thereby he seeketh the distinction of created things. And if man's spirit understands all created things, and he is empty of all accidental faults, he is in the highest nobility of mere nature. But if he keeps to himself, and considereth his nobility with satisfaction in himself, he cannot remain in the highest nobility of his nature, and falls into an ignoble state, and clothes himself with mortality and with manifold defects, for no nature can subsist long without accidents, whether these be from sin or grace. But if it come to pass that when the natural spirit hath attained the highest summit of its nature, it should then turn of itself to

⁴⁷ 2 Cor. xii. 7; Eph. vi. 12.

⁴⁸ 2 Cor. xii. 9. Virtus in infirmitate perficitur.

God, and contemplate the nobleness of God, then the natural nobility of this man is clothed upon with the divine nobility, and his nature is united to the divine nature, his nature becometh immortal and light and life and truth flow into him, and these God begetteth in him alway.



83.

When the spirit of Adam stood on the highest summit of his nature he understood all created things, and that was his delight. And so is it still: when the spirit of man is stripped of faulty accidents, he understandeth much natural truth, and the truth begetteth much delight in him. And delight is of nature, whereas man fancies often it is of grace. Thus nature is often taken for grace. Now just as to the spirit, which is raised above itself and above all things in God, divine light and life and truth flow into it, so also flow into the natural spirit, that standeth on its mere nature, natural and supernatural truth.

84.

It may be asked, What distinction is there between natural truth and divine truth? Natural truth consists in this, that a man knoweth the distinction of manifold things in such wise that the understanding creates images of each and every thing, which images approach most nearly to the truth, and that it understands each thing from its image or representation. Now, if the images are evil they are from the evil spirit; if they are neither good nor evil they are from nature; if they are good, then are they from the angels. Again, these images are evil if they be turned to sins or to the source of sin. They are neither good nor bad, if they do not procure man eternal happiness, and if they are turned to the mere work of knowing everything generally; by this knowledge a man is not blessed or saved, but by knowing God, which is eternal life. Hence this knowledge is not to be called good, as it doth not obtain eternal life for man; nor is it evil, as sin is not committed with it. But these images of the understanding are good when they direct man to virtue, for by them life everlasting is obtained. Thus we see, that natural knowledge consisteth in the distinction of manifold things, that are neither good nor evil. But divine truth is a pure distinction of things everlasting, which man recognises in himself without all images, that is, by an internal consciousness and feeling showing him what God and creatures are, time and eternity, sin and virtue, manifold and simple, useful and hurtful, evil and good. It may be asked, "Can this be known without images?" I answer, Yes, in the truth; those men who are internally touched by God, these know all without natural images, for the truth reveals itself to them, without all images, in a pure consciousness. For the man who hath left creatures and turned himself to God, he findeth in himself, without all intervening images, the sweetness of God and the bitterness



of creatures. It is not necessary to say anything to him in images or in manifold forms, for the divine image and the divine, simple form inform him, and open up to him all things. And this knowledge is in unity and not in the manifold, therefore it is called divine, for it is like unto God. And as God understandeth all things in Himself without all created images, in a simple survey or insight in Himself, so also a divine man understandeth all things in God by a pure indwelling in God. For whoso understandeth God understandeth all things. And to understand is nothing else than that man understands the work of God and its fruit. And by this work and fruit which man finds in Him he values and examines all other works and fruits that are not from God. For God's work is delightful, and its fruit is sweet, but the work of creatures is without delight, unpleasant, and its fruit is bitter. Just as with a man who eateth a sweet and a sour apple; after doing so he knoweth the sweet from the sour. So also is it when man tasteth God, after which he recognises that all other things are bitter, and he values them accordingly. As Christ saith, "By their fruit ye shall know them" ([Matt. vii. 44](#)). And this is the distinction between natural and divine truth.



85.

And as the natural spirit taketh its object in images and forms that are created, when a poor man is empty of all fallible accident he has no impediment in his natural perception. For all that hindereth a man in understanding, whether natural or divine, is a fallible accident, and when a man is empty of this he hath a pure understanding of all truths, whether natural or divine, and from this position he can take out the best in each.



86.

An objection might be made that there are many pure poor men who yet do not understand or find such truth. I say that where there is a pure poor man all truth is opened up in the interior of his soul. And if he doth not understand the truth in images and forms yet he understandeth it in its essence. And if he doth not find the truth in the powers or forces (of nature) he yet findeth it in essence.

87.

The third spirit that speaketh to a man is the angel, and his speaking is for virtue, which leadeth the man to God. The highest angel draws his image from God; this image is multiplied in him, and he giveth it over to a second angel; this one again giveth it to the lowest angel, and this lowest angel at length giveth it to the soul, which obtains thereby the power of distinguishing how she has to seize and hold the truth, and how she shall practise each virtue

in proper order and measure, and according to necessity. And this clear distinction which man obtains is given him by the angel, who also lets him see crime, that he may guard against it. When man knoweth crime he also knoweth virtue, just as through the colour black you can recognise white. And if man denies crime he draweth nigh unto virtue, but if he departs from virtue crime returneth to him; and the man who turneth away from virtue must of necessity arrive at all crimes.



88.

Some one might now say, If a man feeleth remorse at his sins God forgiveth him, so that he hath no more sins upon him, and yet he doth not possess all virtues. To this I answer, that a true repentance includes in itself the forgiveness of sins and the gaining of all virtues. And if virtue be lacking to the man in fact, yet must he have it at least in the will, and if sin is not to find any place in him he must carry out his will in works, as far as this is possible. And through the firm will that man hath, no more to sin and to obtain all virtue, God forgiveth him his sins. But he must overcome every crime by a special virtue, for the root of sins must be extirpated by virtues. But if the man be empty of virtues and of good works, then within him there still abide the roots and the impulse to sin, and if he be attacked he falleth easily. Just as the tree that hath not deep roots falleth easily if the wind sweeps violently against it; so man, if he wish to stand firm and not to fall, must let the virtues strike deep roots in his heart. He must therefore have all virtues if he will not fall. Virtue guardeth a man from sin; if he is empty of virtues he hath also no support, and crime taketh up a place in him.



89.

It may be objected; if a man hath a right repentance of his sins God forgiveth them him, so that he immediately hath no more sins upon him? To this I say, this is done by a true repentance; but there are many men who guard themselves against sin, but yet have not all virtue. I say also that a true, downright avoiding of all sins is a true possession of all virtue. If also some men guard themselves against sin, yet by no means possess virtue, they only guard against it outwardly in their works, and they often do this on account of disgrace, as they are afraid of dishonour before the world; but they do it not for the sake of God, and do not inwardly avoid sin. If also they avoid mortal sins in their works and will, they do so from fear of hell; but they do not avoid venial sins, for they commit these very often; thus sin is not avoided in the right way. If these men, while guarding against sins, be they mortal or

venial, do not at the same time possess all virtue, being aware of this, it must needs be that, though unconsciously, they commit many sins. Anil in this case this unconsciousness itself is a sin. And in sooth a man who wisheth to guard himself against sins must have all virtue; therefore the angel counselleth also to man virtue, that he may be free from vice. The more a man recognises virtue in himself the freer he seeth himself from vice, and he who cannot find any virtue in himself, let him know that he is full of vices.



90.

But it might be urged: a child is pure and without any sins, and yet he doth not possess all virtue. I reply against this, that a child possesseth purity in the lowest degree, which is a mere necessity or necessary first condition for heaven. Therefore the child hath virtue also only in the lowest degree. As it possesseth purity only in an unmerited way, so also hath it virtue without merit, and all its virtues are imperfect, for both qualities may come to naught. It is therefore certain, that true purity is a vessel full of all virtues, and just as much as a man faileth in virtue, he faileth also in purity; therefore the absence of all sins is the possession of all virtues.

91.

Thus the angel persuadeth the soul to virtue, and determines her to fly from vice. His speech is also in images and forms, but his images are useful and good; they lead man along the path of truth, and without these images no one can practise genuine virtue. If a man needeth these images he should not avoid them, for if he were to reject them he would lack the order of virtuous exercises, and he could scarcely carry into effect a good work in proper order and with discretion. These images come from grace, and do not hinder a man from what is best but further him to it. Just as a man, who seeth clearly, leadeth a blind man, so that he fall not into a ditch, in like manner images lead man, so that he lapse in no sin; and he who hath most ideas or images in himself, can best keep himself in proper order, both outwardly and inwardly. Some avoid images but know not what they avoid, and God often imparteth to them the grace to deny them to themselves. But these that help a man to divine truth, we ought gladly to receive.



92.

There is a great difference between natural, angelic, and devilish images. The natural images direct man to the preservation of nature, they refer all things to man's nature, and all men have these images. Every man is by nature more directed to himself than to others; and what man loves in nature, he loves on account of himself, from the pleasure it giveth

his nature, and were it not agreeable to it, he would never love it. The angelic images lead man from himself and all things to God, refer all to God, and few have such images, save a perfect, poor man. For the most of men are more considerate of themselves than of others, whether in spiritual or bodily things; for every man seeketh his own.



93.

People inquire further, if perhaps a poor man have too many natural images in himself. I maintain that a truly poor man is free from all natural images, for he is stationed in a perfect denial of himself and of all things, and therefore the images that are in a poor man proceed from the angel and not from nature, for he refers nothing to himself but all things to God. A poor man hath indeed also more knowledge than another; but he directeth his knowledge to virtue, and thus it is not hurtful but useful. They who have principally natural images in themselves are also mostly thoughtful of themselves and cleave too much to temporal things, for temporal things are to them a maintenance of their nature; now those who are most thoughtful about maintaining temporal things and their nature, are the most natural or immersed in nature, and have mostly natural images in themselves. They are too natural, because they cleave too much to bodily things, and wish thereby to attain to the best. They wish to have temporal and eternal things at the same time, which however is impossible, for two things, that are unequal, cannot subsist in the same being. They wish indeed to be poor in spirit, but yet to be rich in the body; they wish to eat the pure grain, before they have removed the husk; they wish to have God and the creature at the same time. And such men are natural and have the greatest number of natural images in themselves. Now these are not natural, spiritual images, but bodily, but for that reason they are more defective than if they were spiritual. But a truly poor man surrenders temporal and eternal things, outwardly and inwardly; therefore his images are not natural but angelic; and as the man with his image is only directed to the holiest will of God, his image is also like unto that of the angel, that is, it is angelic and not natural.



94.

But how doth it come to pass that natural images are often like unto angelic images; for a man thus frequently taketh a natural to be an angelic image? The likeness is in the forms; they have both a like form in a spiritual way; they are, however, very unlike in their aim. Natural images are directed to nature, and such images hath nature since the fall of Adam; but the image of the angel is directed away from nature to God, and we have this image

from Christ. Before Christ every one was thoughtful about his own selfhood (Ego), and every one wished only to possess, no one wished to be poor, all strained after riches. But when Christ came, He brought the angelic image with Himself, which we had lost since the fall of Adam. This is the true poverty, both outwardly and inwardly, in which the angelic image lieth, which Christ hath brought with Him. No one, therefore, is free from this natural image which we have from Adam, except a truly poor man, who is free both outwardly and inwardly from all temporal things, and who followeth the image of Christ by a genuine poor life. He hath the image of the angel, for he standeth in true denial of himself and of all things, therefore is he like unto the angels and not to Adam. Whosoever abideth with external accidents, he is like unto Adam, but whoso entereth with self-complacency only into himself, he is like unto Lucifer. For Lucifer sinned spiritually but Adam only bodily, therefore also his fall was greater than that of Adam. In like manner the fall of him, who refers all only to himself (his Ego), is greater than his, who cleaveth outwardly to accidents. But the men who are empty, outwardly and inwardly, are like unto Christ according to the angelic image, which Christ hath brought to us from heaven. When nature is blamed, this is because of its likeness with Adam and Lucifer, but when it is praised, this is because of its likeness with the angelic. Therefore nature itself is quite noble, and such a nature is quite adapted to a truly poor man. Thus is the distinction between natural and angelic images to be understood. Natural images are directed to the delight of nature, but the angelic lead from the delight of nature to God and virtue.

75

76

95.

But the devilish images have a likeness with the natural and the angelic. If man directs the images to his own nature, and seeketh delight thereby, then cometh the devil, and presenteth a sensual object to man, that promiseth great delight. If now the man should follow this, and seek delight, the natural is then turned into a devilish image. But if man turneth away from them, and remaineth in an abandonment of all delight of nature, then this his image becometh angelic. But the evil spirit forms himself like unto this image and counselleth to man abandonment of all natural lust; but his counsel surpasseth the forces of nature, and he doeth it to this end, that these may come to nought and destroy themselves. It is in this wise that an image of the devil hath a likeness with the natural and angelic images.

96.

But when a poor man hath denied all bodily lust and delight, and holdeth all things in proper order, neither natural nor devilish images have place with him. They may doubtless occur to him, but he doth not tarry with them, but holdeth on only to those of the angel, which lead him through the virtues to God.

77

97.

Some one might here say, “A man truly poor in spirit is raised above all creatures in God, whether they be angels, or whatever creatures they may be. If now a man be raised above them, he is then also raised above their images; how can he then abide by the images of the angel or of another creature?” To this I make answer, that the elevation of a poor man is to be taken according to the highest forces of the soul, according to the likeness of God, which is stamped upon the soul. Thereby is the poor man raised above all creatures and their images, whatever the creatures may be. But according to his lowest powers, man must have images, to the end that he may order things according to measure. These images must be angelic, in order that he be able to accomplish all things orderly. When it is said that man must be emptied of all images, this is to be understood according to the highest power of his spirit; but this cannot be in the lowest powers of the soul; these must have either good or bad images. And if a man wisheth to practise his work in images, after the likeness of the angelic, that is, in entire abandonment, the work is then perfect and ordered as the best. But if man accomplishes the work so that he is truly emptied of all personality in all works, he must also be free from this image, whether it be angelic or natural, and must leave God alone to work without any images. God worketh not in images, but in essence, therefore He also must be free from nil images.



98.

Lastly, the fourth spirit that speaketh in man is .the Divine Spirit, and its speech is nothing else than a real revelation of divine truth. By it man is raised out of sensuality above all images and forces, and attaineth unto the divine essence. Now, the spirit knoweth its nobility, and its nobility is now compassed around with the godlike. By this entrance the spirit is united with the Divine Spirit, as St. Paul saith, “Whoso cleaveth to God becometh one spirit with Him” (1 Cor. vi. 17). But this cleaving is nothing else than that the spirit goeth out of itself, out of time, and entereth into a pure nothingness. And that which is and forms his being is the divine, likeness, which abideth in man and can never be destroyed. This likeness God taketh and uniteth it with Himself, and thus the spirit of man becometh one spirit with God according to the divine likeness. Man’s spirit is also one spirit with God, when he worketh and bringeth forth all in essence that God worketh. But what doth God work and beget? God hath begotten all things out of love, and because God begat them were they also good. Thus also the spirit ought to work all things from pure love, and what it thus produceth is also good and is the work of God. In the divine love all things are good, as St. Augustine saith, “Have divine charity, and do all things.”⁴⁹



49 The noted “Ama et fac quod vis.”

99.

The Spirit of God speaketh in man that man may speak again all things through the Divine Spirit in God. But the spirit speaketh again all in God, when it purposes in all its works the honour of God, and when, whatever happens or clashes with him, he remains always pure, and never holdeth on to any accident, if thus he always finds himself in a pure state to receive God, and listeneth to Him whenever God willeth to speak to him. In thus hearing he giveth back all to God again, and this hearing is so joyful and delightful for him, that he setteth aside all things, and listeneth only to His words. This hearing is also called giving back all things to God, and thus the spirit speaketh back again all things in God. Thus man becometh one thing with God when he giveth back all things to God as God had given them to him, and by this return he maketh himself the friend of God. But where there is friendship there is union; for “a friend is another myself,” as Aristotle saith,⁵⁰ and the spirit is united with God when it hath obtained God as its friend. Jesus said also to His disciples: “Now call I you no longer servants, but friends” ([John xv. 15](#)). He used this term “Now” when they had left all things to follow Him; now were they no longer servants, but friends. Therefore whosoever wisheth to be a true friend of God must leave all things and follow God; but he who is attached to things and doth not follow God, he is not a friend, but a servant. And he who is not a friend is also not one spirit with God, for friendship worketh union, and not servitude.



100.

What doth a friend furnish? Three things. First, likeness, for “like cherisheth like.” God is empty of all temporal things; now, he who wisheth to be like unto Him must dispense with all that is temporal, and thus can he become like unto Him. Where likeness prevails there is also friendship; where friendship prevails there also doth union. God is the giver of all gifts, therefore man must give back all gifts to God. God loveth all virtue, therefore man must love and practise all virtue.



101.

Secondly, the same willing and not willing maketh a friend. As Aristotle saith, “True friends have the same willing and not willing.”⁵¹ Therefore whoso wisheth to be the friend of God must will what He willeth, and hate what God hateth. But what doth God will? God

50 In the margin stands Aristoteles. Comp. Nic. Eth. 1166. a. 31. “Ἔστι γὰρ ὁ φίλος ἄλλος αὐτός.

51 In the margin of the MS. stands Aristotle. Allusion is made in this passage to the ὁμόνοια in Nic. Eth. 1167. 6, which receives a much fuller treatment by Eudaemus in his Ethics, 1241. 7.

willeth that man should be holy. As St. Paul saith, “God’s will is our sanctification” (1 Thess. iv. 3). Man must also will this. What, then, is holiness? To be holy is to be free of the earthly; therefore he who wisheth to be holy must be emptied of all earthly things. This is the will of God, and man must also will this, if he will be a true friend (of God).

102.

Some men indeed often say, If I only knew what is the dearest will of God I would gladly do it. But they speak very much untruth, for they know it full well, but do it not. Christ hath often announced to us the will of God, and whoso followeth His teaching fulfilleth the dearest will of God. He hath also taught us that we should leave all things and follow Him. In so far as we do this we follow His will, and as oft as we omit it we say an untruth when we give out that we live according to His will.⁵² Whoso wisheth to fulfil the will of God, he must live according to His teaching. But His teaching is no other than that we should give all to the poor if we anyhow wish to come to a perfect life, as in this consists the will of God.

103.

But some one might now say, But do I know that God willeth exactly that of me? Yes, God willeth it, but do thou see and observe if thou art willing to have it! God will give thee all gifts, but what wilt thou to accept from Him? If any of His gifts is despised, the fault lieth only in thee. But thou wilt perhaps say, God hath certainly ordained all things; therefore perhaps He hath put me in a condition that I should contract marriage, and have children, for whom I must procure temporal goods, that they may not suffer necessity. God hath ordained all things for the best, and if it be otherwise, it is no longer the order of God; man often ordereth it for himself, and then considers it still to be God’s decree. Perhaps you continue: Well, but granted that I hold it to be God’s will and order that I should come to perfection, perhaps I am not meet for it, to find myself well in it, as a purely poor life, and this perfection, are not intended for me, and I am not equal to act in what doth not belong to me, as a sick man is not fitted to cope in fight with a strong man. But I say the best belongeth to every man, and God will give it us if thou wilt take it, and if we are not worthy, we ought to strive to become worthy. Thus if we stand in the high place of life, we should make ourselves humble, and thus seize on lowliness in highness. But if we do not find it easy to attain to this, we should strive after all the ways that lead to it. If we are too weak and sick, we should call on God to help us, unite our weakness with His strength, and then what we cannot do. He fulfilleth in us. That is therefore the will of God, that we should thus hold

52 This passage signifies, that we will follow His will and live. The negation makes the sense obscure; nor is it found in Sudermann.

His teaching; this also must be thy will, it thou wishest to be a friend of God and one spirit with God. If now a poor man hold the teaching of our Lord, and live after it, he then fulfilleth the dearest will of God; this maketh of him a true friend of God and one spirit with God.

104.

The man who wisheth to be a friend of God, he must also hate what his Friend hateth. But what doth God hate in us? Sin, and this must we hate if we wish to be the friends of God. But it might be now insinuated: God is Love; this is not accidental but essential, therefore no accident can enter into God. But to hate is an accident; how then can a man say that God hateth sin? This is to be understood in the following way. God is a pure being, unified in Himself with essential love, and no accident is possible with Him. God hath also made man alter His image, as St. Austin saith, "Lord, Thou hast made us after Thy likeness, and my heart is in unrest till it resteth in Thee." If now man is laden with faulty accidents, he cannot come to God. That man in this way turneth away from God is what rouseth His wrath, but not in God as in man, but only anger or displeasure that the image which He hath stamped upon the soul and created after His likeness, is now moved away from Him, and not formed out as He wished. It is the disorder that man stirs up against God's order that causeth His wrath, but not a wrath from accident or hatred, but it is His divine justice which is not shut out by His love. For real hatred is only in man and not in God, and God willeth it not Therefore the man who wisheth to be God's friend must also not will what God willeth not. This is faulty accident from which man ought to be free, if he wisheth to be a friend of God and one spirit with God. If, then, a poor man is free from all faulty accidents, he is this in fact.

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105.

Thirdly, gifts procure a friend, as a teacher saith, "Giving maketh a man well-pleasing to God," and Christ saith, "Give alms, and behold all things are pure to you" ([Luke xi. 41](#)). Purity is likeness to God, and where God findeth His like, there must He also love, therefore giving maketh man a friend of God.

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106.

But what gifts will God have from men that can make him a friend? The noblest gift which man can give is this, that he give himself; and with himself he giveth God all things, for man is himself all things, therefore he need give nothing more than himself, as David also saith ([Ps. xlv. 8](#)), "I blame thee not because of thy offerings, for I eat no flesh; if I am hungry I say it not to thee. Give God the praise and the desire, this offering God willeth to

have from thee.”⁵³ (Ps. 1. 8, 12-14). The same thing is described by God of thee in the words of Solomon, who saith, “My son, give me thy heart” (Prov. xxiii. 26).

107.

If then the greatest offering consisteth in this, that man offer himself, of what use is it, people may say, that man should give other things for the sake of God? The use is threefold.

108.

First, man is created for time and for eternity. But time and eternity cannot be united or made one. Whoso, therefore, wisheth to possess eternity must put aside time and all temporals. Therefore it is needful that the man who holdeth many temporal things, so part with them to others for the sake of God, in order that he may not immerse himself in them, for were this the case, he would go away from the eternal; it is only by going out and away from temporal things there is an entrance into the eternal. You ought to be free also from temporal things, because very many accidents adhere to them. Therefore he who wisheth to be free from all faulty adherence must be freed from the love of temporal things. The man who is too much laden with the temporal can never arrive at true peace of heart. Time itself is fluctuating, therefore he cannot obtain peace who has an influence from time and temporal things. Further, man must be free from temporals, as the temporal hindereth man in the knowledge of the truth, and the fire of divine love is extinguished, as St. Austin saith, “These things we ought to value freely as a poison, which killeth not only the reason of man, but his soul, if he practises them and gives himself up to them.” Another teacher saith, “Just as impossible as to kindle fire in water is it for the heart of man to be enkindled with divine love in bodily delights.”



109.

Secondly, the giving away of temporal things is useful, as Christ Himself hath taught it with the words, “Give alms, and behold all things are pure to you” (Luke xi. 41). A man may have made himself impure in manifold ways by the use of temporal things. If, now, he wish to purify himself from them, this must take place by his denying himself temporal things. Through the lack of temporal things the wounds are healed which man hath inflicted on himself by the possession of them; as a teacher saith, “I know nothing more useful to heal the wounds of the sinner than that the man should give alms out of love.” It is also a com-



53 Psalm xlix. 8 in the Vulgate. In the older English version of James I., 1. 8: I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices; 13. Will I eat flesh of bulls? 14. Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High.

mandment that a man should help another in his necessity, wherefore Jesus also said, “All that ye wish that others should do to you, that do ye to another, that the old and new covenant may be fulfilled” ([Matt. vii. 12](#)).

110.

From temporal things we should also depart, if divine love demands it; as St. John saith, “Whoso hath temporal things and seeth his brother suffering necessity, and closeth his heart against him, how can divine love be in such a one?” ([1 John iii. 17](#)). Where divine love is, it expresseth itself outwardly; as St. Gregory saith, “Where great love is, it worketh great works, and if it doth not work these, it is no divine love at all.”⁵⁴ A heart full of love and a bag full of gold cannot subsist with one another; for love is a fire by which all that is temporal is consumed; but where true love ruleth, there can only be a free heart, or it maketh it free. Whoso is burthened with temporal things, he showeth that the fire of divine love doth not burn properly in his heart. It is the nature of fire that it destroyeth all that it seizeth with its flame. Even so the divine fire destroyeth all things. This fire burnt in St. Paul when he said, “I have reckoned all things as dung.”¹



111.

The question might now be put, If it were not possible that the fire of divine love should burn in man and destroy all temporals only inwardly, while the outward man might preserve what is necessary? I answer, If a man keep himself pure, always watcheth his interior, exercise himself with holy contemplations, especially with the contemplation of the Passion of our Lord—for this maketh a man pure—then in his purity cometh up a light which burneth, and this internal burning showeth itself outwardly. If it be great, it consumeth in man all things, outwardly and inwardly; but if it be weak, man doth indeed despise internally these things⁵⁵, but outwardly he retaineth his necessary possessions. But it is of necessity, in order to reach heaven, that a man be empty of all things internally. Now, these people who do this are indeed good men, but not perfect like those in whom the fire of divine love hath consumed all things inwardly and outwardly; these alone stand on the degree of all perfection, of whom the Gospel also speaketh “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom

54 Nunquam est Dei amor otiosus, operatur etenim magna si est, si vero operari renuit, amor non est. Hom. 20 in Evang. No. 2.

55 [Phil. iii. 8](#). Omnia . . . arbitror ut stercora.

of heaven” (Matt. v. 3). Some one might here object at my speaking of the fire of love, and giving it strength and weakness, and say it is neither great nor small, for it cannot be divided; and what hath no parts hath also not these qualities, but is a simple being in. itself. The divine fire of love is neither great nor little, hot nor cold, in itself, but it is so in its working, for it worketh in every man according to his power of receiving, according to his earnestness and desire for God. If this earnestness and desire be great, this flame ia also greater; but if his earnestness and desire are small, then the flame also is small. If, now, a man hath a will free from all temporal things, the divine fire cometh and consumeth in him all things, outwardly and inwardly. Speaking of this, St. Paul said, “God is a Fire that consumeth all things” (Heb. xii. 29);⁵⁶ this fire springeth up in him who willet to and resign and deny all things. So with him who will not do this, in him nothing is consumed. In fact, if a soul be empty and poor through love, its body must also outwardly be empty and poor, as far as he can strip away from it all save the barest necessity. And even this he must only retain in the mode most despised by the world, namely, in a truly poor life, according to the teaching of Jesus Christ. For the soul commandeth the body, and not the body the soul. To whom orders are given, it behoveth him to be obedient and do the will of his bidder. As a lord commandeth his servants, and his servants do what he commandeth, and if they do not this he dismisseth them, so also is the body the servant of the soul, and what the soul commandeth, that the body ought to do. It now the soul be completely sundered from all temporal things, this same condition she giveth to the body. When a lord getteth into a dispute, his servant must stand by him and help him in the strife. Thus also is it with the soul; while she is in the body she must contend and fight against her foes, and the body must help her, for without the body she could not conquer; and hence she giveth to the body the same weapons that she hath. If she be detached from temporal things, the same thing happens with the body. For if the body wisheth to have reward, it must also work with her, to help her to overcome all things that are not God. Soul and body are only one person, and what the soul receiveth from God she giveth directly to the body; and the same sweetness that the soul feeleth from God the body feeleth from the soul. If, now, the body wisheth to enjoy this blessedness, it must also work with her. If this be the case, and the spirit is emptied in the most perfect manner, the body must also strip itself as far as it is possible.

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56 Heb. xii. 29. Deus noster ignis consumens est.

112.

But St. Paul saith, “The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh” (Gal. v. 17). People will say, Where there are unlike desires, there are unlike results. How can man come to this, that the flesh be subject to the spirit? Man is created for time and for eternity for time in his body, for eternity according to his spirit. Everything strives towards its origin; as now the body is made of earth and for time, it inclineth to earthly and temporal things, and seeketh its delight in them; but the spirit has sprung from God and is created for eternity, therefore it inclineth to God and eternity. This contradicting inclination of both formeth this opposite lusting or desire. Soul and body are one; those which are united have mutual faithfulness; thus the soul is devoted to the body and the body to the soul. If now the soul, from blindness of its knowledge, chooseth a sham good for a real good, she turneth to sensuality and the senses turn to this good, which can be seized by them, and choose it, and the soul followeth them. But this arises from ignorance. Yet she findeth no rest in it; she desireth something else but cannot grasp it, as the body hindereth and her knowledge is blinded. Thus the soul followeth and taketh the likeness of the body—that is, mortality—for the body is mortal; she therefore becometh also spiritually dead; she ought to live, but she dieth, as already St. John said, “Thou hast the name that thou livest, but art dead” (Rev. iii. 1). But if the soul cometh to the knowledge of the truth, seeth the true distinction of everything, recognises that all bodily things are passing and faulty, but also recognises in the light of faith that she herself is eternal, she is then frightened at all mortality, she turneth from the body to God, from the temporal to the eternal. In this longing for God, the soul draweth the sensual desires up into herself and unites them with herself, so that the senses can desire nothing save what the soul willeth. Now, the body must follow the soul and be subject to it. Whither the soul turneth itself, the body followeth her. What God hath lent her that she imparts to the body, and this is a greater comfort to the body than all that is bodily; this comfort maketh it then so strong that it suffereth all things for the sake of God. When the soul has resigned all bodily things, she desires this also of the body, which, no doubt, according to its nature giveth it woe, and this woe is the striving against the spirit; yet now the body followeth the spirit. Just as the soul followeth the body when she inclineth to it, so also the body followeth the spirit when the spirit inclineth to God. And just as it was contrary to the spirit to incline to the body, and yet she did so in her blindness, so it is also burdensome to the body which yieldeth to the spirit, but yet it doeth it. Lastly, when man’s mind is united with his spirit and the spirit with God, no more combat taketh place, but a pure peace, a single will, as two spouses mutually follow one another, and what one wills the other willeth. This is the holiest will of God, and this they wish both to fulfil, and each doeth what it can that the will of God may be fulfilled. This union bringeth to complete resignation, so that each standeth in denial and abandonment, so that the body abandons

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itself to the spirit and the spirit cleaveth to God. If the body do not abandon all temporals as far as is possible, a real union of body and spirit can never take place, nor of the spirit with God; a real peace could never be, but a perpetual contest and fight. Whoso now wisheth to be a friend that he may be one spirit with God, he must leave all things out of love, and unite his love with God alone; in this manner giving maketh friendship and union.

113.

But it may be said: What doth Christ mean when He said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," if you cannot be perfect except you are also poor in body? For He saith Himself, "If thou wilt be perfect, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor!" ([Matt. xix. 21](#)). To this I answer, If two things are united in one you should always look to the best. As now soul and body are one, but the soul is the noblest, happiness should be chosen with the view to the soul, and not on account of the body; for the soul is receptive of happiness and not the body, therefore Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." If He had said, Blessed are the poor in body, a sinner might also be blessed and all rich people would be condemned. Therefore blessedness lies situated in poverty of spirit, for no sinner possesseth poverty of spirit; he may have, indeed, poverty of body, but through this poverty he cannot be saved. The man who holdeth his bodily necessity in a right way, can guard himself so well that he may be saved. But this happiness is not in the most perfect degree, such as the beatitude of those who leave all things, outwardly and inwardly, and only follow God. Therefore Jesus also said, "If thou wilt be perfect, sell all that thou hast and give it to the poor, and come follow me." But what doth Christ mean when He saith, "Give it to the poor?" and what doth Peter mean by "We have left all things?" ([Matt. xix. 27](#)). Could not then a man leave his things unsold and yet be perfect? This must be understood thus. If a man be rich so that he hath much possession, and selleth it, he ought to distribute it to the poor and not to the rich, for the poor have need of it; and it is a great virtue that he should come to the help of his fellow-men, for the poor cannot give him anything in return and repay him, but God must repay the giver in their stead; but what God giveth him is a perfect gift, and also maketh him perfect. Moreover, rich people do not need this gift, therefore it is no virtue if he giveth to them; for they can give him in return and repay him, and this giving doth not make perfect. What he giveth to rich people, God will not give back to him; therefore Jesus said, "Sell all that thou hast, and give it to the poor." And what thou hast not, this thou must abandon even if thou wouldst have gained it. As St. Peter was poor and had nothing, save what he gained by handiwork, he said, "We have left all" ([Matt. xix. 27](#)); and this he was obliged to leave, and could not sell it. Therefore a man who possesseth temporal things ought not to go away and leave them thus; he ought to sell them and give them away and then follow



God, and what he hath not and might perhaps gain he should leave for the sake of God. This consists quite well with perfection.

114.

Secondly, the words, “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” should be also thus understood. Where there is perfect poverty of spirit there is also poverty of body. The highest contains in itself the lower, and what the highest doeth the lower must also do. Now, if the spirit, which is the highest, is poor, then the body, which is the lower, must also be poor. Just as the servant must do what his lord biddeth, so also the body must do what the soul willeth, and not the soul what the body wishes. Therefore it was not necessary for Christ to say, “Blessed are the poor in spirit and in body,” as poverty of spirit includes poverty of body, for where there is true poverty in the mind, there must also be poverty of body. Thus poverty of spirit consisteth with perfection, which belongeth to a poor life. And whoso accepteth poverty of spirit in another sense than that spoken of here, hath it only as far as is necessary for salvation; but for the perfection of which Christ speaketh you must have poverty both of spirit and of body, and otherwise it cannot be.



In the third place. Of the godly work and of three kinds of men.

115.

But here there is a dispute between two classes of these men. One class retain the needs for the body, and give themselves up internally to God. but do not trouble themselves about external works. They watch their heart and attend to what God wisheth to work in the interior, and give also place for this. This occupies them inwardly, so that they do not care much for external reputation. It also cometh to pass that such men attain to great internal contemplation, and perceive divine graces. This is effected by their zealous entering into themselves, and by the devout contemplation of the Passion of our Lord. These and other pious contemplations guard them also from sinful defects and purify them. Into this purity now God poureth his graces, so that they are conscious of these within their selves. If, moreover, these men give themselves up to God, and carry out what He hath warned them to do, it happeneth easily that they leave all things outward and inward, and follow Him through a poor life. And thus they become perfect, and soar indeed to the highest degree of perfection. But if they still keep something for their necessity, and give what remaineth to them for the sake of God, and if they watch over their heart, they are also pious men, but not in the highest degree of perfection. The other class give away all outward things for the sake of God, but they do it more from hearsay, as they, for instance, have heard that perfection consists in this, in giving away all that a man hath, and following Christ in a poor life. This they do also. But they keep and hold on to mere external poverty, do not pay much care to their heart, do not give much attention to internal contemplation of the Passion of our Lord and other good practices that keep man pure from sins, and make him fit to take in divine graces; yet they do many external good works. These also are good pious men, but they are faulty and lack light, and know nothing of the familiarity with God, nor of His working. God worketh only in the ground of the soul, but these men are always turned outwardly, while God worketh inwardly; therefore they cannot properly understand the truth, which is God Himself, in a pure heart. And these men do not come to the proper degree of perfection which appertaineth to a heartily poor man. Now these two kinds of men strive with one another, and each of them judgeth the other, and each thinketh how wrong the other kind is; and this must be so, as both lack the most essential and perfect thing. But those men who go out from all things outwardly and inwardly, and have a diligent ingoing into themselves, and look to what God willeth of them, to satisfy Him in all things, who occupy themselves zealously with contemplation of the Passion of our Lord, and avoid all that hinders them in this, who accept the real truth, which is God, and let it work in them, such men are on the road of perfection. What they cannot do in works they fulfil with their will, and God taketh their will for the work if they do all that they can, and what they cannot do

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that God doth not require of them. These men, I say, are on the road of perfection, and they dispute with no one, nor do they judge any one, but they commit all things to God, for they have completely resigned themselves and all things, and hence they take nothing to themselves. And on their thus going out of themselves and all things, the Spirit of God entereth into them, and draweth them to Himself, and uniteth them to Him, so that they become one spirit with Him. And now the Divine Spirit speaketh in man that he should be free and empty of all things.

116.

In this purity and emptiness God can then work without all hindering; and such a work in a pure soul is much nobler than all works that God ever worked in time and in eternity. And for this reason. When God created all things He had no hindering of His work; but the work that God worketh in the soul may be hindered through the freedom of man's will, and when men unite their will to God's, this is therefore the noblest work.

117.

But what kind of work is this? It is nothing else than a revelation of God in the soul when God showeth Himself to the soul. God worketh, and is Himself the work that He bringeth about. Therefore God draweth away the soul from all things, that it may be able to receive His work; and this receptiveness and the work of God make the soul one spirit with God, and this is the dearest and most desired thing that God will have from man, that man should always be so disposed that God can work in him at all times without hindering, so that he may become one spirit with Him; therefore He also saith, "My delight is with the children of men" ([Prov. viii. 31](#)).

118.

Man's spirit becometh also one with God, if he followeth Christ just as He hath gone before us. For Christ is one with God; therefore it is necessary that he who wisheth to be one spirit with God, should be united first with Christ. And this union of man with Christ consisteth in this, that he do all things as far as it is possible and he is able, as Jesus worked them, when He was man. Christ hath taught us in His works what we should do, and for no other end than that we may become one with Him. Therefore He saith also, "Father, I pray Thee, that these may be one with us, even as I and Thou are one" ([John xvii. 21](#)). Thus then, man is one with Christ when he hath one working with Him. But it might be urged: Christ is God and man, how can a mere man have a working in common with Him? There are two kinds of works in Christ. The one kind is divine, as, to walk on the sea, to do wonders



and signs, to fast forty days. Such-like works do not belong to us, and we should not try to work them, for they are godlike. The other kind is human; as, to be poor, despised, and insulted, to suffer hunger and thirst, to endure pain; then again the virtues that Christ had: humility, patience, and gentleness. These works belong to us, we should adopt them and work them, by which we become one with Him. What we lack in these works, marks how much we stand on ourselves and how distant we are from Christ. Whoso therefore wisheth to be one with Christ and empty of himself, must work all that Jesus worked as man, and as far as it relates to him. Paul also said, “Christ’s working is our teaching.”⁵⁷ Therefore also did He work it, that He might teach us how to work and what He taught is His will, which we ought to fulfil; and this His will bringeth to pass in us, effecting that, our will becomes His will, and His will our will. Thus we become one with Him, and this is only compassed by good works, which we have like unto His. St. Peter saith, “Christ hath suffered, that we might follow His footsteps” (1 Pet. ii. 21). And as He walked, so also ought we to walk.



119.

What do people believe by the expression that we come quite near unto God in heaven? It consists in this, that we follow Him closely on earth. St. Bernard saith, “Many would walk with Christ in heaven, but they are unwilling to suffer with Him on earth.”⁵⁸ These cannot be one with Him, for a true union only begetteth one working; whoso doth not work in it, is separated from Him, for He saith Himself, “Where I am, there shall My servant be” (John xii. 26). But His servant is he who worketh His works, that He hath brought to pass. Now he who doth not this is also not His servant and shall not be with Him.

120.

Thus no one cometh to God, save he only who setteth aside all things and followeth Christ in the way in which He hath gone before us. Christ is the everlasting aim of all men, and whosoever cometh nearest to this aim, he is also nearest to God. It happeneth, indeed,

57 This passage is not in St. Paul, but it occurs in an old Church prayer which runs thus: *Deus celsitudo humilium et fortitudo rectorum, qui per unigenitum Filium tuum ita mundum erudire dignatus es, ut omnis illius actio nostra, fieret instructio, excita in nobis Spiritus Tui fervorem, ut quod ille verbo et exemplo salubriter docuit nos efficaciter imitari valeamus.*

58 *Volunt omnes te (Jesu) frui at non ita et imitari; regnare cupiunt sed non compati.* In Cant. Sermon, 21. 2. See also the Imitation of Thomas à Kempis, c. 11. 11.

that some men come nigh to this aim by good works, and yet do not deny things, and the nearer they come to this aim, the nearer they come also to God, and the more diligently they exercise themselves in good works and avoid sins the nearer they come to Christ. If they have many good works, then they are so much the nearer; if they have few, then they are further; but if they have no good works whatever, then they stick in sins and are entirely away from Christ. On the other hand, if they have all good works and all virtue, they are, in that case, one with Christ, and where Christ is, there are they with Him. Whoso therefore willeth to be one with Christ, must have quite gone forth from himself, and thus he cometh to the aim; but he who giveth not up everything and yet exercises himself in good works, approaches indeed the aim, but doth not reach Christ; for he only who weareth His garment and followeth Him entirely, attaineth unto Him. Let this serve as a simile: A lord, who hath many servants, suffereth those whom he liketh most to stand nearest to him, to wear his uniform, and to bear his arms. So also is it exactly with men; those who wear the garment of Jesus, practise all virtues and bear His arms, are the men who endure His poor, despised life that He had upon earth, and suffer patiently all that smiteth and befalleth them. This is the surest sign that they are dearest to God, and these reach Christ the first; but they who do not this, and therefore have not all virtue, but yet practise good works, come indeed to the aim, but do not find Jesus.

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121.

There are two kinds of works by which we come to the aim—an inner and an outer work,

122.

In an inner work, man must have in view three objects—his defects, the Passion of our Lord, God and His Godhead.

123.

First, man must consider his defects, learn to know himself internally, and if he knoweth this, free himself. If a man doth not turn into himself, if he doth not inwardly consider his defects, he never cometh to a right knowledge of them, and cannot free himself, so that he become quite pure. Therefore the men who only look to outer works and cleave to them, never come to a right knowledge of themselves, and often fail in their good works. They think that they are practising a virtue, and they put in practice a vice, and this proceedeth from a blinding of themselves, whilst the evil spirit can moreover often deceive them. He who wisheth not to be deceived, that he may come without hindering to the aim, which is

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Christ, with the light that God hath kindled in him, he must consider well everything, if it be good or bad; then he must choose the good and reject the bad, and thus he attaineth to the aim.

124.

Secondly, he must consider the Passion of our Lord; this must he stamp upon his heart, and thereby he learneth how he shall avoid all that is not God, and how he shall exercise himself in virtue that he may attain to God. In the contemplation of the Passion of our Lord, God poureth a power into him whereby He draweth man unto Himself. This is the great fruit produced by the Passion of our Lord. If, now, man turneth himself to this with earnest desire and tarries in it, then God revealeth to him the fruit of His Passion, which is so great that it entirely streams round him, and by the stream of His grace man is led with power and energy to God. Just as a mighty stream embraceth all and sweeps it along with itself with overpowering force, so likewise doth it come to pass with the man who diligently considereth the Passion of our Lord. Into him cometh the stream of divine graces, and leadeth him forcibly away from himself to his first origin from which he hath sprung. But those men who do not institute such an inner contemplation of the Passion of our Lord, and only exercise themselves with other good works, go indeed to God, but often stand still or even go backward. But it is not a human but a divine force that is lent to them in the contemplation of the Passion of our Lord, and it is so great that they cannot resist it. Therefore run they alway forward, and even if they lived till the day of judgment they must needs always hasten on, and would not cease to do so, for they do not urge themselves but God spurreth them on.

125.

And as God the Father begetteth His Son in Himself and in all things, so in the same birth He leadeth man to Himself through the Passion of His Son and all virtues. And as God is everlasting in His begettings, so also the initiation of man in the sufferings of His Son is an everlasting process, and nothing can hinder man in this work. Just as little as God can be hindered in the birth of His Word, will He let the man be disturbed who giveth himself up with entire love to the Passion of His Son. The men who with intensest love contemplate the Passion of our Lord, are a second Christ; for love uniteth, therefore they cannot go astray as long as they cleave to Christ. As God the Father did not let His Son fail, so also doth He not let such men go astray, but He willeth that they should always come forward in order that they may reach the aim. Therefore, whoso wisheth to come to the aim, which is Jesus Himself, must entirely immerse himself in the Passion and consider it steadfastly. Out of this contemplation he obtaineth so great force, that in one hour it leadeth him nearer than

he could have attained to for a long time by natural force. But whosoever neglecteth this is idle, and even if he succeed in reaching God, it is only by all possible effort and grievous difficulty.



126.

Jesus saith, “I am the Gate, through which a man must go to God. Whoso entereth elsewhere is a thief and a murderer. The thief cometh to steal, and the murderer to kill”⁵⁹ ([John x. 1-10](#)). And as the thief taketh that which is not his, so also do those who wish to obtain heaven without the Passion of our Lord. They wish to take what is another’s, for the kingdom of heaven is ours through the Passion of our Lord, and whoever taketh it in any other way save this, he taketh it by unjust means and is a thief. He is also a murderer who wisheth to enter otherwise than through the Passion of our Lord. Christ hath been killed and murdered by us, and through His death we have been saved from everlasting death and given again to life. Whoso killeth himself—that is, inflicteth penance on his body—except in considering the Passion of Christ, he killeth himself unrightly, for thereby he cannot come into the kingdom of heaven. Therefore is he called a murderer. Only in the death of our Lord canst thou get there. Whoso wisheth rightly to mortify his body and strip it of lusts, let him sink into the Passion of Jesus, in which all bad lusts disappear, for otherwise no man can die to himself. If a man be thus dead to bodily lusts, a godlike ecstasy ariseth in him exceeding all bodily lusts, and this rapture driveth on man to his aim, which is Christ.



127.

Some men take much exertion for the knowledge of truth. But he who wisheth to obtain genuine truth, let him consider with all possible diligence the Passion of Jesus, in which wellet forth the fountain of all truth. Christ is the truth, and whosoever wisheth to have the truth let him seek it in Christ and in His Passion; here he findeth it for sure, but nowhere else. The truth of the world he may indeed find in his natural knowledge, but even if he have this it helpeth him not to true happiness. But if he wisheth to have the truth which is alone saving, he must seek this in the Passion of our Lord. Here is the real fountain of divine truth, and whoso drinketh of it drinketh living water. To this water Jesus calleth with a loud voice, saying, “If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink. Whosoever drinketh of it, out of his body shall flow streams of living water flowing into everlasting life, and whoso drinketh of this water shall never thirst” ([John iv. 14](#)). Therefore, whosoever wisheth to drink the full truth let him hold his mouth to the sacred wounds of our Lord, from which the truth floweth. St. John rested on the breast of our Lord, and sucked all wisdom and the truth of God, which

59 [John x. 9](#). Ego sum ostium.

was hidden from all men; this do also those men who diligently immerse themselves in the Passion of our Lord. They sleep on His breast, and suck from it all wisdom and all truth, the friendship of God, that was hid from all other men; a truth, an unspeakable truth, as St. Paul saith, “I have heard things which it is not proper to reveal to men” (2 Cor. xii. 4). Such a truth also receive men of which they ought not to speak at all, for the fountain of all grace and truth floweth through them, and the stream is so great that they overflow with it. This no man can know but God alone, for what God works in them goeth above all human conceptions. No man is required to lead or guide these men; they are at all times led to God and guided to perfection. They come to the right aim, that is, God; they go the right road and they are there at home where their right dwelling is—namely, the kingdom of heaven, of which St. Paul saith, “Our conversation is in heaven” (Phil. iii. 20).

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128.

But what heaven does St. Paul mean here? Heaven is of two kinds the heaven that is over us, and the other heaven, which is spiritual, that is. the soul, in which God dwelleth: and where God is. there is heaven. Therefore St. Paul saith, “The kingdom of heaven is within you.”⁶⁰ If, now, the being and essence of our soul is heaven, and God is in it, what is to blame that we have not this heaven here, and do not know God? There are two things that hinder us. First, defective accidents. When man is too much burthened with these, they prevent him from attaining to the essence of his soul; therefore he hath not heaven and cannot know God. The essence of the soul is simple; but if the soul is dissipated in what is manifold, she cannot make use of her essence. Now, St. Paul was freed from all defective accident; thereby, had he come into the essence of the soul, he beheld its nobility and knew God immediately, and therefore could he well say, “Our conversation is in heaven” (Phil. iii. 20). But how comes it to pass that he had not then the kingdom of heaven that he now hath? This relates to the second thing that hindered him; that was, the coarseness of his body, and therefore he said, “I desire to be dissolved from the body, and to be with Christ” (Phil. i. 23); and again, “Oh I, unhappy man, who delivereth me from this body of sin?” (Rom. vii. 24). And on this account he could not have the kingdom of heaven that he now hath. And yet his dwelling was in heaven, which was in the essence of his soul, and in it he knew God, and therefore he said, “I know Christ Jesus and Him crucified” (1 Cor. ii. 2).

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⁶⁰ Luke xvii. 21. Jesus, and not St. Paul, says this.

129.

Thus a man must be free from all the defects of accident if his dwelling is to be in heaven. And it cannot be that he should be free from his defects save in the Passion of our Lord. To it should he turn with all earnestness, all accidental defects pass away from him, and thus he cometh into heaven, that is. into the essence of his soul, when he seeth God inwardly; and no defect can fasten hold on him, for it melteth away in the wounds of our Lord. Just as the snow, if held before the fire, melteth and becometh water, so it happens with all sins which are held in the burning wounds of our Lord. They all melt away and become nothing; and thus the man cometh to the right essence of his soul, when he seeth all truth internally without any taint of untruth.



130.

The heathen also sought the naked and simple essence of the soul, but they could never come to it without Christ. Hence they could not know God, nor be happy, and yet they wished to be happy. And the same happens still to all men who seek the naked essence of the soul without the Passion of our Lord; for they never come to a right understanding of the truth, which is God, and by which they can be saved and happy. For all our salvation and happiness are placed in Christ and in His Passion; therefore he who wisheth to be saved must enter into the Passion of our Lord. And therefore our Lord said, "It was necessary for Christ to suffer to come into the kingdom of heaven."⁶¹ We also must suffer with the Passion of Christ in the kingdom of our soul, where we see God immediately, and thus we come to our right aim with the Passion of our Lord.



131.

The third object that a man ought to have in his internal work, in order that he come to his aim, is to contemplate God in His pure Godhead and Divinity. If man hath seen in his interior what he really is, hath he put aside all defective accident, if the contemplation of the Passion of our Lord hath led him to all virtue, then he seeth God in His essence and simplicity and in His true nature. Through this vision he goeth into God, uniteth himself to Him, and God leadeth man with Himself into Himself, and thus he hath an everlasting entrance into God. He is indeed quite encompassed by God, so that he loseth himself, and knoweth nothing more save God only. And thus sinketh he, and is drowned in the fathomless ocean of the Godhead; he liveth in God as the fish in the sea, and thus as the sea encompasseth the fish, so the soul is encompassed by God and hasteneth to its aim, where

61 See [Luke xxiv. 46.](#)

she shall eternally abide. She aimeth at it and hits it, as is written in the Canticles, when the Lord, speaking of His bride, saith. “My friend, thou hast wounded Me with thine eyes.”⁶² The eye is the love of man penetrating into God; and with this love the soul compelleth God, so that He must do what she wisheth, and this is called wounding, because she hath sway over God and hath mastered Him. She spanneth her bow and shooteth God in the heart; the bow that she spans is her own heart; this she spans and shooteth with a burning desire at God, and hitteth the right mark, and thus she attaineth to the highest degree of perfection.



132.

The other work by which man draweth nigh to his aim, which is Christ, is outward; it consists of all the virtues which appertain unto a perfect life. These a man must have of necessity, if he wisheth to arrive at the right aim. Mention has already been made of these virtues further back, therefore we pass them over here, and only note, moreover, that a man who wisheth to be one spirit with God must be led to this by the life, Passion, and works of our Lord Jesus Christ. As now a thoroughly poor man is led through all this, he cleaveth to God and is one spirit with God.

62 Compare Solomon's [Song iv. 9](#).

The Spirit of God speaketh in man without image and form, life, light, and truth.

133.

The Spirit of God speaketh also in man without images and forms, or rather, raised above all images and forms. This speech is Life, Light, and Truth.

134.

To speak of life, this life is nothing else than a divine force, whereby man can do all things. As St. Paul saith, "I can do all things in Him that strengthened me" ([Phil. iv. 13](#)). But this power was nothing else than the giving up of all things that were against God, and a seizing of all virtues that lead to God. And if man cometh to the capacity of dropping all that is not godlike, and if he can grasp all virtues that lead to God, this is the living force that God poureth into man, and with this force he overcometh all things that are transitory and cometh to life. In tins life liveth God, and God is life; the soul liveth in the life that is God; her life is no longer earthly, but divine. God planteth the soul in His life, and whatever is planted in another fashion must be cast away. What the creature planteth is destructive, what is destructive must be removed, and therefore must it be cast away. Death and life cannot subsist together. What God planteth is life; to this life the soul turneth, and in this life she liveth.

135.

Of what life is in itself we cannot speak; man, indeed, experiences something in himself, but he cannot describe it, and it is above all words, and he cannot give it in images and forms. Therefore he cannot speak of it, but he is silent and passive. This also is the most useful thing a man can do, namely, to be silent and suffer. Silence and suffering are the most perfect work that a man hath. This silence and patience make him living, but if he wisheth to speak or if he wisheth to let man speak in him, this maketh him mortal. If he wisheth always to live, he must always keep silent, and suffer God alone to speak, for what God speaketh, that is life. Christ saith also, "My sheep hear My voice, and I give them everlasting life" ([John x. 3](#)). The sheep of our Lord are men in whom all creaturely things keep silence, and who are in a pure passive state of receiving God. These hear the voice of God, that is, the everlasting word which God the Father speaketh in the soul, and this hearing giveth everlasting life. The Lord saith also, "They follow alter Me" ([John x. 4](#)). This following is nothing else than that they live in the life in which God liveth.



136.

If now the highest happiness of man consist in this, that he keep silence, and listen only to the everlasting word, and avoid all other words, many will say, Why then should we listen to a sermon, to preaching? Preaching is nothing else than a leading to God, and the power of perceiving the everlasting word. But if man is far removed from God, he cannot hear the everlasting word, for when one is distant from another, he cannot perceive what the other saith to him in secret. Therefore this has to be said to mail in images and forms, that he may come to a sense of it, and understand the hidden word of God. Through the outer word that men hear, they attain to the inner word, which God speaketh in the essence of the soul. Christ also saith, "I have other sheep, these also must I lead up, that there may be one Shepherd and one fold" ([John x. 16](#)). Therefore preaching is needful to tell these people what to do who have not yet come into the proper fold, that they may hear the voice of the Shepherd. But the fold is nothing else than the essence of the soul, in which the Eternal Father speaketh His word, and if man cometh to this, that he perceives the eternal word in himself, he need not attend to all other things, but place himself in a complete silence. This is his best condition, therefore St. Austin saith, "The man who hath learnt of our Lord Jesus Christ to be meek and humble of heart, for him it is better that he pray and think of God than that he read or listen to preaching."⁶³ But they who have not come to this should hear preaching, and learn and follow what they hear or read; thus they come to the real truth, and to life, which is God. Even if a man is so advanced that he hear the word in himself, he is yet not at all times prepared for it, for bodily nature cannot bear it, and a man must sometimes turn to his senses and be active; but he ought to direct this work of the senses to the best end. If preaching is useful to him, he can hear it; if an outward virtue is useful to him, he can work it, and he ought to exercise himself in what he recognises as the best. But this by no means hindereth him from hearing the everlasting word, but it furthers him to what is best. If he hath exercised himself in it, if the outer man hath been strengthened and directs itself according to the internal man, he must again enter into himself, perceive and listen to the eternal word, and this hearing bringeth him to everlasting life.



137.

And he should drop and drive out with violence all that hindereth him in this. Then he hath the capacity of depriving himself of all that is not God, and of always hearing the eternal word in himself, which sprugeth from a living ground, in which God is. What he driveth away is as Jesus did in the Temple, when He drove out buyers and sellers, and said,

63 Qui didicerunt a Domino Jesu Christo mites esse et humiles corde, plus cogitando et orando proficiunt, quam legendo et audiendo. Ep. 147. No. 1.

“My house is a house of prayer, but ye have made it into a den of thieves” (Matt. xxi. 13). A pure heart is a temple of God, in which God the Father is worshipped; the tradesmen whom Jesus drove out are the worldly furniture and goods that rust in the heart and are hurtful to it. If now the heart keepeth the useless thoughts and carries over them, it is no longer a house of prayer but a den of thieves, for the evil thoughts drive out God from its dwelling and murder Him. This cometh to pass when the heart is so entirely remote from Him that He can no more come in, and it is a real cavern, where all wickedness holds sway. This hinders God, so that He can no more come into His house, and therefore He nameth it a den of thieves.



138.

But the man who resisteth all thoughts that keep him apart from God, and who giveth place to God only to dwell in him, receiveth this living, divine power from God the Father, who pours it into him. This inpouring is His inspeaking, and that is the life full of ecstasy and joy. Whoso hath not this life, that is, God Himself in a pure heart, he is also lacking all ecstasy and joy, he is more dead than alive, and that is ever against the nature of man. Sin killeth nature, but nature is abhorrent of death, therefore sin is against nature, therefore sinners can never have a joy. Just as little as the dead can rejoice can the sinners rejoice, for the ground from which genuine joy springeth is dead, and thus they cannot possibly rejoice. But in those men who live in genuine purity there is the fountain of all ecstasy and joy, and it admitteth of no sadness, for the eternal word, through which all angels and saints enjoy delight and ecstasy, speaketh in them as in the saints in heaven. “But that their joy is not so perfect as that of those in heaven cometh from this, that they still have their body with them. If they were free from their body they would have the same joy as those in heaven; but their joy is still now unspeakably, great, and the more they are freed from earthly things, the greater is their joy. If now earthly things hinder even pious men from their joys, how can those feel joy who are quite sunk in the earthly? They fancy they are in a goon condition, but this well-being is quite contrary to the true one, for just as it is never quite well with a soul as long as it is in the body, so also there is woe to those who are much burthened with earthly things. But those who dispense the most with earthly things have the true joy which springeth out of a living, pure ground, and the Holy Ghost is the source from which this joy streameth. Therefore St. Paul also said, “The fruit of the Holy Ghost is peace, joy, and righteousness” (Rom. xiv. 17; Gal. v. 22). The inspeaking of the Holy Ghost is life, from which all joy springeth. Whoso listeneth most to this voice, he hath life in the highest fulness, and where this is, is also the highest measure of joy. If now poverty of spirit is a pure instrument of God, with which God can work without any hindering, and where He can lay down



His eternal word, which can give life to all creatures, then a poor man is full of this life, for he hath the fulness of the eternal word in himself, from which all joy springeth.

139.

It might, however, now be said, If man is saved by this, that he heareth the word of God, he is also saved if he heareth the preacher who holds it forth to him; for Christ also saith, “Blessed are they that hear the word of God and do it” (Luke xi. 28). But I say that the speaking and hearing of the word of God is twofold; in the first place, it is internally saving; and secondly, it bringeth and fitteth a man for salvation.



140.

The first is a speaking of God in the essence of the soul, where no creature can enter nor can it speak there, for here God alone dwelleth and also alone speaketh.⁶⁴ But God speaketh therein when the soul setteth aside all that is created, bringeth her power to silence, and hath a vision into the groundwork of her pure essence. In this pure and silent soul now God the Father speaketh, and she heareth His voice. But this hearing is nothing else than an internal feeling of God in the essence of the soul, which passeth over also to the forces, and in so great an ecstasy that she would gladly give up her working and let God alone work, only attending to His lead; and the more that she withholdeth from all working, the more God worketh in the soul. And whoso hath experienced this working in himself is saved and blessed; for God will not carry out His work in any creature, save in the soul which He hath chosen, to remain eternally in it. No creature which will sever itself from God is worthy of it, therefore God also doth not work in it. If Lucifer had felt this in himself he would never have fallen; for this working is so powerful that it moveth the soul out of itself to God. Then God embraceth the soul and unites her with Himself, so that she will and must eternally abide with Him; but this was lacking in Lucifer, therefore he also fell. The working is God’s speaking; His work is His word, the Son of the Godhead; this happeneth in the essence of the soul.



141.

The second is the working of God in the forces. The word is spoken by the preacher, and man heareth it with his bodily ears; but this will not save him unless he follows it in his

⁶⁴ It is an old scholastic doctrine that God only can work in the essence of the soul. See especially St. Thomas, 1. dist. 37. qu. 3. a. 3 ad 4; in Joann. c. 11. lect. 4. Salmantic, tom. iii. tr. 9. disput. 1. dub. § 1, and tom. ii. tr. 7. disput. 2. dub. 10.—Eckhart, 12. 19.

life. This speaking taketh place through men in images and forms; but that which cometh to pass through means or media doth not save the soul, but it can bring them to salvation, and teaches them how they can lay aside the media or means so as to arrive at the pure essence, where the soul seeth God without anything intermediate. But if the soul can distinguish all things by reason, so that it is free from all defective accident, then she must let go all external words that are spoken through men; she must turn herself to the innermost of her being and here only perceive the eternal word which God the Father speaketh. And all other speech she ought not to hear, even if it came from the angels. It is true the word of the preacher is not his own but the word of God; but yet it is mediated, and doth not penetrate like the immediate word of God. If the soul hath freed herself from all intermediate things, if she is stripped of all images, she ought not to tarry with the mediate, but her object must be God in His pure being, and in this essentiality she ought to enter. But as long as man hath the external material about her and hath not attained to his inner essence, so long must she hearken to the external word; this then teacheth him how he should deprive himself in order to attain to the truth. In this way is the external word of God useful.



142.

The second thing that the Spirit of God speaketh in the soul is light. Light is nothing but an adornment of the soul with which God adorneth her, clotheth her, and maketh her well-pleasing to Him. He saith also in the Book of Canticles to His bride, “Very fair art thou, My friend, and no stain is in thee; come from Lebanon; come, thou shalt be crowned.”⁶⁵ This crown is the clear light with which God encompasseth and glorifieth the soul. Christ also said, “Father, glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may also glorify Thee” ([John xvii. 1](#)); and there came a voice from heaven, “I have glorified Him, and will glorify Him again” ([xii. 28](#)). If the soul hath come so far that she bringeth forth the eternal word in her, and she bringeth herself forth with the same word in God, then is she a child of God; not a natural son, like the Word in the Godhead, but a son of grace, and thus can she, speak, “Father, glorify Thy son with Thy clearness, and with the same brightness will I also glorify Thee; this is the unspeakable praise that poureth forth from me to Thee.” And a voice, the eternal word, will then also speak in her, “I have glorified thee, and will still more glorify thee” ([John xvii. 1-4](#)). This glorifying is the being encompassed by God, encompassing the soul with the same clarity that He hath and is Himself, and which glorifies the soul with itself.



65 In the margin stands Solomon. Compare Solomon’s [Song iv. 7](#).

143.

The soul groweth perfect in this clarity. So long as she abideth in this body she will always increase more and more in this divine clarity, and according to the measure of her purity she groweth also in divine clarity. “We can take a likeness from the sun. The purer the air the brighter doth the sun shine and beam forth. So is it also with the soul; the purer it is the more doth the divine sun shine in her and purify her. If she be quite pure of defects of accident, then the divine sun penetrates immediately into her. But if she be over-burthened with venial sins the sun shineth in her mediately but not so brilliantly, only like a flame. If, however, the soul be laden with mortal sins, the light of the divine sun cannot penetrate into it. St. John also saith, “The darkness comprehendeth not the light” ([John i. v](#)). The light of the sun is nothing else than an encompassing of light, and wherever the light penetrates there it enlightens, and whatsoever is a recipient of light receiveth it. Air is refined, glass is pure, a flame is light, and therefore they are recipients of light and they receive it too. But whatever is coarse, impure, and thick can receive no light, such as earth, the stone, and wood. They are altogether coarse, thick, and impure, therefore the light of the sun cannot penetrate them. Exactly so is it with the soul. She is rough and coarse when she is overladen with earthly things; impure when she cleaveth to sensual pleasures; dense and darkened when she is occupied with outer of inner manifoldness; and thus the divine sun cannot penetrate or enlighten her, for she is not meet to receive light. That which is to receive light must be shaped accordingly.⁶⁶ But light is spiritual, freed from everything earthly; and if the soul wisheth to be enlightened by this Divine light she must become a pure spirit, emptied of all earthliness, and in this likeness she then receiveth this light

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144.

If therefore the soul is a pure spirit, emptied of all that is earthly, she is now a light herself for what is pure is also a light—it may be asked what further light is she to receive? If the soul is a pure spirit, free from the earthly, it is a light, but a light of her true nature. God hath placed a pure light in the soul, but this light is the soul herself, if she standeth in the highest dignity of her pure nature, and thus understandeth the distinction of all created things. The light which she still receiveth is a supernatural light, which God draweth in Himself and poureth into the soul that is capable of receiving it; and in proportion that the

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66 Denifle thinks that the Aristotelian-Thomistic doctrine lies at the foundation of this expression, teaching that the last disposition for the form of a class (Gattung) must be with the form. Aristot. an. 414. a. 11. Comp. Hertling, *Materie und Form*, Bonn 1871, p. 83. St. Thom. qu. 8. de verit. c. 3. Ægydius Correct. 1. p. a. 1. resp. 1; *Lux quae est propria forma corporis summe diaphani, nullo modo fieret forma vel actus alicujus, quod nullo modo participat diaphaneitatem*. Comp. Dionys. *De div. nom.* c. 2. § 6, et c. 4. § 4.

natural light is pure, the soul receiveth also the supernatural, which is a light of glory.⁶⁷ Just as with a glass, the purer it is, the more is it enlightened by the sun, so is it also with the soul. The purer it is, the more is it enlightened by the divine light; but if it is darkened, and far from God, she cannot receive the light. In a prison, that is quite walled in, the sun cannot penetrate; just so is also the soul laden with sins a dark prison, in which the divine sun cannot shine.

145.

The soul must also be near the light, if she is to receive it. Though a glass were always quite pure, but it were not brought to the sun, it would not be enlightened. Thus also the soul must raise herself to the divine splendour if she is to receive the clarity of the light. But this being nigh is nothing else than an intense desire for God with perfect love in the light of faith; this maketh the soul receptive of the divine light. If she were even lacking in purity, so that she could not receive the divine light, but yet hath perfect faith and perfect love for God, then she becometh pure and receiveth the light. But if a man be even quite pure and without all sins, but without faith and love to God, then he cannot receive the divine light. Some are also found among the heathen, who kept themselves pure and virtuous, yet they lacked the divine light; the defect was, that they had not the faith, though they certainly had more natural light than other men. So there are many, who indeed keep themselves pure and free of mortal sins, but cannot well guard themselves against venial sins, and the divine light faileth them. The only cause thereof is that they do not approach it in the light of faith. The faith is Christ; but they only follow Him outwardly; for to follow Him innerly is lacking to them, and therefore they have not the divine light. God's light lighteth in the heart, and whoso wisheth to have this light must turn into himself, and thereby he will perceive the light in himself. But whoever followeth Christ only in an outwardly way, doth not receive the right light, for Christ saith, "If your righteousness do not exceed that of the Pharisees and Scribes, you will by no means enter the kingdom of God" ([Matt. v. 20](#)).

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146.

The Pharisees are those men who appear outwardly quite holy in many good works, but who despise the truth and do not follow it in thorough righteousness. These cannot enter into the kingdom of God, which is in the depths and foundation of the soul. But he that desireth to reach it, must exercise himself in all good works, outwardly and inwardly; thus such a man surpasseth the Pharisees in righteousness, and attaineth to the kingdom of

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⁶⁷ Beginning at this place, we find a development of the scholastic principle: *Quidquid recipitur, recipitur juxta facultatem recipientis*. St Thom. de Causis, lect. 24. Albert. Mag. de Causis, Lib. ii. tr. 2. c. 23. and c. 28.

God, in the essence of the soul, where is the kingdom of God. The Pharisees of the old covenant held indeed the laws outwardly, but inwardly they were quite false. But this did not make them righteous; they seemed indeed righteous, but were not so. We must exceed this apparent righteousness if we would come into heaven. What of righteousness we show outwardly must hold sway in full measure internally. This maketh us then capable of receiving the divine light; therefore St. Paul saith, "Appear what ye are, and be what ye appear!" "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 [Thess. v. 22](#)).⁶⁸ Whoso wisheth to have the divine light in himself must follow Christ outwardly and inwardly. Outwardly by a poor life and all good works that appertain unto it; inwardly by a perfect faith, by the consideration of His good works and of His bitter Passion. In him is then inflamed a perfect love, that maketh him meet to receive the divine light, whereby he surpasseth all Pharisees in righteousness.

147.

Man must likewise surpass the Scribes in righteousness. The Scribes in the old covenant were those who taught the people, but what they taught other people they did not practise themselves. It also cometh to pass, that such men show themselves as inwardly righteous, so that men believe that they are really so; but this inwardness is not divine but natural. The natural light of their reason cometh to their help; they can distinguish all things, which maketh them so eloquent, and they hold themselves to be quite internal men. They are also difficult to detect, and only the perfect man, who is enlightened with the divine light, can recognise them; these people are quite like the Scribes of the old covenant. Whoso wisheth to attain to the divine light must surpass them in righteousness, for their righteousness consisteth only in words, but hath no life. If they enter into their interior, this only taketh natural images, and as there is too much natural truth in them, they do not obtain the supernatural light. Their outer emptiness and their internally dwelling in themselves make them reasonable in a natural way. But whoso wisheth to have the divine light must speak little, but what he speaketh must, have life. He must consider his faults and lay them aside, and exercise himself diligently in contemplating the Passion of our Lord. If he now wisheth to distinguish how he is to part with his defects and increase in virtues, he must not long linger over such distinction; he must rise above the distinction of created images, and must penetrate through to the uncreated best, which is God; thus he attaineth to the true divine light.

⁶⁸ This passage cannot be found in St. Paul, though he says, in [1 Thess. v. 22](#), "Abstain from all appearance of evil."

148.

But how can you know the distinction of the natural and the divine light? A likeness thereto is given by the moon and the sun. The moon receiveth its light from the sun, for she is in herself cold and damp, and even when the sun throweth his light upon her, he warmeth nothing thereby. From this we recognise the moon, that her light giveth no warmth, and her light maketh, as you see, many objects doubtful in moonlight; it also deceiveth often. Such is also the natural light in the reason of man. As the moon receiveth her light from the sun, so also the natural light is cold and not warming; and just as the light of the moon is unproductive of fruit, so also the natural light in itself is unfruitful, for it produceth few fruits that are useful for everlasting life. If the natural light could produce fruits whereby man could attain to heaven, in that case many heathen would be in heaven, who are, perhaps, condemned; for by his mere nature man cannot come into heaven, but grace must work together with it. What is also viewed by natural light remaineth doubtful; it is only a weening or conjecture, but not a perfect knowledge. The natural light remaineth dim because it only consists in images and forms, and you cannot see pure truth thereby; though these natural men believe that a thing is so and not otherwise. In this way the natural light is quite like moonlight. But the light of the sun is like unto the divine light. The light of the sun enlighteneth the air immediately, thus also the divine light enlighteneth the soul immediately. The light of the sun giveth warmth, and the divine light warmeth, and the soul gloweth thereby in divine love, and through this that she receiveth the light, she also receiveth the warmth of the light, and all inequality, unlikeness, and each doubt of truth passeth away and vanisheth in the warmth of the divine light. The sun is fructifying, the parent of all earthly life, for all creatures experience the influence of the sun. If the sun were to pass away and his light were withdrawn from the earth, all would perish. Thus the sun is the begetter and upholder of creatures; their generation is wonderful, and no one can perfectly see through it; no sage was great enough to know all that the sun bringeth forth. He begetteth the fish in the water, the beast on the earth, the bird in the air, the phoenix in the fire, and many other unknown beings that God only knoweth. So is it often with the divine sun; it is fruit-bringing, and the parent of all spiritual creatures. God hath created the soul and the angels immediately, but He hath created the bodily creature through the sun. The soul and the angels have been created immediately by God, and also receive immediately the influence of the divine sun. If the divine sun were to withdraw its light from the soul she would perish, not like earthly things, for the soul is dead when she lacketh the divine inworking, for of herself she hath not the life that saveth, but she must receive it from God.



149.

Some will say, however, there are many good men who have not a special inworking from God, and yet their soul is not dead thereby. There are three kinds of men. Some live in mortal sins; these lack the influx of God entirely, and are also quite spiritually dead. But that they are yet called back to life is a much greater wonder than the resurrection of the bodily dead, for as much nobler as the soul is than the body, so is it much greater when she cometh again to life. A teacher saith on this point, "It is a greater work to convert a sinner from his sins than to create heaven and earth."⁶⁹ Others abstain indeed from heavy mortal sins, but yet not from all venial sins; these are neither dead nor living; they do not indeed entirely lack the divine co-operation, but it is slight, so that the outer forces feel nothing. They conceive also that they have a lack of divine influence, and yet are they good men, for they exercise themselves in many good works. Lastly, the third kind of men consists of those who guard themselves against all sins, but this cannot come to pass without divine grace. They live in truth; they are not lacking in divine influence, and this is so strong that it streameth over from the soul to the outer forces of man, and they recognise the splendour of the divine clarity. With the same efflux out of God they come back again to God with the same clarity, which is God Himself; they are also clarified and preserved from all fall. As, therefore, the sun is fructifying, for it generates all things among creatures, so is it also with the divine sun, for it bringeth forth all truth in the soul; but its generation is wonderful, and no one knoweth it perfectly save God alone.

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150.

No man hath been yet so wise by nature that he could recognise the most unimportant work that God worketh in a pure soul. Therefore also no man should judge good men. A really holy man is hidden from all natural men; but such a man ought not to proclaim his secret, especially not to those who are ready with words by nature and make fine speeches, but have little life. According to their natural conceptions they cannot understand what grace worketh in a pure heart; therefore they often hold that which is good to be not good, and what is evil to be not evil.

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⁶⁹ Denifle informs us that in the margin stands Augustine. The Schoolmen were always citing this passage: *Majus est quod ex impio fiat justus, quam creare coelum et terram.* But St. Augustine only says (Tract. 72 in Joann. No. 3) of justification: *Majus hoc esse dixerim, quam est coelum et terra et quaecunque cernuntur in coelo et in terra.*

151.

The begetting of the divine sun is wonderful. We will carry over the simile of the natural sun's begetting to the divine sun. The natural sun produceth the fish in the water, the divine sun maketh all the works of the senses fruitful, for by the water is to be understood the senses. As the water is unsteady and fluctuating, so also are the senses. If the senses in their movements turn to virtue, and go on to work, they have become fruitful. This is effected by the divine sun, which hath enlightened them and rendered them fruitful.

152.

The natural sun produceth the beasts of the earth and fructifieth the earth. When the body exerciseth itself in all good works, its activity bringeth forth fruit for everlasting life, as Christ also saith, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I give him, his body shall be a source of living water flowing into everlasting life."⁷⁰ The living water is the divine light which penetrates into the soul and maketh her overflowing in all virtues, in order that she may come to everlasting life.

153.

The natural sun also begetteth the bird. By the bird is understood the thought of man. As the bird flieth hither and thither, so also are the thoughts of man restless and roving, but these too are made fruit-bringing by the divine sun. If at length they turn from the earthly and fly to the contemplation of the Passion of our Lord, and thereby into the true Godhead, they bring forth here incalculable fruits. This is worked by the divine light, which irradiates and beams round the thoughts, and leadeth them to God. By the air is also understood the reason of man. Just as the natural sun produceth in the air various things, grass and plants, so also doth the divine sun bring forth in the reason various wonderful things and truths. With this truth it adorneth the reason and prepareth for it Unspeakable rapture, so that no heart can conceive and no mouth express it. St. Paul found himself in this rapture when he said, "I have seen things that it is not lawful to mention." He recognised in himself the truth which he could not express in words, therefore he said, "which it is not lawful to mention." Whoso speaketh out what he perceiveth in himself proveth that he hath never yet found in himself right divine truth, and it cometh easily to pass that they who babble the most have the least pure truth. For divine truth consisteth not in speeches but in silence, and keeping



70 [John iv. 14, vii. 38.](#)

within, recollected. St. Paul saith, "On these things we should be silent."⁷¹ What can be said on the subject consists only in images, but divine truth is raised above images and separated from all images. Human reason beholdeth indeed the truth, but cannot embrace or obtain it, for this truth outrunneth the reason. By this going forward it draweth reason after it. If now then reason directeth its course to the summit of perfection, then it seizeth the truth, and this seizing is everlasting life. Then only when it hath reached this has it found rest and satisfaction. But man will not find perfect satisfaction or rest on earth, because as man liveth in time he must grow and advance, therefore he cannot find perfect rest. But if the soul parteth from the body and cometh to everlasting life, then the pure truth is her object, and therein she findeth satisfaction and rest. Thus is the reason adorned with the divine light.

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154.

The natural sun also produceth the phoenix in the fire,⁷² and bringeth it to life without other creatures. For it is not born like other creatures through the influence of creatures, therefore it is the noblest creature that is born under the sun. Exactly in like manner doth the divine light produce the will, and maketh it fruitful in many virtues. By the phoenix is understood the will, for as the phoenix is the noblest creature, so is the will the first power of the soul; and as the phoenix reneweth itself in the fire, so also doth the will in the divine fire. As the phoenix holdeth the first place among creatures having life, so hath the will the first place in God among the remaining creatures and forces. If it hath the first and the highest place, so hath it also the best fruit; and just as the phoenix is born immediately from the sun, without the help of other creatures, so also the true fruit of the will is produced immediately by God, therefore the will is raised above all things, and thus beareth its fruits. If it is free from all things that are not God, the divine light shines gloriously and maketh it fruitful. If the will is entirely separated from all things and united with God, it also produceth with God that which God produceth. This fruit that the divine light bringeth forth in the will is essential, for God's being is bestowed on all creatures, only each receives it according to its receptivity. Thus also the fruit of a perfect will is common to all creatures according to their receptive faculty. A perfect will desires a perfect good, for the good is the object of the will; the same perfect good it desireth also for all creatures that are receptive of good, such as the soul and the angels. The soul and the angels are alone receptive of an essential good, but all other creatures only of an accidental good. Essential good, which is God only,

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71 [2 Cor. xii. 4.](#)

72 According to the Egyptian mythology.

is carried over by a perfect will to all rational creatures. Therefore a perfect will worketh essentially in all creatures; its fruit and its work are essential. This essential fruit is worked by the divine sun in the perfect will; but in the will that is not quite perfect, though good, it only bringeth forth accidental fruit. Nothing can work above its powers; if, therefore, the will be not perfect, it cannot carry out any perfect work; therefore its fruit is not perfect nor essential, but accidental.



155.

But what is a perfect will, whereby works and virtues are essential? A perfect will is an abandonment of all that is not God. If a man hath not done this in works, he must do it in will if he will be perfect. What lacketh him still in works he must lay aside, and free himself in proper order. If he doeth this, and hath exercised himself in accidental virtues, he obtaineth the essence; the will penetrates into the essence, and thereby worketh also essential works, for where two things are one, then they have one working. If now the will hath entirely passed over into the essence, it hath also one working with the essence. Each thing worketh according to its quality, and thus the essence worketh essentially, and the will with it. It is not, however, a work that is brought about by the movement of the forces, but it is a standing still without all motion, and it is Divine. In this manner worketh God, accordingly an essential work is only thus brought forth.



What a perfect will is, whereof the works and virtue are essential.

156.

Now some person might say, How can this be, that the will can work an essential work, when it is nevertheless a force which is movable; and what is movable cannot work anything essential? To this I say, that the will hath two drifts or direction's, one to the creature and time, and the other to God. And in case the will is turned to the creature, and to time, and to the body, it is movable, and cannot generate or work out any essential work. Nothing can work above its power; if, then, the creature and time are unsteady, and the will is united with time, from this cause its working is unsteady and movable, and therefore it is not essential. For an essential work is immovable, and therefore he who wisheth to work an essential work, his will must have parted from all creatures and from time. The other drift which the will hath is in God, and in case the will is directed to God, it is immovable with God, for movement is only in time and in those who are overladen with accidents; and if the will be raised above time into eternity, and is emptied of all accidents, and penetrates into the essential good, which is God, behold all then that God worketh, the will also worketh with God. And since God's works are essential, so also the works of the will are essential and immovable. For just as when an imperfect thing is united with one that is perfect, it will not work according to its imperfection, but it works according to that with which it is united—such also is the right order which is held in the works of the will. For the will of man is in itself imperfect, and therefore of itself it hath an imperfect work; but if the will raiseth itself above itself and above all things in God, then hath it also a perfect work with God; for what is one hath also one working. Now if the will is united with God, it hath then one working with God, and the divine light bringeth forth in the will essential fruit.



157.

Here the question might be put, What is an essential work? An essential work is when the essence of the soul is one and simple, and is placed in complete silence. And through simplicity it hath communion with all things; for what is most simple is most universal, and imparts itself to all things, and yet remains undivided and unmoved in itself. And to communicate and divide with all things is called an essential working; and in this working *one* work is all works, and all works are *one* work. For just as God seeth all things with one glance, and it worketh without any movement of Himself, so doeth also an essential will. It seeth all things in *one* glance, and in this one glance it worketh all works, and all works are

only *one* glance. And this worketh the divine light in the will, for a perfect will is so dear to God that He will reward it with all gifts, and will make it fruitful in all things. For if God did not give all things to a perfect will, so that something of his own might remain to him, God would not have rewarded him, and the will would have no satisfaction; therefore God must give all things, that is, Himself, to a perfect will. Of this St. Austin speaketh, "If God gave me all things without Himself, it would not satisfy me; but if I have God I have all things, and with that I am satisfied."⁷³ Therefore let him who wisheth to work in pure tranquillity, be careful that he have a perfect will, in which God begetteth all virtue and all truth; and thus he taketh hold of the essence of perfection. Therefore Solomon saith, "I have sought rest in all things."⁷⁴ Now, man hath in all things rest if he hath exercised himself in all virtues, so that he taketh hold of the essence of all virtues, for then he resteth and husheth, leaving God only to work; and without any effort all truth poureth into him. For into a pure being flow all virtue and truth, and he lacketh nothing; for where a pure being is, there is no defect. Therefore a man hath nothing further to do than to lay himself aside, and when he hath once laid himself aside, that he keep himself purely passive, and in this purity he hath all virtue and all truth. And he need not seek virtue or truth here or there, for he hath them within him. And all men are lacking in virtue and truth, save alone a perfect, pure, and poor man. He hath them, and the divine will hath worked this in a perfect will, and the essential working endureth always without end. And because man is in time he hath a growth in essential truth, and he penetrates continually into the essential good, which is God; whether he sleep or wake, or eat or drink, he is always advancing. Just as little can the perfect will stand still: it always hasteneth to God. This is the supernatural power whereby the will is led; and as God, who leadeth the will, is eternal, so also is the course of the will eternal.

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158.

Objection might be made to this by some one saying, Just before it was said that the will was immovable, and now, again, I speak of a course of the will; but this is a movement? We said above that if the will turneth away from all things and uniteth with God, that it is immovable. And that is true; and this immobility is to be thus understood, that it no longer moveth to the creature and to time, for it is raised above creatures and time, and therefore it is not moved by the creature nor by time. And it turneth no more to this or to that, but it willeth always *One*, and that is God; to Him it cleaveth always, without any going back; and therefore is it called immovable, for it suffereth not itself to be moved from God. Bui

73 Confess. xiii. 8.

74 In the margin Solomon. Compare [Eccl. xxiv. 11](#).

when I spoke of the will always running forward, this merely means an everlasting advance into God and His eternal immobility; and this stability of the will is meant by its immobility. For creaturely movement is to this and to that, and this will is not such, but it inclineth always toward God, and penetrates into God, and this penetration is its course or running. And the running is not after the manner of creatures, and therefore it is not to be valued as a movement, but it is after a divine fashion, and therefore is it immovable, for the will never moveth outside God, but abideth always in God. This indwelling (in God) is its running, and its running is its indwelling, and the more it runneth the more sure and steadfast is its indwelling, and the more rapid its course in God, the more firm and complete is its silence and immobility.

141

159.

Some one might now say, How can this be, that man cometh to this in time, that his will becometh immovable, for man is scarcely so perfect that he doth not mark how his will inclineth now to one side and now to another, and as man is born in time, he hath a movement with time? To this I answer, That man is made up of time and of eternity, and hence he must have an influence from them both. The body is receptive of the temporal influence, which he must endure, because he liveth in time. Then from the necessity of the body, the will inclineth to the body, that the body should strive to satisfy its necessity. In this way the will is certainly movable, and inclineth now to one thing and now to another, in order that the body may have its necessity. If, now, a man ordereth bodily things with discretion, and giveth the body the necessity that belongeth to it, and which it consumeth in the service of God and according to the doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ, this man is not against the truth nor against perfection, nor is this really a movement. For it is a movement for the will to turn from good to bad, and that is not here the case; for the will only grants to the body what is quite necessary, and in real sincerity and truth; but what a man doth not want that the will doth not grant. If, then, a perfect will dwelleth always in truth and in perfection, and doth not let itself be led out of them, it is called properly immovable. And any movement that may take place in a perfect man is more a movement of the senses than of the will; for a perfect will willeth God only, and what is otherwise, as a necessity of the body, it suffereth the senses to seek; and he doth not this for the pleasure or comfort of the body, but for the honour of God. When, then, the liody taketh its necessity, the will taketh the power which the body hath received from the food, and transfers it to God, so that it is absorbed in God, and thus is the will immovable. Any movement that takes place in it is for the sake of virtue, for it is not to be moved by any evil propensity or vice; and thus it remaineth always in the truth, and therefore it suffereth not itself to be moved. This immobility is also worked again by the divine light, which streams round the will, and consisteth in no untruth.

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160.

It is sometimes said, that poor men stand too much on their own will and like much to follow it, and that this is a fault in them. To this I answer, that a right poor man is entirely resigned and hath given up his will, and never carrieth out his own will; but he fulfilleth always His will to whom he hath resigned himself, that is, God's will. Again it might be said, What is your own will? and what is a resigned will? Your own will is nothing else than a holding yourself possession of bodily and spiritual things.

161.

The man who hath not yet parted with all temporal things, internally and externally, has still possession of his will for it is the property of the will, that it inclineth to creatures and to time, and hence he who is overladen with creatures, hath still property in his will. Therefore whoso wisheth to be free of all property, must leave creatures inwardly and outwardly, as far as may consist with, discretion. It might now be said, There are many good people, who have their outward necessity and yet internally hold no property, for they purpose the honour of God in it, and if they knew that it was the will of God, they would leave all things. To this I answer: When a man is internally free from all property and selfhood he is so outwardly; for what a man hath in his heart, he worketh outwardly, whether it be good or evil; and therefore, if they are quite free internally, this would appear also outwardly. They might be quite free internally, but if they knew that outward things sever them from God, they would leave them and give themselves up to a poor life; but that they are perfectly free from all selfhood is not so. They say, no doubt, that they would leave all, if they knew that it is the will of God, and they would "assume poverty." But it is the holiest will of God that maketh us quite perfect, thus when St. Paul saith: "This is the will of God, our salvation and our sanctification."⁷⁵ But the highest perfection lieth in poverty, therefore it is also the will of God that we should be poor, for Christ Himself saith, "If thou wilt be perfect, sell all and give to the poor, and come, follow Me." If it were not the will of God, He would not have said it. Therefore he who wisheth to be empty of his own will, must set himself free from all outward possession.



⁷⁵ 1 Thess. iv. 3.

162.

Further, keeping possession of ourselves in spiritual things is from self-will, and indeed in a twofold way. First, a man taketh on himself an external work that hindereth him entirely in his perfection, but he will not give it up, but carry it out according to his own head, believing it to be good, though another seeth that it is not good. He would gladly bring the other from it and direct him to something better, but the other will not follow it. This also is from self-will of man, which hindereth him in his perfection. Secondly, if a man hath a false view and holdeth it as true, but will not suffer himself to be brought from it, that is again self-will. And even if his opinion is partly right, but another understandeth the thing better, only the former will not hear the latter, when he insists on having the advantage given to his own more ignorant view. Nay, if a man's opinion be really the true one, so that a different view of the case cannot be entertained, the man of the stamp we are considering will boast of it too much, despise other people, hold them to be devoid of understanding, and think himself the wisest of all. This cometh all from an overbearing will, which is very destructive.

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163.

But if a man is more modest in this his opinion, if he doth not despise other people, and yet is too rejoiced in his having so much penetration, this hinders him from his perfection, which surpasseth all that is human, for the highest perfection cannot be grasped by the senses, but you must be raised above the senses into a state of silence; the reason must drop its imagery and be tranquil and at rest, and in this way you seize hold on that which is perfect. And whoso doth not suffer this in proper order, hath still his own will, which is destructive. St. Dionysius saith, "Quiet yourselves, that ye be at rest from all contest." A single view of pure divine truth is better than all the works that holy Christendom worketh one with another.⁷⁶ Christ also saith, "Ye need not take heed as to what ye shall say when ye have to answer, for it shall be given unto you in that hour what ye shall say."⁷⁷ Christ means by this, that man should not trouble his mind with thoughts and place them as intermediate things between God and his soul, but he should at all times keep silence and let God alone speak. The Divine Word instructeth him more in all wisdom, what he should speak, if it be neces-

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⁷⁶ This passage of Dionysius is always introduced by the German Mystics as far as the words "Christendom worketh." But only what Denifle notes really comes from Dionysius, the remainder, according to this critic, having been copied by one Mystic from another. *Myst. Theol.* c. 1. § 1: Σὺ δὲ . . . τῆ περὶ τὰ μυστικὰ θεάματα συντόνω διατριβῇ καὶ τὰς αἰσθήσεις ἀπόλειπε καὶ τὰς νοεράς. ἐνεργείας καὶ πάντα αἰσθητὰ καὶ νοητὰ κ.τ.λ..

⁷⁷ [Matt. x. 19.](#)

sary, than if he were to learn and study more what he ought to say.⁷⁸ David said also, “Happy is the man whom Thou, Lord, teachest.”⁷⁹ He is taught by God when he keepeth silence, and God only speaketh in him. This speaking maketh him blessed and teacheth him all truth.

164.

Supposing, now, that all which a man understandeth is perfectly true, but he valueth it little, and findeth no joy in it, but findeth more pleasure in that which is raised above all imagery, in pure, divine truth; if in this condition he has to work out virtue outwardly, that belongeth to him of necessity, and he cannot give himself up properly to this work, for he is continually too much occupied with God for him to trouble himself about external things, and he wisheth to be free from them; then I say, he still hath self-will.



165.

It might certainly be asked, Is it not better that a man should only mark the state of his heart and suffer God to work in him, than that he should trouble himself about outer works? I answer, Yes; but a distinction is needful here. It needeth a man, who hath so exercised himself in virtues, that though an external virtue were to rejoice him, he would no more be able to work it; and this happeneth in two ways.

166.

First, if he have expended all that he had already on virtue, so that he hath no longer any matter on which to exercise virtue, if thus he would gladly work it, but cannot, as he hath nothing, and is poor, and is furthermore devoted to God, so that he cannot sever himself from God for a single moment; if he is further weak in body, so that he hath no more strength to work external virtue this excuseth him from the exercise of outward virtue, and if he turned to outward things he would commit a fault. Virtue must now work in the will, and the will is more pleasing to God than the outward work. That he doth not work this, doth not hinder his self-sacrifice, for it is the right self-sacrifice that he hath freed himself from all outward works, and that God can work unhindered within him. These are the genuine supplicants who pray in spirit and in truth; in spirit, because their spirit is one with God, and in truth, because, without any defects, they suffer God alone to work in them,



78 See St. Bonaventure, *Itinerar.* c. 7, p. 347 (ed. Hefele. Tübingen, 1861), who introduces the same doctrine though he does not use exactly the same expression, “speaking of the Word.”

79 [Psalm xciv. 12.](#)

and practise every virtue inwardly in the will. The virtue which they then work is essential virtue. For all accident droppeth away, and a pure essence alone remaineth, and in this pure essence is virtue worked, and for that reason it is called essential, for it cometh to pass in the essence and not in accidents. And these men can work all virtue in one moment. For their nature is so simple and so refined that it can penetrate into each virtue and work it. And this virtue is almost to the divine virtue, for as God exciteth and worketh all virtue, remaining Himself immovable in perfect rest, thus such men excite every virtue. Before a virtue is begun to be practised, it is previously excited in a pure heart; for a pure heart awakeneth more virtues in love than all men can carry out in works. This heart also awakeneth virtue and yet remaineth immovable, therefore is this virtue like God's virtue. Such men who have virtue in essence can let drop accidental virtue without a sin, and in giving up their own will.



167.

But the man who holdeth temporal things and hath not yet devoted all to virtue, must work out, at all events, the virtues necessary to his state. And even if God were to work inwardly in him, yet must he often break off from the internal work and practise external virtue; he must do this if he hath an object for it, and necessity demands it. He must do it if he wisheth to be humble, and if he doeth it not he committeth a fault; he omitteth to do it from self-will, and not through the will of God. He cannot yet possess virtue in essence, as he is still burthened with the temporal; it is therefore needful for him to exercise accidental virtues so long till he is emptied of all accidents. If he is then emptied of the accidental, he is then free from the necessity of exercising this kind of virtue (the accidental) and worketh it henceforth essentially. If an object faileth for this exercise, he must omit it, but if one is found he must do it. Thus man is humble if he exerciseth all virtue, till virtue becometh his property and his very essence, and if this hath come to pass, he can omit accidental virtue. But whoso hath not obtained all virtue, till it hath become his very being, he still possesseth a property in his self-will. He may indeed say to others that he is willing to give way and do all that he is commanded to do, and he may thus believe that he possesseth humility and hath given up his own will. This may be all well and good. But true humility lieth in the virtues; the more a man hath of these, the humbler he becometh, and the more hath given up his own will. If a man possesseth all virtue he is always humble; if he hath it not, he doth not give way, and is not free from his own will, though he give out what he pleaseth.



168.

Now that man entirely give himself up to virtue, is worked out by the divine light, which lighteth the will, and enkindleth in it the fire of divine love, which driveth him on henceforth

to virtue, and suffereth him not to rest till he hath hold on the essence of all virtue. Whoso followeth this light is humble, and no one else. A man may indeed show a denial of self, but this rather hindereth a man from true humility than helpeth him to it. It often cometh to pass that rich folk assume humility, and say to others they will give way; but these people only give way as far as they free themselves from temporal things and practise virtue, but no further; he, however, who entereth into himself and perceiveth the divine light in him, followeth all that is said to him by God; and this man is humble, and hath departed from his self-will.



169.

It might be said, This light is doubtful, for men are often deceived, holding a natural or a devilish light to be divine. Therefore is it good that a man should trust to another who hath more light. I say it is good for a man who standeth in doubt to let himself be led, so that he may be shown what is best, which he can and ought to follow. He should not only stop at external doctrine, but carry it into the light of his heart, see what he finds good, and follow it. Above all things should he turn to the Passion of our Lord, consider it with great earnestness, and what he learneth there he should follow, but he should compare what he hath learnt with the testimony of Holy Scripture and the general teaching of the Church; thus he cannot err. Nor is it necessary that he should always regard what his Leader saith and commandeth him; but he should mark this especially, what God commandeth him inwardly, that should he chiefly follow, and thus cometh he to true humility. By the counsel of men only he cometh not thereto; man only counselleth what is human, and this doth not make perfect. But God's counsel is divine, and this maketh perfect. Whoso followeth His teaching cometh to the highest perfection. "Blessed is the man," saith David, "whom Thou, O Lord, teachest."⁸⁰



170.

It might here be said that the teaching of an exemplary man is from God, therefore you should always follow it. I answer, that the teaching of an exemplary man is from God. But it is still in the intermediate, and so long as a man thus standeth he is not immediately touched by God, for to be so he should not follow any creature, but God. If, however, he hath come so far that God toucheth him without any mediation, he should give way to no creature. For God hath revealed to him a light in which he cannot err, and God giveth him enough to do with himself, so that he forgetteth all creatures, and therefore, saith the Master

80 [Psalm xciv. 12.](#)

of Nature (Aristotle), “Whoso is touched by the first cause must follow no human counsel, but Him who is above all human counsel.”⁸¹

171.

It might be here said, How is man to understand if he is touched by God? By two things. First, when God cometh into the soul He revealeth Himself with a new light, which man hath never known in himself before, and this light breaketh out with heat in the body, so that man by bodily feeling is aware of the divine light, and the heat of the light giveth him to wit that it is from God. For the light of nature, that is cold; but the divine light is hot. In the second place, when God revealeth Himself to the soul, this is without all doubt, and man cannot doubt it. And though all men were to say it is not from God, that would not affect him; for he hath found such truth in him as no one can give, save God only. But natural light is doubtful, and a weening or conjecturing. But this light and this feeling are without all doubt or conjecture, and form a complete knowing. And those who have felt it know that it is true what I say; but those who have not felt, cannot either know it.



81 In the margin stands Aristotle, but Denifle says that he cannot find the passage in that author.

Part Second. How is a man to attain to a perfect, poor life?

How is a man to attain to a perfect, poor life?

1.

The second part of this book treats of how a man shall come to a perfect, poor life, in which man seizeth hold on the highest and closest (perfection), and what things a man must consider in order that he become poor. First, man must consider the teaching and the life of Jesus Christ, for He hath taught poverty and lived it. And a man should follow the teaching and the life, if he wisheth to be perfect, for He saith, “Whoso loveth Me keepeth My commandments and My counsels, and heareth My word.”¹⁰ The love to our Lord, in the lowest degree, is that we keep the Ten Commandments, which are necessary for everlasting life. The second degree of love to Jesus is, that we keep His counsels, that is, His teaching of the Holy Gospels, in which He hath counselled us to follow Him in .a poor life, as when He said. “Whoso cometh after Me, let him deny himself.”



¹⁰ [John xiv. 23.](#)

In the first place, the teaching and the life of our Lord Jesus Christ impel a man to a poor life.

2.

It might now be said, What is man in his selfhood, that he must deny, if he wisheth to follow after Christ? Man's selfhood consisteth in four things. First, his frailty, and that he falleth into sins; and this he must needs set aside; he must die to his defects and sins, and mortify himself. Secondly, he is inclined to creatures. For man is inclined by nature to his like, and he must kill nature, and must withdraw from creatures, for God and creatures are opposites. And therefore he who wisheth to have God must leave creatures. For the soul is so narrow that God and the creature cannot dwell together in her; and therefore if God is to dwell in thy soul, the creature must remain without. The third point is, that man to part from selfhood should drop all sensual delight, for he must die to this and kill it in himself, if he wisheth to have God's comfort. As St. Bernard saith, "The comfort of God is so noble that no one receiveth it who seeketh comfort elsewhere."¹¹ The fourth thing a man must let go, if he wisheth to follow Christ, is spiritual natural comforts, which are generated in man, by detecting the distinction between spiritual and natural knowledge. Through his reason man turneth from natural things to spiritual images and forms, and shapes them so as to form a rational distinction, which giveth him great delight; this pleasure is natural, but it surpasseth all fleshly lust. But whoever tarries by this natural rational delight, hinders himself from the supernatural delight which God in His grace imparteth to the soul. Man often hoMs this natural joy to be the working of grace, but is grievously deceived in taking that to be of grace which only cometh from nature. Now, although this pleasure of the soul doth not blind so much as bodily pleasure, it must nevertheless be abandoned, for it hindereth perfecting. This pleasure pushed the heathen to the knowledge of natural truth. Whosoever stoppeth in this is therefore like the heathen, and not like unto Christ, and is not by any means a poor man, who followeth Christ.



3.

But it will here be asked, How shall man deny himself that these four things may be killed in him?

¹¹ Compare St. Bernard, *De diligendo Deo*, c. 4, No. 11, and the Monk of Heilbronn, p. 65.

4.

First, man should kill sin in himself through virtue; for just as man is removed from God by sin must he be brought nigh again unto God by virtue. St. Paul saith, “As ye gave up your members to serve sin in unrighteousness, so give ye up now also your members to serve virtue in righteousness.”¹² Man hath from his nature a leaning to sin, therefore he must exercise himself in all virtues if he wisheth to conquer his defects; but let no one believe that he is free from sins, unless he hath taken unto himself all the virtues.



5.

But who knoweth, wilt thou ask, if he have all virtues? I answer to this like John, who saith, “Whosoever is born of God cannot sin.”¹³ For in the same moment in which God the Father begetteth His Son in the soul, all sins and all unlikeness disappear, and all virtues are born in her in a likeness to God. In the same moment man standeth there without sins, in all virtues. Man also hath all virtues if he employs all the faculties he can use to virtue, so that he bringeth about virtue essentially in a perfect will, working no longer accidentally but essentially. But no one can do this save a pure, poor man, who hath stripped himself of all things for the sake of virtue, who cleaveth to God alone and worketh virtue in God.

6.

Hath a man virtue in such fulness that he needeth no more? This must be understood differently and in two ways. First, if the outer man hath virtue, he can never have too much, so that he needeth no more in number, magnitude, and purity. He must practise continually more and more virtues, and as long as he liveth on earth always grow and advance. He must strive that his virtues may become always greater and greater, and also that they may become purer, which must be his endeavour even to the end. Secondly, if the inner man have all the virtues, he needeth then no more in number; for whoever possesseth one virtue perfectly, he hath them all; he embraceth in the unity of his will all the virtues, so that none are any more wanting to him. But his love for virtue must grow, it must be always greater and greater for each virtue, it must also increase in purity, that the virtue may be always purer and purer. Thus he groweth in virtues until death, and overcometh sin with them.



12 [Rom vi. 19.](#)

13 [1 John iii. 9.](#)

7.

The second thing that man must shun is the love for creatures. Poverty of spirit is a going out of yourself and out of everything earthly. Thereby he despiseth creatures, is despised by them, and is thus set free. A truly poor man taketh nothing from creatures, but all from God, be it bodily or spiritual. God alone will be the Giver. And truly whoso receiveth something elsewhere than from God is no truly poor man, for a man can give nothing to a perfectly poor man, except it come as a gift from God, therefore is it also good, as God alone is the Giver, and a poor man can gladly leave all things in order that he may receive from God alone. His bodily friends withdraw their love from him, and the love that they still show him cometh from grace. Therefore the gift to a poor man hath such a great reward, for everything is given to him of grace; his life is, moreover, fruitful, as all who show him love reap a reward, and not only doth he come into heaven, but he leadeth also others with him. But whoso possesseth temporal things, to him all is given only out of natural love, and he is only loved from nature; if any one giveth to him it bringeth no reward, nor to him who taketh it, and the gift is lost for everlasting life, as no work of man is rewarding except only from grace. St. Augustine saith also, "Whoso giveth his gift, but not rightly, he sinneth." But you give not rightly if your gift be given where it is not needed; therefore Jesus also said, "Sell all and give to the poor." He doth not mean the rich.



8.

The third selfhood that man must resign is fleshly lust. This is overcome by steady internal contemplation of the Passion of our Lord. If a man immerse himself in the Passion of our Lord, he is purified, and in this purity a light is kindled that burneth and killeth all luxury of the body. A spiritual divine rapture is begotten which surpasseth all bodily lust. Whoso wisheth to have this divine rapture, let him lay his mouth at the wounds of our Lord and suck them in. Truly, if he always doeth this, he overfloweth with divine delight, so that he wondereth whence this great grace cometh. The wounds of our Lord are full of sweetness, and all men, if they knew it, would turn to the Passion of our Lord, and if a man did not this for the sake of God, he would do it on his own account, for all men desire comfort. But seek it where you list, nowhere shall you find it save in the Passion of our Lord. The men who do this have heaven here and there, on earth and above, and if God were not to give them heaven in any other way, He would have given them enough to reward them for all they have endured for God's sake.



9.

Many a man saith, I have no grace. Nothing is to be accused for this save that thou dost not seek it rightly. If thou seekest it rightly in the Passion of our Lord, thou wouldst always find grace and all comfort. Even though it be bitter to thee at first and giveth no delight, this is a sign that thou art still burthened with bodily luxury, which must be rooted out by bitterness. If this bodily pleasure is punished it passeth away, and a spiritual, divine pleasure is born, so that thou hast never felt so great rapture. But if thou fliest the first bitterness, thou wilt never be emptied of luxury. Man can therefore gladly suffer a short bitterness in order to be free from that bitterness which lasteth for ever.

10.

A man who earnestly considereth the Passion of our Lord, from him its fruit also will not be hid. For if he ascendeth the tree of the cross, the fruit thereof beckoneth him on, if he be willing to have it. All on the cross is full of fruit, and more than all tongues could in truth proclaim. Nay, angels' tongues could not describe the overflowing grace that is there hidden in the Passion of our Lord. Blessed are those who have found this treasure, but unhappy they to whom this treasure is hidden, and who do not turn to it that the treasure may be revealed to them. And it is the living fruit of living Paradise. Whoso eat of this fruit shall never die. Had Adam eaten the lawful fruit and not that which was forbidden, he would have remained deathless. The same thing cometh to pass with us. If we eat the fruit of the cross, which is permitted us, and leave that which is forbidden, that is, all natural lust, then we shall become deathless. But if we neglect the fruit of life and take the fruit of death, we become in truth mortal, and shall be driven out of Paradise. Now they who have tasted this fruit desire always to eat more and more, and they are always hungering after it, and are never satisfied so long as they live in time, and in order to satisfy this their hunger they run with great desire to the Sacrament, and their hunger is so great that God could not satisfy them with all that He hath created, but only with Himself. Nor can they ever be satisfied so long as they live in time, for they desire always more.

11.

Priests should have care for such a hungry soul, and should give her God's Body, that she may not die of hunger. It is often said, He who suffereth a man to die of bodily hunger when he might well have helped the sufferer, would be guilty of the death of that man. Much more is a man guilty towards souls when he letteth them die of hunger. For just as the soul is much nobler than the body, so much more are you guilty if you allow the soul to suffer hunger. These men that thus hunger are often severely blamed, because they go often to



receive the Body of our Lord, but in truth he who really saw their hunger would not blame them. The man who blameth them is not willing to see his own blindness, and his small degree of love. He doeth like a man who seeth another sitting on his own tree, from which hangeth a fulness of fruit, and who upbraideth him because he eateth his own fruit. For thus do also these divine men; they sit upon their own tree of the cross, which hath a fulness of the noblest fruit of the body of our Lord. For the Sacrament of the Body of our Lord is the fruit of the holy cross, and whoso would eat its fruit with profit must break it off from the cross by steadfast internal contemplation of the Passion of our Lord. And other men cannot endure, and they must needs judge it But their sins are guilty of this. But he who willet to consider the Passion of our Lord in all earnestness, let him go joyfully to the Table of our Lord, for it is useful to him, and he will become rich in graces. Nay, if he could bring all men to it, they would all be saved and perfect. Thus man overcometh all bodily lusts in the Passion of our Lord, and not only bodily lusts, but all things that are not God. For there is nothing, however great it be, if it is brought into the Passion of our Lord it passeth away into nothingness. For it is a glowing fire in which all inequality vanisheth and is consumed. As Christ saith, "I am come to send fire upon earth."¹⁴ Now the fire that our Lord sendeth, that is the heat of divine love, which He draweth from the wounds of His heart. And whosoever thirsteth let him hold his mouth to it, and he will take draughts such that he will never more thirst for temporal things.



12.

This man doth not need much preaching, save to come here and stay here; for if he entereth thoroughly into the Passion of our Lord, he is so laid hold of that he can no more turn away from God. They who have come to this thank God greatly, for God hath chosen them from among men, like our Lord chose St. Peter, St. John, and St. James, and led them apart from the other disciples to a particular place, and revealed to them the secret of His Passion, and said, "My soul is troubled, even unto death."¹⁵ And that was a sign that He loved them above the other disciples. And so also the men who busy themselves with the Passion of our Lord are loved by God above other men. For they hold their mouth to the source whence divine love always floweth without interruption, and they will overflow in such wise that they can no longer please themselves; they give up all outward and inward things in order that they may be able to give in return a corresponding love to God.



¹⁴ [Luke xii. 49.](#)

¹⁵ [Matt. xxvi. 38.](#)

13.

And these are the right lovers of God, who love God with their whole heart. And they who love God with their whole heart give up all bodily things for the sake of God; and the heart is bodily; thus, when they turn away their heart from all bodily things to God, this is called loving with the whole heart. They also love with their whole soul; that is, when they give up their life for the sake of God; for the soul giveth life to the body, and this same life they give entirely to God. They further love God with all their strength; that is, they ordain all their powers according to the highest discretion, and they direct all of them to one end, and with this effort they penetrate into God. Arrived here all the powers keep silence and rest; this also is the highest work that the powers can perform, when they are inactive and let God only work. They also love God with all their mind; that is, when their mind soareth above all created things, and penetrates into the uncreated good, which is God, and then loseth itself in the secret darkness of the unknown God.¹⁶ Therein it loseth itself and escapeth, so that it can no more come out. As a likeness, let us take that of a man who casteth a stone into the sea, where no bottom can be found: as the stone must continually sink, but would reach no ground, and it could not be fetched out again, unless it were lying still somewhere, which, however, is not the case, as it has no soundings, so also it happeneth with the mind which hath cast itself into the unfathomable Godhead, he sinketh away, but findeth no ground. No one can draw him out again, and he hath no final ground where he can stand and remain. He hath broken away from the created, therefore also no creature can reach him, and thus he hovereth everlastingly in God; he can no more come out of the Godhead than the stone by its own force can come up again to the surface. Sensuous men cannot understand this, and say, So long as a man liveth in time he can always fall. This is quite true; but the men we spoke of do not live in time, for their “dwelling is in heaven,”¹⁷ as St. Paul saith. Whosoever cometh to this dwelling must stay there. Take the following simile: If a man be bound by such strong bonds which he cannot rend, he could not, people will say, become free, and get loose unless he were helped. Thus is the mind bound by God; and if all creatures united their strength, they could not rend this bond. The mind hath become so powerless over itself that of itself it is not able to rend the bond.



14.

To this it might be said, If this is so, the freedom of the will is taken away. I answer, the freedom of the will is not taken away but given to it, for then is the will quite free when it

¹⁶ When the German Mystics speak of being lost in the darkness of God, they always have in view the *contemplatio in caligine*. This theme is most clearly treated by Sandaeus, *Theol. Myst.* p. 201. Mogunt. 1627.

¹⁷ [Phil. iii. 20.](#)

cannot bear anything save what God willeth. We say that a king is free who overcometh all his enemies and ruleth uncontrolled in his kingdom, and he is not called a free king who is conquered by his enemies and driven out of his kingdom. Thus also the will is a free king when it overcometh all its enemies and ruleth uncontrolled, that is, “in God, in whom he then can do all things,”¹⁸ as St. Paul saith. And thus man overcometh all things in the Passion of our Lord, in which of necessity all besides must pass away into nothingness.

15.

When now man is thus prepared with all virtues and with a poor life, and with the Passion of our Lord, he cometh to the third degree of perfection, in which he heareth, in a silent, secret speaking, the everlasting Word which God the Father speaketh in the ground of souls; and this speaking driveth out all created images, so that a man discardeth his selfhood in all spiritual, natural pleasures, which consist in attractive created images and forms, and he will only hear His eternal Word, in which he will know and love God in the most perfect manner. Therefore Christ said, “Whoso loveth Me heareth My word,”¹⁹ that is, when God speaketh in him, and he suffereth it. And this is the highest work of man, that he suffereth God and hindereth Him not in His work.

16.

It might be asked, What is God’s working? There are two kinds of work in God—a working within and a working outwardly.²⁰ The working inward is God’s being and nature; the outward working is the creature. And after the fashion that the creature hath flowed out of God, so also must it flow into Him again; and therefore God worketh in souls that He may bring them to the first origin from which they have flowed, for by their works they cannot go in again. It is therefore absolutely necessary that man should come to this, that he can receive the work of God, in order that by this working he may return to God. Therefore Christ said, “One thing is needful, without which no man can come to God.”

17.

Here some one might say, Since now man with his work cannot come to God, what use is there then in his working? To this I say, that man with his work much more hindereth than furthereth himself in coming to God. For all that man doeth of himself is defective,

18 [Phil. iv. 13.](#)

19 [John xiv. 23.](#)

20 According to the scholastic expression: Actio immanens, actio transiens.

and with that he cannot come to God. For as the creature is faulty, it worketh faulty works; and therefore if man is to come to God, he must be empty of all work and let God work alone. Of this Christ spake, "What the Father doth not plant is cast out and perisheth."²¹ Therefore it is quite the best thing for man that he should be empty of all work. For if he were empty of all work, he would be a mere instrument of God, so that God might work with him without all hindering. Now, all that God willeth to have from us is that we be inactive, and let Him be the working Master. If we were altogether inactive we should be perfect men. For all that is good is the work of God, and if God doth not work it, it is not good. Therefore said St. James, "The best and perfect gifts are from the Father of Lights."²²

18.

Now, it will be asked, How is a man to know if his work is of himself or from God? Shortly be it said: there are three supernatural divine virtues, Faith, Hope, and Love or Charity; whatever increaseth these virtues is from God, but what diminisheth them is a sign that it is the work of man; whoso observeth these things internally knoweth that it is so. For what man worketh of himself, he applieth to himself and to time, and thus doth not increase the supernatural virtue; but what God worketh, draweth a man away from himself to eternity, and this increaseth Faith, Hope, and Charity.



19.

What is the divine work? It is twofold, what God worketh in the soul, one the work of grace, the other essential and divine. By the work of grace man is prepared for the essential. God worketh through His grace in man, when He draweth him away from sin and leadeth him on to virtue; if man leaveth sin and exerciseth virtue, this is a grace of God; by grace God maketh man well-pleasing, it driveth him away from all defective things on to virtue, so that with it he obtaineth all virtues; thus man attaineth to a perfect life, in which he knoweth the holiest will of God, and liveth entirely after it. The second work that God worketh in the soul is essential; when man cometh to this, that he hath obtained all accidental virtue, and so now arriveth at the essence of virtue, then God worketh all virtue in him in an essential way, namely: the Heavenly Father begetteth His Son in the soul, and this birth raiseth the spirit above all created things into God. Now is the spirit without grace, for grace is a creature, but the spirit is raised above all creatures. Nevertheless grace leaveth not the man, but it directeth and ordereth the forces of man and cherisheth the divine birth in the essence of the soul. Now what God so worketh is an essential work, a work raised above all



21 [John xv. 6.](#)

22 [James i. 17.](#)

grace and reason, a work in the light of glory;²³ the spirit of man hath now passed over to the Godhead. Then the essence seeth essentially, and essence giveth essence and the spirit worketh all things with God in an essential manner; his work is the work of God, and God's work is his work. For when two are one they have also one working. This work the reason cannot grasp through imagery, therefore is it a work above human reason.

20.

The reason recognises full well that this working is a work raised above all created things, the noblest work, whereby alone the spirit can be blessed and saved; it is always striving after this essential working, if possible to know and grasp it. But the reason will never seize hold on it in time, for if she would do so, this would give heaven, in time. And although she cannot comprehend it in time, she yet striveth continually after it, and standeth not still until death. By this act of hastening after the divine work, she empties herself of all created images, and with a supernatural light she presseth into the mystery of the hidden Godhead, and through this knowledge she can no longer know, and through this love she can no longer love, which means that she no longer knoweth after the fashion of a creature, but after a divine fashion, and that she loveth not with her own love, but according to the love of God, of which St. Paul spake when he said, "I live, yet not I, but Christ in me."²⁴ The spirit is dead to earth, and henceforth liveth only godly. Whosoever therefore despiseth the reason doeth great wrong to her. For all things desire life, and when the reason recognises that all temporal things are deathly, and that God alone is life, she must needs turn herself to God, for she naturally desireth life. And it is much more natural for the reason to turn to God than to creatures. For all creatures cannot fill her but God only, and therefore is it more natural that she should turn to Him who giveth to her rather than to that which taketh away from her.



21.

The reason is not guilty of this, that man chooseth the earthy and leaveth God, for if reason were present this would not happen. For what the creature chooseth instead of God,

²³ Lumen gloriae. Compare § 144, Part I., and § 72, Part II. Denifle affirms that the Schoolmen never took the light of glory in this acceptation. By most of them it was regarded as equivalent with *qualitas creata animae per modum habitus inhaerens, quae cum beatorum mente ad Dei visionem concurrat*. Denifle admits, however, that the majority of theologians differ in determining how this *concursum* is effected. Comp. Joannes a St. Thoma. *Curs. Theol.* i. 275 and foil. ed. Lugd. 1663. Suarez, *De attributis Dei negativis*, c. 15 (opp. tom. i. p. 101 et. seq., ed. Par. 1856).

²⁴ Gal. ii. 20.

is done by sensuality and not by the reason, and therefore David saith, “Ye shall not be as the horses and mules, which have no reason;”²⁵ and whoso chooseth the creature instead of God, is not a rational man, but is as an irrational beast. If yet the reason sticketh to created things, images and forms, this happeneth because she recognises the eternal God in created things, as St. Paul saith, “In the visible things are the invisible* seen.”²⁶ What preventeth the reason to reach God through created things, is the pleasure attaching to created images, which they generated in her; this is natural pleasure, which blindeth her so that she cannot recognise the divine truth; and this must be avoided. It is fancied, however, that this joy is of grace, and therefore many men tarry in it. These people are also yclept natural, rational men, and yet they have not true reason. For the right reason seeketh God, and removes from creatures whether they be bodily or spiritual, and whoso cometh to this reason is a right, rational man, whose reason is shone through with divine light, in which you know the Godhead and forget the earthy. And whosoever giveth himself into this, hath a foretaste and a delight of everlasting life. This rapture driveth the reason away from all natural pleasure to God. And there she receiveth her rapture, as Christ saith, “Whosoever eateth me hungereth not any more”²⁷ after creaturely pleasures. And this must be thus understood, how the spirit in this state is raised above grace and above reason, and above all pleasure in God, and standeth thus in naked poverty of all created things, and hath vision only of the divine essence, which is raised above all grace, and above all reason, and knoweth nothing of itself, nor of created things, but only of God. And man obtaineth this perfection, if he followeth the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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22.

The other thing that driveth a man to a poor life, is the perfection of virtue. For virtue is never filled up in full measure, nor followed in the highest, except a man strip himself of the love of all temporal possession, till he exerciseth himself in all virtue, and lose the image of all virtue, and cometh to the faculty of no longer being able to work any virtue outwardly, but only essentially and not accidentally. For thus is virtue brought to the highest. This causeth, that all things are small to such a man, and virtue alone great; he turneth easily all things to virtue; he exerciseth himself in all virtues till he can do no more, and becometh so poor and despised that no one desireth any more a virtue from him. Thus without any guilt he is emptied of all outward virtue; and then without any hindering he can turn to God, which was not the case before.

25 [Ps. xxxii. 9.](#)

26 [Rom. i. 20.](#)

27 Compare [John vi. 35.](#)

23.

So long as a man hath he must give, and when he hath nothing more he is free. Freedom is much nobler than giving was before, for he giveth no more in accident but in essence, and giveth no more one gift but all gifts, and giveth no more to one man but to all men. And his gift is like unto the gift of God, therefore also a teacher saith, "It is good when a man imparts his property and cometh to the help of his fellow-men; but it is far better to give all and to follow Christ in a poor life." And never will you have virtue in the most perfect degree save if you have given all things for the sake of virtue. I take the case of mercy. He who is entirely merciful keepeth nothing at all. And whoso keepeth something is not perfectly but only partially merciful, and in a fragmentary way. And whoso wisheth to be perfectly humble must exercise himself in all humble works that are required. Whoso doeth not this is not thoroughly humble. Thus let men take all virtues; whoso wisheth to have them in perfection must give himself up to them so long till he is poor of all creatures and possessions, so that no one asketh anything more of him. Therefore the perfection of virtue consisteth in poverty and in nothing else. _____



In the second place, perfection of virture driveth a man to a poor life.

24.

It might now be said, If a man is weak by nature, and keepeth the things that are required as necessary, if this doth not hinder him from the perfection of virtue? I say in answer, If the man is weak, so that he require this, and keepeth something that he needeth, this is not against virtue. For virtue hath a proper order, and if he gave away this necessity he would act against order, and that he cometh to his own help is as right as if he gave it to a poor man. But it would be much more perfect, if he were sound, that he should thus strip himself of all temporal things, so that he had nothing left when he became sick. Thus the perfection of virtue consisteth in resigning all things; therefore we should give up these gladly, in order to be able to possess all virtue.



In the third place, this ought to drive man to a poor life, that he may die to himself and to all creatures, and God alone may live in him.

25.

The third cause why a man should give himself up to a poor life is in order that he die to himself and all creatures, and that God alone may live in him. Now such a poor life is living in death, and in this death is blessedness, as St. John saith, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.”²⁸ Therefore we should make ourselves poor, that we may fundamentally die, and in this dying be made alive again. Therefore Christ said, “Unless the grain of corn fall into the ground and die it cannot bring forth fruit. But if it die it bringeth forth much fruit.”²⁹ So also is it in truth. Whoso wisheth to have all the fruit of life must suffer all manner of death. And no one can have all manner of death save a poor man. Therefore a teacher said, “Whoso liveth after the Gospel hath cross and martyrdom.” Therefore no one can have the fruit of a right perfect life save a poor man, wherefore Christ said, “Whosoever cometh after Me, let him sell all that he hath and give to the poor, and follow after Me.” This selling means the self-denial of man; the giving away is virtue, the following of Christ is fundamentally to die, so that dying completely to himself, God may live perfectly in him. Therefore is a poor life useful in order that we may always die. And whoso doth not entirely die cannot either fully live.



26.

I hear it said, How can this be, that a poor man entirely dieth, for he is still seen to live like other men, and he is even seen cheerful? To this I answer and say, that a Christianly poor man dieth always; whether he eat or drink, or wake or sleep, all is a suffering to him. How this happens, that he liveth much as the common of men, this is merely an ordering of the outer man, according to which necessity he cannot attend much to God, and this is his dying. For according to the inner man he would wish always to busy himself with God and leave all other things. Moreover if he testifieth himself to be cheerful, this joy hath nothing common with time, nor with any creatures. For it springeth alone from God, and therefore is it without defects, and doth not oppose the dying of the creature. Now although a poor man would perhaps gladly help himself, so that he might not entirely die, God will

28 [Rev. xiv. 13.](#)

29 [John xii. 24.](#)

not allow it. For his future must be his through dying, and what he hath he hath by dying. His death are also manifold and without number, for he dieth every moment. Thus must a poor man die. Blessed is the man who can die all manner of deaths; but this dying is of such a nature that no man can rightly understand it, and he is the most rational who understandeth this dying the best. For no one understandeth death save he to whom God hath revealed it.

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27.

But why must we always die if we would be blessed? There are two matters: One is, that our nature since Adam's fall is full of sinful propensity, and this propensity must be rooted out and die. And as this can never be absolutely rooted out we must continually die. It cometh to pass indeed that a man die according to his rational will, and that he willeth not otherwise than God willeth. As St. Paul saith, "You are dead in Christ, for your life is hidden in Christ."³⁰ But the sensuous will, with its sensuous inclination, can never die absolutely in time. Now the rational will must continually kill this sensuous will, so that sensuality be always under the direction of the higher powers, and these be directed to God. Whoso standeth thus standeth in the justice in which God created Adam, and whoso standeth in this justice he would stand without any sins, mortal or venial. And this can by no means happen unless God draweth man to it. Therefore a man cannot be absolutely without defects, and therefore must he continually die. Another reason why man must continually die is the perpetual onslaughts of the evil spirit and of the world striving to make us fall. For whatever the station of a man he is attacked in it. And no one in time is free from this. Then must we at all times fight against this, and die that we may overcome, for whoso overcometh and dieth shall be crowned, as St. Paul saith;³¹ and the deaths are without number that we die in the combat, for the evil spirit circumvents us with manifold snares, and we must always be on our guard to resist him. It often happeneth that an image is presented to man which he beleiveth to proceed from grace, though it is from the evil spirit, as St. Paul saith, "The evil spirit is clothed as an angel of light."³² He presents this image to us in a pleasant light, and yet it is evil in itself. And those who have much to do with images and visions are often deceived in this way. For it is often from the evil spirit, and now in this time more than it ever was. For the truth is revealed and disclosed in the Holy Scriptures, and therefore it is not needful that the truth should be revealed to us in another way. And whoso taketh truth otherwise than out of the Gospel he is sick in faith, and not much is to be thought of his life,

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30 [Col. iii. 3.](#)

31 [2 Tim. ii. 5.](#)

32 [2 Cor. xi. 14.](#)

for our life is only from the Gospel, as Paul saith, “Our Lord hath begotten us again in His Gospel.”³³ And whoso is begotten elsewhere than in the Gospel is not a legitimate child, but a bastard. Thus, therefore, the evil spirits have often presented man an image that appeareth good in order that he may take false, sham truth to be the real truth. To this we must die. The cause why God formerly revealed Himself in visions³⁴ was this, that the truth was hidden, and this was necessary. But it is not now necessary, and therefore it happeneth very seldom from God. Therefore we must always die to that which is unlike simple divine truth. For simple divine truth is a pure intuition of the soul into the being of God, and we must die to all that hindereth the spirit in this. And the holy Evangel leadeth us to this. And whoso is led into it otherwise than by the teaching of Jesus Christ he is a thief and a murderer, and is a follower of the Final or Antichrist. Therefore let him who doth not wish to be deceived hold to the teaching of Jesus Christ; then let others teach what they will, nothing can injure him.

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28.

A man is often judged as one standing on his own opinion, who would, however, gladly live after the teaching of Jesus. He should not mind this, for it is fair that he should be so judged. Whoso doth not live in the most, perfect manner after the teaching of our Lord standeth on Ids own selfhood. Let him take unto himself humility as much as he will, yet he is not humble, and his humility is more a holding fast to himself than a denial of himself, for true self-denial abideth only in the Gospel, and whoso doth not live in the most perfect manner according to it is never thoroughly humble, nor dieth entirely to himself. Therefore let every man look and see how much he liveth in the Gospel, for so much is he advanced in humility and dead to himself.

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33 St. Paul only says, [1 Cor. iv. 15](#), “I have begotten you through the Gospel.”

34 Denifle admits that Tauler often assumes the existence of visions, but he never in his sermons gives a theory of them. Denifle adds that the author of the “Following” often alludes to them, but while affirming that this same author depreciates visions too much, admits that since Christ these phenomena are not necessary, and that the Catholic Church never taught that a Divine Faith must be attached to them, invariably associating only a human faith with them. Those who, like Preger, see in the doctrine of visions “a serious sign of erroneous belief,” can judge from Benedict XIV. (*De Server. Dei Beatificat et Beatorum canoniz.* Venet. 1764, lib. iii. c. 50. sq. p. 358) how soundly the Church judges on this point. D. Schram treats at great length of visions (*Institut. theologiae mysticae*, Paris 1868), where you find most of the theologians and Mystics cited who treat of them.

29.

But what use doth it bring if a man alway dieth? It bringeth a fivefold use. First, man draweth nigh thereby to his first innocence. For he was created without all sins, but when he fell into these, he became overladen with all manner of sins. But these defects must be rooted out by dying; the more he dieth to these the more he draweth nigh to his first innocence, and if he cometh again into this nobility, he is without defects. If man had not fallen his nobility would have remained immortal, and he would have suffered no punishment. They are best in this who have the most died to themselves, for in that death and denial of self a new delight springeth up, for the death that man suffereth thereby openeth up the hidden joy. Christ also said, “Take My yoke upon you—that is, My Passion—and ye will find rest unto your souls.”³⁵ The second use is, that in each such dying a new life ariseth to man, and with this life every time a new love, so that man is overflowed with grace, and his reason is enlightened with divine light, his will is glowing with the fire of divine love; he groweth continually, so that he becometh rich in graces and his reason so clear that no false light can any more deceive him, and he can perfectly distinguish all truth, as far as it is necessary. He is quite inflamed with divine love, so that no one can any more separate him from God. In this state was St. Paul when he said, “Who can separate us from the love of God?”³⁶ He meant to say, No one. Whoso wisheth to be receptive of the gifts of God, let him always take heed to this, to be able to die; let him suffer all manner of deaths and to him will be all gifts, for through every dying he receiveth in return a special gift. They who thus die also become so rich that no one can compute their riches. Truly if we knew what use lies in dying, we should hasten to it as if all the highest worldly dignities were about to be given to us. But what is most useful to us we fly from the most, while we always seek what is most hurtful. It is said that those who are in heaven, before they would do without the smallest part of the reward they have obtained and which they have received through their suffering, would come down to earth again and suffer till the day of judgment. Thirdly, if a man is quite pure he is emptied of all defective accident, and receptive of God alone. God is present in all things; if you accomplish all things so, then God only remaineth to us; but this purity must be sought by dying, and if the soul is freed from everything else, she is in a condition to bring forth the Son of God within her. And as God the Father begetteth His Son in the Godhead, thus also the Son of God is born in a pure soul, and she is again born in God. Therefore Jesus said, “Except ye be born again, ye can in no wise enter into the

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35 [Matt. xi. 29.](#)

36 [Rom. viii. 35.](#)

kingdom of God.”³⁷ The fourth use ariseth if God is born in the soul,³⁸ when God ravisheth the spirit from the soul and casteth her into the darkness of His Godhead, so that she becometh quite like unto God. She loseth the shape of what is created, and is formed into the formless image of the Son in the Godhead, so that the man becometh a son of grace, as he is a son of nature. Fifthly, if the soul be raised into God, it reigneth also with God; of which St. Paul saith, “If we die with Christ, so shall we also reign with Him.”³⁹ Thus the spirit can do all things with God; he commandeth all with God, he ordereth and leadeth all with God; what God omits, he omitteth; what God doeth, he doeth with God; he worketh all things with God. This unspeakable perfection we obtain through dying.

30.

Some one will ask, Can then no one die without external poverty? I give this answer, So long as a man hath temporal things, he often useth them without dying to his nature; but if he is poor in temporal things, outwardly as well as inwardly, all is turned into grace for him. What was natural to him before becometh now of grace, and he dieth alway; for whoso groweth alway in grace, he must always die to nature. As, however, all things do not become of grace to man, if he hath not yet freed himself from all things, and they are still natural, he doth not therefore continually die. Hence no one can entirely die save a pure and poor man. If a man hath what is his necessity, this doth not kill nature; but if he have want and must beg for much, this killeth nature and increaseth grace; he also who always suffereth want dieth continually. Poor men are so rich in grace, that they do not know it, for their dying is without number, therefore also the grace is incalculable that God secretly imparteth to them. It often cometh to pass that a man believeth that he is abandoned by God and all creatures, and hath no grace. But want and self-denial entirely kill nature, and he is filled with unspeakable grace; for as is the dying so is the grace, and blessed are they who have chosen God in a dying life, for their riches are excessive great in graces. If poverty were useful to no other end than that man should continually die, and thereby receive innumerable graces, it ought to be chosen if only on that account. Whoever doth not love it showeth that he hath no divine love. For if he had divine love, he would then also love the image of our Lord Jesus Christ; His image was poverty and suffering. Whoso doth not love poverty doth not love God also. Thereby should a man know if he belongeth to heaven or to hell from

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³⁷ [John iii. 3.](#)

³⁸ Richard of St. Victor, speaking of this *divisio animae et spiritus*, says, “*hanc autem*” (divisionem); “*operari in nobis solet vivus ille Dei sermo et efficax . . . spiritus ab anima scinditur . . . et in eandem imaginem (Divinae gloriae) transformatur*” (De exterm. c. 18, p. 33).

³⁹ [Rom. viii. 8.](#)

his love for the poor or the rich, and whether he preferreth to be with the poor rather than the rich. Whoever occupies himself much with rich folk doth not show that he is a purely poor man; for like loveth its like; whom he is closest to he loveth, cleaveth to him, and goeth about with him.

31.

The fourth ground that should prompt man to a poor life is the perfection of a contemplative life. So long as a man is chained to temporal things, he must have an active life, for he hath much to work. As long as the affair lasteth he must work, but whoso would free himself from it before he hath completed all outer works, he would have an imperfect self-denial, and fail very much. For it is laziness to be against God and the truth by such a neglect of virtue. A teacher saith on this point, "He raiseth his hands in vain to God who doth not offer them to the poor if he could." Neither true freedom nor contemplation take place in the possession of temporal things, for just as much as a man hath in temporal things, to that same measure he lacketh in everlasting things. For temporal and eternal are opposed to one another. Whoever hath the one must leave the other. A contemplative life is raised above all that is temporal, and only an enjoyment of eternal things; whoever therefore wisheth to lead such a life must needs leave all that is temporal. Thus if a man hath turned himself only to God, the best part, He then alone is his object. He entereth into God and withdraweth from all creatures, so that no one can speak either evil or good of him, as he is entirely hid in God. These men are the friends of God. Verily, no man can hide himself in God, except he who is quite free from creatures, for whoso still cleaveth to the created is also known to it; but if you are free from the creature outwardly and inwardly, then God only knoweth us, and the creature forgetteth us. When these men of contemplation sink themselves in God and hide in Him, they are strangers to all the created, they see God without any hindering. But others cannot do this who still cleave to earthly things, for they would be too often impeded in it. Therefore a perfectly contemplative life is a purely poor life, emptied of all that is temporal.

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32.

People often conceive, too, that if a man lead a contemplative life and seeth God without a veil, yet saw that his neighbour suffereth want, he should give up his contemplation and come to his help. They who still have temporal possessions must do this, for it they do it not their contemplation availeth not indeed, they commit sin; but they who are free from all temporal things, and therefore have nothing with which to help their fellowman, are also set free from this external work. This freedom is much nobler than the occupation with creatures; Christ also praised the inactivity of Mary, for our Lord only goeth about with

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such persons. This going about is nothing else than the dwelling of the lover with the beloved. But God cannot dwell anywhere, save in a soul that is free from the earthly. They who possess such freedom walk with God, and God with them. Solomon also saith, in the Book of Love (the Canticles), "He kissed me with the kiss of His mouth."⁴⁰ The soul is kissed by God when she is raised above all earthly things, and only beholdeth the countenance of God; then God inclineth His countenance and kisseth her, and His kissing is nothing else than a union of love with love. One beholdeth the other, and neither can do anything without the other; they are quite united by love, of which bond of love St. Bernard saith, "How sweet is this bond of love; it maketh the poor rich, but the rich who hath it not is poor."

40 [Solomon's Song i. 2.](#)

In the fourth place, the perfection of a contemplative life should impel a man to a poor life.

33.

Here it might be asked, If it be possible that rich people be united by this bond of divine love, and if they could be partakers of a contemplative life? I answer, So long as man cleaves to creatures and to time, he hath not divine love, for the tie of divine love breaketh every tie with creatures, and whoso is still bound by these creaturely ties showeth that he is not yet enveloped with the divine tie, as St. Austin saith, "If the heart is seized hold of by divine love, in that case the vanity of creatures finds no place in it." Further, genuine love is a foil owing of the beloved; what he ordereth and counselleth, true love cloeth it all, it omitteth nothing, but it accomplisheth all. But the rich do not follow the counsel of our Lord, therefore also they have not the right love. They may indeed show works of love, but these do not spring up from the ground of divine love; for if they did spring from it they could easily work one and all works of love, as St. Austin saith, "To the God-loving man nothing is too difficult, for he can do all in Him who strengtheneth him," But as they are not capable of all works of love, they have not the divine love. Divine love is such a source that whoso holdeth his mouth to this source overfloweth with love, must avoid all creatures, and cleave to God only. St. Austin saith, "To a soul that loveth God all creatures are too narrow, so that they can no longer tarry in any of them." Yea, it is the nature of divine love to give up creatures and cleave to God. St. Paul⁴¹ wished to prove that he loved God when he said, "Behold, Lord, we have left all things and followed after Thee."⁴² Otherwise he could not testify his love. This also must, we have if we wish to love God, namely, we must give up the earthly and cleave to God. Whoso leaveth the earthly the most, he loveth God the most. Whoso doeth it not at all, he cannot say that he loveth God. All can testify this who love God, if they are thoroughly inflamed by the fire of divine love, so that this faith destroyeth all that is not God.



34.

Some say that you can retain temporal things if a man doth not let his selfhood (his ego) cleave to them, and cleaveth to the will of God and not his own will. This is a statement in which there is not much truth. Whoso loveth the will of God right well, he loveth it not according to his own head but according to the teaching of Jesus Christ, who certainly knew the will best. If we therefore wish to fulfil the will of God we must follow the teaching of Jesus.

41 Probably by mistaken transcription for St. Peter.—*Translator*.

42 [Luke xviii. 28.](#)

But His teaching was to leave all and follow Him; whoever doeth not this hath not struck root in the ground of divine love, as Christ saith, “Whoso loveth Me, he keepeth the words which I have taught him.”⁴³ A true lover accomplisheth the counsel of his beloved rather than his commandment; the indifferent lover halteth at the commandment, but suffereth the counsel to go over him.

35.

Some may say indeed, If our Lord Himself were on earth He would not require a man to leave all externally. I say, If He were on earth He would say the same thing that He spake to His disciples, and no one would be excepted. He said, “If thou wouldst be perfect, sell all and follow Me.” No one is excluded or excepted from this commandment, and he who doeth it not must not lay claim to any perfection. Divine love is a force which raiseth a man above all things to the highest degree of perfection, and who standeth on this highest degree he hath the true love. But no one can arrive at this if he have not passed through the lowest degrees. The very lowest degree of divine love is to despise all temporal things, the second to despise himself, the third to deny and give up all, whether bodily or spiritual, which disturbs union between God and man. Thus only doth man arrive at right perfection. Whoever hath not climbed the first degree can arrive at none of the others.

36.

What work of love then do rich people exercise if they [have] not divine love? This love is of two kinds, natural, which hath no reward, or the love of grace, which indeed hath a reward, but is not perfect, as it can increase and decrease; on the other hand, perfect love always groweth and never falleth off. But only they who are emptied of all earthly possess this love; temporal things are changeable, whoever cleaveth to them is also changeable with them in this changeableness, therefore it is no perfection, therefore also they can have no perfect love. If they have not this they also cannot live a contemplative life, for a perfect love is only begotten in a pure contemplation of the Divine Being; whatever fails a man in this contemplation he lacketh also in true love, for it hath nowhere else its origin than in the Father or the Son. If the eye of the reason is pure, and directed away from all that is not God, then it can perfectly contemplate the Divine Being; but if this eye is impure, troubled through temporal things, it cannot contemplate it, for “the light is unbearable to a sick eye,” as St. Augustine saith.⁴⁴ Whoso is overburdened with temporal things can lead no contemplative life, for his eye is impure and sick. But whoso wisheth to arrive at the life in which

43 In [John xiv. 23](#) Christ only saith: Si quis diligit me, sermonem meum servabit.

44 St. Augustine, Confess. 7. 16: Oculis aegris odiosa lux, quae puris amabilis.

lieth the best must strip himself of all external possession and lead a purely poor life; thus he attaineth to the highest degree of perfection. Whoso withdraweth himself from a poor life also neglects the God-contemplating life, for contemplation and poverty stand on the same degree. Among all things there are only two, God and the creature; he who is poor in creatures is rich in God, but these riches are the immediate contemplation of God; our whole blessedness lieth in this, that we know and love God immediately.

37.

If now a man ought to give up all things to arrive at a contemplative life, what use doth it then bring? An unspeakable use, as St. Paul saith, "I have seen such things as it is not lawful to speak of."⁴⁵ Among others, I will mention eight kinds of uses. First, you do all works without much labour; labour only occasioneth an overlading with earthly things; whoso is free from them is also emancipated from trouble. As now a truly contemplative man is freed from all that is earthly, he is also emancipated from this labour. Secondly, what other men work accidentally these men work in essential divine truth; in this he worketh all works. But they who are burdened with the creature work in natural accidents. Thirdly, what others work partially a thoroughly internal man worketh entirely. He accomplished all works in one and one work in all, because he is united with God; thus he hath one working with Him, and as God accomplisheth all in one work and one work in all so doeth likewise such a man. All good works are proper to him as if he himself had worked them, for Christ saith, "All that I have received from My Father I have given unto you."⁴⁶ But His receiving and His giving are all equally good. Fourthly, what other men first get from an active life these have already a foretaste of in time; but as their spirit is raised above time and all earthly things the delight and rapture of things eternal is manifested to it; this spreads so in the spirit that it passeth over to the body, and thus it hath a foretaste of everlasting life, as Christ saith, "From your body will flow living water, flowing into everlasting life." Fifthly, whoever attaineth to a true contemplative life, him God draweth to Himself, revealing unto him His divine being; He confirmeth him so that he shall no more fall off from Him. If Lucifer had been thus drawn into his being, so that he had rightly known God, he would not have fallen, for the being of God is so rapturous that whoever knoweth it rightly in the light of glory would not possibly be able to turn away from God. But God also giveth it only to him who will dwell eternally with Him. Whoso falleth into sins hath never known God in His light, therefore also Jesus said to St. John, "I will that he remain so,"⁴⁷ and to Mary

45 [2 Cor. xii. 4.](#)

46 The passage in St. John is: "Verba, quae dedisti mihi, dedi eis," but the author mixes up the previous verse with it.

47 [John xxi. 22.](#)

Magdalene, "She hath chosen the better part, which shall never be taken from her."⁴⁸ To whom the best part is given it remaineth eternally, for it is no accidental but an essential gift that abideth alway with man. Sixthly, it bringeth to man an everlasting entrance into divine truth and an essential increase in divine love, for the being of God is unfathomable, and no creature can fathom it. Whoso hath been drawn into it sinketh eternally, and can come to no ground or soundings; the spirit hovereth in God as the fish in the sea and the bird in the air. Seventhly, new wonders, rapture, delight, and new truth are continually discovered to man, for God alone satisfieth the spirit. The more he contemplates Him the more he longeth for Him, and the more he beholdeth God with the eye of his reason the purer he becometh, and the more clearly doth he know God. Eighthly, if the spirit is raised above all things in essential truth all inequality escapeth from it; it is placed in an equality, and in this it entereth into God, so that it knoweth nothing more than God, and is embraced by God; the spirit loseth its name, so that it is called rather God than spirit; not that it is God, but only divine, therefore is it more called God than spirit. David also said, "I have said, ye are gods and sons of the Highest."⁴⁹ Gods, he saith, not God, by which he proverb, that we are not God by nature, but divine through grace. Through His speaking we are sons of the Most High, for as the Father looketh to His nature so He begetteth the Son by nature. Thus is it also where God speaketh His word in the soul, for thus He begetteth His Son through grace, and thus we are gods and sons of God, and whoso prepareth himself for this birth, which God the Father begetteth in the soul, he is mostly God's son through grace.



38.

If poverty of spirit is a preparation for a contemplative life, it might be asked, if all men have such a life, who give themselves up to poverty? Certainly he who hath perfectly seized true poverty is a true, internal, and contemplative man. Yea, poverty is nothing else than a lack of all that is not God; if we are freed from this and all means of that sort are lacking, then are you in the presence of God; and in this presence man contemplateth Him. God is present in all things; if that external deception, sensuality, be removed, God only is found; and therefore poverty and contemplation stand on one point. But not all those who adopt a poor life are poor men and hence they are not contemplative men, as Christ saith, "Not every one who saith, Lord, Lord, cometh into the kingdom of heaven, but he who doeth the will of My Father who is in heaven."⁵⁰ So also is it with each man: not every one who saith,



48 [Luke x. 42.](#)

49 [Ps. lxxxii. 6.](#)

50 [Matt. vii. 21.](#)

I am a poor man, or who seemeth a poor man, is a poor man, but he who doeth the work of a poor man, he is a poor man, and is also a contemplative man.

39.

It might now be said, Poverty and contemplation have no works, for they subsist both in emptiness of all works in a pure suffering of God's influence. I answer, That is true. But in the beginning and progress of a poor and contemplative life, you must have works, which prepare man and set him free, so that he can comprehend true poverty. And whoso embraceth the right work also cometh to a poor life. But whoso taketh the wrong work, which happeneth often, never cometh to true poverty nor to a contemplative life. A simile: If a man on a journey, wishing to reach his goal, taketh the wrong way, he goeth astray and cometh not where he listeth; so is it here. Many believe that they have a truly poor life, but they take the wrong road, and thereby they go astray so that they never come to the right goal of a poor, contemplative life, in which man attaineth to the highest degree of perfection.



40.

Which now are the right roads, wilt thou ask, to a poor life? In the first place, there are four of them.

Four ways lead a man to a poor, perfect, contemplative life, seeing God inwardly. The first way is, that a man have a perfect will to give up all, that is against God, that is not a matter of God and that is not solely God, and thereby you obtain all virtue.

41.

The first way is this, that a man have a perfect will to give up all that is against God, also all of which God is not the cause and that is not God Himself. In the first path you leave all sins; in the second you leave the cause of sin, such as temporal property, wives, and so on. The third removeth all that entereth as a disturbing influence between God and man, such as spiritual images and forms, through which you can no longer find God. Man must conquer all virtue with a perfect will, must exercise himself willingly in all virtues that appertain to him, till he reacheth the summit of all virtues, so that none escape him till he hath attained all. Whoso omitteth one, strayeth away from the road of a poor and contemplative life. Poverty consisteth in a freedom from all burdens and a possession of every virtue; and the contemplative life is a life perfected in working. To whom virtue is lacking, lacketh also poverty; to whom a working life lacketh, lacketh also a contemplative life. For only when a man hath come to the highest point of a working life, doth a contemplative life begin, and no one contemplates the divine clarity, save he who hath seized hold on virtue with all his powers, in order that this force may lift him out of himself, out of all darkness of created things, into the divine clarity, in which clarity he will behold the purity of the Divine Being. Now he who lacketh this force must tarry down here below. For nothing can work beyond its force. And as man is sick by nature, therefore he cannot of himself raise himself above himself, but this must take place through a divine force of grace, and the force springeth out of virtue, and it is easy for him, who hath all virtue, to enter into himself and make room for God to work inwardly in him, and this working is full of delight. But it is difficult for him who hath not all virtue to enter into himself and make room for God to work in him, and this is because he is not receptive of the work, and he is still lacking in the force of grace, which springeth out of perfect virtue. Hence they scarcely detect that it is time for their meal, before they turn themselves to outward things in which they take more pleasure, rather than go into themselves. But to a man who is perfect in virtue, his meal seemeth ever too long, he would always wish to do without eating, that he might alway attend to his heart, and this would be more delightful to him than all eating and drinking and all external joy. For his delight is entirely from within, and not from without. And this is the case when he is dead to himself and God alone liveth in him. For where God is, there is joy and rapture without any distress. And people often fancy that a good man hath much woe, hut know not that it is so well with him. For every virtue and good work bringeth him a special delight.

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And he who hath the most virtue, hath also most joy. I shall perhaps be asked what the Lord meant when He said, "Blessed are they that weep and mourn, for they shall be comforted." Here notice, that the joy of good people doth not issue from creatures, but from God. And thus as they have always a divine joy, in that proportion is the delight of creatures bitter to them, and our Lord meaneth that happy are they to whom all creatures are bitter and God alone delightful, of which St. Bernard said, "If you taste the divine spirit, all bodily things become bitter to you,"⁵¹ and whoso goeth forth on the road of virtue, he cometh certainly to the goal of a perfectly contemplative life. For every virtue pusheth him forward, and helpeth him to it, as of himself he cannot get there. And when he cometh to this, that he obtaineth all virtue, he is led forward with power to the highest step of perfection.

42.

The second road to true poverty, in which a man seeth the wonderful riches of God, is this, that he walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, and follow Him in every possible manner. Thereby we receive all the divine light and all the light of grace, which lead man on the right road to a perfect contemplative life, as Christ Himself saith, "Whoso wisheth to come to the Father must enter through Me,"⁵² that is, through His humanity, into the Godhead. This cometh to pass in two ways.



51 It is really St. Gregory who says this: Qui coelestis vitae dulcedinem . . . perfecte cognoverit, ea quae in terris amaverat libenter cuncta derelinquit; in comparatione ejus vilescunt omnia. Homil. 11. in Evang. No. 2.

52 [John xiv. 6.](#)

The other way which leadeth a man into a poor, perfect, contemplative life, is, that man steppeth in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ and followeth him.

43.

First, that a man should clothe himself with the external image of our Lord. And in this man is guarded against all sins. For His image and pattern was a bringing again of man in all the ways from which he had fallen and might fall. For our Lord did not take on Himself sin, but all that rooteth out and atoneth for sin, and this was by sufferings and contradictions, through which He hath brought us back to an innocent life, and this doth not help us except we lay the same garment on ourselves, that is, except we leave all sins, and give ourselves up continually to the sufferings of our Lord. And thus we are brought back to an innocent life, but if our Lord had suffered much and I were not willing to suffer, this could not help us much. But that I suffer through Him, even as He hath suffered through me, in this case His suffering maketh my suffering fruitful, and bringeth me everlasting life, and for this reason Christ spake unto His disciples, “If they drink My cup they will come to life everlasting.”⁵³ And thus the suffering of our Lord bringeth us thither, where we cannot bring ourselves of ourselves, and this is the case since all in us is inclined to fall. But if it is to be raised, this must come to pass after the image of our Lord, and whoso turneth away from this image, he casteth himself down. For no one can stand by his own strength, but from the power that issueth from the works of our Lord; and whoso wisheth to have the force must seek it in the likeness of the image and of the works of our Lord. St. Peter spake of this, “Christ hath suffered through us and left us an ensample, that we follow His footsteps.” And whoso therefore likeneth himself to the image and to the work of our Lord, in him grow up the fruits of His works, and free him from all unlikeness, and bring in him a purely poor life, in which he knoweth God. And thus is Christ known by the fruitfulness of His works—that is, that the fruit which liveth in the works of our Lord spring up in him, and show him that Christ is God and man. Paul speaketh of this, “I know Christ and Him crucified.”⁵⁴ That meant that he knew the fruit of the cross in himself, and to him from whom the fruit of the cross and the works of our Lord are hid, Christ is unknown. For every tree is known by its fruit; thus also Christ is known by the fruit of His works, when a man likens himself in his works to our Lord; and Christ cannot be known otherwise. And these are the right Christ men who believe perfectly in Christ, for no one can separate them from Christ,

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⁵³ Here, again, two verses are condensed. In [Matt. xx. 21](#) we read, the mother of Zebedee’s children begged that they might sit in the kingdom of Christ on both sides of Him; [ver. 22](#), Christ answers, “Can you drink the cup which I shall give you?”

⁵⁴ [1 Cor. ii. 2.](#)

for the fountain of all graces hath overflowed in them, so that they can flow nowhere save into Christ. When it is said that man cometh to the knowledge of the faith, this is nothing else than that the fruit of the faith springeth up in us through grace, and revealeth to us and giveth us to know in a clear manner that Christ is both God and man. Of this St. Paul spake, saying, "I know Christ only." This was because Christ revealed Himself to him in the fruitfulness of his works, and killed all besides that was not Christ, and therefore Christ alone remained known to him. Now we obtain a knowledge of Christ by following the image and the works of Christ. For in the degree to which you follow Christ are you like unto Him, and to the extent you are like Him you know Him. For everything is known by its like, and he who is likest God knoweth also God mostly. Now God is a pure Being, and such must the man be who is to know God, pure and stripped of all besides. And the purity and nakedness issue from the image of our Lord. Therefore he who likeneth himself most to the image of our Lord is the purest, and knoweth God the best. Thus, then, man is prepared in the image of our Lord for a poor life, in which he seeth God in all clarity.



44.

The other way by which a man should enter through the humanity of Christ into His Godhead is when he hath clothed his outer man with the garment of Christ, so also that he now formeth his inner man with a continual contemplation of the works and of the Passion of Christ. And by external exercising in the image of Christ, and by internal consideration of the Passion of Christ, man is inflamed with the fire of love, and all unlikeness to the truth is quickly consumed in him, and then the truth is presented naked to him and he beholdeth it in its pure nakedness. For all that is in man has gone astray through Adam's fall; the senses are gone astray, the powers of the soul are gone astray, and none of them is obedient to another; and if that is to be set right again, so that one may be obedient to another, as they were when Adam stood in his first innocence, all this must come to pass in Christ. For just as Adam was a cause of falling and death, Christ is also the cause of resurrection and life; as Paul saith, "As in Adam all die, so in Christ are all things made alive."⁵⁵ And whatever is in man must be purified; and this must take place through Christ; and each one must do what he can, and must turn himself to make himself capable of receiving.



45.

If the senses of man are to be purified, they must be ordered according to the external man of Christ, and must be formed and directed after Him, and thus they will be purified and ordered in the internal man. But without the image of Christ the senses never die to

55 1 Cor. xv. 22.

sensuality, so that the internal man may remain unhindered by them; ii this is to be, so that the man may be called a man free from sensuality, this must take place in the image of Christ; the more he turneth his senses and formeth them after that image, the more they die within him. In this way also the outward senses are brought to Christ, so that they are restored to the condition of the primitive order.

46.

And just as the outer senses are purified and ordered, in their first nobility, in the image of Christ, so also must the internal powers of the soul be purified and ordered by an internal consideration of the works and of the Passion of Christ. And whoso neglecteth this will never be properly ordered in the internal man, and abideth in the disorder following the fall of Adam, nor will his reason be ever enlightened with divine light For Christ is the true Light which enlighteneth all the powers of the soul; as He Himself saith, "I am the Light of the world."⁵⁶ And therefore whoso wisheth to have the light of truth must have his reason in Christ; and whoso is enlightened elsewhere save in the Passion of Christ, has more a false than a true light. Of this Christ spake: "Beware of false prophets, who show themselves good, but inwardly are ravening wolves."⁵⁷ The false prophets are the lights that are not begotten from Christ, and from His teaching, and from His works, and from His Passion; they appear very good, and yet are inwardly and secretly bad; therefore we should guard against them, and should turn to the true Light, which is Christ. And let no man be directed by any light save it be somewhat like to Christ, and those who wish to come on the right road of an undeceived life, turn their reason from all things to the works and the Passion of Jesus Christ, and plunge themselves in it; then they are born again, as a newly-born child desireth milk to drink, and the eye of the reason is anointed with the oil of divine grace, in which, pure and clean, it will know the naked truth, and no more false light can deceive it. But a reason immersed anywhere save in the Passion of Christ is not anointed with the salve of divine graces. Hence it remaineth dark, so that it cannot see the divine truth; and from this cause many are deceived by manifold false lights, taking falsehood to be truth, and truth to be falsehood; and this is because all men err and are blind of themselves; therefore if they are to see, they must leave the darkness and turn to the Light, which is Christ; then the eye of their reason will be enlightened to know divine truth. For the reason of man is by nature dark, and like unto the night; and when the sun setteth in it it is night, and when it riseth it is day. So also is it with the reason; when the Divine Sun riseth in it it is clear as day, but when the Sun is withdrawn it becometh dark. Now, the light is withdrawn from it when it

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56 [John. viii. 2.](#)

57 [Matt. vii. 15.](#)

turneth to creatures and leaveth Christ. It is correctly said that the heathen attained to great natural light; but I say all their light was night compared to day, when contrasted with the light which the true Christian obtaineth who turneth his reason to Christ. In him dieth all unlikeness or inequality of light; he is all light; with the heathen, however, all inequality was not extinguished, therefore also they had not true pure light. Thus are still all men who have been indeed taught by nature, but not born from the Passion of Christ; they are blind compared with those enlightened by the Passion of Christ, and the distinctions which these last understand they derive from the works of Christ. Natural men, it is true, tell correctly the truth from images and forms, which they draw from their reason; but divine men who are united with Christ and His Passion keep the truth in silence, for what they hold to be true is raised above all images and forms, in a pure feeling of the divine good, of which no one can speak. Therefore are they silent, and they are held to be devoid of reason; thus is it also right, for they do not give to be understood what they know, and cannot at all express it with words. If they were to say what they see internally, they would be obliged rather to lie than to speak the truth; therefore they keep silent in order not to speak falsehoods. St. Dionysius saith, "All that you can speak of God is rather untrue than true, for God is unspeakable; and what you say of God is therefore always something else."⁵⁸ So is it also with the reason which is purified by the Passion of Christ and enlightened by the divine light. All that they can say of the divine is always something else. Yea, St. Paul saith, "It is not lawful to speak of it." Such men also are only known by their silence; many a man showeth by his babble that he is nothing, but the others show by their silence what they are. Whoso talketh much showeth that the simple divine good hath never been found perfectly in him. But whoso hath this is disgusted with external words, save when it is needful for his fellowmen, and to this he must consent. Without it is necessary, he speaketh not; he is familiar with no one, but he hath an everlasting contemplation of the good that he hath found in himself; he findeth no rest in other things, but it driveth him always to this good. He is accused of having no charity, but this happeneth because he hath occupied himself only with the single divine goodness, which makes all that is manifold give him disgust. He would always be gladly alone, and that no one may hinder him he must omit many works of charity. But what faileth him in external works of charity, he worketh immediately in God; and such a work is a thousand times more noble than any accidental work of charity, for it is an essential work, while the other is accidental, and therefore not noble. Whoso worketh all works in immediate love, is right rich in good works, for he worketh all works in one; all are essential to him, and also bring an essential reward. But these men are always blamed; people say that they are inactive, and will not perform any good work; they are accused of transgressing the commandments of Holy Church; but if they are free from everything external, they keep all commandments

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58 De Mystica Theolog. c. 5.

of Holy Church in God. But external men cannot understand or test this, and thus blame the others at all times. It must needs be so, for they are blind; but yet it is a folly for a blind man to wish to lead one who seeth. Such men need no leader, for they have the right lead, and they cannot give themselves up to another; they have the true light, which issueth from the Passion of Christ, which suffereth them not to fall into any false light; for the Passion of our Lord destroyeth all falsity in the reason and enlighteneth it with all truth. Thus doth the reason attain unto its first nobility through the contemplation of the work and of the Passion of Christ.



47.

The will of man is also perfected in Christ, in His works and in His Passion. Without Christ all men go astray; with a blind will they incline to a sham good, and give no heed to the true good. This is also meet and proper, for all temporal things are in themselves blind, and all are blinded by them who choose them, and thus overlook the true good, which is hidden in the Passion of our Lord. If, however, man turneth with his will to Christ and His Passion, then Christ cometh to meet him with all true good things, and endoweth him richly with delightful gifts, which surpass all the gifts of creatures. If the will embraceth these it leaveth all that is earthly and its gifts and cleaveth to Christ, to receive only from Him. Christ also said, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field; if man findeth the treasure he hideth it, and from joy he runneth away, selleth all that he hath and buyeth the field, and also the treasure in the field."⁵⁹ That is the most holy fruit of the Passion of our Lord. If man turneth with his whole will to it and seeketh there he findeth an unspeakable treasure, for special gifts issue from every wound, and these currents of grace are (according to Bonaventura) six thousand six hundred and sixty-six, which flow continually in the richest measure. If a man cometh to this field where these living fountains spring up he openeth his mouth and drinketh, overdrinks himself, and is intoxicated, and overflows with rapture; from overwhelming joy he can no longer hold himself, runneth away and selleth what he hath, namely, all that is not God; he leaveth all and buyeth the field wherein the fountains of this grace spring forth. He seeketh continually more and more for these original springs till he cometh to his first original source, which is in the heart of God. Here he drinketh the hidden wisdom of God, which no one knoweth save he who hath received it. This divine fatherly wisdom and goodness alway floweth through the Passion of our Lord into panting, thirsting hearts, which are burnt through by the divine fire of love. For this fire burneth through and inflameth them, so that they too excessively thirst, and in this thirst they hurry with burning desire to the fountain and to the wounds of our Lord, from which all graces flow; to these they hold their mouth with longing and drink. Oh, the lovely drink that they



⁵⁹ [Matt. xiii. 44.](#)

here drink! The giver is precious, also the drink, for giver and drink are one! He it is who giveth, and He too is what He giveth. Oh, if all men knew what a treasure lieth hid in the field! every one would dig and seek it; they would find so much that they would desire nothing more in time, for the field is full of riches.

48.

That we are poor in graces is a sign that we have not yet come properly to this field, for whoever cometh to it properly and diggeth would not go away empty. Oh, how foolish is many a man that he doth not seek this incalculable treasure! If he can find a penny he seeketh for it, and here he leaveth the riches untouched, and remaineth a poor vile creature, who can never be saved, for all our blessedness and salvation are contained in Christ and His Passion. For whoso seeketh his salvation outside the Passion of Christ loseth much more than he seeketh. The wounds of our Lord are alone the fountains from which all salvation floweth; whosoever seeketh salvation let him seek it in the Passion of our Lord; there he findeth it surely, and nowhere else. I can find nothing better for man than that he turn earnestly to the Passion of our Lord and consider it; what is there counselled him he should do, for thus he obtaineth most surely an entrance into God. Whoever knoweth what noble fruit groweth on the field of the Passion of Christ would work on it day and night and never go away from it; he would fence it round, build himself a tower upon it, and dwell there, and set up a winepress. The fence would be his senses, which he would guard against all luxury and turn to the Passion of Christ; the tower would be his spirit, raised above all created things, where he would dwell in the uncreated Godhead; the wine-press would be his heart, where the sweet new wine would always flow for him, so that he would be quite intoxicated with it. On the field of the Passion of Christ grow wine and corn, in order to have meat and drink at the same time. They who come to this field and eat and drink here are full of divine graces. The prophet saith: "Eat the grist and drink the new wine, and be ye drunken, ye most beloved."⁶⁰ Oh, what a noble meat they eat, and what a good wine they drink! It is a wonder that they are not surfeited with the delight and overflow with the sweetness of the noble wine. Neither hail nor frost can injure this fruit and wine, though they grow winter and summer; you can always reap and gather, it is always harvest and vintage. Whoever wisheth to be rich thereby let him build a great barn and a roomy cellar and store them well. The more they can hold, the larger supply is there of fruit and wine.

⁶⁰ Here the author of the "Following" again combines two verses: [2 Esdras, 8. 10](#). "Comedite pingua et bibite mulsum;" and [Solomon's Song, 5. 1](#). "Drink abundantly, O beloved."

49.

If the desires of all men were directed to this, to gather this fruit and wine, how many rich persons there would then be on earth. If man's will seizeth hold on these riches it sinketh itself therein, eateth and drinketh, and enjoyeth its ease, seeking nothing more among creatures but all in God. But God endoweth him richly with all gifts. With these gifts He forceth the will and maketh it subject to Him. He maketh man free, so that he is freed from all adherence to creatures, and only cleaveth to God alone. Thus is inflamed in him the fire of the love of God, and it maketh him lovely, so that he entirely floweth away in love—a love that is by nature in God, but by grace in him. He arriveth then at the state of his original innocence; the will is raised above itself and all things; the will is no longer will, it loseth its name, and is called now the will of God, and no longer man's will. This is now the aim of the will for which it was created, and this is worked by the noble fruit of the Passion of Christ; it freeth him from all attraction of creatures and floodeth him with divine sweetness; it overwhelmeth him and killeth all besides, and maketh him united. Then in this state of simplicity he is led on high to comprehend the divine wonders; and he is led through all the wonders to the wonder of wonders, which is God; here he has got beyond wondering, and all other wonders escape him. Thus as he seeth that he can never come to the end of this wonder, he keepeth silence and leaveth all things to God, and all that God then doeth seemeth to him right. In this manner the will is at its highest point, and the measureless purity of divine goodness is given him by God, which compelleth him so that he can be nothing else than good. This is obtained by the will in the Passion of Christ, in which all bitterness is turned into sweetness, but all the sweetness of the world is turned into bitterness. Herein alone is revealed true goodness, which is God, and it compelleth him to will only all that God willeth.



50.

It may be asked, Whereby shall a man know that his will is overcome by God? By six things. First, if a man giveth not himself up to any sinful work, but resists it and always fleeth from it, and draweth his will entirely away from it. But the will of man cannot do this, therefore he who liveth according to his own will can never live without sin. Secondly, if man prepareth himself for all virtues, so that he exerciseth each virtue that God requireth of him; this also man cannot do of himself, and of this Christ saith, "Without Me ye can do nothing."⁶¹ In the third place, if he doth not flee all the deaths that may occur to him, but suffereth them gladly through God; and no one can do this except through God, of which

61 [John xv. 5.](#)

St. Paul said, "I can do all things through Him that strengtheneth me."⁶² In the fourth place, if a man sets aside all that is intermediate between him and God, whether bodily or spiritual; and this God Himself must work in man, and must take from him all mediums, and that is the highest work that God can work in man through grace. In the fifth place, it may be known if man's will is the will of God by this: If the honour of God only is his object in all his doing and permitting, if he always taketh the best for the greatest honour of God. Then the light of glory hath sprung up in man, when he findeth nothing else in himself than that the honour of God should always increase, but his own honour should diminish. But many men are found who say, "I wish that the honour of God might be fulfilled in me and in all." It is well to say this, but it is scarcely to be attained that this can always be: no one can do so except a right perfect man who stands in essential truth, unmoved by any accident, whether weal or woe, or whatever it be, so that he always remain contented in all things. Sixthly, if a man who standeth in essential truth always penetrates more in this essence into the hidden, secret, unknown will of God, and loseth his will entirely in it, so that he becometh entirely without will, neither willing good nor evil, but willing nothing; and thus nothing becometh the object of the will. This cometh to pass because he knoweth nothing in that moment but the pure will of God, and thereby is he freed from all willing, and suffereth God only to will, and this is the highest union of the human will with God's will. Now all this is worked by the Passion of Jesus, in which he lifteth himself and freeth himself from all that is not God. He is thus linked to God by the great good which lieth hid in the Passion of Christ, and he arriveth at the highest degree of perfection. And God granteth him what he asketh, because he hath done all that God wished to have from him. Therefore whoever willeth that God should hear him at all times must listen and hear what God willeth to have from him; if he doeth this God can refuse him nothing. St. Gregory saith, "God's hand is never empty of gifts when the ark of the heart is full of good will."

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51.

A perfect will doeth as much with one good work as an imperfect will with many good works, and it worketh as much in a moment as another in a long time, and it doeth as much in rest as another with much labour. This is because God doth not take this according to the plenitude of number, nor of magnitude, but he taketh everything according to the perfection of purity. Therefore the work that is perfect and pure is dearer to God than a thousand that are impure and imperfect. Since now a perfect will alone can do a perfect work, then one single work by it is worth a thousand other works. Also for this reason is its work better, because a perfect will comprehendeth all good works in one good work; and not only those that it might do, but those that all men, and angels, and saints do. And this is because he

⁶² [Phil. iv. 13.](#)

doeth in one work all that he can, and if he could do all works as that one work, he would do it gladly. Yea, if he could do the works that God worketh, he would not omit to do so; and thus he deserveth essential reward in all good works. Again, this is because he loveth them, and where love is it deserveth; and the work answereth to perfect love; this is not what an imperfect will worketh in its imperfection, but the work answereth as if he had done it in perfection. In other cases what is wanting in a good work must be made up by him who worketh it, but whoso loveth hath no drawback in his work, for it answereth to the perfection with which he loveth it. Thus, then, it deserveth reward. The most perfect works that Christ ever did, and that all saints in heaven and all perfect men on earth do, all answer to a perfect will, and the works are entitled to reward according to their perfection. For if anything faileth to this perfection (in this man of charity) he is pained thereby; he would gladly be perfect according to the dearest will of God, and he would do what he could to become so; what is lacking to him now God filleth up with His works and with all perfect works. For God loveth much a good will; He wisheth that it should lack nothing, but that it may always embrace the best, and He will dower him with all good.

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52.

Also the highest power of the spirit, which is called synteresis⁶³—the understanding faculty—is brought back to its first nobility by the Passion of Christ. This faculty is created immediately for God without mediums, but it was brought under a medium by the fall of Adam, and this medium must be destroyed in Christ, so that the spirit may be entirely stripped of all mediums. This happeneth in this wise, when all the faculties of man, whether outer or inner, pass through the works and the teaching of Christ, and do what they can. This exercise in Christ maketh the powers quite pure, and the purity is inflamed with the tire of love, so that each faculty inclineth itself to what it was ordained, that is, to the highest power, which attaineth God without a medium. Then God revealeth Himself in the essence

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63 According to the greatest of the Schoolmen, the synteresis is not a power of the soul (potentia), but a habitus (St. Thomas, 1. p. qu. 79. a. 12) and habitus principiorum operabilium. But according to Alexander of Ales and St. Bonaventure it is not a pure Power (Potenz), but a potentia habitualis (2 qu. 73. m. 1.—2 dist. 39. a. 2. qu. 1.) St. Thomas expressed a similar view (2 dist. 39. qu. 3. a. 1.) when he calls the synteresis a virtus: Quae (sicut aquila) transcendit rationabilem. St. Bonaventure calls it (Itiner. c. 1), Apex mentis, seu synteresis scintilla. According to William of Paris there were several, who described it as Nobilissima et sublimissima pars animae (De vitiis et peccatis, c. 6. opp. ed. Par. 1674. tom. ii. p. 273) as superior pars rationis, nay, as ipsa anima humana secundum essentiam (p. 274). On the whole, all the Schoolmen agree in placing this synteresis in the ratio practica, while the Mystics seek it in parte affectiva, though they also acknowledge in it something higher than the intelligentia. (See Sandaeus, l. c. p. 30 and foll.) Eckhart comes nearest to the scholastic doctrine, 113. 36, where he gives the synteresis much the same properties as the Schoolmen.

of the soul, and draweth all the faculties to Him, and uniteth them with Himself. Thus all that which is in man will run after God and seek Him. And then God showeth Himself, and giveth him to try on His garment, and when the faculties taste how sweet God is, they find such relish in this sweetness, that they follow and hurry after God alway. As a sporting dog hurrieth after game as soon as he findeth the scent, so all the faculties, when they track God in the essence of the soul, run after Him. And thus hath it come to pass when they look into the essence of the soul, where God is, that God lifteth and embraceth them, and they embrace God. And each sitteth down to table, and wisheth to partake, and each one inviteth the other to eat and to drink. They all eat and drink, and are all filled in common. One letteth himself be moved by another, what one willeth the other willeth, and all agree. Therefore Christ said, "When I am lifted up I draw all things to Me." Thus when the highest faculty of the spirit unites itself with Christ, it is drawn up with Christ, and draweth all things with it; and thus each thing cometh to its first origin from which it came. This is because, when the highest faculty of the spirit standeth on the most perfect degree for which the spirit was created, all the lowest faculties are obliged to stand on the highest perfection for which they were ordained, for when anything faileth in the highest it must fail in the lowest.

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53.

Thus is it known of a man if he stand rightly or wrongly. If the internal man be well ordered according to the best, the outer man must also be so, for what the spirit receiveth from God it also giveth to the lower faculties, and just as God ordereth it so it ordereth them. Thus the inner man is known by the outer, for if the spirit is formed inwardly after Christ by grace, then the external man is formed from this. Christ also said, "Even as the Father hath sent Me, so send I also you, that you may go and bring forth fruit."⁶⁴ From this likeness to Christ the disciples of Christ can also be known.

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54.

Nothing maketh us liker Christ than when we consider His works and His Passion. For this also hath Christ worked and suffered, to take away all inequality from us; in this same work and Passion we must form ourselves, if we wish to lose our inequality and unlikeness. Verily as Christ hath redeemed in no other wise than by His life, working, and suffering, just as little can any one be saved and perfect, save if we hold to the teaching, works, and Passion of Jesus; he who busies himself the most with this is happiest and likest Christ. The works and the Passion of Jesus are full of blessedness, and therefore our mind ought to live

⁶⁴ Here again verses of different chapters are combined: [John xx. 21](#), "Even as the Father hath sent Me, so send I you;" and [xv. 16](#), "That ye may go and bear fruit."

upon them. As the bee flieth to the flower and sucketh sweetness therefrom in order to get honey, so also ought we to fly to the wounds of our Lord, and to suck them, and then we shall stream over with divine sweetness. Only thus doth man gather unto himself this precious honey; whatever belongeth to the man will so overflow with divine good that he will desire nothing more. That bee which flieth out the farthest to the flowers of the field bringeth also the most honey home, and what cometh from it is all honey; so is it also with the man who flieth and sucketh the most at the wounds of Christ, the loveliest flowers of the field; he receiveth the most honey. His soul is full of the divine honour, and what proceedeth from him is nothing else than the honour of God, which is at all times revealed to him. As Jesus Christ hath at all times established the glory of His Father, so such men establish alway the honour of God, and for this reason, because the wounds of our Lord always overflow with grace, and whoso drinketh of them drinketh continually internal graces, and these pass over into all his actions, and into all that he letteth be, making all to the honour of God; God also keepeth him from all that is against His honour. As a lord alloweth nothing to his dear servant that would be against his honour, even out of love for this faithful servant, so also God permitteth nothing in His servant that were unworthy of God and of him; this God doeth out of special love for them who cleave to His love, who embrace His Passion and consider it zealously.

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55.

Whoso cleaveth to Christ and considereth His Passion is as little permitted to leave God as the Son is able to leave the Father. For when man turneth to the Passion of our Lord, God openeth the fountain of His grace, floodeth therewith the mind of man, and overwhelmeth him, so that he can do nothing apart from grace; that which now floweth from Him is only love and grace. Oh, lift up thy wings and fly away to the field where the flowers bloom as Solomon saith, "I am the flower of the field,"⁶⁵ and suck the sweetness of the flowers and gather honey. Thou shalt receive honey in plenty, so that thou canst hand it over to men! Why do people think that God suffereth sinners to live, and doth not slay them? Chiefly among others for this reason, because good men who hold their mouth to the wounds of our Lord, and suck all grace therefrom, return to God and pray for sinners. As grace compelleth man to pray for them, so they compel God to hear them. Christ also said to Zaccheus, "I must tarry to-day in thy house."⁶⁶ For as the grace of God compelleth men to do what God willeth, so also they compel God to do what they list. Because under the old covenant the overflow of divine grace was not so perfect, God slew or smote the sinner at the time,

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65 [Solomon's Song ii. 1](#). Ego flos campi, and lower down, p. 220, [Luke xix. 5](#).

66 [Luke xix. 5](#).

instantly; but now is the outflow of divine grace perfect and floodeth all pure hearts, compelling them in true love to cleave to God, and thus also is God compelled by them.

56.

Oh, wise would be he who knew these men and was intimate with them; if they desired he should do anything he would do it quite perfectly, for what they ask of God He granteth them. But they are known by no one save those who are like unto them, for their treasure, which they carry in themselves, is hidden, as gold in the earth; therefore he whose heart is burthened with earthly things cannot know them. They are also for this reason not to be known, because they carry what they have in the innermost depths of their soul, hence the man who minds outward things cannot well recognise them. They are unknown because their treasure is raised above all images and forms; but whoso perceiveth truth according to images cannot recognise them. What they have, have they obtained from the Passion of Christ; whoso doth not know this also knoweth nothing of these men. They cannot also be known, because they obtained all that they have in a pure state of rest, but whoever is impure and unquiet knoweth them not. They are also unknown as they have nothing striking about them, and whoever still aspires after notorious things and striking things, he knoweth nothing of such men, and thus these best men are generally the most slighted and least loved, because people do not love what they do not understand. Lastly, they are not known because their possession is raised above all words; but those who love all things according to words are often deceived. Therefore is it the highest wisdom to recognise good men. Wisdom is not studied at Paris but in the Passion of our Lord, and whoso turneth his reason to this learneth all godly wisdom.⁶⁷

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57.

But no one is hidden from these men; they recognise all; for as Christ hath communion with all things, such a man learneth, when in communion with Christ, all things. Jesus is the rule of all men, and whoso knoweth the rule understandeth all men; He is full of grace and truth: whoso obtaineth the grace that is in Christ and in His Passion, to him all mediation disappeareth, so that all things are known to him immediately. That we do not know all in truth comes from this, that we still have mediation; if we were free from this we should

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⁶⁷ Denifle remarks in this connection, that if some Protestant inquirers see in this or in other passages an undervaluing of scholasticism, let once for all this fact suffice in answer: that the greatest of the Schoolmen, St. Thomas, teaches that—“Scientia et quidquid aliud ad magnitudinem pertinet occasio est quod homo confidat de se ipso, et ideo non totaliter se Deo tradat. Et inde est quod hujusmodi quandoque occasionaliter devotionem impediunt, et in simplicibus et mulieribus devotio abandat.” &c. (St. Thomas, 2. 2. qu. 82, a. 3. ad 3.)

certainly know the pure truth. But its purity we obtain in Christ and in His Passion. For His Passion is like a grindstone, and to him who grindeth his mind in it, all rust falleth away. His Passion taketh away all deformity from the mind, so that thou knowest quite purely, and no more unlikeness remaineth in thee. The spirit becometh thus a pure vessel of God; in Him God can now work without any hindering; but God worketh in the soul without hindering when its highest power looketh well about it, and driveth away all that is hurtful. What doth not belong to its dwelling is not let in, it shutteth out all, that no storm may bring an injury. Thus God now resteth in it and inviteth in His guests, namely, all the faculties of the soul; He leadeth them into His house, into the essence of the soul. They must all be therein, and He giveth to each his special viand; each receiveth its own and taketh what belongeth to it, as Jesus saith, "Give to each his reward, beginning from the last unto the first."⁶⁸ The last to whom God giveth is here the highest power and the essence of the soul; they are the last in the divine service, but they yet receive first their reward. The lower powers must begin in the service of God, and each one must do what he can. Thus the lowest powers are gradually led into the highest; but the highest are led into the essence of the soul, where God dwelleth as in His own house. He endoweth them now and beginneth with the last; for he begetteth His Son in the essence of the soul, for this is alone capable of supernatural birth. Through this birth all the other faculties also receive their distinct gifts; He imparteth to the reason light, to the will love, to the memory strength: also the lower faculties receive their share; from the sight He withdraweth all that is against God, the hearing He draweth to Himself, the feeling He turneth away from the luxury of the flesh, from the taste He withholdeth all that is unholy, the smell He directeth to Himself; each receiveth its own. But the lower faculties murmur because they are not endowed first. This murmuring ariseth when man beginneth to turn to God; he would wish at once to know all truth and to have perfect love, to be free from all that is against God; he would embrace all that appertaineth to God. But if he doth not find this directly he waxeth wrath against God, and yet he cannot become all this till he cometh to the point where the Father begetteth His Son in the soul; then all perfect gifts are given him by the Father of Light, in whom there is no shadow of turning, for which reason also His gifts are unchangeable. God alway draweth the weakest to Himself, and yet endoweth the best first. For if He were to dower the lower faculties first, they would be too weak, and could not keep the gift. Whereupon God beginneth with the best, endowing this first, that the gift may be retained. His gifts lead the spirit to the highest degree of perfection, in which it seeth the pure truth, which is God Himself. This is worked by the fruitfulness of the works and of the Passion of Christ, wherewith it conquereth and overcometh all things, so that it obtaineth true peace and enjoyeth God without a medium. Then the

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68 This passage, again, is not correctly cited: [Matthew xx. 8](#), "Call the labourers and give them their wages, beginning from the last to the first . . . They received one penny."

spirit standeth in right freedom, and what it willeth cometh to pass, and what it ordereth must be obeyed, and what it asketh is granted. This is because it and God are one, and what God willeth it willeth, and what God commandeth it commandeth, and hence all things must come to pass as it wisheth, and all things must be obedient to it. And this is the other way by which you should go to a poor life.

The third way of a poor, perfect life, when you contemplate God internally, is, that a man do not fly from what may kill him in spiritual things.

58.

The third way, which belongeth to a poor life, wherein you see God inwardly, is to give yourself up and not flee all that killeth man spiritually. This is expressed by being spiritually dead, so that a man is despised by all creatures and judged and condemned; now, a man ought not to fly from this if he wisheth thoroughly to die to his nature. Whoso flieth this steppeth aside from the way of poverty and of a pure life.

59.

Now this is so, because man hath cast himself through sins into the hatred of God, and this hatred must be rooted out by the hatred of creatures. Whoso is most hated in his repentance of sins, to him will his sins be most surely forgiven; and in proportion as man seeketh the love of creatures he departeth from the divine love, for creaturely love and godly love cannot subsist together. Thus he who is hated by the creature in a natural way is loved by God in a spiritual way; for no truly poor man is ever loved by any creature in a natural way, nor doth he love any one by nature; this is because he dieth continually to his nature, in him and in other men, and hence no one findeth anything to love in him naturally. For it is meet and lit that natural men who live devoted to their bodily nature should always hate him. For like loveth its like; therefore he who wisheth that he should never be loved unrightly, should take heed that he always die to his nature, in him and in other men, for what then is loved in him is God. And whoso is loved by natural men, that is a sign that he is not yet dead to his nature. For what natural men love is the luxury of nature, and when they do not find that, they do not love. It is therefore a good sign that a man rejoice when he is hated, for this no sinner can feel. He should give up all likeness with natural love, then divine love is always his object, and he is only loved through divine love. For no one loveth another save when he findeth some likeness to himself in him, both by nature and grace; hence, when the likeness of nature is quite gone, there remaineth only the likeness of grace; and hence, whoso dieth to all likeness of nature, his flow or efflux is divine love, and his influx or ebb is also divine love. It happens thus that men not dead to themselves often love by nature, weening it is by grace, and when they are blamed for this, they are troubled and wax wrath; by this they should know that their love is natural. For right divine love is at all times patient, and suffereth all things; it letteth itself quite well be hated, but it hateth no one, and construeth all things for the best; but men not dead to themselves are always agitated in contradiction, and distracted from their peace.



60.

A man must also endure all judgment? that fall upon him, and this prepareth him also for a poor life. If a man is to be freed from all the judgments which a man hath deserved, he must be judged; and by the judgment, that he patiently endureth, the judgment of God is taken away from him. This is necessary for those who belong to God—that they should be prepared by manifold judgments. Therefore Christ said, “It is needful that scandal should come, but woe to him through whom it cometh.”⁶⁹ Therefore is it necessary that virtue should be guarded by contradiction and judgment; and whoso is not judged, that is a sign that he never worked proper virtue, for the highest virtue that man can work is most attacked by judgment; and whoso fleeth judgment fleeth virtue. In fact, the man who wisheth to live most perfectly must be judged by all men, for they do not stand in the same nearness to perfection. Every man praiseth his own, and what is unlike his own is not praised by him; and hence he judgeth all that is not like to him.

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61.

Therefore let no man omit any virtue through any judgment, and say, I will spare my fellow-man, that I be not a stumblingblock to him; or again, I will leave virtue for God. I answer to this, that a true virtue is never a cause of stumbling to any one, but it is a cause of setting all men upright, and guarding them from all falls. Whoso falleth through virtue is like a man whom a physician physics and who dieth of it. A man who doth not better himself by good works can never better himself by bad works, and the omission to do a good work is a bad work; therefore no one is bettered by the neglect of a pure virtue. And whoso leaveth a virtue for the sake of judgment, he feareth more bodily injury to himself than the spiritual injury of other people; for true virtue bringeth no injury, but it always bringeth use. And whoso neglecteth virtue out of fear, this is a sign that he never obtained real virtue, which springeth out of divine love, for “in divine love there is no fear,” as St. John saith.⁷⁰ Therefore the man dead to creatures accomplisheth virtue, even if the pains of hell were to fall upon him. For he worketh no virtue either from fear of hell or for the sake of heaven, but alone from pure love of God; and he will gladly suffer what falleth upon him, and it is the greatest joy to him thus to suffer, like the twelve apostles, who rejoiced that they were worthy to suffer through Christ. Therefore whoso hath divine love letteth no virtue be omitted, and suffereth every one to judge as much as he will; and he looketh to all that is pleasing to God, and not to what pleaseth people.

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69 [Matt. xviii. 7.](#)

70 [1 John iv. 18.](#)

62.

When a man hath still an eye to other people, and to what pleaseth them, his eye is not clear, therefore his work is not pure: for the creature blindeth, and God maketh seeing. He, therefore, who wisheth to see perfectly must turn his eye away from all creatures, and alone to God. After this all his works are pure virtue, and whatever falleth then upon him is for his best. No one should be guilty of this, that he goeth out of his best and followeth the best of other men; and this is because, when a man followeth his best in the most perfect manner, he doeth what is best for all in the most perfect manner. As Christ saith, "When am raised up, behold I draw all things after me."⁷¹ Now, therefore, whoso is raised with Christ above all earthly things, draweth all things with him aloft, where is Christ, and that is the very best for all men. And who doth not take his best therein, this is his fault, as he is not worthy of Him; but no one must omit virtue for any unworthy object, and if he were to omit a virtue, he would fall into this same unworthiness. And God's honour doth not lie in this that I am sparing with virtue on account of my fellowman, but that I fulfil all virtue, and I ought to endure whatever judgment may fall upon me, and that is the honour of God. For these same judgments make me a powerful judge at the last day, over all those who judge me here. Of this Christ spake: "Judge not, that ye be not judged."⁷² Now, whoso judgeth another here in good works, gives him power to judge himself. Of this Paul spake: "Whoso judgeth his brother, heapeth judgment on himself."⁷³ Therefore let no man be frightened because he is judged; for all his detects are thereby taken away from him, which only leave him henceforth the feeling of repentance.

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63.

It may now be asked if man with his virtues cannot in any way give an occasion of falling to his fellow-man. I say, where there is a true virtue, which is perfectly worked by divine love, this is no cause of falling; and whatever judgment falleth upon it is nothing else than a revelation of truth and justice. But the good work that taketh place out of fear or natural causes and natural likeness and an unprepared ground is an impure work; the greater the impurity the greater is the cause of falling to fellow-men; and whoso overthroweth his fellow-man with such works is guilty of his fall; these good works must often be left for the purpose of helping a fellow-man. Because these good works, through an improper intention, are changed into bad works, so that they are no longer good, but they are bad, and therefore

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71 [John xii. 32.](#)

72 [Matt. vii. 1.](#)

73 [Rom. ii. 1.](#)

they must be left; but good works that take place from right divine love are altogether pure, nor are they a cause of stumbling to our fellowmen, and therefore they are not to be left.

64.

It might now be said, Could not an evil work be wrought from love, so that though the intention is to God, yet the work is evil? I say that all right works of love are good, and not evil.⁷⁴ St. Paul saith this, that “divine love worketh no evil.” But many a man weeneth that he worketh from love when it is not love, therefore his works are oftentimes evil. For divine love is ordained according to a necessary aim, and when a man worketh works of love without order or necessity, love loseth its name, and a work lacking love taketh place. But such works are not entitled to reward; for Paul saith, “If I lack charity, I am nothing.”⁷⁵ Therefore is it a great necessity that men should know how they should work works of love, and should let drop works lacking charity. Few men are found who know this art, to work the works of love in perfection.

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65.

A right work of love hath four kinds of ordinances. First is the law of Holy Church; the second order is that of the natural law; and these two ordinances meet in one law, and their law is measure, and the measure applieth to outer works, and whoso doth not attain to measure in his works of love, spoileth his work. Now, this is the measure, a mean or medium between little and much; and whoso always hitteth the mean in his works of love, his works are ordered and ordained according to divine love. Thus it is not a work of love to give to a man who doth not need it, for the giver doth not work according to the mean, which is here the necessity; for necessity is the object of gifts and their mean or measure, and hence it is not a virtue that a rich man should give to another rich man. Just as little is it a virtue that you give to eat to a man who is full, or to a drunken man to drink, as it is to give temporal goods to a rich man. There is indeed a little of virtue in this, Give to me and I will give to you. But God giveth no reward for this, for it is no work of love. Nor is it a properly ordered work of love, that a man should fast above the power of nature, so that his nature is injured by it; it is also not good that a man should eat beyond necessity, but a medium and measure should be kept in all things, and whoso observeth the mean in all his works, keepeth the commandments of Holy Church and of nature. Of this St. Bernard speaketh:

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74 [1 Cor. xiii. 5.](#)

75 [1 Cor. xiii. 2.](#)

“The best thing that a man can do is to keep order in nature and spirit.”⁷⁶ For all things have order, and whosoever taketh away their order from things, taketh their being; and whoso breaketh proper order in his works of love, he infringeth the divine love, and his works are rather evil than good. For Christ saith, “There is no one good save God,” and therefore nothing is good, save it be done in God, and nothing is done in God save according to order. The third order according to which a proper work of love should be worked is the order of the Holy Gospel; the fourth order is divine. And these two orders have one aim, which is God; for the order of the Holy Gospel admonisheth to external freedom from temporal things, which are not God, and the divine ordinance admonisheth to an internal freedom from all things that are not God. And whoso keepeth both these ordinances rightly in his works, he worketh always without mediation, in God and for God. This is because a perfect man, who liveth according to the order of the Gospel and according to divine order, is stripped of all creatures, inwardly and outwardly; hence God is his object, without mediation; for all means are departed, therefore also his works are without mediation, for they are worked without and above all creatures in God. And therefore Christ said, “Whoso leaveth not all that he hath, cannot be My disciple.” He says “all things,” and not to leave a part and keep a part, for this aims at natural means. But He saith we should leave all things and keep nothing, and this aims at God without any mediation. And he is a true disciple of God if he goeth only to the divine school, in which he learneth all truth, and if God alone is his schoolmaster, and teacheth him to work all his works according to divine order. Christ also saith: “Whoso doth not leave father and mother and sister, and all other things, is not worthy of Me.”⁷⁷ In truth, whose selfhood cleaveth to a thing that is not simply God, let this thing be as small as you please, maketh himself thereby unworthy of a great God; for worth and dignity subsist in likeness, and whoso cleaveth to his selfhood is unlike to God.

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66.

The Sacrament of our Lord is God and man. Whoso wisheth to receive Christ here worthily, must as far as possible be like unto Him. As the Humanity is here pure, so must be also the man who receiveth Him in His externals be clear of all temporal things; and as God is here pure, so also must the spirit be freed from all things which are not purely godlike. In this way is the Sacrament worthily received. Christ saith, “Whoso doth not leave all, is not worthy of Me.” Such a one alone receiveth the fruit in the most perfect manner, for he

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76 It is Guigo (in *Epis. ad fratres de monte Dei*. lib. 1. c. 11) who says: “Modus in omnibus habendus est,” whereas our author confounds him with St. Bernard.

77 Here the author combines several verses of different Gospels: [Luke xiv. 26](#), “If a man doth not hate his father and mother, his brethren and sisters;” and again, [Matt. x. 38](#), “he is not worthy of me.”

hath nothing in himself that can hinder him from this fruit. He can therefore go every day and receive his own food; no one can do this properly but he alone. Whoso would refuse him this food would take from him his Fatherly inheritance, that Christ hath left him through His death, to live upon it and still his desire. Whoso goeth otherwise to the table of the Lord than in true reality, he goeth not as a child to his fatherly inheritance. You can withhold from him his inheritance without sin, so long till he hath been chosen as a legitimate child of the covenant; such must hold themselves back from the Holy Sacrament till they are better prepared. They must have awe of the judgment of people, as it is not yet their proper inheritance, for they can be judged rightfully. If they still go up to receive, they give scandal and are thus guilty, for they take what is not their property. But the true children of the covenant, whose inheritance it is, need not omit for the sake of any man, unless their own heart did not consent to it. They must then turn to their Father, and keep to their inheritance. No one giveth them scandal if they use their inheritance; but they do not only use it, but divide it with all men who desire it. They need not hold in awe any judgment, for no one can deny their right. They must hold fast their inheritance, and if they let it be denied them, they prove thereby no love to their Father, but would make themselves illegitimate children. Whoso were to withhold from them the Sacrament, would be like unto a man whom a housefather inviteth to himself as guest, offereth him meat and drink, and accepts nothing from him therefor; but the guest driveth the host from his table, upsetting meat and drink, so that they must both fast. A wise and determined house-father would not pardon the guest, and if he were to do so, he would be a fool and a coward, who never possessed a manly character, and is not worthy to eat his meat. Whoso now knoweth that God feedeth him with Himself, let him eat and drink without fear, and let every one murmur and judge as he will; he giveth right to himself, to God, and to all men. But if he omitteth it on account of murmuring and judgments, he showeth that he is no child of the covenant, and that he doth not rightfully eat this food.



67.

Some say you ought to consider your fellowmen and omit it for God's sake. Whoso goeth worthily to the table of the Lord, giveth alms to the whole of Christendom, and to each one is given according to his worthiness. But whoso omitteth it giveth nothing to any one, and letteth all men hunger. Whoso blameth a good man for receiving the Body of Christ maketh himself unworthy of all the good of the whole of holy Christendom; but the highest good of Christendom is this, that good men receive the Body of Christ. Now, he who sinneth and maketh himself unworthy in the highest, maketh himself also unworthy in small things; whoso treateth God with dishonour, he dishonoureth also all the saints. On account of this unworthiness of his Censor no one should omit the Sacrament, in order that all other men



should not have to answer for it if one sinneth. If he omitteth it when he ought to do it, he falleth into the same unworthiness in which he is who blameth him. In doing thus he followeth him more than God, therefore he hath more likeness to his blamer than to God. He also showeth no use to him or any one if he omitteth it. Whoso standeth on a weak tree, which is shaken by a vehement wind, must fall down, and if he falleth not at the first gust of wind, he falleth after another; but as he must needs fall, it is better that he should fall through the first than through a following gust. But to receive the Body of Christ is an occasion of falling to no one; it is his own wickedness which is in him, and if it is not revealed in this, it will be revealed in another work, and therefore he cannot escape. It is quite right that such persons should be judged, for it is the greatest work to receive the Body of Christ, and man in his weakness cannot prepare himself worthily for it; therefore it is necessary that he should be helped, in order that he may the sooner step up to it worthily. God permit-teth that a judgment should fall upon him; these judgments make him pure, so that he may the more worthily receive the Body of the Lord: if any one flee these judgments, he will not let himself be prepared for it. Hence it belongeth to a poor life that a man be judged, in order then to be free, that he may commune with God immediately and work out each virtue in the most perfect manner.



68.

Man must also suffer every persecution, which helpeth very much to a poor life. Man, through Adam's fall and his defects, is full of sinful leanings, which hinder him from his best; this inrooted leaning and these defects must be rooted out by sufferings. Whoso doth not overcome Adam through sufferings, never attaineth to a pure poor life; whoso giveth him occasion to suffer helpeth him to this end. God willeth not that anything should be rooted out in man without sufferings; all that is untrue must disappear through these. He also lendeth no gifts if the ground for them is not purified by sufferings. Holy Writ saith, "No evil remaineth unpunished, and no good unrewarded."⁷⁸ If all evil is rooted out by suffering, then all good is given; therefore also Christ wished to suffer, that through His suffering all evil might be done away and all good given. Whoso suffereth most in his sufferings, has also the most use from the Passion of our Lord; but whoso fleeth this, fleeth his everlasting blessedness, as through nothing doth man come nearer to his blessedness than through sufferings. Suffering purifieth man as fire doth gold; the gold that is most burned in the fire is also the purest. So is it also with man; whoso suffereth most becometh also purest, whoso is purest is also nighest God, and thus suffering is the greatest gift that God lendeth here in time, for through this you come nighest to Him.



78 In the margin stands Augustine.

69.

But no one is worthy of suffering except he who suffereth in the highest degree of divine love; he who hath not this is also not worthy. God letteth sinners suffer little upon earth; on the other hand, good men must suffer much, and if- any one is wise, he accepteth suffering more joyfully than if he received all the riches of the earth; for temporal good robbeth man of everlasting happiness if he tarries in it with joy. But temporal good giveth him suffering if he suffereth from love; he is also a fool who leaveth the good and chooseth the evil. Yet many fools are found on earth who desire and seek temporal good, but flee sufferings, therefore they are the wisest before the world and the most foolish before God. If God were to give sufferings to worldly-minded men, but temporal good to good men, He would act like one who were to kill his friend but would keep his foes alive, and give them, moreover, what they desired. Nothing bringeth more life into the soul than suffering. It rooteth out all that bringeth death to the soul, and when the deathly is thus removed, nothing more remaineth than life. Thus the most severe suffering begetteth the greatest joy, as joy springeth from suffering.



70.

It may now be asked, Which suffering is better that which man hath occasioned to himself or what other people have wrought, or what God inflicts upon him? Just as much as it is better that God should bless man than that man should make himself happy, so much better is also the suffering that other people cause him and that God inflicts upon him than that which he occasions himself. Further, that suffering is the best where the greatest patience is called forth; but patience is greater when you suffer at the hands of others than when it is caused by yourself. A man easily endureth himself, but, on the contrary, he doth not so easily endure another.



71.

It may be said: if, then, the suffering that is inflicted on us by others is better than that which we inflict on ourselves, it is also better that we should not seek any suffering, but allow it to be applied to us; and thus, therefore, the suffering of rich people is better, as they do not seek it, than that of poor people, who seek it? But I say thus: That suffering is the best which is endured in true love, and this is certainly greater love if you seek suffering from love, than if you fly from it out of fear. But rich folk flee from sufferings, whether caused by themselves or others. The rich man is much more loved than hated, therefore no one doeth injury to him, save he himself. But the man truly poor in spirit thrusteth himself into every suffering, he fleeth his sins, as such sufferings give no reward, and he seeketh that others

should do him injury, as he hath reward from this. Your own proper suffering cometh from a man's own sins, and he suffereth quite rightly who liveth in sins, as each sin begetteth a special spiritual suffering. But if rich folk suffer thus, they have yet no merit unless they avoid the sins; if, however, they live in sins, they must endure severe sufferings. A suffering of this kind is like unto that of hell, for the more you suffer the worse you become; this happeneth to sinners; the more they suffer through their sins, the more wicked they become, and they fall continually more into them in order to get free from suffering; the more they flee external suffering, the more are they punished internally. Even if they have no external punishment, they are yet tortured internally by their sins, and complain of their great sufferings. They think it ought to bring them merit, because people say that suffering is good; but it is more a beginning of hellish torments than a preparation for heaven; for as good men have a foretaste of everlasting joys, so have sinners a foretaste of everlasting torments, as everlasting joy is begotten in virtue, and everlasting torment in sins. Therefore that suffering alone bringeth merit which out of love is borne with patience and for the sake of the truth. Such sufferings are sought by good men, therefore their suffering is also well pleasing to God.



72.

Nothing bringeth man nearer to God than Buffering, and indeed for this reason, because suffering rooteth out all that is hateful and ungrateful to God in man, and thus man must remain free from all hatred and must love God. Therefore Christ saith through David: "I am with him in tribulation; I will deliver him, and glorify him; I will give him a long life, and show him My salvation."⁷⁹ "I am with him in suffering" meaneth that you have always God present in suffering. Nay, God cometh with suffering to man, and cannot come better to him; man is thus freed from all that is not God; he adhereth to God only, and God enlighteneth him with the light of His glory, and filleth him with everlasting blessedness, which is Himself. His suffering is like a wine-press in which grapes are pressed in wine making. If the grape is pressed, what is in it floweth from it; if it is sweet, sweet wine floweth forth, if sour, sour wine. So is it also if man is pressed by suffering, what is in him floweth from him. If he is a virtuous man, when he is seized by suffering, only divine sweetness issueth from him, which was hidden in him; it becometh manifest, so that he giveth good noble wine to drink to all men, and he can say, "Come all to me, ye that thirst, ye shall all be filled and satisfied with my own wine."⁸⁰ With this sweetness he now presseth into all things, he



⁷⁹ [Ps. xci. 15-16.](#)

⁸⁰ This seems to be a free rendering of [Eccles. xxiv. 26](#): "Transite ad me omnes qui concupiscitis me et a generationibus meis implemini."

maketh them all good, and also receiveth the best. He disturbeth no man, and no man can trouble him; thus hath he then much likeness with God, if he remaineth quite immovable in his mind. Christ said also, "Blessed are they that are persecuted for justice' sake, for they shall be called the children of God; blessed are ye when men hate you and persecute you; rejoice and be exceeding glad, for your reward shall be great in heaven."⁸¹ "Blessed," He saith, "are they who suffer persecution for justice' sake," and this is because persecution, hatred, and contempt bring salvation to man, and whoso doth not suffer this findeth also not happiness. No man can bless himself; if he is to be blessed, he must be holpen to this; this help rather than his works saveth him. Therefore also Jesus said, "Rejoice in the days of adversity, for your reward is great in heaven," that is, such a reward will be given to man as he could not have merited by his works. Therefore let no man be sorrowful in suffering, for it taketh away all sorrow, and procureth all peace. Good people are the most cheerful, because they have most sufferings, and the pressing winepress causeth the hidden joy to overflow. That is indeed a noble life, when man alway rejoiceth and is never thoroughly sorrowful.

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73.

Nevertheless our Lord saith, "My soul is sorrowful unto death."⁸² How then can good people be always gladsome? There are two kinds of sorrow, first, a sorrow that ariseth from our sins; but Jesus and good souls have not this sorrow. The other sorrow is more one of compassion, and ariseth from the love of man; Jesus had this, and also all the pious. This sorrow can well subsist with divine joy, and he who loveth his neighbour most, and hath compassion with him, in him ariseth the greatest divine joy. Even though the good man must feel sufferings on account of its defects, this taketh place from divine love, and his suffering is not like that of the sinner, in whom the pangs of hell always are born, but his suffering cometh out of love, and begetteth divine joy. Whoso doth not rejoice in suffering giveth evidence that it is not fruit-bearing. St. Paul saith, "Rejoice in the Lord alway,"⁸³ and in another place he saith again, "Be joyful." "Rejoice in the Lord alway; "this meaneth that man should abide in everlasting joy in the Lord, but a joy issuing from a pure conscience. Whoso hath this joy, that is a sign that God dwelleth in his heart, who revealeth Himself in love and joy. Thus good souls cannot show much sadness, for God hath taken away from them all sadness, and hath taken the place of this in them; but where God is there is perpetual joy. "Be ye joyful," that is, as often as a man meeteth a suffering, he should always have a

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81 [Matt. v. 10, 11.](#)

82 [Matt. xxvi. 38.](#)

83 [Phil. iv. 4.](#)

peculiar joy. That is then a sign that God answereth him in all things, and always cometh to meet him with new gifts. Every suffering endured from love and with joy bringeth fresh gifts; and he who rejoiceth alway in suffering, proveth that God is always giving to him, and that no gift escapeth him. Fresh gifts bring fresh joys, and the joy is known by the gift; for no one rejoiceth if you take from him, but if you give to him. God giveth continually to good men, so they constantly also feel joy.

74.

But it will be said that Jesus called those accursed who always live in joy here,⁸⁴ how can then good people always have such joy? Our Lord only calls those accursed who have their joy and their delight in this moment of time; this sham delight is sinful, therefore God rejecteth it. But the joy of the good doth not issue from the moment of time but from eternity, not from sin but from virtue. They do not procure this joy for themselves, but God giveth it to them.

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75.

It might again be said, If good people always have joy what is then their suffering? for suffering and joy cannot subsist together. I reply, Man is made up of body and soul, and each hath its separate work. But when the body rejoiceth in temporal things and sins, the spirit sorroweth, and sinners have this joy and sadness. Again, when the spirit rejoiceth in God, the body sorroweth in time, and this joy and sadness have good people. And the suffering of the body which they have in time bringeth them to life everlasting. Moreover, the joy that they have is the fruit of suffering, and thus suffering and joy subsist together, and the greater the suffering of the body, the greater is the joy of the spirit. That they can rejoice in sufferings is a sign that they belong to eternal life. Never was there to any man a divine joy in suffering, if he belonged to hell. From this cause also sinners have an everlasting sadness in their joy. The fruit of their temporal lust is much more a sham and a vain fancy than a truth. It is also in truth no joy but everlasting torment. These men, the more external delight they have, the more are they inwardly tortured. And this is a sign that they do not belong to God. For luck in this time is an affair of everlasting ill luck. He therefore who puffeth himself up with temporal luck is like unto a thief who rejoiceth when he is led over a green meadow; and so long as he is on the green meadow he thinketh it is well with him, but as soon as he hath passed over the meadow they hang him on the gallows, and all his joy is gone. So also it happeneth with the sinner who rejoiceth in this short time, and is afterwards hanged on the everlasting hellish gallows. And this is right, for they are thieves

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84 [Luke vi. 25.](#)

and steal from God what is His own. For all that they have is from God, and they give nothing back to Him, and therefore are they rightly hanged. And whoso is puffed up with good luck is puffed up because he is a thief and has to be hanged. Thus luck in time is a cause of hell and ill-luck, and pain a cause of everlasting life.

76.

The remark might now be made: There be many good folk on earth who yet have little suffering, must they then on that account have less reward? I say, Whoso is a true friend of God is never without temporal suffering—he suffereth alway. This happeneth in a fourfold way. One suffering is in the works, another in the will, a third in the spirit, and a fourth in God, and each bringeth about a separate joy. The first suffering that a man endureth is from outer accidents. Thus God inflicts on man sickness, or condemnation, or letteth a man fall into poverty, so that he is exposed to hunger, thirst, and misery and insult, and whatever other sufferings he endureth he endureth all through God, and a right good man is seldom without such suffering; he must needs always suffer something. If such suffering were entirely withdrawn from him he would stray from the way to the kingdom of heaven. And let him know it or not, he must endure suffering in several ways. For on the road of God you must always go by your own strength, and yet no man can do this always unless God help him and give him power and power alway floweth into the soul through suffering. Whoso lacketh suffering lacketh strength, and whoso lacketh strength cannot always go of himself; but whoso cannot always go of himself, steppeth aside from the way of God. Hence good people must always suffer, that they may always have strength to go of themselves, and this they suffer privately or openly. It cometh often to pass that good men be hated privately, and that the worst things are said of them. Thus are they prepared by private sufferings. All this steadieth them on the way of God, and bringeth them great reward, and therefore Christ spake, “Rejoice in the day when ye are hated, for your reward shall be great in heaven.” What He speaketh of the day is said of the light of truth. For as the sun enlighteneth the day, so suffering enlighteneth the reason to know the truth, therefore David said, “Suffering giveth understanding.”⁸⁵ Therefore the men most tried by suffering are they of the most understanding. This is because suffering giveth to a man to know everything as it is. And it revealeth the secret nature of things. But what is revealed is also known. Now voluptuous delight and temporal luxury darken the reason, in the darkness of creatures, so that it becometh quite blind and loseth its natural discretion, and this is seen well in the love of the world. But suffering gathereth up the soul from all things that are not God into itself; and it loveth the truth, and in the light which is the spirit and God in the spirit, and in no other way can a



85 Instead of David, Denifle suggests Isaiah, for at [xxviii. 19](#) occurs the passage, “Vexatio dabit intellectual auditui,” “and it shall be a vexation only to understand the report.” Compare No. 83.

man know the truth better than in suffering. This is because the sweetness of temporal things covereth the reason with darkness. But the bitterness of temporal things strippeth from the reason all darkness of creatures, as the knowledge of the truth is a going apart from all natural things. The sweetness of material things causeth the reason to cleave unto them, but the bitterness of things causeth the reason to turn away from all things, and thus suffering causeth detachment, and bringeth to the knowledge of the naked truth. Whoso would be right wise let him go to the school of suffering. For therein each thing showeth itself as it is, and of this Gregory speaketh, "Whatever was hid in man when suffering cometh, it is revealed."⁸⁶ In this way man cometh to a knowledge of himself and of all things in sufferings, as Paul saith, "Through much tribulation must we enter the kingdom of God."⁸⁷ For this kingdom of God consists in this, that we know God in us and know ourselves in God. But we know God in us and ourselves in God when all things that are not God are driven out of us with suffering, and thus God alone remaineth known in us. Therefore a teacher saith, "Whoso wish to live intimately with Christ must suffer persecution."⁸⁸ For suffering is driven out by suffering; and when a man hath endured all suffering he is free from all suffering, and thus he liveth in Christ intimately, that is, in right rest and peace of his heart. But whoso fleeth suffering is never free from suffering, that is because the ground of his heart never becomes clear, and thus the heart is always troubled. For all trouble must pass away with suffering, and therefore good people must always have some suffering, that they may always continue pure. For while man is in time he cannot always continue without sinful propensity, and sinful propensities must each one root out, and whosoever suffereth most, this is a sign that God loveth him most, especially removeth his sins, and maketh him pure from all sinful accidents. Hence suffering is a noble plant that quickly healeth the wounds of man. But to fools this plant hath not a pleasant smell, they turn away their noses from it and flee away. Therefore they must always be distressed, and moreover poor and unhappy, and right reprobate fools. But the richer and nobler they be in time, the greater fools without doubt. Therefore good people must always endure sufferings, that all folly may drop away from them, and that their reward may be always assigned them. Of this the wise man saith, "These are they whom we held as fools and mocked at them, but now are they counted among the sons of God."⁸⁹

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86 Qualiter unusquisque apud se lateat, contumelia illata probat.

87 In the margin [Act. ix.](#) See [Acts xiv. 22.](#)

88 In the margin Paulus ad Thimoth. 2. Comp. II. 3-12.

89 In margin: Sapientia V^o. Comp. [Book of Wisd., v. 4, 5.](#)

77.

Secondly, man must have Buffering in the will, and what faileth him in works, he must fulfil in the will. This cometh to pass in this wise: when a man turneth into himself, and in the light of faith seeth the love of our Lord, which compelled Him to suffer such great martyrdom for him, then an answering love springeth up in man, who out of right love for our Lord would atone and make good all that which He hath suffered for his sake, and thus he falleth with the will on all the sufferings that might be inflicted upon him, and those he is willing again to suffer through and for Christ. Then his desire for suffering is greater than for all the things that are in time, and out of genuine answering love he throws off all that may bring him pleasure, comfort, and joy, and giveth himself a lack of all bodily delight and comfort, and of all creaturely joy, that he might repay Christ for a part of His sufferings. And this beginning of poverty is a sure way to a perfect life; and after a good beginning followeth easily a good middle course and a good end.



78.

It is wonderful that these beings are never abandoned by God; they have begun in love, which is Christ, and Jesus must support them, and keep them with him for eternity. It also happens that their seduction will be attempted by nature, but the will bound to God with the determination to give up all things, can resist all other temptations. Such men then are the servants of God. All that bringeth the good to default is that their own will was never serious, for when a man standeth on his own responsibility he must fall, and cannot remain upright. But he who forceth on himself the atonement for the sufferings of Jesus, this earnest determination is aided by God, who raiseth him to godliness, and never letteth him fall again into a human will: this determination can therefore resist deadly falls. The following giveth us an example:—“A king who hath an enemy seeketh to catch him, and if he getteth him into his power he punisheth him, taketh his goods from him, and perchance killeth him.” So is it also with the “will,” when man standeth on it unaided. It is the enemy of God, God seeketh to get it into his power, He sendeth forth scouts, and those are the men who announce the word of God, and the warnings of conscience which God giveth: if the man through the light of his reason is led to recognise all that he had formerly sought he waxeth wrathful, and wisheth to leave all evil and that is a cause of evil. Thus now God persecuteth him, punisheth him with mental and external sufferings, taketh from him all his goods and greed; He killeth him entirely, and draweth all away from him which is deadly and not of God; thus is earthly attraction crushed and conquered by God. Those are blessed who thus die in God, as St. John says, “Blessed are those who die in God” ([Rev. xiv. 13](#)).



79.

That worketh a great love which through the sufferings of our Lord is kindled by the burning fire of the Holy Ghost. This love forceth the volition, to suffer all pains that are forthcoming in atonement for the One who loved man so strongly. He now turneth all things to bring suffering upon him, and that which He cannot bring to him in action he bringeth to himself mentally: the will then bringeth before him all the torments suffered by our Lord, all the sufferings endured by the saints, and all that men must yet suffer. He uniteth himself in this with complete affection, and the wish to have suffered all things, or to suffer more. This love maketh the will receptive of all the advantage which is to be found in the agony of our Lord, and sufferings of all saints and pious souls. The following is to be read anent the holy Martin, that he, although not executed with the sword, hath none the less not lost the martyr's crown, because he suffered in the wish, what the martyrs suffered in the flesh, and because it gave him pain that he could not suffer bodily.⁹⁰ In this way many good people are able to be companions of the martyrs, when they have willed to suffer all their martyrdoms; but they must also bear in mind, that when they tramp in the footsteps of our Lord and of the saints they must endure in the love of God all sufferings that cross their path, however cruel, and with a firm will wish that they may suffer more. Thus can a man partake of all suffering.

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80.

But on the other hand, he who demandeth suffering and yet always attempteth to avoid it in action doth not present himself in the form of our Lord, which showeth that his desire was not complete (earnest), and he will therefore not take part in all sufferings. Man must, so long as he can work anything, work the work prescribed by God; first, when he hath accomplished all things, and desireth nothing more, God worketh instead of himself, and then for the first time beginneth the godly work in entirety, because the man in fact is freed from his own works. He beareth also now, though sinless, a suffering; what he can suffer he suffereth, what doth not occur to him he seeketh to suffer; love maketh the sufferings of strangers as his own, not one but all. Were God to impart him less than if he had suffered all he would not have rewarded him justly; but this is to be understood as essential and not as accidental reward, because essential reward is that one understandeth and loveth the pure truth. If in a perfect will is also an unbounded love of absolute truth, if absolute truth is the greatest

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⁹⁰ Martin occurs in the margin. The passage is traced by Denifle to the Breviary on the Festival of St. Martin, 11th Nov. (Brev. Rom. antiphon. in 2 vesp. at Magn.; Brev. O.P. antiph. super Ps. in I vesp.): "O sanctissima anima, quam etsi gladius persecutoris non abstulit, tamen palmam martyrii non amisit. See above, No. 44, Part I and No. 51, Part II.; and Sylvius, Comment, in Summam, S. Thom. tom. ii p. 151, ad 7 (ed. Venetiis, 1726).

reward, then the wish with love of suffering gains all essential reward. The object is simple, therefore also the reward. Some truly say, when a man hath come to complete truth he cannot increase it, because complete truth is simple, and he who once hath it hath it completely, and nothing can be wanting to him. True it is that in respect to the difference in number one cannot increase it, but in its simplicity and purity one can increase it so long as we live in time; the simpler and purer we are, the more we are able to understand absolute truth. If the man in the first attempt after absolute truth seeth not at once the highest pinnacle of pure internal simplicity, he can also not at once understand this truth; and as he increaseth in this singleness of purpose his reward will also increase. As his volition separateth itself from things to the one unity, which is God, after an essential manner, he therefore also increases in absolute reward; according as his spirit is united with God so also increaseth his absolute sanctity. When the will getteth into the condition that he increaseth in absolute reward, then he embraceth all good works with love, all virtues and sufferings, and perfects it all with charity (love). By love therefore he draweth forth the best fruit, and adheres to it, for it is God the fountain of all things; he compelleth God with this true love to place him as a co-worker in all good works in an essential manner. Whoever were to know what a hidden treasure he is bringing to himself by an humble and devoted will, would not stand on his own will, because with love he arrives at that point to which angels' reason does not reach, in the beginning without end. The beginning of God, which is, however, without beginning, no one can know except God. Him can the will alone love in the past, and therefore God must reward him, as if he himself had always been, and as if he had always loved.



81.

We can here make use of the expression of Augustin, "What one doth not understand one doth not love,"⁹¹ Thus love springeth from the understanding. If, therefore, the eternity of God is beyond understanding, is it therefore impossible by volition to love His eternity? I answer, love is twofold, one springeth from the understanding, and with this will one cannot love Him in His eternity; the other ariseth from faith, and loveth Him for the sake of His eternity. As we can and must believe that God is without beginning and without end, so also can the will love Him entirely from the light of faith, as an always existing and everlasting God. According as the will loveth Him, so also will He reward it; He loveth it indeed as if it had been an eternal will, and equal will be the recompense. As Christ says, "With the same measure that ye measure out, will also be measured back, and a heaped up and overflowing measure will they give into your lap." Equal measure is equal love; God giveth not less to the soul than she loveth Him; He will measure out to her according to the summit



91 See Part I., p. 10, No. 14.

of His love. The heaped up, overflowing measure is God Himself; when also the will understands God then more superfluity remaineth to her than she can comprehend; and in this godlike abundance the will hath more joy than in that which it comprehendeth. But God rewards the will with eternal love, for the will doth not rouse itself to love God, but the Holy Ghost is the love from which the will loveth, and as the Holy Ghost is without beginning or end, so also it loveth God without beginning and without end. But the will loves God thus in the love of the Holy Ghost only, when it has raised itself above the beginning and end of the creature world. If this is the case, then it goeth forth in the unending God, with whom there is neither beginning nor end. Then man loveth all in an essential manner, and will accordingly be rewarded. All suffering that hath been suffered and will yet be suffered, he wisheth may also occur to him; for the sake of the sufferings of Jesus Christ let him add his own sufferings, so that the suffering and reward may be complete. St. Paul had this love when he said, "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is troubled, and I am not troubled? Yes, I am all things to all men. that I might make you all holy."⁹²



82.

The third suffering abideth in the soul, when the spirit of man is seized by the godly Spirit, with the mantle of His love wound round it, so that he dependeth to it. The band of divine love is then so delightful to him that all other things revolt him; and if he meeteth anything, which is not from the love of the Holy Ghost, it paineth him. All that he seeth and heareth, and which is not divine, is a sad and unspeakable scathe.

83.

When David saith,⁹³ "The righteous will not be troubled," that referreth to temporal things, which make him troubled and unclean; but this suffering of a clean soul is caused by all things that are not God, and it thereby causeth the soul to purify and retain purity. When anything sinful crosseth the spirit, it is of necessity that it should be met with bitterness; this bitterness (hostility) driveth away the unholy onslaught, and retaineth the soul in its

⁹² The only passage resembling this is [Rom. xii. 15](#). *Flere cum flentibus citieren*.

⁹³ This passage cannot be found in the Psalms, but in [Proverbs xii. 21](#). "There shall no evil happen to the just." Schmidt, p. 130, infers from the whole passage, that the soul united with God will, according to the author, never more be troubled; it is raised above all that is changeable, &c. In this case Denifle thinks that Schmidt can only have read the passage from Scripture, for from the context follows exactly the contrary.

cleanliness. If the soul is free from all sinful impressions, if it standeth in the form of divinity, then it findeth itself in the righteousness in which God had originally formed it. It has arrived there through grace, and it is not troubled, for it hath passed beyond where grief can reach, it hath united itself with that which is all rapture and joy, he revelleth, and no more sadness can approach him. Thus meaneth David when he saith, "The righteous cannot be troubled." Secondly, nothing could trouble the righteous unless God were stolen away; thus only the tearing away of his righteousness could trouble him. But so long as man liveth in time so long will he be persecuted, therefore he feeleth trouble and bitterness. But this trouble doth not injure the righteous, but rather holdeth him in his righteousness. Thirdly, the righteous man will also not be troubled when he existeth in the complete enjoyment of his righteousness. But this cannot be completely the case in time, but only in eternity. So long, therefore, as man is here below, so long his soul must be troubled, because he hath no power to enjoy his righteousness; but this trouble is also not destructive, but driveth him towards this complete righteousness. When there is hunger and thirst there is also trouble. Fourthly, the righteous man will not be troubled when his soul is given up to God, when all worldliness hath disappeared, and divinity standeth alone before him, in which he findeth joy. But if the man throweth a glance on his neighbour of human kind and seeth his misery he must then suffer with him. But such trouble doth not hinder the righteous, for righteousness springeth from charity. In the Gospel it is written of Jesus, "Jesus shuddered in spirit, and was troubled." This was sympathy which he had for us. Fifthly, the righteous soul is unable to be troubled when all created objects are set aside and it is wrapped in the uncreated, which is God, where it alone findeth peace and sufficiency. But when the interest of the man concentrateth itself in created objects, which lead the soul not to God, then the spirit is troubled, because its sanctity is not fashioned and formed in that shape, he is, therefore, not able to be quiet *of spirit; but even this disturbance of the spirit is not destructive, for it gradually driveth away all things that, are not God, until God finally alone abideth with him. But at the same lime when perchance a man hath for a time peace through the perception of reason, that is not complete rest but a natural one.

84.

This peace had also the pagans; they put away all earthly things that they might enjoy bodily peace; therefore also the spirit was of joy, although not its true joy. But this natural joy should be avoided, and it should alone be sought in God; those who stand by this joy are more like unto the Gentiles than like Christ. It is possible, and also often happeneth, that a man putteth away all to have peace of spirit without obstacles, and therefore it is rather difficult to separate these natural pagan men from the Christian and divine; both of them avoid all earthly things, both have a similar life; they love poverty and venerate the Creator;

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both of them attempt externally to imitate the picture of our Lord; but inwardly they are unlike. Objects and forms are the aims of the natural men, they find their happiness in them; but the divine seek their happiness in the humanity and godliness of Christ, they come out from Him and they return to Him. But let no man attempt to find the difference between these two men, unless he hath divine light in his nature and is directed in spirit, lest he should attach sins to holy people. The best side should be looked on in all intentions, and no one should be pronounced wicked of whom the rottenness cannot here be known.

85.

But if some one loveth a natural man (man of the world) as if he were a divine man, will God then reward him as if he were a true one? I answer, It is better that one should love a man who bears the name of a Christian, if he is good or bad, than that one should dislike and hate him, as God rewards love in any form more than if a man is without it; but love must be general, not directed to one individual nor intermittent. Who at the same time can love a worldly or ordinary man strongly, and yet keep God in view, hath but an impeded and forced love, for all attachments make an obstacle. But the man who loveth all his neighbours equally, without personal interest, hath a true love, which God will also reward. But if a man loveth another as if he were good, when he is not so, it would be unjust for God to reward him, because as love springeth from understanding, if that understanding is an unjust one so also is the love, therefore God rewardeth him not. It also happeneth that a man loveth another because he holdeth him as good, whilst another holdeth him as bad. God then gives more reward to the man who held him as wrong, if justly, than to the man who held him as right. Thus love becometh better according as it is lighted by divinity, and the more it is drawn away the less in value it becomes. It certainly does occur that one man is drawn to another by blind love, holding him for righteous when it is not the case; whereas another, being better awakened, does not act to him according to blind love, but loveth him according to his worth. This love is much nobler than the first blind love, God accordingly rewards it more thoroughly.

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86.

But a reversed view may here be taken. Thus love doth not come entirely from the understanding, but also from faith. Therefore if one man hath more faith than another, and loveth him from that reason, because he holdeth him for good, should God not reward him more than another who hath not so much faith, and therefore doth not love him so much? I answer, The man hath only so much real faith as he obtaineth from divine light; to whom the light faileth, faileth also the faith. He who hath learnt to know divine truth best hath also the truest faith; but no one hath this except the man who hath understood essential truth,

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and who loveth from complete faith; this love is the most useful and most worthy. It also happeneth that a man trusteth another, holding him to be righteous, and loving him, but he doth not exactly understand why he loveth him; whilst another hath no trust in him, doth not hold him as righteous, and doth not love him, and understandeth what he should believe; and this hostility is nobler and more useful than that love, for God doth not reward a false faith when some one believes a thing that is not true; it is, on the contrary, almost faithlessness and sinful, rather than perfection; such love is not rewarded by God which springs from faithlessness. Thus Jesus said, "Take heed of false prophets, that come to you in sheep's clothing, but are inwardly raging wolves." They are false prophets who point to themselves as respectable (righteous), but who are really bad; and holding such men as good is rather unrighteous than righteous. Jesus adviseth us to defend ourselves from them, therefore it is bad. In the latter time false teachers shall rise up and preach, but he who believeth in them showeth that he is not good. He who liketh the superficially righteous man (hypocrite), and holds him for good, is certainly not righteous himself; he is certainly, as a teacher saith, "a fool, that believeth anything or everything."

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87

The light of faith is above all understanding; a man requireth no reason with faith, for he is raised above it. Men without understanding believe truly; God giveth them therefore the same reward as to the awakened. Is it, therefore, not necessary to understand to believe because faith is simple? Understanding is twofold; one is required for faith, the other is faith itself. The first is that a man should understand the articles of faith and the teachings of Christ. Whosoever knoweth the teaching and liveth according to it, in him the fruit of the doctrine is revealed by which he will be known, because the tree is known by its fruit; if the man cometh to understanding, then he at once beginneth to believe, and it is certain that the faith is true. But the men who have not lived according to the doctrines of our Lord, also do not know the fruits of His teachings, and they also therefore do not know whether they believe rightly or wrongly. They believe only from hearsay, therefore their faith is not complete, and they can easily err. As now their faith is incomplete, so also is their love. The second understanding which perfect men have is united with faith (is one); when a man acteth on the doctrines of Christ in life, bringing all things into one, and this one into unity of knowledge in the light of faith, that is God, and where faith springs from faith, he penetrates into the hidden darkness of the pure divinity. His understanding consisteth then in suffering, but his faith is working with God. But this faith in God worketh on the understanding with burning love, this love feeleth it, and this feeling is its understanding; what is beyond it is true faith. Then the man is a true Christian, but not before. Who then, therefore, is not led forward by the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and by all virtue, until he without any distinction

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is brought to this oneness, he cannot have real faith; his faith is of course manifold, but it is not true; therefore also his love, which springs from it, is not right

88.

The best and only way to arrive at the true faith, which contains all love, is that man should be monopolised with the doctrines of our Lord, and lead a holy life; that he should be illumined with the teachings of Jesus, in order to know the awakening spirit and believe it. From this faith man must love without any attachment, then he loveth not men alone, but also the image and life of our Lord, which love is always good and meritorious. Even if such a man who were loved in the image and life of our Lord were still hampered with defects, he would not lose the reward. Christ said, "He who taketh up a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive the reward of a prophet." He who discovereth that a man walketh on the road of Christ he should love him as a follower of Christ, he then receives the reward of a disciple of Christ. We should not only look on the image but also on the works, for there is the greatest importance. He who loveth outside the life of Christ his love is of the world or worldliness; this is wasted and bad; that which is not a pure truth and love is a pain to the spirit. He who will not be deceived with false lights and unrighteous loves must strive that his spirit may be emptied of all falsity, and that it may be inflamed by the love of the Holy Ghost. If the spirit standeth in purity everything showeth itself in its true light; if it is good the spirit remaineth in peace, if it is bad it loseth its peace: thus good men recognise all things through peace. In a pure heart nothing can err, evil must show itself, for that heart is like unto a clean looking-glass, in which one seeth all things which are held before it, and as everything is it showeth to the eye. So it is also with a pure spirit, which is united with God. God permitteth nothing to approach which could destroy the unity, what is of no value there will be thrown out. Pure men require not to see all things with difference of form, for appearances cause disturbance if one attendeth to them long; fallacy is treated by external forms, and the evil spirit clothes himself in them. In simplicity let a man take note of his heart, and let God work without any external images in this way the eye of reason remaineth clean and unmixed, and no mistake can occur; the evil spirit liketh not this purity, and flieth from it. The man who hath purity remaineth untempted by evil, for God worketh in a pure soul, and illumines it with the flame of divine love, and imparts His love to it. If the powers of evil feel this they avoid it as a thief flieth from the light in a house where he will steal. The sorcery of the devil is nothing else than a mixing up with sense and worldliness and its images, but if one avoideth these, if one throweth away all material images and interests then the enemy findeth no space.



89.

But if man turn again to the senses he is befooled by the evil spirit, thus those men who live a life of the senses cannot long persist without a fall, for they have no refuge where they can stay. For God is the refuge of all men, and God doth not work in the senses nor in images, but He draweth away all the senses, and driveth out all images, and then he is the dwelling-place of man and his refuge against deadly falls. But those who do not stand withdrawn from their sensuality and stripped of all images they are on the verge of a fall, and it is a wonder if they still keep their footing. For this reason it is an absolute necessity that the senses be withdrawn into the highest reason and penetrate therewith into God, and thus you stand alone without a deadly fall. And if it were possible that the senses were always drawn in under the highest reason, and the reason were directed to God, a man thus placed would stand always untouched by death, and without venial sins, and would stand in original justice, in which God created the first man. Again, they who live in the senses cannot guard themselves against sins, and this is because all sensuality is death-giving, therefore they who live in sensuality live in death, and thus they cannot guard themselves against death, hence they must needs fall. The spirit that is raised above all things in God draweth up the senses with it, and turneth them as it is also turned, and maketh them subject to itself as it also is subject to God; and while there is obedience the spirit hath rest in God; but when the senses are rebellious in disobedience to the spirit the spirit is troubled and deprived of peace, and this is then a suffering of the spirit.



90.

The fourth suffering that a man must have is in God. This happeneth when all unlikeness falleth away from the spirit through grace, and it is placed in a likeness when it is receptive of the work of God, and in this receptiveness God worketh, and the spirit suffereth the work of God.

91.

There are two kinds of work in the soul, one is of reason and of grace, the other is essential and divine.

92.

The first or reasonable work is when the reason courseth through all things with the distinction of images (ideas or conceptions), and findeth God in all things. For God is a good that hath flown into all things, and thus man offereth himself to serve all things that he may find God; and the reason calleth this an inworking reason, and it giveth to each thing its own proper thing that belongeth to it, and thus it findeth God in all things. For whoso could take things in the order, according to which God hath ordained them, would find God in all things. The cause why we do not find God in things is that we seek things without order, and with disorder we lose God in things. Now, as order is a matter of finding, so disorder is a matter of losing; but if the reason seeketh all things in proper order, it findeth a present God. And when it findeth God it forgetteth things and cleaveth to God alone, and it perceiveth that all things are unquiet, and that perfect rest is in God alone. Therefore she lifteth herself above all things and seeketh God out of all things; and this cometh to pass by a working out of the images which she hath drawn into herself from creatures. And thus she freeth and strippeth herself from all creaturely imagery, and as the reason before drew in the images of creatures, that she might find God in them, so now she worketh off all the images of creatures that she may find an unveiled God. This, therefore, is called a working off reason,⁹⁴ for she casteth off all things, that she may be free from all works, and God be alone the working Master. This is also all of grace in an angelic light.



94 Compare Eckhart, 19. 29; and Eckhart the Younger, in the Tractate of the Working and the Possible Reason, edited by Preger, in Sitzung's Berichten of the Phil. Hist. Class of the Royal Bavarian Academy of Sciences, 1871, p. 185. But Preger overlooked the fact that already, more than twenty years earlier, attention had been directed to a Low German MS. of this Tractate (Four Writings of John Rusbroek, Hanover, 1848, p. xxxvi.), which ought to have been made the basis of the restoration of the text, because, as Preger himself confesses, the Tractate is not of High but Low German origin. Respecting the Possible and Working Reason, see further, Greith, p. 163. The same theme is treated in an unpublished sermon of the Mystic, Helwic von Gernar, "Der Iesemeister was zu Erforte." With reference to the doctrine itself, C. Werner (Der Heilige Thomas von Aquino, iii. 656) finds in it a false Gnosis, and Steffensen (Gelzer Protest. Monatsbl. xi. 274) says it is to be reckoned as the boldest speculation that can be found among the German Mystics. But Denifle pronounces that neither one nor the other of these views is true. He conceives that this view is based on the scholastic doctrine of the intellectus agens and the contemplatio pura. According to the Schoolmen, if a contemplatio without images of the fancy is possible, and if the intellectus agens has, according to the nature of light, the special function to enlighten the fancies or Phantasmata and to make what is intelligible in them perceptible to the mind, then in this case, during the contemplatio, the intellectus agens remains quiescent, and the essential imageless knowledge is then imparted to the spirit, without any co-operation on its part, as St. John of the Cross teaches (p. 515, ed. Mad. 1672), and from whence can it be imparted save from God? This view, continues Denifle, has nothing to do either with the

93.



After this the godlike work goeth on; that is, when the reason has cut off all images of creatures, has unclothed itself from all created images, God cometh into the soul and placeth Himself in the stead of the working reason and worketh His works; in this case the reason is called a passive or suffering reason, for it suffereth what God worketh. And then and thus all works are worked in one work, and as all things are enclosed in God, so He encloseth all things in one work that He worketh in the soul. The soul hath received the eternal Word, when it is free from all else. If it hath entered the divine essence with ardent love it begetteth the Son in the Godhead.

94.

This divine birth in the soul is, however, twofold, an internal and external. It is the internal, when the soul embraced by the divine light penetrateth into the divine heart, its heart and all its powers become a nutriment of the divine heart, so that it loseth at once its heart and its powers, and hath nothing more of them. But in return God giveth to the soul His heart and His powers, and the heart of the soul now is a godlike heart, and no more a human heart. Thus the heart liveth always in an ardour of the divine fire, is penetrated by it, so that it becometh faint through love, for human power faileth, so that all the members fall into weakness. And must needs be that this come to pass, for where the divine power shall work human power must become lost, as this is only inclined to error and sin. If this defective power is no more at hand God can pour out His power into the soul without hindrance. Therefore God sendeth the fire of His love into the heart that all evil may be consumed, all disorderly powers may be ordered, all defects may be healed, and an unlikeness removed. Then all things lose their proper form, and are transformed into godlike forms, as also Jesus said, "Behold I make all things new."⁹⁵ This taketh place also when God dwelleth in the soul, for thus He ordereth everything as He will have it, and maketh new that which is old. Therefore St. Paul admonisheth us, "Put off the old man and put on the new man, which is shapen after God, in holiness, justice, and truth." This old man is put off and a new man put on when God the Father begetteth His Son in the soul. By this birth He reneweth all that was fallen, and all cometh back again to its first nobility. Thus, then, man is created after God in holiness, justice, and truth, and is called a new man. Christ saith also, "If ye do not become as little children ye cannot enter the kingdom of God;" that is, unless a man be



views of William of Paris or Henry of Ghent respecting the intellectus agens, nor with those of Alexander of Aphrodisius and the Arabian peripatetics. On the *contemplatio pura* see Sandaeus, l.c. p. 144. 2 foll.

95 In the margin Apoc. [Rev. xxi. 5](#); [Eph. iv. 22, 24](#).

born again as a child of God he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. And as he is newly born internally so it cometh to pass also outwardly; the external man is transformed, so that he is deiform, or like in form unto God. As he had before offered his members instruments of luxury, so now he devoteth them to the service of God in holiness and justice. As everything is new inwardly so it becometh also outwardly; as this divine fire inflameth the heart and consumeth inwardly all unlikeness, ordaining the powers for the best, so also the divine fire passeth over to the body, consumeth all sinful leaning, driveth it on to virtue and to all good works, and thus it arriveth at its original justice; he is called a new man who is created in righteousness after the likeness of God.



95.

Thus this man is passive or suffering in this birth, and God worketh all in him. For this reason Jesus also said, "None is good, save God alone." No man's work is good, save that from God and by God. It is also the best thing that a man be free from all work, and let God alone work and suffer it. If God is the working and man the passive being, then all is placed at rest in him. God's working in the soul is essential; it springeth out of the divine essence, and is fulfilled in the essence of the soul. By the divine work all evil that was ever exercised is rooted out of the soul. Punishment and guilt are remitted to the man, for when God revealeth Himself to the soul, all besides must give way, and God be alone let reign; and nothing can reign there save God.



96.

Thus is it possible that man be preserved from deadly and venial sins, and this in a sixfold way.

97.

First, man is overwhelmed with divine power, whereby all his powers are strengthened! If the divine birth is fulfilled in the essence of the soul, it passeth over into all its powers; each receiveth divine power to resist all that is against God. It is needful that the divine power work in us, for by human strength no one can resist sins. But man receiveth this divine power, when all his powers turn to the divine birth, which is brought about in the depths of the soul. But if each power seeketh to accomplish its work without turning to the birth, they cannot receive godly power. For whoso wisheth to receive anything from another, he must be nigh unto him; therefore all the powers must be united, waiting for the divine birth. All that bringeth good men to fall is mostly, that they take too much interest in unnecessary things, and thereby scatter their powers. The more they do this the more the divine power

escapes them, and thus they must fall. Holy Writ saith, “The just falleth at least seven times a day,” that is, he doth not constantly perceive the divine birth in the soul. If the powers were to always persist in this they would all always receive this divine power, and would be warded from falling.



98.

Further, the second way to be preserved from venial sins is, that the lower powers be always subordinate to the higher powers; this keepeth man in his original justice, as Adam was. He fell by the lower powers turning away from the higher. This happeneth still to-day. When man turneth to sensuality without hearkening to the higher powers he falleth. But if he exerciseth an external work, while he listeneth to his reason, he doth not fall, nor doth his work bear the name of sinful. Though it is brought about by the senses, yet the reason hath more part in it than the senses. Therefore it is called a reasonable work, and is a virtue. Let him who doth not wish to fall look with every work, whether internal or external, to his higher reason, then his work becometh a virtue, and is more divine than human. Man’s works are sensual when blindly brought about without the reason. Through these man falleth, and these man ought not to have. Therefore is it also said: “It is right that a man be free of all work, namely, of sensual works, which are sinful.” Such works are man’s proper own, but virtuous works are called God’s works. God is alone the source of all good, therefore whatever good must be worked must spring from Him and end in Him. If the senses stand under the highest powers, and thus stand under God, they can obtain divine power to resist all defects.



99.

Thirdly, man is guarded from venial sins when his will is entirely united to the divine will, and when the reason heareth always God’s will in all things, and liveth according to it. By this giving up of one’s own will man is capable of receiving all divine gifts; he is strengthened thereby to be able to resist everything that is not God. God only dowereth His will in us, and what is not His will is also not able to receive any gift. If the will of God liveth entirely in him, and if he have entirely given up his own will, he is able to receive all gifts; what he asketh God will he also receive. If he asketh that God may shield him from all sins against His holiest will, this taketh place, but if he still fall into a fault, this happens according to the will of God, not, however, as if the will of God consented to faults, but God inflicteth it on him, that man may learn to know his weakness, and may be put down in true humility, through which alone he can keep his footing against every fall. It is very hurtful if a man findeth his will without God’s will, and holdeth himself to be somebody with much complacency. That this complacency may be killed out, and man come to the knowledge of his own



weakness, God suffereth even a good man to fall, that he may be guarded from a greater fall. If now man is entirely dead to his own will, God becometh his life; not he liveth any more, but God liveth in him, and guardeth him from deadly falls.

100.

Fourthly, a man is guarded from venial sins when he always employeth the proper measure in all things; whoso always observeth the proper measure in his words and works will not fail. For faults and sins come from this, that you take too much or too little, and through too much or too little arise faults.⁹⁶ He who doeth that which he ought to do, and omitteth what he ought to omit, to him God is always present, and God is always in the midst. Of this also the Gospel speaketh: “Jesus stood in the midst of His disciples.”⁹⁷ Jesus, that is salvation, stood in the midst of His disciples, that is the disciples reconciled by grace, received their salvation from the midst of the Godhead. Whoso were to have such order, that he would always take the medium or the right measure in all his words and works, would always find God. Yet it is said, we must draw near to God with mediation? This drawing nigh to and finding God is twofold. One lieth in the creature and in its works, here God is found in mediation, for God is in the midst of all creatures, and whosoever cometh there with his works findeth God. The other finding is that of God only, apart from all creatures in His simple being. But he only findeth God thus, who is the man freed from all creatures and their works. But if man busieth himself with creatures and their works, in creation, he must keep measure in the midst, and arriveth thus at God through God. He must observe this, if he wisheth to be freed from defects and to find God outside all things.



101.

Fifthly, man is guarded from venial sins by voluntary poverty, inward and outward; for true poor men stand alway in suffering, and if such men fall with a fault or defect, their suffering removeth it directly. A teacher saith “Be careless about the defects of poor people, for what lacketh in them, is cancelled again by poverty.”⁹⁸ Poverty also protecteth specially against faults, for if any one beggeth a poor man for a gift, he cannot give it, but doth not commit a fault in refusing the beggar; whereas they who have temporal goods, if they are

96 The opposite of virtue, compare No. 78. Aristotle teaches, Nic. Eth. 1006. 633: Τῆς μὲν κακίας ἡ ὑπερβολὴ καὶ ἡ ἔλλειψις τῆς δ' ἀρετῆς ἡ μεσότης.

97 [Luke xxiv. 36.](#)

98 St. Gregory says: Et cum quoslibet pauperes nonnulla reprehensibilia perpetrare conspiceris, nolite despiciere, quia fortasse quod superfluitas tenuissimae pravitatis inquinat, caminus paupertatis purgat (Homil. 40. in Evang. No. 6).

begged and they refuse, these sin. They show a want of pity and a hardness, and this is a sin. Poverty is farther good against sins, for temporal possession giveth much occasion thereto; and since poor men are free from this property, they have no such motive for sin and can also exercise no sins, as a heathen teacher already said: "When the cause faileth, the work also faileth."⁹⁹ Nothing is without a cause, and nothing can lead astray him who hath not any cause. Lastly, poverty also guardeth against sins, for when a man hath parted with all things he hath a perfect will to all virtue, and whoso willeth all virtue he opposeth all and every vice; a perfect will hath the power to resist all vices, it exerciseth all virtues and denieth instantly all sins. If he yet faileth, it is not his will, therefore no sin, for sin taketh place with the will, as St. Austin saith: "If there were no will, there would be no sin."¹⁰⁰ Therefore he who hath not given up all things hath also not the power to will all virtues, for so long as man is hindered by outward things, he cannot bring forth virtue in acts. But whoso hath turned all to virtue, getteth the power of the will, to will all virtues and to abandon every vice. They who are tainted with temporal possession cannot do this.

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102.

Sixthly, a man is guarded from temporal sins by his own heart when it is inflamed with the love-fire of the Holy Ghost, for this consumeth all unlikeness in man, making him pure from all sins. Love and hatred cannot subsist together. If a man loveth, he must leave all that begetteth hatred, namely, sin; as long as he now loveth, he liveth also without sin. St. Paul saith, "Charity is a consuming fire."¹⁰¹

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103.

If now the love of the Holy Ghost destroyeth all sin, they who have received the Holy Ghost live always free from sins, for the gift that the Holy Ghost giveth abideth eternally; and St. John also saith, "Whoso is born of God cannot sin."¹⁰² But I say that man must be viewed in two lights, according to his internal and external man. The gift of the Holy Ghost is received by the internal man this also destroyeth sins in the interior, and guardeth him farther from sins; but the outer man, on the other hand, is not receptive of the gifts, and will also not receive them, and therefore never be without venial sins; he is somewhat like unto time; but time is? fluctuating and defective, therefore also must his senses be defective and

99 The Schoolmen express this principle thus: *Remota causa, removetur effectus.*

100 *De vera religione*, c. 14, No. 27: *Usque adeo peccatum voluntarium est malum ut nullo modo sit peccatum, si non sit voluntarium.*

101 This passage is in allusion to [Heb. xii. 29](#).

102 [1 John iii. 9](#).

inclined to sin. Thus, therefore, the external man cannot live without venial sins save when his senses are drawn into the internal man, and this is found in God; so long as this lasteth, man is without sin, outwardly and inwardly, for whatever defects the sins may yet have are consumed by the fire of love. Were it possible that the senses were always drawn in by the internal man, he would always be united to God, and man would remain without sin; and for this reason, because sin is nothing else than a turning away from God and a leaning to creatures. But if the whole man be turned to God, no sin is brought to pass as long as this lasteth; but if he returneth to himself to the service of the senses, he will certainly fail again, and this without paying attention to the spirit, so that man forgetteth his duty entirely, and committeth faults and sins. But if man accomplisheth all his works, outwardly or inwardly, according to the statutes of his reason, lighted up with divine light, he would seldom fall into a sin; he would refer all his doing and suffering to the praise of God. This is worked by the ardent love of the Holy Ghost, which entirely inflameth him, driveth away all darkness, and enlighteneth him, so that he can accomplish all for the honour of God; it giveth him power to do all things, to give up all things that are against God, and to obtain all that is godly. This goodness of the Holy Ghost filleth him also with goodness, so that he receiveth all from the Holy Ghost. The goodness of the Holy Ghost penetrates his heart and all his members, and filleth each; whatever was bitter and harsh in them must give way; and there abideth with man only goodness, which shieldeth him from all the bitterness of sin.

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104.

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If such a man really committeth a sin from forgetfulness, and perceiveth it, he suffereth pain again more than another who were to commit a venial sin: for this reason, because he who hath tasted sweetness is more disgusted at bitterness than he who hath not yet tasted the former. So is it also with the men who love God; all things are bitter to them on account of the great sweetness of the Holy Ghost; what to another man is joyful is to such a man painful; nothing is dearer to him than to love God in the most perfect manner. Moreover, all is bitter to a good man; but this bitterness leadeth to purity and greater love, and God inflicts on many good men that they falter, in order to be brought to greater purity, and to love Him the more earnestly. Paul saith, “Where sin abounds there doth grace abound.”¹⁰³ Paul also saith, “All turneth to good to them that love God.”¹⁰⁴ For whoso loveth another giveth him the best. God loveth them who love Him, therefore giveth He to them always the best. If now such a man fall into a sin, this doth not come to pass through what is best, as though sin were a good, but it showeth to man his weakness, and bringeth him to humility;

103 [Rom. v. 20.](#)

104 [Rom. viii. 28.](#)

nor is this because sin enlighteneth man to self-knowledge; it is the cause that what is hidden should be made known. The light enlighteneth the darkness of sins, and thus then man attaineth unto the knowledge of his weakness, submits himself humbly to God, and to men for the sake of God. In this humility he standeth secure against falling, which would have brought him scathe. This is occasioned by the love of the Holy Ghost; through this all his defects are shown to man, it boweth him down before God, and guardeth him from sins. Thus, then, must man suffer and endure all if he wisheth to attain unto a God-seeing, poor life.



105.

The fourth way that leadeth to a poor life is when man hath exercised himself in all virtues, with inner consideration of the Passion which our Lord hath undergone, by which he attaineth unto true rest and to the peace of heart. This is the fourth way to a perfect, poor life, which therefore is nothing else than a careful ward over all that which happeneth to man, whether spiritual or bodily, that he may receive it in such wise that the spirit doth not suffer scathe, but find itself always immediately in simple purity.

106.

To this end man must turn himself away from all outward exercise, and exercise himself inwardly; for all outward exercise goeth over to en azures, all inward to God. Whoso therefore wisheth to find God must enter into himself, and seek Him within. Whoso seeketh God without may indeed find Him with creatures, but in this lieth not true blessedness; but if he seeketh God in himself, he findeth Him apart from all creatures, in His pure, simple essence, and in this lieth true blessedness. St. Austin saith: "Lord, when I knew Thee first, I knew that Thou art a good that hath entered into all creatures; and I gave myself up to the service of all created things, in order to find Thee in them, but so long as the seeking lasted my heart was always in unrest. But, when I knew Thee better, I knew that Thou art a good that is without all creatures; I took myself apart from them, in order to find Thee alone outside all creatures. Then was my heart quiet; for it is disquieted save if it rest in Thee, for Thou hast created us solely for Thyself."¹⁰⁵



105 This passage does not occur in the same form in St. Augustine. It is made up of different extracts, as Enarr. in [Psal. 41](#). Nos. 7, 8.—Confess. 7. 10. No. 16 and 1. 1.

The fourth way that leadeth a man into a poor, perfect, contemplative life, is a zealous avoidance of all that which can please men, whether it be spiritual or bodily, so that whatever it be, it be so received as not to mis up the soul with it.

107.

All things are fluctuating and unquiet, and whoso busies himself with things, his heart is always in unrest. In unrest we find not God, for He dwelleth only in peace; therefore he who wishes to find Him must have a heart at peace. St. Austin saith: "There be many that seek God, but there be few that find Him, for they seek Him all without, where He is not."¹⁰⁶ People say, however, God is everywhere; why should we then not find Him? The ground for this is, because God is in the interior, but we are without. God is a Spirit, we are in the body; God is separated from all creatures, but we are burthened with these; God is a pure, simple good, we are changeable; God is the Light, we are darkened through sin; God is Love, we are still tainted with hatred. This unlikeness maketh that we cannot find God. Would we find Him, we must have likeness in order to seek Him. As God is in the interior and in the spirit, separate from all creatures, simple and pure, the purest Light, which is Himself, full of burning love, thus must we be if we would find God. We must enter our heart, turned away from all external works; we must have a pure mind, freed from all images and forms, pure, simple, enlightened by divine light, inflamed with the love-fire of the Holy Ghost. In this likeness we find the pure Godhead who giveth us rest in which we enjoy Him immediately. Thus, then, man standeth in pure poverty, where he can behold God.

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108.

If man turneth to himself in this true purity, perceiveth the state of his heart, and seeketh God in it, all springeth up in him that maketh him like unto God. If he was before turned outwardly, he becometh now inward; if he was fleshly minded, he is now turned to the Spirit; if he clove to creatures, he is now free; if he was darkened, he is enlightened; if he was cold in godly love, he is now inflamed with the divine love-fire. He must seek all inwardly if he would find the right treasure which enricheth him with all the gifts of God. Whoso neglecteth this seeking in his interior also neglecteth the gifts of God which He imparteth. The senses are not receptive of the best gifts of God, for they are fluctuating and changeable, but the godly gifts remain everlastingly; to him who is wavering God imparteth them not. Therefore, if we would be receptive of these gifts, our senses must be withdrawn into the inner man, which hath likeness with God. Here the best gifts are imparted by the Father of Light, with whom there is no shadow of turning; therefore all His gifts are unchangeable.

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106 De vera religione, c. 49, No. 94.

We also must receive them in unchangeableness; but the senses do not possess this, for they have likeness to time. Only the internal man possesseth this property, who is created after the likeness of God in holiness, justice, and truth; he receiveth the unchangeable gifts of God, and God giveth him His best. As a lord doth not readily give over his rule and his property to a spendthrift, who can neither tend it nor protect it, so God doeth also with His own, which is in the hands of such spendthrifts, who squander all you give them, and keep nothing. No perfect gift, and no gift of God should be intrusted to external sensual men, for one would be deceived. God findeth no place in him which would make him receptive of the gifts; and even if God would gladly give His gifts to sensual men, He can it not, because He would find no suitable place for them. He would be a fool who would build a house on flowing water. But this water is the senses, which hurry on with time, and therefore God giveth not His gifts to them.



109.

Externally good men can gain reward in heaven no doubt through good works, but that with time they come to this, that they receive the complete gifts which God offers to those, which turn into themselves, and give heed unto him, cannot be. Of this also David saith: “I will hear what God the Lord saith unto me. He will give peace to His people and those who are converted.”¹⁰⁷ Some people kill their senses, fast and watch, and flagellate themselves much. This is very good; but he who wishes to annihilate his senses must first altogether set aside all material interests; he must live within himself; he must triumph here, then he can destroy his senses, or subdue them to obedience. Then the man revolveth in his inmost spirit; he seeth God truly. Then he maketh himself receptive of divine power, with which the senses are always forced to be obedient; in no other way can they be tamed. This strength the man only receives inwardly, and thereby he draweth in and controlleth the senses. But when this divine power faileth, the senses also remain unconquered. This we find to be the case with many men, who have much striven, and at the last have failed, and only because the senses were not controlled in the manner in which divine force controlleth them. Therefore the strength faileth them and they fall. Had Adam drawn back on his inward control, and not regarded his senses, he would not have fallen. But as he obeyed his senses his fall was certain; for he had not the divine power that holdeth upright. Such also is the case with all men who do thus, they must fall.



107 [Psalm lxxxv. 8.](#)

110.

Why, it will be objected, doth God form men, so that they are exposed to fall? If he wished to hold back man, he should have fashioned him otherwise. But as it is, having soul and body, with a free will to direct himself whither he wisheth; he directed himself to his weakest side, that is to his senses, and therefore he met the most dangerous result, “death.” Had he directed himself to the right direction, he would have seized the truth, and been forewarned of the fall. But as he followed the senses, he could not perceive the truth, and fell; for the senses cannot receive divine truth, only the inward man can do that, which is formed like God in truth. This then happeneth to all those who give way to the senses; this is right and just, and no one should wonder that God lets the others fall and go to destruction. It is the justice of God that must allow these men to fall, unless they turn themselves from their senses to their reason, then God must help them, for then they are receptive of His help. If the senses were the easier vessels of divine gifts, then certainly all men would be easily great saints, and could easily bear resistance to the sins, which the whole power of the senses would be used to restrain; but it is not so, they fall, and the greater the sensuality the greater the fall. God’s justice damns these men, who always favour the senses, and live on in their sensuality. He wisheth strongly to give them eternal salvation, but they are unable to receive it, for they are dead and must die, and are therefore not vessels of life; for death and life cannot exist together.



111.

He who wisheth to receive eternal Beatitude, must receive it inwardly, in the inner man, which is formed like God. When Christ saith, “Who believes, and is baptized, is saved;”¹⁰⁸ this also is to be understood, as applying to the case, when the faith is seized by the reason and not by the senses. The hearing takes a form, but the reason receives the life of faith. Enlightened are only those who have faith; they are baptized in the waters of repentance, and are twice born in the spirit of truth. Those who live on in their sensuality cannot have faith. They of course can say, I have faith; many a man saith, I have a hundred pounds of pfennigs, when he does not possess one. Such men are exactly like unto the Pagans, and are only Christians by name, which does not make them blessed. Christ also saith, “Not every one who saith to Me, Lord, Lord! will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who carrieth out the teachings of God.” Not every one who saith, “I believe,” but the one who doth good works. “For faith without works is dead.” The senses bring death, faith is our blessedness, and brings eternal life. Therefore it must be received in the reason, and not in the senses; what the senses take up, they also lose. It is therefore necessary, that the essence of faith



108 [Mark xvi. 16.](#)

should be impressed upon the reason, for this alone retaineth faith. When the senses are commanded by the inward man, then he receives the impression of divine faith, which begetteth salvation.

112.

Now a question could be asked: If the senses cannot receive the highest truth, why should they then be drawn to the inward man, so that he then be capable of seizing the truth? I answer: Where two have to receive a gift, the weakest must always attach itself to the strongest; what is defective in the one. must be set right by the other. One person is body and soul, therefore they have but one movement; but the soul cannot work without the body, therefore the soul would not be able to receive godly divine gifts, unless it was unhindered by the senses. But it is not hindered, when it is absolutely drawn away from all external matter; thus only therefore can it receive complete truth, and that reception it divides with the senses, and in this way the senses receive it, not as external independent objects, but as such which have given way and are controlled by the inward man. From here it penetrates into the senses, and forces them to follow.



For three reasons man should draw in all his senses.

113.

This decidedly is the most useful bond, with which to bind the senses; that they are entirely drawn inwards and bound together with divine truth, to the praise of God. Without this union no man can defend himself from fall. Why alone should the inward man be receptive of divine truth, and not also the senses? Now the inward man can also not receive divine truth, unless united with the senses; so the reason is only this, that, because there is only one God, and one faith, so also must a man have this unity, and also in his oneness he is receptive of his God, because oneness believes truly in God. Giving it more than one God and then believing, would render it impossible for a man to be inwardly united. But as there is only one God, and one faith, so also the man must be one, if he wisheth to be receptive of God and of true faith. So much as this unity faileth him, so much faileth him of God and of true faith; it is therefore necessary, that the senses should be drawn more together in inward unity. The more the senses are directed outwards, the more dissipated they are in their works; the more numerous these are in interest, so much the more are men inwardly impeded, to receive divine simple truth, which is God. Thus God is unable to be united with the changeable, external worldly man, for God is unable to be received in what is disunited, He can only enter inward unity. It standeth written by the prophets, "I will lead thee in the desert, and speak to thy heart;"¹⁰⁹ viz., the desert of internal unity, where all alien beings and all things are united in one, where alone the eternal Word is spoken from the fatherly heart; and only in this solitude can the unity be heard. If also God speaks His Word to the man engrossed with material interests it cannot be heard, for if two speak at once we cannot hear them; one must be silent. Just the same also is it when God speaks to the soul, then all creatures and all things must be as nothing to the man, and alone the Spirit, the Word of God, must be heard.



114.

It is usual when the master speaketh that the servant listeneth; but if the servant is uncivil to the master, he often waxeth wrathful. So it is also when God speaketh His Word, all things must be as silent to the man, and he must hearken to the divine Word, through which all wisdom is learnt; whoever disturbeth Him, acteth with insolence to Him. But a man disturbeth God when he giveth way to his senses without giving attention to His advice; over this He waxeth wrath. These sensual men never again come to the love of God, because they fail in respect to Him. The greatest honour and love man can show to God is to hear His



109 In the margin stands Solomon's Song, but the passage occurs in [Hosee ii. 14.](#)

Word; but those who favour the senses cannot hear it, and cannot therefore love Him with a true love. He who wisheth this divine love must tame his passions, and have his powers at peace to be able to hear what God speaketh in the soul. In the mutual conversation which the soul holdeth with God there existeth the divine love; God loveth the soul with this love, and the soul returneth the love, and thus it will be loved justly. Jesus also saith, "He who loveth Me, heareth My Word; "those, therefore, who will not hear His Word can also not love Him. The origin of divine love is in the eternal word that God speaketh to the soul; he who ignoreth this faileth also in the foundation of divine love. Therefore man should direct all his senses and strength to the divine Word, so he will come to the true origin of divine love, he will drink from this fountain, will be intoxicated with love, and be swept away with it.



115.

Love is his entire life, he can do nothing else than love; love hath penetrated him, without love he desireth nothing more. Who attributeth anything else than charity to him doeth him injustice, for he is all love; who attempteth to take it from him must also take his life. Charity is his life and death. If he liveth, he liveth from love; if he dieth, he dieth from love; let the lot fall, as it will, love is always one with him, and he is one with love. What happeneth to love also happeneth to him, what disturbeth love also disturbeth him. Whatever form it take is but love. Whosoever giveth to him giveth to charity, whosoever taketh from him taketh from charity. Whosoever wisheth closely to work with God bringeth it to completion through such God-loving men; for if these men receive a work of love, then love is uppermost, which is the consuming fire of divine love. Whosoever feedeth such men, feedeth also God. Thus when the food has been received love draweth the force of the food and consumeth it in the fountain of divine love, so that man knoweth not that he hath eaten. Everything cometh back with men of love to its origin, from which it is gone forth; he is the nearest to this origin, and what is accomplished by it must come through him. Whosoever showeth love and faith to such a man will not, most probably, be lost by God. For love and faith raised to this higher love cannot be overlooked by God. But those who love God are never loved by man, except by those who are worthy of His love. It is also quite natural that they are much hated, for very few are worthy of or equal to them. Of these St. Paul says, "The world is not worthy of them," therefore they must bear much insult.



116.

But this unworthiness is the dignity of love; for worldly honour is contemptible to them, and whosoever showeth such to them offendeth them. The honour of such men is the cross of Jesus Christ, from this love hath its honour and dignity. St. Paul saith, "Let all worthiness

be far from me, except through the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; “in this lies all my honour and worth. But the cross of Jesus Christ leadeth to, and is, degradation, hatred, persecution, and every form of agony. From these things love gaineth honour and notoriety. But whosoever wisheth to be honoured, and pleaseth himself with a worldly position of honour, showeth immediately that he hath not divine love; divine love wisheth equality with nothing except that which it loves. And whosoever attempteth to draw it away from this equality maketh it sick, but whosoever handleth it with equal love filleth it with pleasure; from this one knoweth those who possess divine love.



117.

This true divine love springeth from the fatherly heart when God speaketh His eternal Word to the soul; for in this conversation the Spirit of the Holy Ghost poureth forth and floodeth the soul and all its forces, so that all that it breatheth forth is love (charity). But this causeth the senses to be drawn under the control of the inward man, silencing their forces, whilst the inner love gloweth in God—in this condition the soul expandeth whilst the eternal Word is pronounced, from which all complete love springs. It is, therefore, necessary that he who wisheth to attain a perfect life must take up an inward life, and drag himself away from all external sheen. When he has drawn himself from this, and freed himself from the numbing influence of temporal greed, and even if he had the desire to perform a material work, desireth also that he would find no property remaining to him, then, but not till then, can he live a complete internal life, and give God scope to work in him.

118.

The highest perfection of poverty of spirit is then in being entirely devoted to God so completely that a man doth not perceive the doings and defects of outside creatures, so that God can finish His perfect work, which maketh eternal beatitude. Concerning this Christ also said, “If thou wilt be perfect, sell all thou hast and give it to the poor.” Jesus doth not mean that all men without temporal goods are perfect, He only meaneth that to be perfect a man must have no property, and only give attention that God worketh direct on the soul. Thus a poor life leadeth to the highest perfection, and poverty is the only condition that permitteth a man to forget all creatures, and to hear God alone. As a master gives the first place to his disciple, and expecteth him to give only attention to him, and not to another, so also is poverty the highest place that God can give to His friends that they can better approach Him. But whosoever being poor, interesteth himself in external things, hath a poverty more damaging than perfect. God hath directed him to an inward life, and only to give attention to Him; but when he giveth his attention to outward attractions, he faileth in duty



to God, and doth not live in the true road of humility of spirit. He who wisheth to serve man must have material goods, but whosoever wisheth to serve God must not make gain, but seek God. Therefore also Jesus directed Mary Magdalene that she should castaway all valuable objects that she might the more easily be able to direct herself away from creatures, and look at Him without obstruction. Therefore He also saith, "She hath chosen the better part," that is, she left the service of creatures, for she left temporal gains, and turned towards God, where the best part is to be found. But whosoever possess temporal things must give attention to creatures, serving them according to the will of God, for through this devotion they reach God; but those who are free from property have only God in view, and that is their best means of reaching God. On this question Seneca saith, "Whosoever wisheth to have the freedom of poverty must be an absolute pauper, or live as a pauper." But that man is truly free if he is able to turn himself to the best part, which is God. But this only occurs by complete freedom from all temporal things. All temporal things are by their nature heavy, therefore they drag down the mind which is occupied with them. But whosoever is free from them hath a tendency which draweth him to God, and thus true freedom is to be found in the absence of all material goods.



119.

It is quite a right sequence that they who are laden with the temporal should blame freedom, for they possess it not, and you cannot praise what you have not. True freedom consisteth in an internal life, and in perceiving God in it; but if man turneth to creatures he is bound by them, and this fetter hindereth him from going back to God in his interior. Therefore is it good to remain always very much in yourself, in order to be unfettered and unhindered by creatures, that we may always find God in the depths of the soul, where His real dwelling is.



120.

Therefore man should hush his senses and attend to his inner man, because the man's best part is within; for it is quite fair that a man should serve the best and should give up evil. But whoso favoureth the senses is like a man who leaveth his best friend and giveth himself up to the public enemy; for what is sensual is the enemy of the soul; whoso serveth sense serveth his public enemy, and it is quite just that he should receive the reward of his enemy, that is, everlasting death. The senses bring death, their reward is therefore also death. No one giveth what he hath not therefore also they cannot also give life, for they have it not. It came to pass thus with Eve. When she saw that the fruit was good she desired it, ate thereof, thus served her sensuality, and death was also her portion. So it happeneth still to all who favour their senses. If she had followed her reason she would have gone apart from



her senses, and then life would have been her portion. It is often said that God damneth man; God damneth no man, but man damneth himself, for by this, that he turneth himself wilfully to sensuality and liveth to it, he chooseth death and abandoneth life. If God were to give him life he could not take it, for he hath no place in which he could receive life. All is death that is in him, and death alone is his portion. Even if God were to give life to such sensual men, he would act like him, who throweth his best good that he hath, into impure dung. All that is sensual is impure dung; as also St. Paul saith, "I have held all things as dung." Life is the best good that God hath. That He may also not be mocked He giveth it to no one who liveth down in the senses. Let not therefore any one wonder if God doth not grant much grace to him; he ought not to do so. It doth not agree with his order to give divine good to them that serve sensuality. It is also said: If God would, He could give many gifts to man. This is true; and if man were to turn to grace God might give them to him, and he could take them; but as he turneth whither there is no grace, God also ought to give him none. Therefore, if man wisheth to receive grace from God he must subdue his senses and turn himself inwardly to God, then he can receive it. But if he liveth in the senses, if he turneth away from God, God also will grant him no grace. For whoso wisheth to receive something from another must be with him from whom he receiveth it; therefore all that is in man must be inwardly with God, as God is in our interior. Only thus can the divine grace be received.



121.

Thirdly, man should draw his senses inward, for as often as he turneth outward, the senses receive something impure and bring it with them, which also sullieth the soul. Whoso, therefore, wisheth to abide always pure, let him keep his senses within, let him not suffer them to roam outwardly, then his heart remaineth pure and in peace. Whoso stirreth about too much outwardly, even if it be for good works, cometh never to the true peace of his heart, for the peace of God surpasseth all sense; whoso liveth on in the senses cannot attain to it. What is sensual is all unstable and unquiet. Therefore he who wisheth to attain to true rest must go apart from the senses and enter into the depths of the soul where stability is; there alone he findeth rest and peace. But let no one hold himself already so free and perfect that he fancy it would not harm him if he were to turn to outward works that are not necessary for him. I say to thee, that no one is so holy in time that he can remain as pure if he turneth himself outwardly as if he tarrieth in his interior, and for this reason, because if man, without any necessity, turneth outwardly, he turneth to creatures as they are found there. But if he turneth himself to his interior he turneth to God, as He dwelleth there. But no one can remain as pure with creatures as with God; the creature is unfruitful, but God fruitful. But he who denieth that this turning outwardly is hurtful, proveth that he hath



never yet come to true internal piety. Some very small thing causeth pain to the eye, and we must take great heed and be provident if it is to remain clear. But a far smaller thing can injure the internal man, and you must take much more heed than with the outer eye if it is to remain always pure. All that is outward is impure; but if the senses turn thither they take up the impure with themselves, and if they come back again into the interior they bring this with them, and thereby trouble the heart. It is therefore meet and right, if man keepeth himself always in the interior, that his heart may remain always pure. Internal life belongeth to a pure poor life. Whoso turneth himself without goeth aside from the way of true poverty; for poverty of spirit is a matter of the inner man, but the external man hath it not. Poverty of spirit is a pure, simple being, and whoso is outwardly cannot be pure. Purity is begotten of God inwardly, and not of creatures. If, therefore, thou wishest to keep poverty of spirit, live inwardly.



122.

But no man can be really poor save if God maketh him poor, and God granteth this only to him who is inwardly with Him, from him He taketh away all that is ungodly. He who is the most internal is also the poorest, and he who is the poorest is also the most internal. Inwardness and poverty stand on the same degree. Whoso hath not left outer things in inwardness hath evidently not yet obtained true inwardness, for true inwardness is an entire abnegation of oneself and of all things; not only inwardly but outwardly must we suffer it to be; all must give way to true inwardness. Into it the will entereth into the most perfect will of God, and uniteth itself then with God; what God willeth for the best, the true internal will willeth also. But that is the most perfect will of God that we follow Jesus Christ in His life and in His teaching. This was the voice of the Father to the Son, when St. John baptized Him: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him." "In whom I am pleased," this means that all the good pleasure of the Father is alone in the Son; and therefore it is the highest will of the Father for them that follow Him, to follow His Son as closely as possible. He said further: "Hear ye Him," this is a sign that it is His will for us to follow His teaching. But the life and the teaching of our Lord are outward and inward poverty, and the true will that penetrateth into God desireth this also. But whoso bringeth not his will to work, his will is not yet internal, nor is it yet united with the divine will. For from this, that the man is inwardly taken up and his will united with God's will, he will directly know what he ought to do or omit. God's will is only for him to follow Christ in life and in His teaching; and whoso followeth Him the closest is the most internal man, but whoso liveth most internally followeth Him also the closest.



123.

Whoso attaineth to a poor life in this inwardness hath true poverty and no one else. It is needful that he who desireth to be right poor, should be so internally. Poverty without inwardness is like a king without lands or like a body without a soul, thus inwardness maketh man's life fruitful and well pleasing to God. Christ said also, "Unless the seed of corn falleth into the earth and dieth, it can bring forth no fruit." All things must die inwardly in us, and we in God, then we bring forth much fruit, that is, much life is born in us, which is well pleasing to God. Whoso doth not come thus into his interior, cannot also die internally or bring forth any fruit. The outward show of poverty hath no worth; the street beggars have also this show, but they are not on that account holy. Man must die inwardly in the ground of his soul; this belongeth to a poor life, in which perfection lieth.

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124.

It might now be asked: What is then an inward life, dead to all things? I give this answer: Man is then dead when he forsaketh all sin and obtaineth virtue, so that virtue becometh his very being. He is internal, when all that is outward is painful to him; he is poor, when his spirit is a mere instrument of God, so that God, without hindrance, can speak His Eternal Word in the ground of the soul. These three things stand on the same point, eternally, in the purity of a pure being genuine dying is unity, true unity is inwardness, and true poverty is unity. Christ said, "One thing is needful." This is needful if God is to work in the soul, that man should gather himself up in an internal, mortified, and pure unity. This alone is receptive of the work of God, and God can only work His most perfect in one, in this unity; whoso is most united is most receptive of God. When the heaven is clearest, the sun can best send out its rays through the air; so is it also, when the soul is quite simplified, the divine sun can spread out its splendour the most in the soul; it enlighteneth the soul with divine light. As much as the soul lacketh unity, so much it lacketh light; therefore also its working is in unity, for each thing worketh according to its nature; therefore the light, which is like unto God, worketh always in unity, and whoso turneth himself away from unity, turneth himself from the divine light. The highest perfection consists in this, that the soul be internal and united; whoso is and abideth eternally the most inward, increaseth most in perfection, he receiveth most the influx of the divine light, which enlighteneth his reason, to know the pure truth. Right knowledge of truth passeth on to unity; no man with scattered faculties, whose reason is occupied with the manifold, attaineth to true light, in which all divine truth revealeth itself. The light is simple, therefore also the ground must be simple if it reflects its splendour, for each thing must also find a place according to its value. It is therefore needful that he, who wisheth to have light should be internal and united, therefore also Jesus said,

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“If thine eye is single, thy whole body will be light.”¹¹⁰ Man’s eye is the reason, if this is single, all that it understandeth is pure truth, and all its works are pure virtues.

125.

What is not produced from a simple ground is all deception; therefore whoso doth not wish to be deceived, let him turn from the manifold to internal unity; no deception can be mixed up there. All that deceiveth man is that the phantasy forms too many things, and that it taketh these images to be the truth; the evil spirit can shut himself up in this, holdeth before him false images, and deceiveth him. He cannot reach a perfectly simple, pure ground, therefore also he cannot deceive the pure, simple man. He who attacheth weight to so-called visions, and busieth himself much with images, showeth that his ground is not simple or pure. For in a simple, pure ground, nothing is begotten save God, and what is like unto God. But God is invisible, raised above all images, therefore they are deceived who assume that they wish to see Him. What is produced in a pure ground is so fine and simple that no one can grasp it by images, and no one can speak of it; whoso knoweth the pure truth, he knoweth well that it is true, and maketh nothing of visions, especially at this time. For the truth hath been revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ, and whoso seeketh it outside Him and His teaching deceiveth himself, and also others. All that believe in this man are sick in faith, and have more in common with Antichrist than with Christ. They who live in Christ, and in whom He liveth, can hold and believe nothing else than Christ, and whatever else is revealed in them they hold to be false. Thus they alone remain undeceived by all falsity.

126.

Nay, even a pure and simple man, of whose heart Christ hath taken possession must often resist a pure distinction of truth having a likeness to the God-like; he must do so in order to remain pure in his simplicity, that God may not be hindered in His working in him, which is raised above all the distinctions of truth by imagery. And even if they sometimes examine a thing by distinction, in order to be able to teach their fellow-men about it, yet as soon as they turn away from these works they loose the very image of the thing, return to Christ, and leave all the rest as it is, which keepeth them also in true purity. These men have the greatest labour and the greatest burthen that any one can have in time, for they must resist all that is in time and not God, they must overcome all with a heavy fight, all that is in them must be broken through and set aside. It happeneth indeed that some, who have a

110 [Matt. vi. 32.](#)

weak nature, or are burthened with sins, are so weakened that they must lie down sick, and can say with the loving soul, "Tell it to my Beloved, for I lie sick with love."¹¹¹

127.

The love of the Holy Ghost penetrateth all the members of man, inflameth them all with the love fire; and this fire burneth up all unlikeness, and maketh all things straight that were crooked before. Man fancieth that he will be entirely burnt up, and this is named the working and overwhelming love. And as something unlike is still in man, this love must work; but afterwards when working love hath worked off all unlikeness, a sweet love springeth up in man, and this is named passive love, which then suffereth in a calm and gentle rest what God worketh; and it worketh no more, but God worketh, and it suffereth. And now at length the soul is in an eternal entrance into God, and God draweth it with Himself, and maketh the soul one love with Himself, and thus man becometh entirely one love with God. Whoever would now give him a name would properly give him that of love, for nothing save love is in him. And those men do not trouble themselves with any vision, or with any strange ways, but only with simple, divine love. This is brought about by the simple, pure ground and foundation out of which simple, divine love springeth. In this is the greatest joy that exists in time, and the delight is not natural or contrary to truth, but it is God-like, and revealeth the truth, which is God. This rapture ought not to be blamed, for it is from God, and destroyeth all natural lust that is against God. But man should not linger with love because of this delight, so that he would love God on account of the delight; but he ought to love God for the sake of God, he must give up all delight, and cleave to God alone without any wherefore, and thus is his love perfect. For if he were to love God on account of delight, he would love Him in a natural way, or according to the love of creatures. And may God help us to love God in the most perfect manner.

111 In the margin Canticorum, *i.e.* [Solomon's Song ii. 5.](#)

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Ἔστι γὰρ ὁ φίλος ἄλλος αὐτός: 69

Ἔστιν ἄρα ἡ ἀρετὴ ἕξις προαιρετικὴ ἐν μεσότητι οὔσα τῇ προς ἡμᾶς ὠρισμένη λόγῳ καὶ ὡς ἂν ὁ φρόνιμος ὀρίσειεν μεσότης δὲ δύο κακιῶν τῆς μὲν καθ' ὑπερβολὴν τῆς δὲ κατ' ἔλλειψιν: 60

Σὺ δέ . . τῇ περὶ τὰ μυστικὰ θεάματα συντόνω διατριβῇ καὶ τὰς αἰσθήσεις ἀπόλειπε καὶ τὰς νοεράς. ἐνεργείας καὶ πάντα αἰσθητὰ καὶ νοητὰ κ.τ.λ.: 104

Τῆς μὲν κακίας ἡ ὑπερβολὴ καὶ ἡ ἔλλειψις τῆς δ' ἀρετῆς ἡ μεσότης: 176

Τὸ Βέλτιον καὶ τὸ τιμιώτερον πρότερον εἶναι τῇ φύσει θεοκεῖ: 32

ἡγεμονικόν: 5

νοῦς . . πᾶς ὢν τοῦ πάντων ἐπέκεινα καὶ οὐδενὸς οὔτε ἑαυτοῦ οὔτε ἑτέρου τῷ παντελῶς δὲ ἀγεώστῳ . . ἐνοουμένος: 9

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τὸ ὁμοῖον τῷ ὁμοίῳ φίλον: 29

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“Apostoli mirabantur quasi nimis dura esset ac severa sententia; respondit Christus, eam, etiam atque etiam exaggerans, et severiorem reddens; atque hoc est quod ait: ‘iterum dico vobis,’ quasi dicat,” non solum quod modo dixi verum est, sed amplius etiam dico vobis, facilius esse camelum per foramen acus transire, quam divitem intrare in regnum coelorum . . . : 7

“Tum quia cupido divitiarum facit eus coacervari per fas et nefas; tum quia eadem ita mentem auro alligat ut nequeat cogitare de coelo; tum quia divitiae sunt materia et stimulus ad superbiam, gulam, luxuriam, omniaque scelera.” “Et iterum Christus enim adaugendo quasi corrigit id quod dixit.” Dixi difficile esse divitem salvari; nunc addo quod amplius est, facilius esse camelum . . . Quemlibet divitem accipias.: 7

“hanc autem” (divisionem); “operari in nobis solet vivus ille Dei sermo et efficax . . . spiritus ab anima scinditur . . . et in eandem imaginem (Divinae gloriae) transformatur”: 126

A semetipsa penitus deficit.: 9

Actio immanens, actio transiens.: 116

Ama et fac quod vis.: 68

Apex mentis, seu synteresis scintilla.: 144

Apud homines hoc impossibile est . . . Christumque voluisse sententiam suam magis et magis exaggerando confirmare. Primo enim simpliciter dixit, difficile esse divitem in regno coelorum introire; secundo dixit, facilius esse camelum, etc.; tertio, impossibile omnino esse sed apud homines, non apud Deum.: 7

Bonum; quod in Deo vel in proximo diligam, diligendo faciam meum.: 10

Coelestis medicus singulis quibusque vitiis obviantia adhibet medicamenta.: 45

Comedite pingua et bibite mulsum: 141

Cur non recte dicatur spiritus semetipsum non habere, quando incipit a semetipso deficere et a suo esse in supermundanum quemdam et vere plus quam humanum statum transire . . . ita ut ipse jam non sit ipse, eo duntaxat tempore quo Domino incipit altius inhaerere.: 9

Deus celsitudo humilium et fortitudo rectorum, qui per unigenitum Filium tuum ita mundum erudire dignatus es, ut omnis illius actio: 80

Deus non destruit naturam, sed perficit eam.: 49

Deus noster ignis consumens est.: 74

Ego: 67 67

Ego flos campi: 146

Ego sum ostium.: 83

Et cum quoslibet pauperes nonnulla reprehensibilia perpetrare conspiciatis, nolite despiciere, quia fortasse quod superfluitas tenuissimae pravitatis inquinat, caminus paupertatis purgat: 176

Et sic transformatur quodammodo in Deum, quod nec cogitare nec intelligere nec amare nec memorari potest nisi Deum pariter et de Deo.: 9

Ex hoc sunt in rebus aliqua superiora, quod sunt uni primo, quod est Deus, propinquiora et similia: 32

Flere cum flentibus citieren.: 166

Haec est hominis in vita sublimior perfectio ita uniri Deo ut tota anima cum omnibus potentiis suis et viribus in Deum collecta unus spiritus fiat cum eo, nihil meminerit nisi Deum, nihil sentiat et intelligat nisi Deum.: 9

Humanae naturae viribus impossibile est diviti opibus suis intricato salutem consequi . . . imo ut non pauci iis relictis ambient et sequantur evangelicam Christi paupertatem; hoc enim fecere primo omnes Christiani, qui omnia habebant communia ut patet: 7

Illud quod unus videtur specialiter haberi inter homines, quodammodo omnes communiter habent, in quantum se per charitatem perfectam unusquisque bonum alterius suum reputat.: 9

Labor exterior operatur ad augmentum proemii accidentalis; sed augmentum meriti respectu proemii essentialis consistit principaliter in charitate.: 9

Laus virtutis in voluntate consistit, non autem in potestate, et ideo deficere ab aequalitate, quae est medium iustitiae propter defectum potestatis non diminuit laudem virtutis, si non fuerit defectus ex parte voluntatis.: 10

Lux quae est propria forma corporis summe diaphani, nullo modo fieret forma vel actus alicujus, quod nullo modo participat diaphaneitatem.: 92

Majus est quod ex impio fiat justus, quam creare coelum et terram.: 96

Majus hoc esse dixerim, quam est coelum et terra et quaecunque cernuntur in coelo et in terra.: 96

Mens . . . quodammodo se sibi furatur, immo rapitur atque elabitur a seipsa, ut verbo fruatur.: 9

Modus in omnibus habendus est: 154

Nobilissima et sublimissima pars animae: 144

Nolle proficere deficere est.: 45

Nunquam est Dei amor otiosus, operatur etenim magna si est, si vero operari renuit, amor non est.: 73

O sanctissima anima, quam etsi gladius persecutoris non abstulit, tamen palmam martyrii non amisit.: 164

Oculis aegris odiosa lux, quae puris amabilis.: 130

Omnia . . . arbitror ut stercora.: 73

Pauperes evangelizantur.: 53
Qualiter unusquisque apud se lateat, contumelia illata probat.: 162
Qui coelestis vitae dulcedinem . . . perfecte cognoverit, ea quae in terris amaverat libenter cuncta derelinquit; in comparatione ejus vilescunt omnia.: 135
Qui didicerunt a Domino Jesu Christo mites esse et humiles corde, plus cogitando et orando proficiunt, quam legendo et audiendo.: 88
Quidquid recipitur, recipitur juxta facultatem recipientis.: 93
Quisquis charitatem habet etiam dona alia percipit; quisquis charitatem non habet, etiam dona quae percipisse videbitur amittit.: 44
Rationabile obsequium vestrum.: 37
Regnum coelorum vim patitur, et violenti rapiunt illud.: 31
Remota causa, removetur effectus.: 177
Rursum impossibile hic proprie capias; nam divitem salvare impossibile est apud homines: 7
Scientia et quicquid aliud ad magnitudinem pertinet occasio est quod homo confidat de se ipso, et ideo non totaliter se Deo tradat. Et inde est quod hujusmodi quandoque occasionaliter devotionem impediunt, et in simplicibus et mulieribus devotio abandat.: 147
Si quis diligit me, sermonem meum servabit.: 130
Si scirem deos ignoscituros et homines ignoscituros, adhuc peccare dedignarer.: 56
Totum meritum voluntate est. Quantum vis, tantum mereris: 10
Transite ad me omnes qui concupiscitis me et a generationibus meis implemini.: 158
Usque adeo peccatum voluntarium est malum ut nullo modo sit peccatum, si non sit voluntarium.: 177
Verba, quae dedisti mihi, dedi eis: 131
Vexatio dabit intellectuali auditui.: 161
Virtus in infirmitate perficitur.: 61
Volunt omnes te (Jesu) frui at non ita et imitari; regnare cupiunt sed non compati.: 80
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qualitas creata animae per modum habitus inhaerens, quae cum beatorum mente ad Dei visionem concurrat.: [118](#)

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