

ON THE LOVE OF GOD

PREFACE

To the illustrious lord Aimeric, cardinal deacon and chancellor of the Roman Church, Bernard, called abbot of Clairvaux, life unto the Lord and death in the Lord.

You were wont to ask prayers from me, and not the solution of questions; and, indeed, I feel myself sufficient for neither. The former, it is true, my profession imposes, even if my conversation does not; but for the latter (to speak sooth) methinks I lack what seem chiefly necessary, diligence and understanding. Nevertheless it pleases me, I confess, that you seek spiritual things in return for carnal, although it were surely better to have done so from one more rich than I. But since it is the custom of learned and unlearned alike to make excuses of this kind, and it is not easy to know whether the excuse proceeds truly from incompetence or from modesty, unless the performance of the work enjoined shows, accept out of my poverty what I have, lest by keeping silence I should pass for a philosopher. I do not, however, promise to answer all; to that alone which you ask concerning the love of God, I will make what reply He will give. Keep the rest for the more diligent.

CHAPTER I

WHY AND HOW GOD IS TO BE LOVED

1. You would hear from me, then, why and how God is to be loved? I answer: The cause of loving God is God; the manner is to love without measure. Is this enough? Yes, perhaps, for the wise. But I am debtor to the unwise as well; where enough is said for the wise, we must comply with the others also. Therefore I will not refuse to repeat it, more fully rather than more deeply, for the sake of the slower in apprehension. I may say that God is to be loved for His own sake for a double reason; because nothing can be loved more justly, nothing more fruitfully. The question, why God is to be loved, bears a double meaning. For it can be asked what is especially asked; whether for what desert of His, or for what advantage of ours, God is to be loved. But I will give the same answer to either; assuredly I find no other worthy cause of loving Him, save Himself. And first with respect to desert. Verily He has deserved much of us, who gave Himself to us for no deserts of ours. For what better than Himself could even He have given? Therefore, if the desert of God is sought, when the cause of loving Him is sought, it is this above all: that *He hath first loved us*. Worthy, indeed, is He to be loved in return,

especially if we consider who loved, whom He loved, and how much. For who? Is it not He to whom every spirit confesses : *Thou art my God, for thou hast no need of my goods?* It is the true charity of this Majesty who seeketh not His own. But to whom is love so unalloyed shown? *When we were yet enemies,* it is said, *we were reconciled to God.* God loved then, both freely, and His enemies. But how much? As much as John says : *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son ;* and Paul says : *He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.* That very Son, too, of Himself saith : *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* Thus has the just deserved from the wicked, the highest from the lowest, the almighty from the weak. But one says : This indeed from men ; but from Angels not so. It is true, for there was no need. But He who succoured men in such necessity, kept the Angels from it ; and He who, by loving men, made them such that they remained not as they were, Himself, by equal love, gave the Angels grace not to become such as men were.

CHAPTER II

HOW GREATLY GOD DESERVES TO BE LOVED BY MAN,
ON ACCOUNT OF THE GOODS BOTH OF BODY AND
OF SOUL. HOW THESE ARE TO BE KNOWN AND
KEPT WITHOUT INJUSTICE TO THE GIVER

2. To those to whom these things are clear, I deem it clear likewise why God is to be loved : that is, for what He has deserved to be loved. If these are hidden from unbelievers, God is still ready to confound the ungrateful with His innumerable benefits, lent for human use and manifest to sense. Who else, forsooth, ministers food to him who eats, light to him who sees, breath to him who breathes? But it is idle to wish to enumerate what we have just declared to be innumerable ; it is enough, for example, to have mentioned the chief : bread, sun, and air. I mean the chief, not as more excellent, but as more necessary ; for they are of the body. Let man seek his goods that are more excellent in that part of himself which excels himself, that is, in the soul, which are dignity, knowledge, virtue. By dignity in man I mean free will, in which it is surely given him not only to excel, but to rule over all other living creatures ; by knowledge, that by which he knows this dignity to be in himself, though not from himself ; by virtue, that by which he then diligently

seeks Him from whom he has his being, and cleaves firmly to Him when found.

3. Thus each of these three appears twofold. Not only the prerogative of nature, but also the power of dominion, demonstrates human dignity ; for the fear of man is perceived to lie over all living things of the earth. Knowledge also will be double, when we know that this same dignity, or any other good in us, both dwells in us and is not from ourselves. Lastly, virtue too will likewise be recognised as twofold, if we therefore seek the Author and adhere inseparably to Him when found. Thus dignity without knowledge doth not profit ; nay, it even does harm, if virtue be lacking, as the argument that follows makes clear. For what glory does it give, to have what thou knowest not thou hast ? To know what thou hast, but not to know that thou hast it not from thyself, gives glory indeed, but not with God. Now to one glorying in himself it is said by the Apostle : *What hast thou that thou didst not receive ? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it ?* He says not simply, *why dost thou glory ?* but adds, *as if thou hadst not received ;* that he may blame, not him who glories in what he hath, but him who glories as though he had not received it. Rightly is glory of this kind called vain, as having no solid foundation of truth. For he distinguishes true glory from this, by saying : *He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord ;* that is, in truth ; for the Lord is truth.

4. It is therefore necessary for thee to know both

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what thou art, and that thou art not of thyself ; lest thou either glory not at all, or glory vainly. At last, it is said : *If thou know not thyself, go forth after the flocks of thy companions.* In good sooth, it happens so. Man made in honour, when he understands not this honour, deserves by such ignorance to be likened to the cattle who are the sharers in his present corruption and mortality. Therefore it comes to pass that the creature marked off by the gift of reason, through not knowing himself, begins to be herded with the flocks of irrational beings, whilst, ignorant of his own glory which is within, he is conformed outwardly to things of sense and led away by his own curiosity ; and he becomes one of the rest, because he understands not that he has received something beyond the rest. Therefore we must greatly beware of this ignorance, by which we haply think of ourselves less than ourselves ; but not less, nay even more, of that by which we attribute more to ourselves ; which befalls if, deceiving ourselves, we think any good is in us and from ourselves. But, indeed, above either ignorance is that presumption to be shunned and abhorred by which, knowingly and of set purpose, thou haply darest to seek thine own glory from goods not thine, and fearest not to rob the glory of Another for what thou art certain thou hast not from thyself. The former ignorance has no glory ; the latter indeed has, but not with God. But this third evil, because now knowingly committed, usurps from God Himself. This arrogance is seen to be more grievous and more dangerous than that latter ignorance, inasmuch as

by that God is not known, but by this He is condemned ; it is worse and more detestable than the former, inasmuch as, whereas by that we are made the fellows of cattle, by this the fellows of demons. Assuredly it is pride, and the greatest of sins, to use gifts as though they were naturally ours, and to usurp the glory of the benefactor in the benefits we have received.

5. Thus it is that with these two, dignity and knowledge, there is need also of virtue, which is the fruit of both, through which He is sought and held who, as author and giver of all, is rightly glorified for all. Otherwise, he that knows, and does not things worthy, *shall be beaten with many stripes*. Wherefore ? Surely because *he would not understand that he might do well ; rather hath he devised iniquity on his bed*, whilst as an unfaithful servant he strives to take for himself, nay even to plunder, the glory of his good Master in the good things which, by the gift of knowledge, he has learned for certain are not of himself. It is therefore clear that dignity is altogether useless without knowledge, and knowledge hurtful without virtue. But the man of virtue, with whom neither knowledge is harmful nor dignity unfruitful, cries to God and frankly confesses : *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory*. This is : We attribute nothing unto us, O Lord, of knowledge, nothing unto us of dignity ; but we render the whole unto Thy name, from whom the whole is.

6. But we have wandered somewhat far from our

undertaking, while engaged in showing that those also who know not Christ are sufficiently taught by natural law, from the goods they perceive of body and of soul, how they, too, are bound to love God for the sake of God. For, to repeat in brief what has been said on this point, what infidel does not know that those necessary things, whereby he lives, whereby he sees, whereby he breathes, are ministered to his body in this mortal life by no other than by Him *who giveth food to all flesh, who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust* ? What wicked man can think any other the author of the human dignity which shines in the soul, save He Himself who saith in Genesis : *Let us make man in our image, after our likeness* ? Who can deem any other the bestower of knowledge, save likewise *he that teacheth man knowledge* ? Who, again, can think that the gift of virtue has been given him, or hope for it to be given, from any source save from the hand likewise of the *Lord of virtues* ? Therefore God deserves to be loved for His own sake, even by the infidel, who, albeit he knows not Christ, yet knows himself. Hence even every infidel is without excuse, if he love not the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might. Surely that innate justice, which reason knows, cries to him from within, that he is bound with his whole self to love Him from whom he is not ignorant that he owes all that he is. But it is difficult, nay impossible, for anyone, with his own powers of free will, to render wholly to the

will of God what he has once received from God, and not rather to twist them back to his own will and keep for himself as though his own ; as it is written : *All seek their own ; and again ; The imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil.*

CHAPTER III

HOW MANY INDUCEMENTS CHRISTIANS HAVE FOR
LOVING GOD MORE THAN HAVE INFIDELS

7. ON the other hand, the faithful surely know how utterly they need Jesus and Him crucified ; whilst, wondering at and embracing the love in Him *which passeth knowledge*, they are confounded that they repay not even that little which they are in return for so great love and condescension. Readily therefore do they love more, who understand themselves more loved ; but he to whom less has been given, loveth less. The Jew, forsooth, or the Pagan, is in no (wise) stirred by such prickings of love as the Church feels, who says : *I am wounded with charity ; and again : Stay me with flowers, comfort me with apples ; for I am sick of love.* She beholds king Solomon *with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him* ; she beholds the Only Begotten of the Father, bearing His cross ; she beholds the Lord of Majesty buffeted and spat upon ; she beholds the Author of life and of glory fastened by nails, pierced by the lance, overwhelmed with reproaches, and at last laying down that dear life of His for His friends. She beholds these things, and the more the sword of love pierces her own soul, and she says : *Stay me with flowers, comfort me with apples ; for I am sick*

of love. These indeed are the pomegranates, which the bride, brought into the garden of her Beloved, gathers from the tree of life, which have borrowed their taste from the heavenly bread, their colour from the blood of Christ. Then she sees death dead, and the author of death led in triumph. She sees captivity led captive from hell to earth, from earth to heaven, *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.* She perceives the earth, which had brought forth thorns and thistles under the ancient curse, renewed and flowering again at the grace of a new blessing. And, in all this, she remembers that verse : *And my flesh hath flourished again, and with my will I will give praise to him ;* she desires to wax strong on the apples of the Passion, which she has plucked from the tree of the Cross, and on the flowers of the Resurrection, whose fragrance especially invites the Bridegroom to visit her more often.

8. At last she says : *Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, and comely ; our bed is flowering.* In showing the bed, she manifests clearly what she desires ; and, when she calls it flowering, she clearly indicates whence she expects to obtain what she desires : for it is not from her own merits, but from the flowers of the field which God hath blessed. Christ, who willed to be conceived and nurtured in Nazareth, delights in these flowers. The heavenly Bridegroom rejoices in such fragrance, and often and freely enters the bridal-bed of the heart, which He has found filled with such fruits and strewn with flowers. For

where He beholds a soul absorbed in contemplating the grace of His passion or the glory of His resurrection, there straightway He is present, constantly and gladly. The memorials of the Passion are as the fruits of last year, or rather of all times past under the rule of death and sin, at length appearing in the fulness of time. But the signs of the Resurrection are the new flowers of the season following, in the new summer of its flowering again under grace, the fruit of which the future general resurrection will bring forth to abide without end. *Now, He saith, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers have appeared on the earth ;* meaning that the time of summer is come with Him who was loosed from the cold of death into a spring mildness of new life. *Behold, He saith, I make all things new ;* whose flesh was sown in death, and flowered again in the Resurrection, at the fragrance whereof straightway in the field of our valley the dry becomes green, the cold grows warm, the dead return to life.

9. At the freshness of these flowers and fruits, and the fairness of the field breathing most sweet smell, the Father Himself delights in the Son who maketh all things new, so that He says : *See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a plentiful field which the Lord hath blessed.* Plentiful indeed, of whose fulness *have all we received.* Yet the bride more familiarly, when she wills, gathers flowers therefrom for herself and plucks fruits, with which she sprinkles the hidden places of her conscience, that the bed of her heart may smell sweetly to the Bridegroom when He enters. For

it behoves us, if we would have Christ as a frequent guest, to keep our hearts always fortified with faithful testimonies, alike of His mercy in dying and of His power in rising again; even as David said: *These two things have I heard; that power belongeth unto God, and mercy unto thee, O Lord.* Of each, the testimonies are very sure; for Christ died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, and ascended for our protection, and sent the Spirit for our consolation, and will return sometime for our consummation. Surely, He hath shown mercy in death, power in resurrection, and both in each of the rest.

10. These are the apples, these the flowers, with which the bride prays that meanwhile she may be comforted and stayed; feeling, I believe, that the strength of love in her can in a measure grow cold and languish, if it be not cherished continually by such kindlings, until, brought at last into the bedchamber, she may be received in the long-desired embrace, and may say: *His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.* In sooth she will then feel and prove that all the testimonies of love, which in His former coming she had received as from the left hand of the Beloved, are to be valued lightly, in comparison with the abundant sweetness of the embrace of the right hand, and deemed altogether lower. She will feel what she has heard: *The flesh profiteth nothing; it is the spirit that quickeneth.* She will prove what she had read: *My spirit is sweet above honey, and my inheritance above honey and the honeycomb.* As to what follows: *My memory is in the*

p

generations of the ages; this means that, as long as the present age is seen to abide, in which generation comes, and generation passes away, consolation shall not be lacking from memory to the elect, to whom the full joy from the presence is not yet vouchsafed. Therefore it is written: *They shall utter the memory of the abundance of thy sweetness*; those, doubtless, of whom it was said a little before: *Generation and generation shall praise thy works.* Memory, then, in the generations of this life, presence in the kingdom of heaven. By the latter the company of the elect, now taken up, is glorified; by the former, in the meantime, the generation of wayfathers is consoled.

CHAPTER IV

WHO THEY ARE THAT TAKE CONSOLATION FROM THE
REMEMBRANCE OF GOD OR ARE MORE CAPABLE OF
LOVING HIM

11. But it touches us to know what generation takes comfort from the remembrance of God. Not that stubborn and rebellious generation, to which it is said : *Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation ; but that which can truly say : My soul refused to be comforted.* This is made clear by what follows : *I remembered God, and was delighted.* Surely it is just that they, whom present things delight not, should have the ready memory of those to come ; and that the remembrance of eternity should delight those who scorn to be comforted by any abundance of things that flow away. And this is the generation of them that seek the Lord, of them that seek not their own, but the face of the God of Jacob. Therefore, to them that seek and sigh for the presence of God, memory meanwhile is ready and sweet, albeit they are not satisfied thereby, but hunger the more for what will satisfy them. This indeed the Food testifies of itself, in this wise : *He that eats me, shall yet hunger ; and he who is fed upon it says : I shall be satisfied, when thy glory shall appear.* Nevertheless, blessed are they now already *which do hunger*

and thirst after justice, for at last they, and not others, *shall be filled.* Woe to thee, pervertse and crooked generation ! woe to thee, foolish people and without understanding, who scorn the memory and fear the presence ! Deservedly indeed ; for thou wouldst not now be delivered *from the snare of the fowler*, although *they that will be rich in this world fall into the snare of the devil ;* and thou wilt not then be able to be *delivered from the sharp word.* O sharp word, O hard saying ! *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.* Harder indeed and sharper than that which, for remembrance of the Passion, is daily repeated to us in the Church : *He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life.* That is, he that calls to mind My death, and by My example mortifies his members which are on the earth, hath everlasting life ; that is, if ye suffer with Him, ye shall also reign with Him. And nevertheless the most, falling away from this voice, and going back to-day too, answer not the word, but the deed : *This is an hard saying, and who can hear it ?* Therefore a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God, but rather trusting in uncertain riches, is oppressed at hearing even a word of the Cross, and deems the remembrance of the Passion burdensome to itself. But how will it bear the weight of that word in presence : *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels ?* Assuredly, on whomsoever this stone shall fall, it will grind him to powder. But the generation of the upright shall be blessed ; they who,

with the Apostle, *labour that, whether absent or present, they may please God*. At last they shall hear : *Come, ye blessed of my Father*. Then the generation *that set not their heart aright* shall experience too late how, in comparison with that grief, the yoke of Christ was sweet and His burden light, from which, as though harsh and heavy, they proudly withdrew their stiff necks. You cannot, O wretched servants of Mammon, at once glory in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and hope in treasures of money ; go after gold, and prove how sweet is the Lord. Hence you shall without doubt find Him sharp in presence, whom you feel not sweet in remembrance.

12. The faithful soul, on the other hand, both sighs longingly for the presence and rests sweetly in the remembrance ; and, until she is capable of *beholding the glory of the Lord with open face*, she glories in the ignominy of the Cross. Thus, in sooth, thus the bride and dove of Christ rests meanwhile, and *sleepeth in the midst of the lots*, having chosen for the present in memory of the abundance of Thy sweetness, Lord Jesus, *wings covered with silver*, the whiteness, to wit, of innocence and purity ; hoping moreover to be fulfilled of joy with Thy face, where also *her back shall be covered with yellow gold* ; when, brought with joy into the *brightness of the saints*, she shall be more fully illumined with the light of wisdom. Justly, therefore, does she even now glory and say : *His left hand is under my head, and his right hand shall embrace me* ; for she counts that in His left hand is the remembrance of that love, than which is none

greater, whereby He laid down His life for His friends ; but in His right the blessed vision, which He has promised to His friends, and the joy of the presence of His majesty. Justly is that deific vision of God, that inestimable delight of the Divine presence, assigned to the right hand, concerning which it is joyously sung : *At thy right hand are delights for evermore*. Justly in the left hand is placed that wondrous remembered and ever to be remembered love, for, until iniquity shall pass away, the bride shall lean and rest upon it.

13. Justly, then, is the left hand of the Bridegroom under the head of the bride ; upon which, leaning back, she rests her head, that is, the intention of her mind, lest it should be inclined and bent to carnal and worldly desires ; *for the corruptible body is a load upon the soul, and the earthly habitation presseth down the mind that museth upon many things*. For what else doth the consideration of so great and so unmerited pity, such freely given and thus proved love, such unexpected condescension, such unrequered meekness, such overwhelming sweetness ? What, I say, shall all these when diligently considered, save wondrously catch up to themselves the mind of him that considers, wholly delivered from all perverse love, vehemently affect it, and make it despise in comparison whatever cannot be desired save by contemplating them ? Assuredly, therefore, doth the bride run swiftly to the odour of their ointments, love ardently, and, so loved, seem to herself to love little, even when she has pressed together her whole

self in love. Nor unfittingly. For what great thing is rendered for love so great and of one so great, if poor dust shall have gathered its whole self to love again, and that very Majesty, outstripping it in love, is seen wholly intent on the work of its salvation ? Yea, *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son*. This, without doubt, is said of the Father. Again : *He hath poured out his soul unto death ;* and this, no doubt, is spoken of the Son. And it is said of the Holy Ghost : *The comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you*. God then loves, and loves with His whole Self, for the whole Trinity loves ; if the " whole " can be said of the Infinite and Incomprehensible, or of what is simply One.

CHAPTER V

HOW MUCH THE DEBT OF LOVE IS INCUMBENT UPON
THE CHRISTIAN

14. He then who looks upon these things, methinks, knows full well why God is to be loved, that is, for what He deserves to be loved. But the infidel, not having the Son, consequently hath neither the Father nor the Holy Ghost. For *he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him*, nor the Holy Ghost whom He sent. It is therefore no wonder if he who knows less also loves less. Nevertheless, even he is not ignorant that he owes all himself to Him whom he knows is the Author of his whole being. What then I, who believe my God not only the free bestower of my life, the most bountiful administrator, the tender comforter, the careful ruler, but moreover the most ample redeemer, the eternal preserver, the enricher, the giver of glory ? As it is written : *With him is plenteous redemption ;* and again : *He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption ;* and of preservation : *He will not forsake his saints, they shall be preserved for ever ;* and of enriching : *Good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall they give into your bosom ;* and again : *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man,*

the things which God hath prepared for them that love him ; and of glorification : We look for the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall reform the body of our lowliness, that it may be fashioned like unto the body of his glory ; and this : The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come which shall be revealed in us ; and again : Our present light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.

15. What shall I render to the Lord for all these things ? Reason and natural justice urge that other * to deliver his whole self to Him from whom he hath his whole self, and to love Him with his whole self. To me assuredly faith enjoins that He should be loved so much more as I understand His inestimable worth above mine own ; I, forsooth, who believe Him the bestower, not only of myself, but also of His very self. The time of faith had not yet come, not yet had God become known in flesh, died on the Cross, come forth from the sepulchre, returned to the Father ; not yet, I say, had He commended His great love toward us (that of which we have already said much), when the commandment was already given to man to love the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, that is, with all that he is, that he knows, that he can. Nor was God unjust, in claiming for Himself His work and gifts. For how shall the work not love Him who made it, when it hath

* the infidel.

power so to do ? And why cannot it do so wholly, when it can do nought at all save by His gift ? Moreover, that it has been made out of nothing, freely, in this dignity, makes more manifest the debt of love, and shows the demand more just. And how great deem we His further bounty, in that He hath preserved men and beasts, whereby God hath multiplied his mercy ? We, I say, who changed our glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass, by sinning made like to senseless beasts. If I owe all myself for my being made, what shall I now add for being re-made, and re-made in this fashion ? For not so easily was I re-made as made ; if, indeed, not only of me, but of all things too that were made, it is written : *He spoke, and they were made*. But, indeed, He who made me all by speaking once, assuredly in re-making me spoke many words, and did wondrous things, and bore grievous things ; things not only grievous, but also unworthy. *What then shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me ?* In the first work, He gave me myself ; in the second, Himself ; and, when He gave Himself, He gave me back myself. Thus given, and given back, I owe myself for myself, and I owe twice. What shall I render to God for Himself ? For, even if I could pay back myself a thousand times, what am I to God ?

CHAPTER VI

BRIEF RECAPITULATION AND SUMMARY OF WHAT HAS BEEN SAID

16. HERE first see in what measure, nay how without measure, God has deserved to be loved by us ; He who (to repeat in a few words what has been said) first loved us, so much and freely, He so great, we so small and unworthy. Lo, I remember what I said in the beginning, that the manner of loving God is to love without measure. And since the object of the love of God is immeasurable and infinite (for God is infinite and immeasurable), what, I ask, should be the limit or measure of our love ? Our very love is not rendered as a free gift, but repaid as a debt. Immeasurableness loves, eternity loves, *charity which passeth knowledge* loves ; God loves, whose greatness is unsearchable, whose wisdom is infinite, whose peace passeth all understanding ; and do we pay back again with measure ? *I will love thee, O Lord, my strength, my rock, my refuge, and my deliverer* ; and my sum of all that is desirable and worthy of love. My God, my helper, I love thee according to Thy gift, and in my measure, less indeed than just, but surely not less than my power ; I, who cannot as much as I ought, and yet cannot beyond what I can. I shall, indeed, be able to love more, when Thou shalt deign to give

more ; though never in proportion to Thy worth. *Thine eyes did see my imperfect being ; but, nevertheless, in thy book all shall be written, they who do what they can, albeit they cannot what they should.* It is clear enough, methinks, both in what measure God is to be loved, and by what desert of His own. By what desert of His, I say ; for the greatness of it, who may fully see ? Who may tell ? Who may know ?

CHAPTER VII

THAT GOD IS LOVED NOT WITHOUT FRUIT AND REWARD,
AND THE DESIRE OF THE HUMAN HEART IS NOT
APPEASED WITH EARTHLY THINGS

17. Now let us see with what advantage to us He is to be loved. But what comparison is there between what we can see and the reality? Nevertheless, we will not be silent about what is seen, even though it is not wholly seen as it is. Above, when it was asked why and how God is to be loved, I said that the *why* that is sought can be understood in two ways; so that it can equally be sought, either by what desert of His, or for what advantage of ours, He is to be loved. Therefore, having spoken of the desert of God, not indeed worthily with respect to Him, but as it was granted me to speak, it remains that I speak of the reward, as it will in like manner be granted. For not without reward is God loved, albeit He is to be loved without thought of the reward. True charity cannot fail, yet neither is it a hireling; in sooth it *seeketh not its own*. It is affection, not a contract; it is neither gained nor gains by bargain. It affects freely and maketh free. True love is content with itself. Its reward is the possession of the object loved. For whatever thou mayst seem to love for the sake of something else, thou clearly lovest the ultimate end

of thy love, not the means. Paul doth not preach the Gospel that he may eat, but eats that he may preach the Gospel; he loves, not meat, but the Gospel. True love seeketh no reward, but merits it. Reward is not offered to the lover; it is gained by him that loves, and rendered to him that perseveres. When we would dispose to things of a lower order, we invite the unwilling by promises or rewards, but not the willing. For who thinks that a man should be rewarded that he may do what he freely desires? No one, for instance, leads one that hungers to eat, or one that thirsts to drink, or a mother to give suck to the little son of her womb. Or who thinks that a man should be induced by prayer or price to hedge in his own vine, dig round his own tree, or build the structure of his own house? How, then, should the soul that loves God seek any other reward of her love save God? If she seeketh another, she assuredly loves that, not God.

18. It is natural to every one that uses reason to desire, always in proportion to his judgment and intention, the things that are greater, and to be content with nothing than which he deems what he lacks to be better. He who, for instance, has a beautiful wife looks with discontented eyes or mind upon one fairer; and he who is clothed with a precious robe aims at one more precious, and, possessing much wealth, envies one richer than himself. Thou mayst see men, abounding in lands and possessions, still day by day adding field to field, and with infinite greed extending their boundaries. Thou mayst see,

too, those who dwell in royal houses and ample palaces, nevertheless daily joining house to house, and, with restless curiosity, building, pulling down, changing square for round. What of men uplifted by honours? Do we not see them, with insatiable ambition, straining more and more with all their might to higher things? And of all these there is no end, for nothing in them is found which of itself is highest or best. And what wonder if he be not contented with lower and worse things, who cannot rest on this side of the highest or best? But it is foolish, and smacks of sheer madness, always to desire those things which never, I say not satisfy, but even lessen the appetite; inasmuch as, whatever of such thou mayst have, thou still longest for what thou hast not, and ever restlessly pantest for what is lacking. Thus it happens that the mind, wandering through the various false attractions of the world, is wearied, not satisfied, by running to and fro with vain labour; while whatever it hungrily swallows it reckons little to what remains to be devoured, and ever not less anxiously desires what are lacking than gladly possesses what are present. For who may obtain all things? And although a man is not certain when he will lose with sorrow even that little which he has obtained with labour, he is nevertheless certain that he will some time lose it. Thus the perverse will strives for a direct way to the best, hastens to that whereby it may be filled; nay, rather, vanity sports with itself in these turnings, iniquity lies to itself. If then thou wouldst fulfil thy wish, if thou wouldst

take hold of that of which the possession leaves no more to be desired—what need to essay the rest too? Thou runnest through bye-paths, and shalt die long before thou attain by this circuit to thy desire.

19. Thus, then, *the wicked walk round about,* naturally desiring that whereby they may end desire, and foolishly rejecting that whereby they may approach the end; the end, I mean, not consumption, but consummation. Wherefore they hasten, not to be consummated in a blessed end, but to be consumed with fruitless labour—they who, delighting in the aspect of things rather than in the Author, would fain run through all and have experience of each, before they care to come to the Lord of the universe Himself. And, indeed, they might reach their goal, if at some time they could attain their wish, to wit, that one might obtain all things, except the Source of all. For by that law of his own cupidity, by which in the rest he is wont to hunger for what he has not, rather than for what he has, and to weary of what he has on account of what he has not, soon, having obtained and despised all things which are in heaven and on earth, man would at last surely run to Him who alone would be lacking, the God of all. Then he would rest there; for no repose calls back on the one side, no restlessness urges now on the other. Assuredly he would say; *It is good for me to adhere to my God.* He would say; *For what have I in heaven, and besides thee what do I desire upon earth?* And again; *Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever.* Thus then (as has been said) a man of desires

might attain to that which is the best, if he indeed could first acquire what he desires on this side.

20. But, since the shortness of life, and the weakness of power, and the number of sharers make this altogether impossible, they surely toil on a long road and with fruitless labour, who, while they would fain attain whatsoever they desire, are unable to come to the end of all things desirable. And would that they were fain to attain all things with the mind, and not by experience ! This, indeed, they might easily do, and not fruitlessly. For the mind, swifter and more keen-sighted than bodily sense, is given for this, that it may prevent it in all things, and that the sense may not dare to take hold of aught which the forerunning mind has not first proved useful. Hence I deem it is said : *Prove all things, hold fast that which is good ; to wit, that the mind may provide for this, nor sense obtain its wish save at that other's judgment. Otherwise, thou shalt not ascend into the mountain of the Lord, nor stand in his holy place, because thou hast lifted up thy soul unto vanity, that is, the rational soul, while, like a brute beast, thou followest sense, reason resting idle, or offering no resistance. Those, therefore, whose steps reason does not prevent, run, but outside the way, and thus, despising the counsel of the Apostle, run not so that they may obtain. For when shall they obtain Him whom they would not obtain save after all things ? It is a crooked way, and an endless circuit, to wish to reach at all things in the first assay.*

21. But not so the just man. Hearing how the

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many are blamed that tarry in the circuit (for many are they who go along the broad way which leads to death), he chooses for himself the royal road, not turning aside to the right or to the left. The prophet bears witness : *The way of the just is right, the path of the just is right to walk in.* These are they who, by a saving nearer way, are careful to avoid this harmful and fruitless circuit, choosing that shortened and shortening word, not to desire whatever they see, but rather to sell *what they have and give to the poor.* Surely, *blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* All run indeed, but there is distinction among those that run. *The Lord knoweth the way of the just, but the way of the wicked shall perish.* Therefore, *better is a little to the just, than the great riches of the wicked ; for, indeed, as the wise man says and the fool finds, he that loveth money, shall not be satisfied with money ; but they that hunger and thirst after justice, they shall have their fill.* Justice is the vital and natural food of the spirit that uses reason ; but money no more lessens the hunger of the mind than does wind that of the body. If, then, thou shouldst see a hungry man, with mouth opened to the wind, drawing in the air with puffed-out cheeks, as though thereby to satisfy his hunger, wouldst thou not deem him mad ? So it is not less madness to think that the rational spirit is not rather puffed up than satisfied by any bodily things. For what have bodies to do with spirits ? Neither can those be refreshed with spiritual things, nor these with bodily. *Bless the Lord, O my soul, who satisfieth*

thy desire with good things. He satisfies with good, He stirs to good, He preserves in good; He prevents, sustains, fulfils. He makes thee desire, He is what thou desirest.

22. I said above; The cause of loving God is God. I spoke truly; for He is both the efficient and the final cause. He gives the occasion, He creates the affection, He consummates the desire. He wrought (or, rather, is what He is) that He might be loved; He is the object of hope, to be loved more blissfully, that He may not be loved in vain. His love both prepares and rewards ours. It goes before more graciously, is repaid more justly, is expected more sweetly. He is *rich unto all that call upon him*; nor still hath He aught better than Himself. He gave Himself to be merited, He keeps Himself for reward, He sets forth Himself for the refecton of holy souls, He gives Himself out for the redemption of those in captivity. Thou art good, O Lord, *to the soul that seeketh thee*: then what to her that finds? But herein is a wondrous thing: no one can seek Thee save whoso has first found. Therefore Thou dost will to be found that Thou mayst be sought, to be sought that Thou mayst be found. Thou canst, indeed, be sought and found, but not prevented. For although we say, *in the morning my prayer shall prevent thee*, there is, nevertheless, no doubt that every prayer is luke-warm which inspiration has not prevented. We must now say whence our love begins, for we have told where it is consummated.

CHAPTER VIII

OF THE FIRST DEGREE OF LOVE, WHEREBY A MAN LOVES HIMSELF FOR HIS OWN SAKE

23. LOVE is a natural affection, one of four. They are well known; it needs not to name them. It would, then, be just that what is natural should first of all be at the service of the Author of nature. Therefore it is called the first and greatest commandment: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God*, etc. But, since nature is too weak and feeble, it is compelled, at the bidding of necessity, first to serve itself. And there is carnal love, by which before all things man loves himself for his own sake, as it is written; *That first was which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual.* It is not enjoined by precept, but implanted in nature; for who ever yet *hated his own flesh*? But if this love, as it is wont, begins to overflow, and is not held in by the channel of necessity, it will be seen to pour forth more widely and flood the fields of pleasure. Straightway its superfluity is restrained by the commandment that meets it, when it is said: *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* It is most just that the sharer in nature should share in grace as well, especially in that grace which is implanted in nature. If a man finds it hard, I say not to relieve his brother in necessities, but to serve his

pleasures, let him, check his own, if he would not be a transgressor. Let him indulge himself as much as he will, so long as he remembers to give as much in the same measure to his neighbour. A bridle of temperance is set upon thee, O man, out of the law of life and discipline, lest thou shouldst go after thy concupiscence, and perish by serving the enemy of the soul, that is, lust, with the goods of nature. How much more justly and rightly dost thou communicate these things to thy fellow-sharer, that is, thy neighbour, than to thine enemy ! If indeed, after the advice of the wise man, thou turn away from thine own pleasures, and, according to the teaching of the Apostle, being content with food and covering, dost not feel it hard to refrain for a while thy love from carnal desires *which war against the soul* ; surely, methinks, it will not be grievous to thee, that what thou withdrawest from the enemy of thy soul should be bestowed upon thy fellow-sharer of nature. Then thy love will be both temperate and just, if what is withdrawn from thine own pleasures be not denied to the necessities of thy brother. Thus carnal love becomes social, when it is extended for the good of others.

24. But if, while thou sharest with thy neighbour, perchance even what is necessary should fail thee, what wilt thou do ? What indeed, save with all confidence ask of Him *that giveth to all men abundantly and upbraideth not, who openeth his hand and filleth with blessing every living creature* ? Assuredly He will freely be near in necessities, who does not

desert men even in superfluities. Again He says : *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you.* He promises that He will of Himself give all that is necessary, to him who restricts what is superfluous and loves his neighbour. This is to seek first the kingdom of God, and to implore, aid against the tyranny of sin—preferring to bear the yoke of purity and sobriety rather than that sin should reign in thy mortal body. But surely this pertains also to justice, not to possess the gift of nature apart from him who shares this nature with thee.

25. Nevertheless, that the love of our neighbour may be perfect justice, it must be referred to God. How otherwise can he love his neighbour purely, who does not love in God ? Surely he cannot love in God, who loves not God. It is then necessary that God be loved first, in order that our neighbour, too, may be loved in God. Therefore God also causes Himself to be loved, who makes all else that is good. He doth it thus. He who fashioned nature, Himself too protects it. For it was so fashioned as likewise to need as protector Him whom it had as fashioner ; that what could not have come into being, save through Him, should not be able to subsist at all without Him. And lest the creature should not know this about itself, and therefore (which Heaven avert) proudly arrogate to itself the benefits of the Creator, that same Fashioner, in His high and salutary counsel, wills man to be exercised in tribulations ; in order that, when man has failed, and God has succoured,

whilst man is freed by God, God may be honoured by man, as is meet. For He saith thus : *Call upon me in the day of tribulation ; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt honour me.* He doth this in such wise, that animal and carnal man, who knew not how to love any one save himself, may begin, even for his own sake, to love God too, because in Him indeed, as he has often found, he can do all things that profit him to do, and without Him he can do nought.

CHAPTER IX

OF THE SECOND AND THIRD DEGREES OF LOVE

26. He now loves God, then, but still for a while for his own sake, not for Himself. It is, however, a kind of prudence to know what thou canst do of thyself, and what by the aid of God, and to preserve thyself guiltless to Him who preserves thee to thyself unharmed. But if frequent tribulation assails, on account of which there is frequent turning to God, and no less frequent deliverance obtained from God, is it not inevitable, even if the breast of him so often delivered were of iron, or the heart of stone, that they should be softened to the grace of the Deliverer, and that man should love God, not for his own sake alone, but also for Himself ? From the occasion of frequent necessities God must be approached by man with constant appeals, by approaching tasted, and by tasting it be proved how sweet is the Lord. Thus it comes about that His sweetness, once tasted, more allures to the pure love of God than our necessity impels. Even as the Samaritans said to the woman who had announced that the Lord was come ; *We now believe, not for thy saying ; for we ourselves have heard him, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world ;* so, I say, we too after their example, speaking to our flesh, may justly say : *We*

now love God, not for thy necessity ; for we ourselves have tasted, and know how sweet is the Lord. For the necessity of the flesh is a kind of speech, which in its exultation proclaims the benefits which it proves by experience. Therefore, to one thus affected, it will not now be difficult to fulfil the commandment of loving his neighbour. In sooth, he truly loves God, and for this the things that are God's. He loves purely, and to the pure it is not hard to obey the commandment, rather *purifying his heart*, as it is written, *in the obedience of charity*. He loves justly, and freely embraces a just commandment. This love is rightly grateful, because gratuitous. It is pure, because it is not paid in word or by tongue, but in deed and in truth. It is just, since it is rendered as it is received. For whoso thus loves, assuredly loves not otherwise than as he is loved ; himself seeking in turn, not the things that are his, but those that are of Jesus Christ, even as He sought ours, or rather ourselves, and not His own. So loves he who says : *Give praise to the Lord, for he is good*. He who gives praise to the Lord, not for that He is good to him, but for that He is good, he truly loveth God for Himself, and not for his own sake. Not so loves he of whom it is said : *He will praise thee when thou shalt do well to him*. This is the third degree of love, by which God is now loved for His very self.

CHAPTER X

OF THE FOURTH DEGREE OF LOVE, WHEN MAN LOVES
NOT EVEN HIMSELF EXCEPT FOR THE SAKE OF GOD

27. HAPPY he who hath deserved to reach unto the fourth degree, where man may love not even himself except for the sake of God. *Thy justice, O Lord, is as the mountains of God*. This love is a mountain, and the high mountain of God. In very truth, a *curdled mountain, a fat mountain*. *Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord ? Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest ? This place is in peace, and this abode in Sion*. *Woe is me, that my sojourning is prolonged !* Flesh and blood, vessel of clay, when shall the earthen dwelling-place attain this ? When shall the mind experience affection like this, so that, inebriated with divine love, forgetful of self, and become to its own self like a *broken vessel*, it may utterly pass over into God, and, adhering to God, become one spirit with Him, and say : *My flesh and my heart hath fainted away, thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever ?* Blessed and holy should I call one to whom it has been granted to experience such a thing in this mortal life at rare intervals, or even once, and this only, and for the space of hardly a moment. For 'ain manner to lose thyself, as though thou

wert not, and to be utterly unconscious of thyself, and to be emptied of thyself, and, as it were, brought to nothing, pertains to celestial conversation, not to human affection. And if, indeed, any mortal is suddenly, now and then (as has been said), and for a moment, admitted to this, straightway the wicked world envies, the evil of the day disturbs, the body of death becomes a burden, the necessity of flesh provokes, the defect of corruption does not endure, and, what is more insistent than these, fraternal charity recalls. Alas ! he is compelled to return into himself, to fall back into his own, and miserably to exclaim ; *Lord, I suffer violence, answer thou for me ; and this too ; Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?*

28. Nevertheless, since the Scripture says that *God hath made all things for himself*, it will surely be that the creature will, at some time, conform and harmonise itself with its Author. Therefore, when so it be, we shall cross over into the same affection ; so that, even as God willed all things for Himself, so we too may will neither ourselves nor aught else to have been, or to be, save equally for His sake, for His will alone, not our pleasure. Truly not the appeasing of our necessity, or the reception of felicity, will delight so much as that His will shall be fulfilled in us and concerning us ; which, too, we daily ask in the prayer when we say : *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*. O holy and chaste love ! O sweet and tender affection ! O pure and perfect intention of the will ! surely so much more perfect and more pure as there

is in it nothing now mixed of its own ; the more sweet and tender, as all is divine that is felt. To be thus touched is to become godlike. As a drop of water mingled in wine is seen to pass away utterly from itself, while it takes on the taste and colour of the wine ; as a kindled and glowing iron becomes most like the fire, having put off its former and natural form ; and as the air, when flooded with the light of the sun, is transformed into the same clarity of light, so that it seems to be not merely illumined, but the light itself : so it will needs be that all human affection in the Saints will then, in some ineffable way, melt from itself, and be entirely poured over into the will of God. Otherwise, how will *God be all in all*, if in man somewhat remains over of man ? The substance, indeed, will remain, but in another form, another glory, and another power. When shall this be ? Who shall see this ? Who shall possess ? *When shall I come and appear before the face of God ?* O Lord my God, *my heart hath said to thee ; My face hath sought thee ; thy face, O Lord, will I seek*. Thinkest thou, shall I see Thy holy temple ?

29. Verily, I think not that the commandment will be perfectly fulfilled : *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength ; until the heart itself is no longer compelled to take thought for the body, and the soul ceases ministering to its life and senses in this state, and the strength, relieved from its molestations, is fortified in the power of God*. For it is impossible totally to draw all these together to God,

and fix them upon the Divine Countenance, as long as it is necessary for them to be bent and distracted in serving this frail and afflicted body. Therefore in a spiritual and immortal body, a body perfect, calm and acceptable, and in all things subject to the spirit, let the soul hope to apprehend the fourth degree of love, or, rather, to be apprehended in it; for, verily, it lies in the power of God to give to whom He wills, not to human industry to acquire. Then, I say, she will easily obtain the supreme degree, when no enticement of the flesh will now draw her back, no molestation disturb, as she hastens most swiftly and eagerly into the joy of her Lord. Do we think the holy martyrs, even in part, attained this grace, while still remaining in their victorious bodies? Certainly a great might of love had inwardly caught up those souls, whereby they had strength so to expose their bodies outwardly and condemn their torments. But, assuredly, the sense of most bitter pain could not but disturb their calm, albeit it could not confound.

CHAPTER XI

THIS PERFECTION OF LOVE DOES NOT BELONG EVEN TO
THE UNBODIED SOULS OF THE BLESSED BEFORE
THE RESURRECTION

30. BUT what now of souls already set free from the bodies? We believe them to be utterly plunged into that boundless ocean of eternal light and of luminous eternity. But if (as is not denied) they would fain have received their bodies, or certainly desire and hope to receive them; it is clear, beyond question, that they are not yet entirely changed from themselves, since it is agreed that there is still something lacking of their own, towards which, although but a little, their intention is deflected. Therefore, until death is swallowed up in victory, and the perennial light so invade and take possession of the boundaries of night on every side that the heavenly glory shine forth even in the bodies; the souls cannot utterly unload themselves and pass over into God, since they are surely even yet bound to their bodies, if not by life or sense, certainly by natural affection, so that they have neither will nor power to be consummated without them. And so, before the resurrection of the body, there will not be that self-abandonment of the souls which is their perfect and supreme state; nor surely would the spirit now seek again the companion-

ship of the flesh, if it might be consummated without it. Verily, not without profit to the soul is the body either laid down or resumed. *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.* But if the death is precious, what is the life, and that life? Nor is it any marvel if the body, now of glory, seems to bring something to the spirit, since it is granted that, even when infirm and mortal, it was of no small avail to it. O how truly did he speak, who said : *All things work together for good to them that love God.* To the soul that loves God, her body avails in its infirmity, avails in its death, avails too in its resurrection : first, indeed, for the fruit of penitence, secondly for repose, thirdly for consummation. Rightly doth she not wish to be made perfect without that which she feebleth serves her in every state with good things.

31. Truly a good and faithful companion is the flesh to the good spirit ; for, if it burdens, it aids it ; or, if it aids not, it disburdens ; or, surely, aids, and burdens not at all. The first state is laborious, but fruitful ; the second free from toil, yet in no wise wearisome ; the third, also glorious. Hear the Bridegroom in the Canticle inviting to three stages of this progress. *Eat, He saith, O friends, and drink ; yea, be inebriated, O beloved.* Those still labouring in the body, He summoneth to food ; those who, having laid down the body, are at rest, He inviteth to drink ; those who resume the body, He impels even to inebriation ; and these He calls beloved, as most full of love. For in the others, whom He calls not *beloved*, but *friends*, there is a difference. Those

who groan because still weighed down in the flesh are called dear, in return for the love that they have ; but those who are already loosed from the bond of the flesh are so much the dearer as they are become more prompt and unimpeded for loving. Rightly then, beyond both the others, are they called *beloved*, and are so, who, having now received the second robe, in the bodies resumed with glory, are carried into the love of God the freer and the swifter as nothing is now left of their own which can in any wise stir or hold them back. This, indeed, neither of the other states can claim ; since in the first the body is borne with labour, and in the second it is awaited, not without some desire of their own.

32. First, then, the faithful soul eats her bread, but, alas, in the sweat of her brow. While still remaining in the flesh she walks by faith, which, indeed, must work by love ; for, if it hath not works, it is dead. This work is food, as the Lord saith : *My meat is to do the will of my Father.* Thereafter, having put off the flesh, she now eats not the bread of sorrow ; but she is permitted to drink more fully, as though after meat, the wine of love, though not unmixed, but as is read in the Canticle as spoken by the Bridegroom : *I have drunk my wine with my milk.* For the soul, even then, mixes with the wine of divine love the suavity of natural affection, with which she desires to resume the body and it to be glorified. She is inflamed because she has already drunk of the wine of holy charity, but not yet unto inebriation ; for, in the meanwhile, the mixture of

this milk tempers that ardour. Inebriation overturns the mind and renders it altogether forgetful of itself. But she is not utterly forgetful of herself who still thinks on the raising up of her own body. When this has been obtained, which alone was lacking, what now hinders her from in a manner passing from herself, and going utterly into God, and becoming as entirely unlike herself as it is granted her to be made most like to God? Then, at last, when admitted to that cup of wisdom of which we read : *And my chalice which inebriateth me, how goodly it is* !—what marvel is it if now she is inebriated with the plenty of the house of God, when, no care for what is her own infesting her, she securely drinks that wine unmingled and new with Christ in the kingdom of His Father ?

33. Wisdom makes this threefold banquet, at which the fare is love alone, herself giving food to them that labour, drink to those that rest, inebriation to those that reign. But even as in a bodily banquet food is set forth before drink, for nature requires such order, so too here. First indeed, before death, in mortal flesh we eat the labour of our hands, masticating with labour what is to be swallowed ; but after death, in the spiritual life, we drink, taking with a certain most sweet ease what is received ; at last, when the bodies have been revived in immortal life, we are inebriated, abounding in wondrous plenty. For thus the Bridegroom says in the Canticles : *Eat, O friends, and drink ; yea, be inebriated, O beloved.* Eat before death, drink after death, be inebriated after resurrection. Truly now are they *beloved*, who

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are inebriated with love, and truly inebriated, who deserve to be brought into the wedding-feast of the Lamb, *eating and drinking at his table in his kingdom*, when He now presents to himself a glorious Church, *not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing*. Then surely doth He inebriate His beloved, then doth He *make them drink of the torrent of his pleasure ; for, indeed, in that most fast and most chaste embrace of Bridegroom and bride, the stream of the river maketh the city of God joyful*. This I deem to be nought else than the Son of God, who passing will minister unto them, as He Himself hath promised ; so that thereby *the just may feast and rejoice before God and be delighted with gladness*. Hence that satiety without weariness ; hence that yearning to see, insatiable but without disquietude ; hence that eternal and inexhaustible desire, which knows lack of nought ; hence, in fine, that sober inebriation, filled with truth, not wine, not drenched with juice of grape, but on fire with God. Hence that fourth degree of love is now possessed for ever, when God is loved supremely and alone ; for we now do not even love ourselves save for His sake, so that He is the reward of those that love Him, the eternal reward of those that love eternally.

CHAPTER XII

OF CHARITY FROM THE LETTER WRITTEN TO THE
CARTHUSIANS

34. I MIND me that, a while ago, I wrote a letter to the holy Carthusian brethren, and discoursed in it, among the rest, of these same degrees. But inasmuch as I there said other things, though not unconnected with the subject, concerning charity, I deem it not useless to add some of them to the present work; especially since it is easier for me to transcribe what I have already composed than to compose again anew. That charity, I say, is true and sincere, and manifestly proceeds altogether from a pure heart and a good conscience and a faith unfeigned, by which we love our neighbour's good equally as our own. For he who loves only what is his, or loves it more, is convicted of loving good not chastely, since he loves for his own, not for its sake. And such a one cannot obey the prophet, who says: *Give praise to the Lord, for he is good*. He gives praise indeed, perchance because He is good to him, but not because He is good in Himself. Therefore let him know that rebuke to be directed against him by the same prophet: *He will praise thee when thou shalt do well to him*. There is he who gives praise to the Lord for He is powerful, and there is he who gives praise for He is

good to him, and again he who gives praise simply for He is good. The first is a servant, and fears for himself; the second, a hireling, and desires for himself; the third, a son, and gives to his Father. Therefore both he who fears and he who desires work for themselves. Only the charity which is in the son seeketh not her own. Of that charity I deem it said: *The law of the Lord is unspotted, converting souls*; for it is she alone who can convert the soul from love of self and of the world, and direct her to God. Neither fear nor selfish love converts the soul. They sometimes change aspect or action; affection never. Now and then, indeed, even the servant does the work of God; but, because he does it not spontaneously, he is known to remain still in his hardness. The hireling doth it too; but, because not freely, he is proved to be drawn by his own cupidity. Verily where there is distinction of persons, there is individual possession; and where there is individual possession, there is a corner; and where a corner, there without doubt meanness and rust. Let, then, that very fear by which he is constrained be his law to the servant; to the hireling, his cupidity whereby he too is fettered, since by it he is drawn away and led astray. But neither of these is without spot or can convert souls. Charity converts souls, whom she makes free agents.

35. Again, I call her unspotted in that she is wont to retain for herself nothing of her own. Whoso hath nothing proper to himself, surely all that he hath is God's; but what is God's cannot be unclean.

Therefore the unspotted law of the Lord is charity, which seeks not what is profitable to herself, but what is profitable to many. Now it is called the law of the Lord, either because He Himself lives by it, or because no one possesses it, save by His gift. Nor let it seem absurd that I said that even God lives by law; since I said, by no other law save charity. What in that supreme and blessed Trinity preserves that supreme and ineffable Unity, save charity? It is law, then, and charity the law of the Lord, which in a certain way holds together the Trinity in Unity, and binds it in the bond of peace. Let no one, however, deem that I here take charity as a quality or as some accident (otherwise, which Heaven forbid, I should be saying that there is in God something which is not God), but as that divine substance; which is neither new nor strange, for John says: *God is love*. Charity is then rightly called both God and the gift of God. Therefore charity gives charity, the substantial what is accidental. Where it signifies the giver, it is the name of the substance; where the gift, of the quality. This is the eternal law, that creates and rules the universe. All things, indeed, were made through it in weight and measure and number, and nought is left without law, since the very law of all is not without law, though none other than itself; by which, although it created not itself, it nevertheless is its own rule.

CHAPTER XIII

OF THE LAW OF SELF WILL AND OF CUPIDITY, OF
SERVANTS AND OF HIRELINGS

36. Now the servant and the hireling have a law, not from the Lord, but which they have made for themselves; the one by not loving God, the other by loving something else more. They have, I say, a law, not the Lord's, but their own, though subject to that of the Lord. And, indeed, they could make each one his law to himself; but they could not withdraw it from the unchangeable order of the eternal law. I should say, then, that each one made his own law to himself, when he preferred his own will to the general and eternal law, perversely wishing to imitate his Creator; that, even as He is law to Himself and His own master, so he too might rule himself and make his own will a law to himself. Alas! truly a heavy and unbearable yoke upon all the children of Adam, bending and bowing down our necks, so that *our life hath drawn nigh to hell*. *Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* by which I am so weighed down, and well nigh crushed, that, *unless the Lord had been my helper, my soul had almost dwelt in hell*. Pressed down under this weight, he groaned who said: *Why hast thou set me as a mark against thee, and I am become burdensome to myself?* In saying, *I am become*

CHAPTER XIV

OF THE LAW OF CHARITY OF SONS

37. Thus not even sons are without law, unless perchance some one may hold otherwise because of what is written ; *The law is not made for the just man.* But we must know that the law, promulgated by the spirit of bondage in fear, is one ; that given by the spirit of liberty in sweetness, another. Sons are neither forced to be under the former, nor endure to be without the latter. Wouldst thou hear why the law is not made for the just ? *You have not received,* he says, *the spirit of bondage again in fear.* Wouldst thou hear how, nevertheless, they are not without the law of charity ? *But you have received,* he adds, *the spirit of adoption of sons.* Lastly, hear the just man confessing of himself that he is not under the law, nor yet without law. *I became,* he says, *to them that were under the law, as if I were under the law (whereas myself was not under the law) ; to them that were without the law, as if I were without the law (whereas I was not without the law of God, but was in the law of Christ).* Wherefore it is not fitly said, *the just have not the law, or, the just are without the law ; but, the law is not made for the just ; that is,* not imposed upon them as though unwilling, but for the willing as generously given as sweetly breathed in. Therefore, too, the Lord says beautifully ; *Take*

burdensome to myself, he shows that he was the law to himself, and none other than he had made it to himself. But what, speaking to God, he set down first, *Thou hast set me as a mark against thee,* betokened that he yet had not escaped the law of God. This indeed pertained to the eternal and just law of God, that he who would not be ruled in sweetness by God should be ruled in punishment by himself ; and he who, of himself, cast off the sweet yoke and light burden of charity, should unwillingly endure the unbearable burden of his own will. Thus, in a wondrous and just way, the eternal law both set its fugitive as a mark against itself and kept him subject ; for while he neither escaped the law of justice for his deserts, he did not yet remain with God in His light, in His rest, in His glory ; subject to power, and excluded from felicity. O Lord my God, *why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and why dost thou not take away mine iniquity ?* that, having cast off the heavy load of mine own will, I may breathe under the light burden of charity ; that I may be no more constrained by servile fear, nor enticed by hireling cupidity ; but may be led by Thy spirit, the spirit of liberty, whereby Thy sons are led, and it bear witness with my spirit, that I too am one of the sons, since the same law is mine as is Thine, and, as Thou art, so I too may be in this world. For these who do as the Apostle says : *Owe no man anything, but to love one another ;* assuredly even as God is, so are they too in this world ; they are neither servants nor hirelings, but sons.

up my yoke upon you ; as if He said : I lay it not upon the unwilling, but do you take it up if you will ; otherwise you shall find not rest, but labour, to your souls.

38. Good, therefore, is the law of charity, and sweet ; for it is not only lightly and sweetly borne, but even renders the laws of servants and hirelings bearable and light, which indeed it destroys not, but causes to be fulfilled, as the Lord says : *I am not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil.* It tempers the one, sets order on the other, and lightens both. Never will charity be without fear, but chaste fear ; never without desire, but duly ordered. Charity, therefore, fulfils the law of the servant, when it pours in devotion ; it fulfils that of the hireling, when it sets desire in order. Assuredly devotion mingled with fear does not nullify, but purifies it. Dread of penalty only is taken away, without which it could not be whilst it is servile ; and the fear is chaste and filial, *enduring for ever and ever.* For the text, *perfect charity casteth out fear*, is to be understood of dread of penalty, which (as we said) is never lacking to servile fear, by that kind of speech in which the cause is often put for the effect. Desire is then rightly set in order by the coming of charity, when evil is utterly rejected, better things are preferred to good, and good are not sought save for the sake of the better. And when this shall have been fully attained through the grace of God, the body will be loved, and all the goods of the body, only for the sake of the soul ; the soul for the sake of God ; but God for His own sake.

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CHAPTER XV

OF THE FOUR DEGREES OF LOVE AND THE HAPPY STATE
OF THE HEAVENLY COUNTRY

39. NEVERTHELESS, because we are carnal and born from the concupiscence of the flesh, it must needs be that our desire, or love, begins from the flesh ; and if it is directed by right order, advancing by its several degrees under guidance of grace, it will at last be consummated by spirit : for *that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural ; afterwards that which is spiritual.* And first we must bear the image of the earthly, afterwards the image of the heavenly. First, then, man loves himself for his own sake ; he is flesh forsooth, and can have no taste for aught beyond himself. And when he sees that he cannot subsist of himself, he begins by faith to seek God as necessary to him, and to love Him. Thus he loves God in the second degree, but for his own sake, not for Himself. But when, by occasion of his own necessity, he has begun to worship and approach Him, by meditation, reading, prayer, obedience ; by a certain familiarity of this kind, little by little and gradually, God becomes known and consequently grows sweet ; and thus, having tasted how sweet is the Lord, he passes on to the third degree, so that he

*to have the
means of
sustaining
life*

loves God, not now for his own sake, but for Himself. Assuredly the abiding is long in this degree ; and I know not if the fourth is perfectly attained by any man in this life, so that, that is, a man love himself only for the sake of God. Let those, if any, who have experienced, tell us ; to me, I confess, it seems impossible. But it will be beyond question, when the good and faithful servant is brought into the joy of his Lord, and inebriated with the plenty of the house of God. For, in a certain wondrous fashion oblivious of himself, and as it were utterly abandoning himself, he will wholly pass on into God ; and henceforth, joined to the Lord, will be one spirit with Him. Methinks the prophet meant this, when he said : *I will enter into the powers of the Lord ; O Lord, I will be mindful of thy justice alone.* Assuredly he knew that, when he entered the spiritual powers of the Lord, he would be freed from all the infirmities of the flesh ; so that he would no longer have to take thought for the flesh, but wholly in spirit be mindful of the justice of the Lord alone.

40. Then, certainly, each of the members of Christ will be able to say of himself what Paul said of the Head : *Though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know him so no longer.* No one there will know himself according to the flesh ; for flesh and blood shall not possess the kingdom of God. Not that the substance of the flesh will not be there ; but that every carnal necessity will be absent, and love of flesh to be absorbed in love of spirit, and the weak human affections, which now are, shall be

changed into certain divine affections. Then the net of charity, which now, drawn through this great and spacious sea, ceases not gathering together all kinds of fishes, when brought to shore, casting forth the bad, will retain only the good. Indeed, the net of charity encloses all kinds of fishes within its wide folds in this life ; where, conforming herself to all according to the time, and transferring the adverse and prosperous things of all into herself, and making them in some sort her own, she is wont not only to *rejoice with them that do rejoice*, but also to *weep with them that weep*. But when it shall have come to shore, casting forth as bad fishes all that it bore with grief, it will retain only those things which can please and give delight. Shall then, for instance, Paul be weak with the weak, or burn for those who are offended, where offences and weakness shall be far away ? Or shall he mourn for those that repent not, where it is certain that none will either sin or do penance ? Far be it from us to think that he will bewail or weep even for those who are assigned to the everlasting fire with the devil and his angels, in that city which *the streams of the river make glad*, whose gates *the Lord loveth more than all the tabernacles of Jacob* ; for manifestly in the tabernacles, although there is sometimes joy for victory, there is still labour in combat, and often struggle for life ; but in that native land assuredly no adversity or sorrow will enter, even as it is sung thereof : *The dwelling in thee is as it were of all rejoicing* ; and again : *Everlasting joy shall be with them.* Then how shall mercy be remembered,

where the justice of God alone shall come to mind ?
Assuredly, where there shall now be no place for
misery or time for mercy, there can be no feeling of
compassion.

THE END OF THE BOOK OF THE LOVE
OF GOD

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