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The Great Conversation
How Should We Live?
Volume II: Disorder & Renewal

TGC II: Disorder & Renewal

Over five hundred years ago, Renaissance humanists construed history as having descended from an ancient, “classical,” age into the “Middle Ages”: the medieval being in-between an ancient and a dawning, somehow definitive, “modern” (up-to-date) age. The Great Conversation this semester engages medieval texts, asking “How should we live?” in dialogue with poets, thinkers, and mystics who took up the civilizational conversation of the ancients after the collapse of the Western Roman Empire.

Rather than dismissing the Middle Ages as backwards or glorifying them out of nostalgia, we will approach these texts openly and honestly. The goal is to *think* with people who both prolonged and modified the Greco-Roman heritage reaching back to Mesopotamia, setting the conditions for the modern world.

The most fundamental modification stems from the three monotheistic religions rooted in the ancient Near East: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The mythologies and philosophies of the classical world had to contend with the universal claims made by these faiths. Islam and Christianity in particular, as missionary religions, drew on the dynamism of a growing global sensibility, an ecumenic consciousness, instigated by the empires that paraded across the Near East and the Mediterranean. This contest for the “ecumene” (from the word used by Greek geographers to denote the known world) settled down into an equilibrium between Rome and Iranian empires until late antiquity, when Islam erupted out of the deserts and oases of Arabia to smash Persia and humble the Byzantines (as we call the Eastern Roman Empire after the fall of the West). Its cavalry, along with its unitarian and iconoclastic faith (which appealed doctrinally to some Christians, while others—such as Monophysites—were disaffected from Byzantium due to orthodox persecution of their beliefs), won it an empire extending from Spain through North Africa and the Near East to Central Asia and northwest India. Islamic civilization proved essential in the preservation and transmission of the texts of the Greek classical tradition.

Initially, the caliphate that ruled over the House of Islam united in itself religious and political authority—an even more total union of “church” and state than Byzantine caesaropapism, in which the emperor predominated over the Patriarch of Constantinople. In Western Europe, there would be a different disposition of forces: the Pope, the Catholic bishop of Rome, would represent an international

power distinct from that of the Germanic kingdoms that took the place of the Western Roman Empire.

Conflict over the imperial policies of the Greek East (including iconoclasm) and Byzantium's inability to defend Italy against the Lombards, induced the papacy to look north and west away from the

Mediterranean towards those Germanic kingdoms, and papal coronation of Charlemagne as emperor in 800 set a new dynamism in motion. Charlemagne conquered and united territory that would become the nations of France and Germany. He wanted to create cultural uniformity and was particularly interested in ecclesiastical reform. In what has come to be called the Carolingian Renaissance, he encouraged widespread education in the liberal arts (above all, to improve the quality of the clergy), sought to preserve the integrity of

Latin (even as it was evolving into the Romance languages), commissioned philological work to produce corrected texts of the Bible, the Fathers, etc. Great effort was expended by monks in manuscript production, without which the great riches of classical Latin literature would have been lost to us. That said, pagan classics were not to be enjoyed in themselves, but only as instruments of further Christianization.

Overriding Saint Augustine's dismissal of every worldly kingdom's claim to being the City of God, the Carolingian Empire understood itself as a new Israel, unleashing an explosive identity-politics of spiritual-temporal power (transcendent and intimate): Christendom. This was the typically medieval solution to the immemorial question of how to order common life and action. The demand for infinite moral progress (the call to holiness) inserted the utopian ideal of the New Jerusalem into the substance of history. The ancient balance between city and empire (and then church), as played out in

Christendom, would be recalibrated in the sovereignty of the nation-state, modernity's answer to the theological-political problem posed by the Roman Catholic Church.

The popes attempted to maintain the integrity of spiritual authority (divine power vested in certain publicly acknowledged individuals by office or ascetic charisma) against secular political usurpation, but would also, in turn, attempt to compromise the integrity of temporal civil authority and general human access to the divine. At least the bipolar oscillations preserved the possibility of a liberty that can only live where no authority is total. Resonant in Israelite prophecy, Greek and early Roman detestation of monarchy, so essential to their sense of liberty, had already passed away under the camouflaged military dictatorship of the Roman Empire. The ancient ideal of liberty would only find widespread life with modern republicanism. Charlemagne's grandsons ended up dividing the empire into three kingdoms in 843 (the Treaty of Verdun), resulting in a feudal fragmentation of power especially in the French territories, which surrendered many peasants into the tyranny of local *grands*. As population recovered during the High Middle Ages, and cities rose again, it was still the case that politics (understood as popular deliberation about the common good) was preempted by royal, aristocratic, and clerical elites. The civilizational promise of liberty was still a promissory note. But Christianity, following upon Judaism and alongside philosophy, reminds the individual person (even the lowliest) that he or she is the object of God's direct concern: a dream of liberty under God. At the same time, the ecumenic consciousness of the Christianized Greco-Roman world spurs onwards towards a solidarity without limit: a dream of universal communion and social justice.

The cultural salience of Roman Catholicism meant that theology mattered, and that meant ideas mattered—even if the dogmatist was always tempted to punish different ways of thinking and, indeed, to stop thinking. But if theology mattered, then philosophy had to continue to matter, and Western Europe has always been a hotbed of ideas and ideologies. Good, bad, ambiguous: these thoughts have the set the world on fire many times over.

It is this contest and cross-fertilization of ideas into which The Great Conversation enters.

Contents

<i>Beowulf</i>	1
<i>The Rule of St. Benedict</i>	49
al-Ghazālī, <i>Deliverance from Error</i>	81
Peter Abelard, <i>Dialogue Between a Philosopher, a Jew, and a Christian</i>	119
Moses Maimonides, <i>The Guide of the Perplexed</i>	155
Guillaume de Lorris/Jean de Meun, <i>The Romance of the Rose</i>	185
St. Thomas Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologiae</i>	225
Dante Alighieri, <i>Divine Comedy</i>	269

Catherine of Siena, <i>The Dialogue</i>	325
Geoffrey Chaucer, <i>The Canterbury Tales</i>	359
Christine de Pizan, <i>The Book of the City of Ladies</i>	407
Niccolò Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i>	441

Beowulf

Beowulf is a heroic-elegiac poem written in Old English, probably composed not long after the Christianization of Anglo-Saxon Britain, a process completed by the end of the seventh century. The de-Romanization of Britain happened sooner than in the rest of Western Europe (explaining why English is not a Romance language): in the years leading up to the sack of Rome by the Visigoths in 410, the legions were withdrawn from Britain, which eventually was overrun by the Anglo-Saxons. (According to legend, King Arthur led the Romano-British resistance to that invasion around 500.) These invasions caused a reversion to Germanic polytheism in the east of Britain. Pope Gregory the Great placed a monk, Augustine of Canterbury, at the head of a Benedictine mission to convert the Anglo-Saxons, and he arrived in 597. This work was later aided by the Hiberno-Scottish mission (“Celtic Christianity”), which would also establish monasteries in Frankish lands on the continent. As literacy disappeared with Christianity, so it returned with Christianity.

J. R. R. Tolkien theorizes that it is within a few decades of the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons that *Beowulf* was composed, given the vitality of the poem’s pagan elements. This poem would then provide a window into the process of Christian inculturation into Germanic warrior society and the Northern Heroic Age. *Beowulf* appears to be set in sixth-century Scandinavia, a world of Norse paganism, combining legend and history. Beowulf’s Geats would have been found in Sweden, and he sails to aid Hrothgar, the king of the Danes. The poem may have been composed in Suffolk, England, whose ruling family at the time may have descended from the Geats and whose Scandinavian links are on display at Sutton Hoo.

Like Homer's epics, *Beowulf* emerges from a bardic tradition of oral poetry. Before Christianization, Anglo-Saxon culture was illiterate—but already skillfully poetic. The poetic structure does not depend on a repeating rhythmic pattern. Rather, the verse line is composed of two phrases (half-lines), usually with differing rhythms, typically with two primary stresses each, linked by alliteration on stressed syllables. Old English poetry has a wonderful compression, force, and strangeness (epitomized in its figurative or riddling compounds called kennings), and *Beowulf* touches our most inexpressible sentiments: our sense of tragedy and comedy escaping any final rationalization. Tolkien speaks to the poem's beautiful balance of two seemingly incompatible worldviews: "The monsters had been the foes of the gods, the captains of men, and within Time the monsters would win. In the heroic siege and last defeat, men and gods alike had been imagined in the same host. Now the heroic figures, the men of old, [heroes under heaven], remained and still fought on until defeat. For the monsters do not depart, whether the gods go or come. A Christian was (and is), still like his forefathers, a mortal hemmed in a hostile world."

So. The Spear-Danes in days gone by
and the kings who ruled them had courage and greatness.
We have heard of those princes' heroic campaigns.

There was Shield Sheafson, scourge of many tribes,
a wrecker of mead-benches, rampaging among foes.
This terror of the hall-troops had come far.
A foundling to start with, he would flourish later on
as his powers waxed and his worth was proved.
In the end each clan on the outlying coasts
beyond the whale-road had to yield to him
and begin to pay tribute. That was one good king.

Afterwards a boy-child was born to Shield,
a cub in the yard, a comfort sent
by God to that nation. He knew what they had tholed,
the long times and troubles they'd come through
without a leader; so the Lord of Life,
the glorious Almighty, made this man renowned.
Shield had fathered a famous son:
Beow's name was known through the north.
And a young prince must be prudent like that,
giving freely while his father lives
so that afterwards in age when fighting starts
steadfast companions will stand by him
and hold the line. Behaviour that's admired
is the path to power among people every where.

Shield was still thriving when his time came
and he crossed over into the Lord's keeping.
His warrior band did what he bade them
when he laid down the law among the Danes:
they shouldered him out to the sea's flood,
the chief they revered who had long ruled them.
A ring-whorled prow rode in the harbour,
ice-clad, outbound, a craft for a prince.
They stretched their beloved lord in his boat,
laid out by the mast, amidships,
the great ring-giver. Far-fetched treasures
were piled upon him, and precious gear.
I never heard before of a ship so well furbished
with battle tackle, bladed weapons
and coats of mail. The massed treasure
was loaded on top of him: it would travel far
on out into the ocean's sway.

They decked his body no less bountifully
with offerings than those first ones did
who cast him away when he was a child
and launched him alone out over the waves.
And they set a gold standard up
high above his head and let him drift
to wind and tide, bewailing him
and mourning their loss. No man can tell,
no wise man in hall or weathered veteran
knows for certain who salvaged that load.

Then it fell to Beow to keep the forts.
He was well regarded and ruled the Danes
for a long time after his father took leave
of his life on earth. And then his heir,
the great Halfdane, held sway
for as long as he lived, their elder and warlord.
He was four times a father, this fighter prince:
one by one they entered the world,
Heorogar, Hrothgar, the good Halga
and a daughter, I have heard, who was Onela's queen,
a balm in bed to the battle-scarred Swede.

The fortunes of war favoured Hrothgar.
Friends and kinsmen flocked to his ranks,
young followers, a force that grew
to be a mighty army. So his mind turned
to hall-building: he handed down orders
for men to work on a great mead-hall
meant to be a wonder of the world forever;
it would be his throne-room and there he would dispense
his God-given goods to young and old-
but not the common land or people's lives.
Far and wide through the world, I have heard,
orders for work to adorn that wallstead
were sent to many peoples. And soon it stood there,
finished and ready, in full view,
the hall of halls. Heorot was the name
he had settled on it, whose utterance was law.
Nor did he renege, but doled out rings
and torques at the table. The hall towered,
its gables wide and high and awaiting
a barbarous burning. That doom abided,
but in time it would come: the killer instinct

unleashed among in-laws, the blood-lust rampant.

Then a powerful demon, a prowler through the dark,
nursed a hard grievance. It harrowed him
to hear the din of the loud banquet
every day in the hall, the harp being struck
and the clear song of a skilled poet
telling with mastery of man's beginnings,
how the Almighty had made the earth
a gleaming plain girdled with waters;
in His splendour He set the sun and the moon
to be earth's lamplight, lanterns for men,
and filled the broad lap of the world
with branches and leaves; and quickened life
in every other thing that moved.

So times were pleasant for the people there
until finally one, a fiend out of hell,
began to work his evil in the world.
Grendel was the name of this grim demon haunting the marches, ma-
rauding round the heath
and the desolate fens; he had dwelt for a time
in misery among the banished monsters,
Cain's clan, whom the Creator had outlawed
and condemned as outcasts. For the killing of Abel the Eternal Lord
had exacted a price:
Cain got no good from committing that murder because the Almighty
made him anathema
and out of the curse of his exile there sprang
ogres and elves and evil phantoms
and the giants too who strove with God
time and again until He gave them their reward.

So, after nightfall, Grendel set out
for the lofty house, to see how the Ring-Danes
were settling into it after their drink,
and there he came upon them, a company of the best
asleep from their feasting, insensible to pain
and human sorrow. Suddenly then
the God-cursed brute was creating havoc:
greedy and grim, he grabbed thirty men
from their resting places and rushed to his lair,
flushed up and inflamed from the raid,
blundering back with the butchered corpses.

Then as dawn brightened and the day broke
Grendel's powers of destruction were plain:
their wassail was over, they wept to heaven
and mourned under morning. Their mighty prince,
the storied leader, sat stricken and helpless,
humiliated by the loss of his guard,
bewildered and stunned, staring aghast
at the demon's trail, in deep distress.
He was numb with grief, but got no respite
for one night later merciless Grendel
struck again with more gruesome murders.
Malignant by nature, he never showed remorse.
It was easy then to meet with a man
shifting himself to a safer distance
to bed in the bothies, for who could be blind
to the evidence of his eyes, the obviousness
of that hall-watcher's hate? Whoever escaped
kept a weather-eye open and moved away.

So Grendel ruled in defiance of right,
one against all, until the greatest house
in the world stood empty, a deserted wallstead.
For twelve winters, seasons of woe,
the lord of the Shieldings suffered under
his load of sorrow; and so, before long,
the news was known over the whole world.
Sad lays were sung about the beset king,
the vicious raids and ravages of Grendel,
his long and unrelenting feud,
nothing but war; how he would never
parley or make peace with any Dane
nor stop his death-dealing nor pay the death-price.
No counsellor could ever expect
fair reparation from those rabid hands.
All were endangered; young and old
were hunted down by that dark death-shadow
who lurked and swooped in the long nights
on the misty moors; nobody knows
where these reavers from hell roam on their errands.

So Grendel waged his lonely war,
inflicting constant cruelties on the people,
atrocious hurt. He took over Heorot,
haunted the glittering hall after dark,

but the throne itself, the treasure-seat,
he was kept from approaching; he was the Lord's outcast.

These were hard times, heart-breaking
for the prince of the Shieldings; powerful counsellors,
the highest in the land, would lend advice,
plotting how best the bold defenders
might resist and beat off sudden attacks.
Sometimes at pagan shrines they vowed
offerings to idols, swore oaths
that the killer of souls might come to their aid
and save the people. That was their way,
their heathenish hope; deep in their hearts
they remembered hell. The Almighty Judge
of good deeds and bad, the Lord God,
Head of the Heavens and High King of the World,
was unknown to them. Oh, cursed is he
who in time of trouble has to thrust his soul
in the fire's embrace, forfeiting help;
he has nowhere to turn. But blessed is he
who after death can approach the Lord
and find friendship in the Father's embrace.

So that troubled time continued, woe
that never stopped, steady affliction
for Halfdane's son, too hard an ordeal.
There was panic after dark, people endured
raids in the night, riven by the terror.

When he heard about Grendel, Hygelac's thane
was on home ground, over in Geatland.
There was no one else like him alive.
In his day, he was the mightiest man on earth,
high-born and powerful. He ordered a boat
that would ply the waves. He announced his plan:
to sail the swan's road and search out that king,
the famous prince who needed defenders.
Nobody tried to keep him from going,
no elder denied him, dear as he was to them.
Instead, they inspected omens and spurred
his ambition to go, whilst he moved about
like the leader he was, enlisting men,
the best he could find; with fourteen others
the warrior boarded the boat as captain,
a canny pilot along coast and currents.

Time went by, the boat was on water,
in close under the cliffs.
Men climbed eagerly up the gangplank,
sand churned in surf, warriors loaded
a cargo of weapons, shining war-gear
in the vessel's hold, then heaved out,
away with a will in their wood-wreathed ship.
Over the waves, with the wind behind her
and foam at her neck, she flew like a bird
until her curved prow had covered the distance
and on the following day, at the due hour,
those seafarers sighted land,
sunlit cliffs, sheer crags
and looming headlands, the landfall they sought.
It was the end of their voyage and the Geats vaulted
over the side, out on to the sand,
and moored their ship. There was a clash of mail
and a thresh of gear. They thanked God
for that easy crossing on a calm sea.

It was a paved track, a path that kept them
in marching order. Their mail-shirts glistened,
hard and hand-linked; the high-gloss iron
of their armour rang. So they duly arrived
in their grim war-graith and gear at the hall,
and, weary from the sea, stacked wide shields
of the toughest hardwood against the wall,
then collapsed on the benches; battle-dress
and weapons clashed. They collected their spears
in a seafarer's stook, a stand of grayish
tapering ash. And the troops themselves
were as good as their weapons.

Then a proud warrior
questioned the men concerning their origins:
"Where do you come from, carrying these
decorated shields and shirts of mail,
these cheek-hinged helmets and javelins?
I am Hrothgar's herald and officer.
I have never seen so impressive or large
an assembly of strangers. Stoutness of heart,
bravery not banishment, must have brought you to Hrothgar."

The man whose name was known for courage,
the Geat leader, resolute in his helmet,

answered in return: “We are retainers
from Hygelac’s band. Beowulf is my name.
If your lord and master, the most renowned
Son of Halfdane, will hear me out
and graciously allow me to greet him in person,
I am ready and willing to report my errand.”

Wulfgar replied, a Wendel chief
renowned as a warrior, well known for his wisdom
and the temper of his mind: “I will take this message,
in accordance with your wish, to our noble king,
our dear lord, friend of the Danes,
the giver of rings. I will go and ask him
about your coming here, then hurry back
with whatever reply it pleases him to give.”

With that he turned to where Hrothgar sat,
an old man among retainers;
the valiant follower stood four-square
in front of his king: he knew the courtesies.
Wulfgar addressed his dear lord:
“People from Geatland have put ashore.
They have sailed far over the wide sea.
They call the chief in charge of their band
by the name of Beowulf. They beg, my lord,
an audience with you, exchange of words
and formal greeting. Most gracious Hrothgar,
do not refuse them, but grant them a reply.
From their arms and appointment, they appear well-born
and worthy of respect, especially the one
who has led them this far: he is formidable indeed.”

Hrothgar, protector of Shieldings, replied:
“I used to know him when I was a young boy.
His father before him was called Ecgtheow.
Hrethel the Greath gave Ecgtheow
his daughter in marriage. This man is their son,
here to follow up an old friendship.
A crew of seamen who sailed for me once
with a gift-cargo across to Geatland
returned with marvelous tales about him:
athane, they declared, with the strength of thirty
in the grip of each hand. Now Holy God
has, in His Goodness, guided him here
to the West-Danes, to defend us from Grendel.

This is my hope; and for his heroism
I will recompense him with a rich treasure.
Go immediately, bid him and the Geats
he has is attendance to assemble and enter.
Say, moreover, when you speak to them,
that they are welcome in Denmark.”

At the door of the hall,
Wulfgar duly delivered the message:
“My lord, the conquering king of the Danes,
bids me announce that he knows your ancestry;
also that he welcomes you here to Heorot
and salutes your arrival from across the sea.
You are free now to move forward
to meet Hrothgar, in helmets and armor,
but shields must stay here and spears be stacked
until the outcome of the audience is clear.”

The hero arose, surrounded closely
by his powerful thanes. A party remained
under orders to keep watch on the arms;
the rest proceeded, lead by their prince
under Heorot’s roof. And standing on the hearth
in webbed links that the smith had woven,
the fine-forged mesh of his gleaming mail shirt,
resolute in his helmet, Beowulf spoke:
“Greetings to Hrothgar. I am Hygelac’s kinsman,
one of his hall-troop. When I was younger,
I had great triumphs. Then news of Grendel,
hard to ignore, reached me at home:
sailors brought stories of the plight you suffer
in this legendary hall, how it lies deserted,
empty and useless once the evening light
hides itself under Heaven’s dome.
So every elder and experience councilman
among my people supported my resolve
to come here to you, King Hrothgar,
because all knew of my awesome strength.
They had seen me boltered in the blood of enemies
when I battled and bound five beasts,
raided a troll-nest and in the night-sea
slaughtered sea-brutes. I have suffered extremes
and avenged the Geats (their enemies brought it
upon themselves, I devastated them).

Now I mean to be a match for Grendel,
settle the outcome in a single combat.

And so, my request, O king of Bright-Danes,
dear prince of the Shieldings, friend of the people
and their ring of defense, my one request
is that you won't refuse me, who have come this far,
the privilege of purifying Heorot,
with my own men to help me, and nobody else.
I have heard moreover that the monster scorns
in his reckless way to use weapons;
therefore, to heighten Hygelac's fame
and gladden his heart, I hereby renounce
sword and the shelter of the broad shield,
the heavy war-board: hand-to-hand
is how it will be, a life-and-death
fight with the fiend. Whichever one death falls
must deem it a just judgment by God.
If Grendel wins, it will be a gruesome day;
he will glut himself on the Geats in the war-hall,
swoop without fear on that flower of manhood
as on others before. Then my face won't be there
to be covered in death; he will carry me away
as he goes to ground, gorged and bloodied;
he will run gloating with my raw corpse
and feed on it alone, in a cruel frenzy,
fouling his moor-nest. No need then
to lament for long or lay out my body:
if the battle takes me, send back
this breast-webbing that Weland fashioned
and Hrethel gave me, to Hygelac.
Fate goes ever as fate must."

Hrothgar, the helmet of the Shieldings, spoke:
"Beowulf, my friend, you have traveled here
to favour us with help and fight for us.
there was a feud one time, begun by your father.
With his own hands he had killed Heatholaf,
who was a Wulfing; so war was looming
and his people, in fear of it, forced him to leave.
He came away then over rolling waves
to the South Danes here, the sons of honor.
I was then in the full flush of kingship,
establishing my sway over all the rich strongholds

of this heroic land. Heorogar,
my older brother and the better man,
also a son of Halfdane's, had died.
Finally I healed the feud by paying:
I shipped a treasure-trove to the Wulfings
and Ecgtheow acknowledged me with oaths of allegiance.

"It bothers me to have to burden anyone
with all the grief Grendel has caused
and the havoc he has wreaked upon us in Heorot,
our humiliations. My household-guard
are on the wane, fate sweeps them away
into Grendel's clutches — but God can easily
halt these raids and harrowing attacks!

"Time and again, when the goblets passed
and seasoned fighters got flushed with beer
they would pledge themselves to protect Heorot
and wait for Grendel with whetted swords.
But when dawn broke and day crept in
over each empty, blood-spattered bench,
the floor of the mead-hall where they had feasted
would be slick with slaughter. And so they died,
faithful retainers, and my following dwindled.

"Now take your place at the table, relish
the triumph of heroes to your heart's content."

Then a bench was cleared in that banquet hall
so the Geats could have room to be together
and the party sat, proud in their bearing,
strong and stalwart. An attendant stood by
with a decorated pitcher, pouring bright
helpings of mead. And the minstrel sang,
filling Heorot with his head-clearing voice,
gladdening that great rally of Danes and Geats.

Wealhtheow came in,
hrothgar's queen, observing the courtesies.
Adorned in her gold, she graciously saluted
the men in the hall, then handed the cup
first to Hrothgar, their homeland's guardian,
urging him to drink deep and enjoy it,
because he was dear to them. And he drank it down
like the warlord he was, with festive cheer.
So the Helming woman went on her rounds,

queenly and dignified, decked out in rings,
offering the goblet to all ranks,
recreating the household and the assembled troop
until it was Beowulf's turn to take it from her hand.
With measured words she welcomed the Geat
and thanked God for granting her wish
that a deliverer she could believe in would arrive
to ease their afflictions. He accepted the cup,
a daunting man, dangerous in action
and eager for it always. He addressed Wealhtheow;
Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, said:

“I had a fixed purpose when I put out to sea.
As I sat in the boat with my band of men,
I meant to perform to the uttermost
what your people wanted or perish in the attempt,
in the fiend's clutches. And I shall fulfill that purpose,
prove myself with a proud deed
or meet my death here in the mead-hall.”

This formal boast by Beowulf the Geat
pleased the lady well and she went to sit
by Hrothgar, regal and arrayed with gold.

Then it was like old times in the echoing hall,
proud talk and the people happy,
loud and excited; until soon enough
Halfdane's heir had to be away
to his night's rest. He realized
that the demon was going to descend on the hall,
that he had plotted all day, from dawn-light
until darkness gathered again over the world
and stealthy night-shapes came stealing forth
under the cloud-murk. The company stood
as the two leaders took leave of each other:
Hrothgar wished Beowulf health and good luck,
named him hall-warden and announced as follows:
“Never, since my hand could hold a shield
have I entrusted or given control
of the Danes' hall to anyone but you.
Ward and guard it, for it is the greatest of houses.
Be on your mettle now, keep in mind your fame,
beware of the enemy. There's nothing you wish for
that won't be yours if you win through alive.”

Hrothgar departed then with his house-guard.
The lord of the Shieldings, their shelter in war,
left the mead-hall to lie with Wealhtheow,
his queen and bedmate. The King of Glory
(as people learned) had posted a lookout
who was a match for Grendel, a guard against monsters,
special protection to the Danish prince.
And the Geat placed complete trust
in his strength of limb and the Lord's favour.
He began to remove his iron breast-mail,
took off the helmet and handed his attendant
the patterned sword, a smith's masterpiece,
ordering him to keep the equipment guarded.
And before he bedded down, Beowulf,
that prince of goodness, proudly asserted:

“When it comes to fighting, I count myself
as dangerous any day as Grendel.
So it won't be a cutting edge I'll wield
to mow him down, easily as I might.
He has no idea of the arts of war,
of shield or sword-play, although he does possess
a wild strength. No weapons, therefore,
for either this night: unarmed he shall face me
if face me he dares. And may the Divine Lord
in His wisdom grant the glory of victory
to whichever side He sees fit.”

Then down the brave man lay with his bolster
under his head and his whole company
of sea-rovers at rest beside him.
None of them expected he would ever see
his homeland again or get back
to his native place and the people who reared him.
They knew too well the way it was before,
how often the Danes had fallen prey
to death in the mead-hall. But the Lord was weaving
a victory on His war-loom for the Weather-Geats.
Through the strength of one they all prevailed;
they would crush their enemy and come through
in triumph and gladness. The truth is clear:
Almighty God rules over mankind
and always has.

Then out of the night
came the shadow-stalker, stealthy and swift;
the hall-guards were slack, asleep at their posts,
all except one; it was widely understood
that as long as God disallowed it,
the fiend could not bear them to his shadow-bourne.
One man, however, was in fighting mood,
awake and on edge, spoiling for action.

In off the moors, down through the mist bands
God-cursed Grendel came greedily loping.
The bane of the race of men roamed forth,
hunting for a prey in the high hall.
Under the cloud-murk he moved towards it
until it shone above him, a sheer keep
of fortified gold. Nor was that the first time
he had scouted the grounds of Hrothgar's dwelling —
although never in his life, before or since,
did he find harder fortune or hall-defenders.
Spurned and joyless, he journeyed on ahead
and arrived at the bawn. The iron-braced door
turned on its hinge when his hands touched it.
Then his rage boiled over, he ripped open
the mouth of the building, maddening for blood,
pacing the length of the patterned floor
with his loathsome tread, while a baleful light,
flame more than light, flared from his eyes.
He saw many men in the mansion, sleeping,
a ranked company of kinsmen and warriors
quartered together. And his glee was demonic,
picturing the mayhem: before morning
he would rip life from limb and devour them,
feed on their flesh; but his fate that night
was due to change, his days of ravening
had come to an end.

Mighty and canny,
Hygelac's kinsman was keenly watching
for the first move the monster would make.
Nor did the creature keep him waiting
but struck suddenly and started in;
he grabbed and mauled a man on his bench,
bit into his bone-lappings, bolted down his blood
and gorged on him in lumps, leaving the body

utterly lifeless, eaten up
hand and foot. Venturing closer,
his talon was raised to attack Beowulf
where he lay on the bed; he was bearing in
with open claw when the alert hero's
comeback and armlock forestalled him utterly.
The captain of evil discovered himself
in a handgrip harder than anything
he had ever encountered in any man
on the face of the earth. Every bone in his body
quailed and recoiled, but he could not escape.
He was desperate to flee to his den and hide
with the devil's litter, for in all his days
he had never been clamped or cornered like this.
Then Hygelac's trusty retainer recalled
his bedtime speech, sprang to his feet
and got a firm hold. Fingers were bursting,
the monster back-tracking, the man overpowering.
The dread of the land was desperate to escape,
to take a roundabout road and flee
to his lair in the fens. The latching power
in his fingers weakened; it was the worst trip
the terror-monger had taken to Heorot.
And now the timbers trembled and sang,
a hall-session that harrowed every Dane
inside the stockade: stumbling in fury,
the two contenders crashed through the building.
The hall clattered and hammered, but
somehow survived the onslaught and kept standing:
it was handsomely structured, a sturdy frame
braced with the best of blacksmith's work
inside and out. The story goes
that as the pair struggled, mead-benches were smashed
and sprung off the floor, gold fittings and all.
Before then, no Shielding elder would believe
there was any power or person upon earth
capable of wrecking their horn-rigged hall
unless the burning embrace of a fire
engulf it in flame. Then an extraordinary
wail arose, and bewildering fear
came over the Danes. Everyone felt it
who heard that cry as it echoed off the wall,
a God-cursed scream and strain of catastrophe,

the howl of the loser, the lament of the hell-serf
keening his wound. He was overwhelmed,
manacled tight by the man who of all men
was foremost and strongest in the days of this life.

But the earl-troop's leader was not inclined
to allow his caller to depart alive:
he did not consider that life of much account
to anyone anywhere. Time and again,
Beowulf's warriors worked to defend
their lord's life, laying about them
as best they could with their ancestral blades.
Stalwart in action, they kept striking out
on every side, seeking to cut
straight to the soul. When they joined the struggle
there was something they could not have known at the time,
that no blade on earth, no blacksmith's art
Could ever damage their demon opponent.
He had conjured the harm from the cutting edge
of every weapon. But his going away
out of this world and the days of his life
would be agony to him, and his alien spirit
would travel far into fiends' keeping.

Then he who had harrowed the hearts of men
with pain and affliction in former times
and had given offence also to God
found that his bodily powers failed him.
Hygelac's kinsman kept him helplessly
locked in a handgrip. As long as either lived,
he was hateful to the other. The monster's whole
body was in pain, a tremendous wound
appeared on his shoulder. Sinews split
and the bone-lappings burst. Beowulf was granted
the glory of winning; Grendel was driven
under the fen-banks, fatally hurt,
to his desolate lair. His days were numbered,
the end of his life was coming over him,
he knew it for certain; and one bloody clash
had fulfilled the dearest wishes of the Danes.
The man who had lately landed among them,
proud and sure, had purged the hall,
kept it from harm; he was happy with his nightwork
and the courage he had shown. The Geat captain

had boldly fulfilled his boast to the Danes:
he had healed and relieved a huge distress,
unremitting humiliations,
the hard fate they'd been forced to undergo,
no small affliction. Clear proof of this
could be seen in the hand the hero displayed
high up near the roof: the whole of Grendel's
shoulder and arm, his awesome grasp.

Then morning came and many a warrior
gathered, as I've heard, around the gift-hall,
clan-chiefs flocking from far and near
down wide-ranging roads, wondering greatly
at the monster's footprints. His fatal departure
was regretted by no-one who witnessed his trail,
the ignominious marks of his flight
where he'd skulked away, exhausted in spirit
and beaten in battle, bloodying the path,
hauling his doom to the demons' mere.
The bloodshot water wallowed and surged,
there were loathsome upthrows and overturnings
of waves and gore and wound-slurry.
With his death upon him, he had dived deep
into his marsh-den, drowned out his life
and his heathen soul: hell claimed him there.

Then away they rode, the old retainers
with many a young man following after,
a troop on horseback, in high spirits
on their bay steeds. Beowulf's doings
were praised over and over again.
Nowhere, they said, north or south
between the two seas or under the tall sky
on the broad earth was there anyone better
to raise a shield or to rule a kingdom.
Yet there was no laying of blame on their lord,
the noble Hrothgar; he was a good king.

The queen spoke:
"Enjoy this drink, my most generous lord;
raise up your goblet, entertain the Geats
duly and gently, discourse with them,
be open-handed, happy and fond.
Relish their company, but recollect as well
all of the boons that have been bestowed on you.

The bright court of Heorot has been cleansed
and now the word is that you want to adopt
this warrior as a son. So, while you may,
bask in your fortune, and then bequeath
kingdom and nation to your kith and kin,
before your decease. I am certain of Hrothulf.
He is noble and will use the young ones well.
He will not let you down. Should you die before him,
he will treat our children truly and fairly.
He will honour, I am sure, our two sons,
repay them in kind when he recollects
all the good things we gave him once,
the favour and respect he found in his childhood.”

She turned then to the bench where her boys sat,
Hrethric and Hrothmund, with other nobles’ sons,
all the youth together; and that good man,
Beowulf the Geat, sat between the brothers.

The cup was carried to him, kind words
spoken in welcome and a wealth of wrought gold
graciously bestowed: two arm bangles,
a mail-shirt and rings, and the most resplendent
torque of gold I ever heard tell of
anywhere on earth or under heaven.
There was no hoard like it since Hama snatched
the Brosings’ neck-chain and bore it away
with its gems and settings to his shining fort, away
from Eormenric’s wiles and hatred,
and thereby ensured his eternal reward.
Hygelac the Geat, grandson of Swerting,
wore this neck-ring on his last raid;
at bay under his banner, he defended the booty,
treasure he had won. Fate swept him away
because of his proud need to provoke
a feud with the Frisians. He fell beneath his shield,
in the same gem-crustad, kingly gear
he had worn when he crossed the frothing wave-vat.
So the dead king fell into Frankish hands.
They took his breast-mail; also his
neck-torque, and punier warriors plundered the slain
when the carnage ended; Geat corpses
covered the field.

Applause filled the hall.

Then Wealhtheow pronounced in the presence of the company:

“Take delight in this torque, dear Beowulf,
wear it for luck and wear also this mail
from our people’s armoury: may you prosper in them!
Be acclaimed for strength, for kindly guidance
to these two boys, and your bounty will be sure.
You have won renown: you are known to all men
far and near, now and forever.
Your sway is wide as the wind’s home,
as the sea around cliffs. And so, my prince,
I wish you a lifetime’s luck and blessings
to enjoy this treasure. Treat my sons
with tender care, be strong and kind.
Here each comrade is true to the other,
loyal to lord, loving in spirit.
The thanes have one purpose, the people are ready:
having drunk and pledged, the ranks do as I bid.”

She moved then to her place. Men were drinking wine
at that rare feast; how could they know fate,
the grim shape of things to come,
the threat looming over many thanes
as night approached and King Hrothgar prepared
to retire to his quarters? Retainers in great numbers
were posted on guard as so often in the past.
Benches were pushed back, bedding gear and bolsters
spread across the floor, and one man
lay down to his rest, already marked for death.
At their heads they placed their polished timber
battle-shields; and on the bench above them,
each man’s kit was kept to hand:
a towering war-helmet, webbed mail-shirt
and great-shafted spear. It was their habit
always and everywhere to be ready for action,
at home or in the camp, in whatever case
and at whatever time the need arose
to rally round their lord. They were a right people.

They went to sleep. And one paid dearly
for his night’s ease, as had happened to them often,
ever since Grendel occupied the gold-hall,
committing evil until the end came,

death after his crimes. Then it became clear,
obvious to everyone once the fight was over,
that an avenger lurked and was still alive,
grimly biding time. Grendel's mother,
monstrous hell-bride, brooded on her wrongs.
She had been forced down into fearful waters,
the cold depths, after Cain had killed
his father's son, felled his own
brother with a sword. Branded an outlaw,
marked by having murdered, he moved into the wilds,
shunned company and joy. And from Cain there sprang
misbegotten spirits, among them Grendel,
the banished and accursed, due to come to grips
with that watcher in Heorot waiting to do battle.
The monster wrenched and wrestled with him
but Beowulf was mindful of his mighty strength,
the wondrous gifts God had showered on him:
He relied for help on the Lord of All,
on His care and favour. So he overcame the foe,
brought down the hell-brute. Broken and bowed,
outcast from all sweetness, the enemy of mankind
made for his death-den. But now his mother
had sallied forth on a savage journey,
grief-racked and ravenous, desperate for revenge.

She came to Heorot. There, inside the hall,
Danes lay asleep, earls who would soon endure
a great reversal, once Grendel's mother
attacked and entered. Her onslaught was less
only by as much as an amazon warrior's
strength is less than an armed man's
when the hefted sword; its hammered edge
and gleaming blade slathered in blood,
razes the sturdy boar-ridge off a helmet.
Then in the hall, hard-honed swords
were grabbed from the bench, many a broad shield
lifted and braced; there was little thought of helmets
or woven mail when they woke in terror.

The hell-dam was in panic, desperate to get out,
in mortal terror the moment she was found.
She had pounced and taken one of the retainers
in a tight hold, then headed for the fen.
To Hrothgar, this man was the most beloved

of the friends he trusted between the two seas.
She had done away with a great warrior,
ambushed him at rest.

Beowulf was elsewhere.
Earlier, after the award of the treasure,
the Geat had been given another lodging.
There was uproar in Heorot. She had snatched their
trophy,
Grendel's bloodied hand. It was a fresh blow
to the afflicted bawn. The bargain was hard,
both parties having to pay
with the lives of friends. And the old lord,
the grey-haired warrior, was heartsore and weary
when he heard the news: his highest-placed adviser,
his dearest companion, was dead and gone.
Beowulf was quickly brought to the chamber:
the winner of fights, the arch-warrior,
came first-footing in with his fellow troops
to where the king in his wisdom waited,
still wondering whether Almighty God
would ever turn the tide of his misfortunes.
So Beowulf entered with his band in attendance
and the wooden floor-boards banged and rang
as he advanced, hurrying to address
the prince of the Ingwins, asking if he'd rested
since the urgent summons had come as a surprise.

Then Hrothgar, the Shieldings' helmet, spoke:
"Rest? What is rest? Sorrow has returned.
Alas for the Danes! Aeschere is dead.
He was Yrmenlaf's elder brother
and a soul-mate to me, a true mentor,
my right-hand man when the ranks clashed
and our boar-crests had to take a battering
in the line of action. Aeschere was everything
the world admires in a wise man and a friend.
Then this roaming killer came in a fury
and slaughtered him in Heorot. Where she is hiding,
glutting on the corpse and glorying in her escape,
I cannot tell; she has taken up the feud
because of last night, when you killed Grendel,
wrestled and racked him in ruinous combat
since for too long he had terrorized us

with his depredations. He died in battle,
paid with his life; and now this powerful
other one arrives, this force for evil
driven to revenge her kinsman's death.
Or so it seems to thanes in their grief,
in the anguish every thane endures
at the loss of a ring-giver, now that the hand
that bestowed so richly has been stilled in death.

“I have heard it said by my people in hall,
counsellors who live in the upland country,
that they have seen two such creatures
prowling the moors, huge marauders
from some other world. One of these things,
as far as anyone ever can discern,
looks like a woman; the other, warped
in the shape of a man, moves beyond the pale
bigger than any man, an unnatural birth
called Grendel by country people
in former days. They are fatherless creatures,
and their whole ancestry is hidden in a past
of demons and ghosts. They dwell apart
among wolves on the hills, on windswept crags
and treacherous keshes, where cold streams
pour down the mountain and disappear
under mist and moorland.

A few miles from here
a frost-stiffened wood waits and keeps watch
above a mere; the overhanging bank
is a maze of tree-roots mirrored in its surface.
At night there, something uncanny happens:
the water burns. And the mere bottom
has never been sounded by the sons of men.
On its bank, the heather-stepper halts:
the hart in flight from pursuing hounds
will tum to face them with firm-set horns
and die in the wood rather than dive
beneath its surface. That is no good place.
When wind blows up and stormy weather
makes clouds scud and the skies weep,
out of its depths a dirty surge
is pitched towards the heavens. Now help depends
again on you and on you alone.

The gap of danger where the demon waits
is still unknown to you. Seek it if you dare.
I will compensate you for settling the feud
as I did the last time with lavish wealth,
coffers of coiled gold, if you come back.”

Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, spoke:
“Wise sir, do not grieve. It is always better
to avenge dear ones than to indulge in mourning.
For every one of us, living in this world
means waiting for our end. Let whoever can
win glory before death. When a warrior is gone,
that will be his best and only bulwark.
So arise, my lord, and let us immediately
set forth on the trail of this troll-dam.
I guarantee you: she will not get away,
not to dens under ground nor upland groves
nor the ocean floor. She’ll have nowhere to flee to.
Endure your troubles to-day. Bear up
and be the man I expect you to be.”

With that the old lord sprang to his feet
and praised God for Beowulf’s pledge.
Then a bit and halter were brought for his horse
with the plaited mane. The wise king mounted
the royal saddle and rode out in style
with a force of shield-bearers. The forest paths
were marked all over with the monster’s tracks,
her trail on the ground wherever she had gone
across the dark moors, dragging away
the body of that thane, Hrothgar’s best
counsellor and overseer of the country.
So the noble prince proceeded undismayed
up fells and screes, along narrow footpaths
and ways where they were forced into single file,
ledges on cliffs above lairs of water-monsters.
He went in front with a few men,
good judges of the lie of the land,
and suddenly discovered the dismal wood,
mountain trees growing out at an angle
above grey stones: the bloodshot water
surged underneath. It was a sore blow
to all of the Danes, friends of the Shieldings,
a hurt to each and every one

of that noble company when they came upon
Aeschere's head at the foot of the cliff.

Everybody gazed as the hot gore
kept wallowing up and an urgent war-horn
repeated its notes: the whole party
sat down to watch. The water was infested
with all kinds of reptiles. There were writhing sea-dragons
and monsters slouching on slopes by the cliff,
serpents and wild things such as those that often
surface at dawn to roam the sail-road
and doom the voyage. Down they plunged,
lashing in anger at the loud call
of the battle-bugle. An arrow from the bow
of the Geat chief got one of them
as he surged to the surface: the seasoned shaft
stuck deep in his flank and his freedom in the water
got less and less. It was his last swim.
He was swiftly overwhelmed in the shallows,
prodded by barbed boar-spears,
cornered, beaten, pulled up on the bank,
a strange lake-birth, a loathsome catch
men gazed at in awe.

Beowulf got ready,
donned his war-gear, indifferent to death;
his mighty, hand-forged, fine-webbed mail
would soon meet with the menace underwater.
It would keep the bone-cage of his body safe:
no enemy's clasp could crush him in it,
no vicious armlock choke his life out.
To guard his head he had a glittering helmet
that was due to be muddied on the mere bottom
and blurred in the upswirl. It was of beaten gold,
princely headgear hooped and hasped
by a weapon-smith who had worked wonders
in days gone by and adorned it with boar-shapes;
since then it had resisted every sword.
And another item lent by Unferth
at that moment of need was of no small importance:
the brehon handed him a hilted weapon,
a rare and ancient sword named Hrunting.
The iron blade with its ill-boding patterns
had been tempered in blood. It had never failed

the hand of anyone who hefted it in battle, anyone who had fought and faced the worst in the gap of danger. This was not the first time it had been called to perform heroic feats.

When he lent that blade to the better swordsman, Unferth, the strong-built son of Ecglaf, could hardly have remembered the ranting speech he had made in his cups. He was not man enough to face the turmoil of a fight under water and the risk to his life. So there he lost fame and repute. It was different for the other rigged out in his gear, ready to do battle.

Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, spoke:
“Wisest of kings, now that I have come to the point of action, I ask you to recall what we said earlier: that you, son of Halfdane and gold-friend to retainers, that you, if I should fall and suffer death while serving your cause, would act like a father to me afterwards. If this combat kills me, take care of my young company, my comrades in arms. And be sure also, my beloved Hrothgar, to send Hygelac the treasures I received. Let the lord of the Geats gaze on that gold, let Hrethel’s son take note of it and see that I found a ring-giver of rare magnificence and enjoyed the good of his generosity. And Unferth is to have what I inherited: to that far-famed man I bequeath my own sharp-honed, wave-sheened wonderblade. With Hrunting I shall gain glory or die.”

After these words, the prince of the Weather-Geats was impatient to be away and plunged suddenly: without more ado, he dived into the heaving depths of the lake. It was the best part of a day before he could see the solid bottom. Quickly the one who haunted those waters, who had scavenged and gone her gluttonous rounds for a hundred seasons, sensed a human observing her outlandish lair from above. So she lunged and clutched and managed to catch him in her brutal grip; but his body, for all that,

remained unscathed: the mesh of the chain-mail saved him on the outside. Her savage talons failed to rip the web of his warshirt. Then once she touched bottom, that wolfish swimmer carried the ring-mailed prince to her court so that for all his courage he could never use the weapons he carried; and a bewildering horde came at him from the depths, droves of sea-beasts who attacked with tusks and tore at his chain-mail in a ghastly onslaught. The gallant man could see he had entered some hellish tum-hole and yet the water did not work against him because the hall-roofing held off the force of the current; then he saw firelight, a gleam and flare-up, a glimmer of brightness.

The hero observed that swampathing from hell, the tarn-hag in all her terrible strength, then heaved his war-sword and swung his arm: the decorated blade came down ringing and singing on her head. But he soon found his battle-torch extinguished: the shining blade refused to bite. It spared her and failed the man in his need. It had gone through many hand-to-hand fights, had hewed the armour and helmets of the doomed, but here at last the fabulous powers of that heirloom failed. Hygelac's kinsman kept thinking about his name and fame: he never lost heart. Then, in a fury, he flung his sword away. The keen, inlaid, worm-loop-patterned steel was hurled to the ground: he would have to rely on the might of his arm. So must a man do who intends to gain enduring glory in a combat. Life doesn't cost him a thought. Then the prince of War-Geats, warming to this fight with Grendel's mother, gripped her shoulder and laid about him in a battle frenzy: he pitched his killer opponent to the floor but she rose quickly and retaliated, grappled him tightly in her grim embrace. The sure-footed fighter felt daunted, the strongest of warriors stumbled and fell. So she pounced upon him and pulled out

a broad, whetted knife: now she would avenge
her only child. But the mesh of chain-mail
on Beowulf's shoulder shielded his life,
turned the edge and tip of the blade.
The son of Ecgtheow would have surely perished
and the Geats lost their warrior under the wide earth
had the strong links and locks of his war-gear
not helped to save him: holy God
decided the victory. It was easy for the Lord,
the Ruler of Heaven, to redress the balance
once Beowulf got back up on his feet.

Then he saw a blade that boded well,
a sword in her armoury, an ancient heirloom
from the days of the giants, an ideal weapon,
one that any warrior would envy,
but so huge and heavy of itself
only Beowulf could wield it in a battle.
So the Shieldings' hero, hard-pressed and enraged,
took a firm hold of the hilt and swung
the blade in an arc, a resolute blow
that bit deep into her neck-bone
and severed it entirely, toppling the doomed
house of her flesh; she fell to the floor.
The sword dripped blood, the swordsman was elated.

A light appeared and the place brightened
the way the sky does when heaven's candle
is shining clearly. He inspected the vault:
with sword held high, its hilt raised
to guard and threaten, Hygelac's thane
scouted by the wall in Grendel's wake.
Now the weapon was to prove its worth.
The warrior determined to take revenge for every gross act Grendel
had committed —
and not only for that one occasion
when he'd come to slaughter the sleeping troops,
fifteen of Hrothgar's house-guards
surprised on their benches and ruthlessly devoured,
and as many again carried away,
a brutal plunder. Beowulf in his fury
now settled that score: he saw the monster
in his resting place, war-weary and wrecked,
a lifeless corpse, a casualty

of the battle in Heorot. The body gaped
at the stroke dealt to it after death:
Beowulf cut the corpse's head off.

Immediately the counsellors keeping a lookout
with Hrothgar, watching the lake water,
saw a heave-up and surge of waves
and blood in the backwash. They bowed grey heads,
spoke in their sage, experienced way
about the good warrior, how they never again
expected to see that prince returning
in triumph to their king. It was clear to many
that the wolf of the deep had destroyed him forever.

The ninth hour of the day arrived.
The brave Shieldings abandoned the cliff-top
and the king went home; but sick at heart,
staring at the mere, the strangers held on.
They wished, without hope, to behold their lord,
Beowulf himself.

Meanwhile, the sword
began to wilt into gory icicles,
to slather and thaw. It was a wonderful thing,
the way it all melted as ice melts
when the Father eases the fetters off the frost
and unravels the water-ropes. He who wields power
over time and tide: He is the true Lord.

The Geat captain saw treasure in abundance
but carried no spoils from those quarters
except for the head and the inlaid hilt
embossed with jewels; its blade had melted
and the scrollwork on it burnt, so scalding was the blood
of the poisonous fiend who had perished there.
Then away he swam, the one who had survived
the fall of his enemies, flailing to the surface.
The wide water, the waves and pools
were no longer infested once the wandering fiend
let go of her life and this unreliable world.
The seafarers' leader made for land,
resolutely swimming, delighted with his prize,
the mighty load he was lugging to the surface.
His thanes advanced in a troop to meet him,
thanking God and taking great delight

in seeing their prince back safe and sound.
Quickly the hero's helmet and mail-shirt
were loosed and unlaced. The lake settled,
clouds darkened above the bloodshot depths.

With high hearts they headed away
along footpaths and trails through the fields,
roads that they knew, each of them wrestling
with the head they were carrying from the lakeside cliff,
men kingly in their courage and capable
of difficult work. It was a task for four
to hoist Grendel's head on a spear
and bear it under strain to the bright hall.
But soon enough they neared the place,
fourteen Geats in fine fettle,
striding across the outlying ground
in a delighted throng around their leader.

In he came then, the thane's commander,
the arch-warrior, to address Hrothgar:
his courage was proven, his glory was secure.
Grendel's head was hauled by the hair,
dragged across the floor where the people were drinking,
a horror for both queen and company to behold.
They stared in awe. It was an astonishing sight.

Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, spoke:
"So, son of Halfdane, prince of the Shieldings,
we are glad to bring this booty from the lake.
It is a token of triumph and we tender it to you.
I barely survived the battle under water.
It was hard-fought, a desperate affair
that could have gone badly; if God had not helped me,
the outcome would have been quick and fatal.
Although Hrunting is hard-edged,
I could never bring it to bear in battle.
But the Lord of Men allowed me to behold
for He often helps the unbefriended-
an ancient sword shining on the wall,
a weapon made for giants, there for the wielding.
Then my moment came in the combat and I struck
the dwellers in that den. Next thing the damascened
sword blade melted; it bloated and it burned
in their rushing blood. I have wrested the hilt
from the enemies' hand, avenged the evil

done to the Danes; it is what was due.
And this I pledge, prince of the Shieldings:
you can sleep secure with your company of troops
in Heorot Hall. Never need you fear
for a single thane of your sept or nation,
young warriors or old, that laying waste of life
that you and your people endured of yore.”

Then the gold hilt was handed over
to the old lord, a relic from long ago
for the venerable ruler. That rare smithwork
was passed on to the prince of the Danes
when those devils perished; once death removed
that murdering; guilt-steeped, God-cursed fiend,
eliminating his unholy life
and his mother's as well, it was willed to that king
who of all the lavish gift-lords of the north
was the best regarded between the two seas.

Hrothgar spoke; he examined the hilt,
that relic of old times. It was engraved all over
and showed how war first came into the world
and the flood destroyed the tribe of giants.
They suffered a terrible severance from the Lord;
the mighty made the waters rise,
drowned them in the deluge for retribution.
In pure gold inlay on the sword-guards
there were rune-markings correctly incised,
stating and recording for whom the sword
had been first made and ornamented
with its scrollworked hilt. Then everyone hushed
as the son of Halfdane spoke this wisdom.
“A protector of his people, pledged to uphold
truth and justice and to respect tradition,
is entitled to affirm that this man
was born to distinction. Beowulf, my friend,
your fame has gone far and wide,
you are known everywhere. In all things you are even -
tempered,
prudent and resolute. So I stand firm by the promise of
friendship
we exchanged before. Forever you will be
your people's mainstay and your own warriors'
helping hand.

Heremod was different,
the way he behaved to Ecgwala's sons.
His rise in the world brought little joy
to the Danish people, only death and destruction.
He vented his rage on men he caroused with,
killed his own comrades, a pariah king
who cut himself off from his own kind,
even though Almighty God had made him
eminent and powerful and marked him from the start
for a happy life. But a change happened,
he grew bloodthirsty, gave no more rings
to honour the Danes. He suffered in the end
for having plagued his people for so long:
his life lost happiness.

So learn from this
and understand true values. I who tell you
have wintered into wisdom.
It is a great wonder
how Almighty God in His magnificence
favours our race with rank and scope
and the gift of wisdom; His sway is wide.
Sometimes He allows the mind of a man
of distinguished birth to follow its bent,
grants him fulfilment and felicity on earth
and forts to command in his own country.
He permits him to lord it in many lands
until the man in his unthinkingness
forgets that it will ever end for him.
He indulges his desires; illness and old age
mean nothing to him; his mind is untroubled
by envy or malice or the thought of enemies
with their hate-honed swords.
The whole world conforms to his will, he is kept from the worst
until an element of overweening
enters him and takes hold
while the soul's guard, its sentry, drowns,
grown too distracted. A killer stalks him,
an archer who draws a deadly bow.
And then the man is hit in the heart,
the arrow flies beneath his defences,
the devious promptings of the demon start.
His old possessions seem paltry to him now.
He covets and resents; dishonours custom

and bestows no gold; and because of good things
that the Heavenly Powers gave him in the past
he ignores the shape of things to come.
Then finally the end arrives
when the body he was lent collapses and falls
prey to its death; ancestral possessions
and the goods he hoarded are inherited by another
who lets them go with a liberal hand.

“O flower of warriors, beware of that trap.
Choose, dear Beowulf, the better part,
eternal rewards. Do not give way to pride.
For a brief while your strength is in bloom
but it fades quickly; and soon there will follow
illness or the sword to lay you low,
or a sudden fire or surge of water
or jabbing blade or javelin from the air
or repellent age. Your piercing eye
will dim and darken; and death will arrive,
dear warrior, to sweep you away.

“Just so I ruled the Ring-Danes’ country
for fifty years, defended them in wartime
with spear and sword against constant assaults
by many tribes: I came to believe
my enemies had faded from the face of the earth.
Still, what happened was a hard reversal
from bliss to grief. Grendel struck
after lying in wait. He laid waste to the land
and from that moment my mind was in dread
of his depredations. So I praise God
in His heavenly glory that I lived to behold
this head dripping blood and that after such harrowing
I can look upon it in triumph at last.
Take your place, then, with pride and pleasure
and move to the feast. To-morrow morning
our treasure will be shared and showered upon you.”

The Geat was elated and gladly obeyed
the old man’s bidding; he sat on the bench.
And soon all was restored, the same as before.
Happiness came back, the hall was thronged,
and a banquet set forth; black night fell
and covered them in darkness.

Then the company rose
for the old campaigner: the grey-haired prince
was ready for bed. And a need for rest
came over the brave shield-bearing Geat.
He was a weary seafarer, far from home,
so immediately a house-guard guided him out,
one whose office entailed looking after
whatever a thane on the road in those days
might need or require. It was noble courtesy.

That great heart rested. The hall towered,
gold-shingled and gabled, and the guest slept in it
until the black raven with raucous glee
announced heaven's joy, and a hurry of brightness
overran the shadows. Warriors rose quickly,
impatient to be off: their own country
was beckoning the nobles; and the bold voyager
longed to be aboard his distant boat.
Then that stalwart fighter ordered Hrunting
to be brought to Unferth, and bade Unferth
take the sword and thanked him for lending it.
He said he had found it a friend in battle
and a powerful help; he put no blame
on the blade's cutting edge. He was a considerate man.

And there the warriors stood in their war-gear,
eager to go, while their honoured lord
approached the platform where the other sat.
The undaunted hero addressed Hrothgar.
Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, spoke:
"Now we who crossed the wide sea
have to inform you that we feel a desire
to return to Hygelac. Here we have been welcomed
and thoroughly entertained. You have treated us well.
If there is any favour on earth I can perform
beyond deeds of arms I have done already,
anything that would merit your affections more,
I shall act, my lord, with alacrity.
If ever I hear from across the ocean
that people on your borders are threatening battle
as attackers have done from time to time,
I shall land with a thousand thanes at my back
to help your cause. Hygelac may be young
to rule a nation, but this much I know

about the king of the Geats: he will come to my aid
and want to support me by word and action
in your hour of need, when honour dictates
that I raise a hedge of spears around you.
Then if Hrethric should think about travelling
as a king's son to the court of the Geats,
he will find many friends. Foreign places
yield more to one who is himself worth meeting."

Hrothgar spoke and answered him:

"The Lord in His wisdom sent you those words
and they came from the heart. I have never heard
so young a man make truer observations.

You are strong in body and mature in mind,
impressive in speech. If it should come to pass
that Hrethel's descendant dies beneath a spear,
if deadly battle or the sword blade or disease
fells the prince who guards your people
and you are still alive, then I firmly believe
the seafaring Geats won't find a man
worthier of acclaim as their king and defender
than you, if only you would undertake
the lordship of your homeland. My liking for you
deepens with time, dear Beowulf.

What you have done is to draw two peoples,
the Geat nation and us neighbouring Danes,
into shared peace and a pact of friendship
in spite of hatreds we have harboured in the past.
For as long as I rule this far-flung land
treasures will change hands and each side will treat
the other with gifts; across the gannet's bath,
over the broad sea, whorled prows will bring
presents and tokens. I know your people
are beyond reproach in every respect,
steadfast in the old way with friend or foe."

Then the earls' defender furnished the hero
with twelve treasures and told him to set out,
sail with those gifts safely home
to the people he loved, but to return promptly.
And so the good and grey-haired Dane,
that high-born king, kissed Beowulf
and embraced his neck, then broke down
in sudden tears. Two forebodings

disturbed him in his wisdom, but one was stronger:
nevermore would they meet each other
face to face. And such was his affection
that he could not help being overcome:
his fondness for the man was so deep-founded,
it warmed his heart and wound the heartstrings
tight in his breast.

...

A lot was to happen in later days
in the fury of battle. Hygelac fell
and the shelter of Heardred's shield proved useless
against the fierce aggression of the Shylfings:
ruthless swordsmen, seasoned campaigners,
they came against him and his conquering nation,
and with cruel force cut him down
so that afterwards
the wide kingdom
reverted to Beowulf. He ruled it well
for fifty winters, grew old and wise
as warden of the land
until one began
to dominate the dark, a dragon on the prowl
from the steep vaults of a stone-roofed barrow
where he guarded a hoard; there was a hidden passage,
unknown to men, but someone managed
to enter by it and interfere
with the heathen trove. He had handled and removed
a gem-studded goblet; it gained him nothing,
though with a thief's wiles he had outwitted
the sleeping dragon. That drove him into rage,
as the people of that country would soon discover.

The hoard-guardian
scorched the ground as he scoured and hunted
for the trespasser who had troubled his sleep.
Hot and savage, he kept circling and circling
the outside of the mound. No man appeared
in that desert waste, but he worked himself up
by imagining battle; then back in he'd go
in search of the cup, only to discover
signs that someone had stumbled upon
the golden treasures. So the guardian of the mound,
the hoard-watcher, waited for the gloaming

with fierce impatience; his pent-up fury
at the loss of the vessel made him long to hit back
and lash out in flames. Then, to his delight,
the day waned and he could wait no longer
behind the wall, but hurtled forth
in a fiery blaze. The first to suffer
were the people on the land, but before long
it was their treasure-giver who would come to grief.
The dragon began to belch out flames
and burn bright homesteads; there was a hot glow
that scared everyone, for the vile sky-winger
would leave nothing alive in his wake.
Everywhere the havoc he wrought was in evidence.
Far and near, the Geat nation
bore the brunt of his brutal assaults
and virulent hate. Then back to the hoard
he would dart before daybreak, to hide in his den.
He had swung the land, swathed it in flame,
in fire and burning, and now he felt secure
in the vaults of his barrow; but his trust was unavailing.
Then Beowulf was given bad news,
the hard truth: his own home,
the best of buildings, had been burned to a cinder,
the throne-room of the Geats. It threw the hero
into deep anguish and darkened his mood:
the wise man thought he must have thwarted
ancient ordinance of the eternal Lord,
broken His commandment. His mind was in turmoil,
unaccustomed anxiety and gloom
confused his brain; the fire-dragon
had razed the coastal region and reduced
forts and earthworks to dust and ashes,
so he war-king planned and plotted his revenge.

And so the son of Ecgtheow had survived
every extreme, excelling himself
in daring and in danger, until the day arrived
when he had to come face to face with the dragon.
The lord of the Geats took eleven comrades
and went in a rage to reconnoiter.
By then he had discovered the cause of the affliction
being visited on the people. The precious cup
had come to him from the hand of the finder,
the one who had started all this strife

and was now added as a thirteenth to their number.
They press-ganged and compelled this poor creature
to be their guide. Against his will
he led them to the earth-vault he alone knew,
an underground barrow near the sea-billows
and heaving waves, heaped inside
with exquisite metalwork. The one who stood guard
was dangerous and watchful, warden of the trove
buried under earth: no easy bargain
would be made in that place by any man.
The veteran king sat down on the cliff-top.
He wished good luck to the Geats who had shared
his hearth and his gold. He was sad at heart,
unsettled yet ready, sensing his death.
His fate hovered near, unknowable but certain:
it would soon claim his coffered soul,
part life from limb. Before long
the prince's spirit would spin free from his body.
Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, spoke:
"Many a skirmish I survived when I was young
and many times of war: I remember them well.
At seven, I was fostered out by my father,
left in the charge of my people's lord.
King Hrethet kept me and took care of me,
was openhanded, behaved like a kinsman.
While I was his ward, he treated me no worse
as a wean about the place than one of his own boys,
Herebeald and Haethcyn, or my own Hygelac.
For the eldest, Herebeald, an unexpected
deathbed was laid out, through a brother's doing,
when Haethcyn bent his horn-tipped bow
and loosed the arrow that destroyed his life.
He shot wide and buried a shaft
in the flesh and blood of his own brother.
That offense was beyond redress, a wrongfooting
of the heart's affections; for who could avenge
the prince's life or pay his death-price?
It was like the misery endured by an old man
who has lived to see his son's body
swing on the gallows. He begins to keen
and weep for his boy, watching the raven
loat where he hangs: he can be of no help.
The wisdom of age is worthless to him.

Morning after morning, he wakes to remember
that his child is gone; he has no interest
in living on until another heir
is born in the hail, now that his first-born
has entered death's dominion forever.
He gazes sorrowfully at his son's dwelling,
the banquet hail bereft of all delight,
the windswept hearthstone; the horsemen are sleeping,
the warriors under ground; what was is no more.
No tunes from the harp, no cheer raised in the yard.
Alone with his longing, he lies down on his bed
and sings a lament; everything seems too large,
the steadings and the fields.

Such was the feeling
of loss endured by the lord of the Geats
after Herebeald's death. He was helplessly placed
to set to rights the wrong committed,
could not punish the killer in accordance with the law
of the blood-feud, although he felt no love for him.
Heartsore, wearied, he turned away
from life's joys, chose God's light
and departed, leaving buildings and lands
to his sons, as a man of substance will.
"Then over the wide sea Swedes and Geats
battled and feuded and fought without quarter.
Hostilities broke out when Hrethel died.
Ongentheow's sons were unrelenting,
refusing to make peace, campaigning violently
from coast to coast, constantly setting up
terrible ambushes around Hreosnahl.
My own kith and kin avenged
these evil events, as everybody knows,
but the price was high: one of them paid
with his life. Haethcyn, lord of the Geats,
met his fate there and fell in the battle.
Then, as I have heard, Hygelac's sword
was raised in the morning against Ongentheow,
his brother's killer. When Eofor cleft
the old Swede's helmet, halved it open,
he fell, death-pale: his feud-calloused hand
could not stave off the fatal stroke.
"The treasures that Hygelac lavished on me
I paid for when I fought, as fortune allowed me,

with my glittering sword. He gave me land
and the security land brings, so he had no call
to go looking for some lesser champion,
some mercenary from among the Gifthas
or the Spear-Danes or the men of Sweden.
I marched ahead of him, always there
at the front of the line; and I shall fight like that
for as long as I live, as long as this sword
shall last, which has stood me in good stead
late and soon, ever since I killed
Dayraven the Frank in front of the two armies.
He brought back no looted breastplate
to the Frisian king but fell in battle,
their standard-bearer, highborn and brave.
No sword blade sent him to his death:
my bare hands stilled his heartbeats
and wrecked the bone-house. Now blade and hand,
sword and sword-stroke, will assay the hoard.”

Beowulf spoke, made a formal boast
for the last time: “I risked my life
often when I was young. Now I am old,
but as king of the people I shall pursue this fight
for the glory of winning, if the evil one will only
abandon his earth-fort and face me in the open.”

Then he gave a shout. The lord of the Geats
unburdened his breast and broke out
in a storm of anger. Under gray stone
his voice challenged and resounded clearly.
Hate was ignited. The hoard-guard recognized
a human voice, the time was over
for peace and parleying. Pouring forth
in a hot battle-fume, the breath of the monster
burst from the rock. There was a rumble under ground.
Down there in the barrow, Beowulf the warrior
lifted his shield: the outlandish thing
writhed and convulsed and viciously
turned on the king, whose keen-edged sword,
an heirloom inherited by ancient right,
was already in his hand. Roused to a fury,
each antagonist struck terror in the other.
Unyielding, the lord of his people loomed
by his tall shield, sure of his ground,

while the serpent looped and unleashed itself.
Swaddled in flames, it came gliding and flexing
and racing toward its fate. Yet his shield defended
the renowned leader's life and limb
for a shorter time than he meant it to:
that final day was the first time
when Beowulf fought and fate denied him
glory in battle. So the king of the Geats
raised his hand and struck hard
at the enameled scales, but scarcely cut through:
the blade flashed and slashed yet the blow
was far less powerful than the hard-pressed king
had need of at that moment. The mound-keeper
went into a spasm and spouted deadly flames:
when he felt the stroke, battle-fire
billowed and spewed. Beowulf was foiled
of a glorious victory. The glittering sword,
infallible before that day,
failed when he unsheathed it, as it never should have.
For the son of Ecgtheow, it was no easy thing
to have to give ground like that and go
unwillingly to inhabit another home
in a place beyond; so every man must yield
the leasehold of his days.

Before long
the fierce contenders clashed again.
The hoard-guard took heart, inhaled and swelled up
and got a new wind; he who had once ruled
was furling in fire and had to face the worst.
No help or backing was to be had then
from his highborn comrades; that hand-picked troop
broke ranks and ran for their lives
to the safety of the wood. But within one heart
sorrow welled up: in a man of worth
the claims of kinship cannot be denied.
His name was Wiglaf, a son of Weohstan's,
a well-regarded Shyfling warrior
related to Aelfhere. When he saw his lord
tormented by the heat of his scalding helmet,
he remembered the bountiful gifts bestowed on him,
how well he lived among the Waegmundings,
the-freehold he inherited from his father before him.

Then he waded the dangerous reek and went
under arms to his lord, saying only:
“Go on, dear Beowulf, do everything
you said you would when you were still young
and vowed you would never let your name and fame
be dimmed while you lived. Your deeds are famous,
so stay resolute, my lord, defend your life now
with the whole of your strength. I shall stand by you.”
After those words, a wildness rose
in the dragon again and drove it to attack,
heaving up fire, hunting for enemies,
the humans it loathed. Flames lapped the shield,
charred it to the boss, and the body armor
on the young warrior was useless to him.
But Wiglaf did well under the wide rim
Beowulf shared with him once his own had shattered
in sparks and ashes.

Inspired again
by the thought of glory, the war-king threw
his whole strength behind a sword stroke
and connected with the skull. And Naegling snapped.
Beowulf's ancient iron-gray sword
let him down in the fight. It was never his fortune
to be helped in combat by the cutting edge
of weapons made of iron. When he wielded a sword,
no matter how blooded and hard-edged the blade,
his hand was too strong, the stroke he dealt
(I have heard) would ruin it. He could reap no advantage.
Then the bane of that people, the fire-breathing dragon,
was mad to attack for a third time.
'When a chance came, he caught the hero
in a rush of flame and clamped sharp fangs
into his neck. Beowulf's body
ran wet with his life-blood: it came welling out.
Next thing, they say, the noble son of Weohstan
saw the king in danger at his side
and displayed his inborn bravery and strength.
He left the head alone, but his fighting hand
was burned when he came to his kinsman's aid.
He lunged at the enemy lower down
so that his decorated sword sank into its belly
and the flames grew weaker.

Once again the king
gathered his strength and drew a stabbing knife
he carried on his belt, sharpened for battle.
He stuck it deep in the dragon's flank.
Beowulf dealt it a deadly wound.
They had killed the enemy, courage quelled his life;
that pair of kinsmen, partners in nobility,
had destroyed the foe. So every man should act,
be at hand when needed; but now, for the king,
this would be the last of his many labors
and triumphs in the world.

Then the wound
dealt by the ground-burner earlier began
to scald and swell; Beowulf discovered
deadly poison suppurating inside him,
surges of nausea, and so, in his wisdom
the prince realized his state and struggled
toward a seat on the rampart. He steadied his gaze
on those gigantic stones, saw how the earthwork
was braced with arches built over columns.
And now that thane unequalled for goodness
with his own hands washed his lord's wounds,
swabbed the weary prince with water,
bathed him clean, unbuckled his helmet.
Beowulf spoke: in spite of his wounds,
mortal wounds, he still spoke
for he well knew his days in the world
had been lived out to the end — his allotted time
was drawing to a close, death was very near.
“Now is the time when I would have wanted
to bestow this armor on my own son,
had it been my fortune to have fathered an heir
and live on in his flesh. For fifty years
I ruled this nation. No king
of any neighboring clan would dare
face me with troops, none had the power
to intimidate me. I took what came,
cared for and stood by things in my keeping,
never fomented quarrels, never
swore to a lie. All this consoles me,
doomed as I am and sickening for death;
because of my right ways, the Ruler of mankind
need never blame me when the breath leaves my body

for murder of kinsmen. Go now quickly,
dearest Wiglaf, under the gray stone
where the dragon is laid out, lost to his treasure;
hurry to feast your eyes on the hoard.
Away you go: I want to examine
that ancient gold, gaze my fill
on those garnered jewels; my going will be easier
for having seen the treasure, a less troubled letting-go
the life and lordship I have long maintained.”

Wiglaf went quickly, keen to get back,
excited by the treasure. Anxiety weighed
on his brave heart — he was hoping he would find
the leader of the Geats alive where he had left him
helpless, earlier, on the open ground.
So he came to the place, carrying the treasure
and found his lord bleeding profusely,
his life at an end; again he began
to swab his body. The beginnings of an utterance
broke out from the king’s breast-cage.
The old lord gazed sadly at the gold.
“To the everlasting Lord of all,
to the King of Glory, I give thanks
that I behold this treasure here in front of me,
that I have been allowed to leave my people
so well endowed on the day I die.
Now that I have bartered my last breath
to own this fortune, it is up to you
to look after their needs. I can hold out no longer.
Order my troop to construct a barrow
on a headland on the coast, after my pyre has cooled.
It will loom on the horizon at Hronesness
and be a reminder among my people—
so that in coming times crews under sail
will call it Beowulf’s Barrow, as they steer
ships across the wide and shrouded waters.”
Then the king in his great-heartedness unclasped
the collar of gold from his neck and gave it
to the young thane, telling him to use
it and the war-shirt and gilded helmet well.
“You are the last of us, the only one left
of the Waegmundings. Fate swept us away,
sent my whole brave highborn clan
to their final doom. Now I must follow them.”

That was the warrior's last word.
He had no more to confide. The furious heat
of the pyre would assail him. His mill fled from his breast
to its destined place among the steadfast ones.



*The Rule of St.
Benedict*

The Rule of Saint Benedict was decisive for the preservation of civilization in the West. The history of Western Europe has been determined by the need to find a way to order society after the collapse of the Western Roman Empire. At the time Saint Benedict wrote his *Rule*, a kind of constitution for Christendom (and second only to the Bible as a text), the Western imperial court had just been formally dissolved. Italy came to be ruled by Germanic kings (who were Arian Christians): war all around; plague ravaging; urban order collapsing; trade networks disintegrating; literacy disappearing; barter replacing money; material culture regressing. Civilization was gasping in the long post-imperial tidal recession. Humanistic learning survived in the monasteries, and those monasteries largely came to be ordered by this *Rule*, which presents a model of life centered on prayer and a reasonable asceticism. It dignifies manual labor, charters consultative self-governance, and exemplifies the value of a written constitution. Charlemagne and his son Louis the Pious made sure that the *Rule* would serve as the template for Western monasticism. One of the projects of the Carolingian Renaissance was philological work to establish a sound text of the *Rule*.

According to Pope Gregory the Great, who provides our oldest substantial treatment of his life, Benedict (c.480-c.547) was born in Nursia (in Umbria) of a noble Roman family (his sister was Saint Scholastica). He went to Rome for humanistic studies, but found himself alienated there. He withdrew from the city and spent three years as a hermit in a cave at Subiaco, forty miles east of Rome, close to the ruins of one of Nero's villas. In 529, he founded the Abbey of Monte Cassino, on a plateau rising between Rome and Naples that had been the site of a temple to Apollo. This is the prime monastery of the Benedictine Order (a confederation of autonomous monasteries). The Benedictine rhythm of life is ordered according to the Divine Office (the Liturgy of the Hours), communal and chanted prayer at eight canonical hours focused on the Psalms (the psalter) and meant to sanctify time. Benedict calls this the *opus Dei* (work of God). Monasticism was essential to the structure of medieval society, which was articulated as three orders: those who pray (*oratores*, the clergy), those who fight (*bellatores*, the nobles), and those who work (*laboratores*, the peasants).

The monastic movement derives its original impetus from Saint Anthony of the Desert, who disengaged and withdrew (*anachōrēsis*, hence anchorite) from the social tensions of Roman Egypt during the Crisis of the Third Century in order to find the good life in spiritual perfection. After the threat of imperial persecution of Christianity was ended by Constantine, there was little occasion for the existential witness of the martyrs, so a new way to demonstrate Christian earnestness was required: the heroic asceticism of the monastic (from the Greek for alone, *monos*—hence monk). In the early fourth century, Saint Pachomius shifted the emphasis from eremitic (from the Greek for “desert-dweller,” which gives us the word hermit) to cenobitic monasticism, establishing the paradox of living alone for God in common. Monasticism spread quickly throughout the Roman East. Islam forbids monasticism, and a vehement rejection of such a vocation characterized the Protestant Reformation. Monasticism (and celibacy in general) sets into the world a more otherworldly life, channeling divine power into human agents. It is to provide training in self-overcoming and universal charity. But in responding to the ideal of holiness, it introduces the totalitarian temptation involved when some men govern their fellows even to the policing of interiority (the government of souls). Unknown to antiquity, a new kind of authority, that of the clerical class, one that could reach into the very conscience, had arrived. On the one hand, Benedict’s *Rule* instantiates this intimate governmentality (absolute obedience to the superior). On the other, it provides checks. The existence of the *Rule* itself makes clear that even the abbot’s power is constrained by a rule of law beyond his will. The abbot (from the Aramaic word for father) should wield authority like a wise, merciful, and loving father and like a servant (authority in the service of the spiritual perfection of each monk individually)—and honor the equality of the monks regardless of original class status. He is to be elected by the whole community and must take communal deliberation and counsel seriously. The monastery is a new kind of city, modeled after a household—like the New Jerusalem. The Benedictines would go through periods of decadence, and reforms such as the Cluniac and Cistercian would attempt to restore the purity of the apostolic life to monasticism, a ferment in the history of Europe.

Prologue

Listen carefully, my son, to the master's instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart. This is advice from a father who loves you; welcome it, and faithfully put it into practice. The labor of obedience will bring you back to him from whom you had drifted through the sloth of disobedience. This message of mine is for you, then, if you are ready to give up your own will, once and for all, and armed with the strong and noble weapons of obedience to do battle for the true King, Christ the Lord.

First of all, every time you begin a good work, you must pray to him most earnestly to bring it to perfection. In his goodness, he has already counted us as his sons, and therefore we should never grieve him by our evil actions. With his good gifts which are in us, we must obey him at all times that he may never become the angry father who disinherits his sons, nor the dread lord, enraged by our sins, who punishes us forever as worthless servants for refusing to follow him to glory.

Let us get up then, at long last, for the Scriptures rouse us when they say: It is high time for us to arise from sleep (Rom 13:11). Let us open our eyes to the light that comes from God, and our ears to the voice from heaven that every day calls out this charge: If you hear his voice today, do not harden your hearts (Ps 94[95]:8). And again: You that have ears to hear, listen to what the Spirit says to the churches (Rev 2:7). And what does he say? Come and listen to me, sons; I will teach you the fear of the Lord (Ps 33[34]:12). Run while you have the light of life, that the darkness of death may not overtake you (John 12:35).

Seeking his workman in a multitude of people, the Lord calls out to him and lifts his voice again: Is there anyone here who yearns for life and desires to see good days? (Ps 33[34]:13) If you hear this and your answer is "I do," God then directs these words to you: If you desire true and eternal life, keep your tongue free from vicious talk and your lips from all deceit; turn away from evil and do good; let peace be your quest and aim (Ps 33[34]:14-15). Once you have done this, my eyes will be upon you and my ears will listen for your prayers; and even before you ask me, I will say to you: Here I am (Isa 58:9). What, dear brothers, is more delightful than this voice of the Lord calling to us? See how the Lord in his love shows us the way of life. Clothed then with faith and the performance of good works, let us set out on this way, with the Gospel for our guide, that we may deserve to see him who has called us to his kingdom (1 Thess 2:12).

If we wish to dwell in the tent of this kingdom, we will never arrive

unless we run there by doing good deeds. But let us ask the Lord with the Prophet: Who will dwell in your tent, Lord; who will find rest upon your holy mountain? (Ps 14[15]:1) After this question, brothers, let us listen well to what the Lord says in reply, for he shows us the way to his tent. One who walks without blemish, he says, and is just in all his dealings; who speaks the truth from his heart and has not practiced deceit with his tongue; who has not wronged a fellowman in any way, nor listened to slanders against his neighbor (Ps 14[15]:2-3). He has foiled the evil one, the devil, at every turn, flinging both him and his promptings far from the sight of his heart. While these temptations were still young, he caught hold of them and dashed them against Christ (Ps 14[15]:4; 136[137]:9). These people fear the Lord, and do not become elated over their good deeds; they judge it is the Lord's power, not their own, that brings about the good in them. They praise (Ps 14[15]:4) the Lord working in them, and say with the Prophet: Not to us, Lord, not to us give the glory, but to your name alone (Ps 113[115:1]:9). In just this way Paul the Apostle refused to take credit for the power of his preaching. He declared: By God's grace I am what I am (1 Cor 15:10). And again he said: He who boasts should make his boast in the Lord (2 Cor 10:17). That is why the Lord says in the Gospel: Whoever hears these words of mine and does them is like a wise man who built his house upon rock; the floods came and the winds blew and beat against the house, but it did not fall: it was founded on rock (Matt 7:24-25).

With this conclusion, the Lord waits for us daily to translate into action, as we should, his holy teachings. Therefore our life span has been lengthened by way of a truce, that we may amend our misdeeds. As the Apostle says: Do you not know that the patience of God is leading you to repent (Rom 2:4)? And indeed the Lord assures us in his love: I do not wish the death of the sinner, but that he turn back to me and live (Ezek 33:11).

Brothers, now that we have asked the Lord who will dwell in his tent, we have heard the instruction for dwelling in it, but only if we fulfill the obligations of those who live there. We must, then, prepare our hearts and bodies for the battle of holy obedience to his instructions. What is not possible to us by nature, let us ask the Lord to supply by the help of his grace. If we wish to reach eternal life, even as we avoid the torments of hell, then—while there is still time, while we are in this body and have time to accomplish all these things by the light of life—we must run and do now what will profit us forever.

Therefore we intend to establish a school for the Lord's service. In drawing up its regulations, we hope to set down nothing harsh, noth-

ing burdensome. The good of all concerned, however, may prompt us to a little strictness in order to amend faults and to safeguard love. Do not be daunted immediately by fear and run away from the road that leads to salvation. It is bound to be narrow at the outset. But as we progress in this way of life and in faith, we shall run on the path of God's commandments, our hearts overflowing with the inexpressible delight of love. Never swerving from his instructions, then, but faithfully observing his teaching in the monastery until death, we shall through patience share in the sufferings of Christ that we may deserve also to share in his kingdom. Amen.

Ch. 1 The Kinds of Monks

There are clearly four kinds of monks. First, there are the cenobites, that is to say, those who belong to a monastery, where they serve under a rule and an abbot.

Second, there are the anchorites or hermits, who have come through the test of living in a monastery for a long time, and have passed beyond the first fervor of monastic life. Thanks to the help and guidance of many, they are now trained to fight against the devil. They have built up their strength and go from the battle line in the ranks of their brothers to the single combat of the desert. Self-reliant now, without the support of another, they are ready with God's help to grapple single-handed with the vices of body and mind.

Third, there are the sarabaites, the most detestable kind of monks, who with no experience to guide them, no rule to try them as gold is tried in a furnace (Prov 27:21), have a character as soft as lead. Still loyal to the world by their actions, they clearly lie to God by their tonsure. Two or three together, or even alone, without a shepherd, they pen themselves up in their own sheepfolds, not the Lord's. Their law is what they like to do, whatever strikes their fancy. Anything they believe in and choose, they call holy; anything they dislike, they consider forbidden.

Fourth and finally, there are the monks called gyrovagues, who spend their entire lives drifting from region to region, staying as guests for three or four days in different monasteries. Always on the move, they never settle down, and are slaves to their own wills and gross appetites. In every way they are worse than sarabaites.

It is better to keep silent than to speak of all these and their disgraceful way of life. Let us pass them by, then, and with the help of the Lord, proceed to draw up a plan for the strong kind, the cenobites.

Ch. 2 Qualities of the Abbot

To be worthy of the task of governing a monastery, the abbot must always remember what his title signifies and act as a superior should. He is believed to hold the place of Christ in the monastery, since he is addressed by a title of Christ, as the Apostle indicates: You have received the spirit of adoption of sons by which we exclaim, abba, father (Rom 8:15). Therefore, the abbot must never teach or decree or command anything that would deviate from the Lord's instructions. On the contrary, everything he teaches and commands should, like the leaven of divine justice, permeate the minds of his disciples. Let the abbot always remember that at the fearful judgment of God, not only his teaching but also his disciples' obedience will come under scrutiny. The abbot must, therefore, be aware that the shepherd will bear the blame wherever the father of the household finds that the sheep have yielded no profit. Still, if he has faithfully shepherded a restive and disobedient flock, always striving to cure their unhealthy ways, it will be otherwise: the shepherd will be acquitted at the Lord's judgment. Then, like the Prophet, he may say to the Lord: I have not hidden your justice in my heart; I have proclaimed your truth and your salvation (Ps 39[40]:11), but they spurned and rejected me (Isa 1:2; Ezek 20:27). Then at last the sheep that have rebelled against his care will be punished by the overwhelming power of death.

Furthermore, anyone who receives the name of abbot is to lead his disciples by a twofold teaching: he must point out to them all that is good and holy more by example than by words, proposing the commandments of the Lord to receptive disciples with words, but demonstrating God's instructions to the stubborn and the dull by a living example. Again, if he teaches his disciples that something is not to be done, then neither must he do it, lest after preaching to others, he himself be found reprobate (1 Cor 9:27) and God some day call to him in his sin: How is it that you repeat my just commands and mouth my covenant when you hate discipline and toss my words behind you (Ps 49[50]:16-17)? And also this: How is it that you can see a splinter in your brother's eye, and never notice the plank in your own (Matt 7:3)?

The abbot should avoid all favoritism in the monastery. He is not to love one more than another unless he finds someone better in good actions and obedience. A man born free is not to be given higher rank than a slave who becomes a monk, except for some other good reason. But the abbot is free, if he sees fit, to change anyone's rank as justice demands. Ordinarily, everyone is to keep to his regular place, because whether slave or free, we are all one in Christ (Gal 3:28; Eph 6:8) and share alike in bearing arms in the service of the one Lord, for God

shows no partiality among persons (Rom 2:11). Only in this are we distinguished in his sight: if we are found better than others in good works and in humility. Therefore, the abbot is to show equal love to everyone and apply the same discipline to all according to their merits.

In his teaching, the abbot should always observe the Apostle's recommendation, in which he says: Use argument, appeal, reproof (2 Tim 4:2). This means that he must vary with circumstances, threatening and coaxing by turns, stern as a taskmaster, devoted and tender as only a father can be. With the undisciplined and restless, he will use firm argument; with the obedient and docile and patient, he will appeal for greater virtue; but as for the negligent and disdainful, we charge him to use reproof and rebuke. He should not gloss over the sins of those who err, but cut them out while he can, as soon as they begin to sprout, remembering the fate of Eli, priest of Shiloh (1 Sam 2:11–4:18). For upright and perceptive men, his first and second warnings should be verbal; but those who are evil or stubborn, arrogant or disobedient, he can curb only by blows or some other physical punishment at the first offense. It is written, The fool cannot be corrected with words (Prov 29:19); and again, Strike your son with a rod and you will free his soul from death (Prov 23:14).

The abbot must always remember what he is and remember what he is called, aware that more will be expected of a man to whom more has been entrusted. He must know what a difficult and demanding burden he has undertaken: directing souls and serving a variety of temperaments, coaxing, reproving and encouraging them as appropriate. He must so accommodate and adapt himself to each one's character and intelligence that he will not only keep the flock entrusted to his care from dwindling, but will rejoice in the increase of a good flock. Above all, he must not show too great concern for the fleeting and temporal things of this world, neglecting or treating lightly the welfare of those entrusted to him. Rather, he should keep in mind that he has undertaken the care of souls for whom he must give an account. That he may not plead lack of resources as an excuse, he is to remember what is written: Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things will be given you as well (Matt 6:33), and again, Those who fear him lack nothing (Ps 33[34]:10).

The abbot must know that anyone undertaking the charge of souls must be ready to account for them. Whatever the number of brothers he has in his care, let him realize that on judgment day he will surely have to submit a reckoning to the Lord for all their souls — and indeed for his own as well. In this way, while always fearful of the future examination of the shepherd about the sheep entrusted to him and

careful about the state of others' accounts, he becomes concerned also about his own, and while helping others to amend by his warnings, he achieves the amendment of his own faults.

Ch. 3 Summoning the Brothers for Counsel

As often as anything important is to be done in the monastery, the abbot shall call the whole community together and himself explain what the business is; and after hearing the advice of the brothers, let him ponder it and follow what he judges the wiser course. The reason why we have said all should be called for counsel is that the Lord often reveals what is better to the younger. The brothers, for their part, are to express their opinions with all humility, and not presume to defend their own views obstinately. The decision is rather the abbot's to make, so that when he has determined what is more prudent, all may obey. Nevertheless, just as it is proper for disciples to obey their master, so it is becoming for the master on his part to settle everything with foresight and fairness.

Accordingly in every instance, all are to follow the teaching of the rule, and no one shall rashly deviate from it. In the monastery no one is to follow his own heart's desire, nor shall anyone presume to contend with his abbot defiantly, or outside the monastery. Should anyone presume to do so, let him be subjected to the discipline of the rule. Moreover, the abbot himself must fear God and keep the rule in everything he does; he can be sure beyond any doubt that he will have to give an account of all his judgment to God, the most just of judges.

If less important business of the monastery is to be transacted, he shall take counsel with the seniors only, as it is written: Do everything with counsel and you will not be sorry afterward (Sir 32:24).

Ch. 4 The Tools for Good Works

First of all, love the Lord God with your whole heart, your whole soul and all your strength, and love your neighbor as yourself (Matt 22:37-39; Mark 12:30-31; Luke 10:27). Then the following: You are not to kill, not to commit adultery; you are not to steal nor to covet (Rom 13:9); you are not to bear false witness (Matt 19:18; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20). You must honor everyone (1 Pet 2:17), and never do to another what you do not want done to yourself (Tob 4:16; Matt 7:12; Luke 6:31).

Renounce yourself in order to follow Christ (Matt 16:24; Luke 9:23); discipline your body (1 Cor 9:27); do not pamper yourself, but love

fasting. You must relieve the lot of the poor, clothe the naked, visit the sick (Matt 25:36), and bury the dead. Go to help the troubled and console the sorrowing.

Your way of acting should be different from the world's way; the love of Christ must come before all else. You are not to act in anger or nurse a grudge. Rid your heart of all deceit. Never give a hollow greeting of peace or turn away when someone needs your love. Bind yourself to no oath lest it prove false, but speak the truth with heart and tongue.

Do not repay one bad turn with another (1 Thess 5:15; 1 Pet 3:9). Do not injure anyone, but bear injuries patiently. Love your enemies (Matt 5:44; Luke 6:27). If people curse you, do not curse them back but bless them instead. Endure persecution for the sake of justice (Matt 5:10).

You must not be proud, nor be given to wine (Titus 1:7; 1 Tim 3:3). Refrain from too much eating or sleeping, and from laziness (Rom 12:11). Do not grumble or speak ill of others.

Place your hope in God alone. If you notice something good in yourself, give credit to God, not to yourself, but be certain that the evil you commit is always your own and yours to acknowledge.

Live in fear of judgment day and have a great horror of hell. Yearn for everlasting life with holy desire. Day by day remind yourself that you are going to die. Hour by hour keep careful watch over all you do, aware that God's gaze is upon you, wherever you may be. As soon as wrongful thoughts come into your heart, dash them against Christ and disclose them to your spiritual father. Guard your lips from harmful or deceptive speech. Prefer moderation in speech and speak no foolish chatter, nothing just to provoke laughter; do not love immoderate or boisterous laughter.

Listen readily to holy reading, and devote yourself often to prayer. Every day with tears and sighs confess your past sins to God in prayer and change from these evil ways in the future.

Do not gratify the promptings of the flesh (Gal 5:16); hate the urgings of self-will. Obey the orders of the abbot unreservedly, even if his own conduct—which God forbid—be at odds with what he says. Remember the teaching of the Lord: Do what they say, not what they do (Matt 23:3).

Do not aspire to be called holy before you really are, but first be holy that you may more truly be called so. Live by God's commandments

every day; treasure chastity, harbor neither hatred nor jealousy of anyone, and do nothing out of envy. Do not love quarreling; shun arrogance. Respect the elders and love the young. Pray for your enemies out of love for Christ. If you have a dispute with someone, make peace with him before the sun goes down.

And finally, never lose hope in God's mercy.

These, then, are the tools of the spiritual craft. When we have used them without ceasing day and night and have returned them on judgment day, our wages will be the reward the Lord has promised: What the eye has not seen nor the ear heard, God has prepared for those who love him (1 Cor 2:9).

The workshop where we are to toil faithfully at all these tasks is the enclosure of the monastery and stability in the community.

Ch. 5 Obedience

The first step of humility is unhesitating obedience, which comes naturally to those who cherish Christ above all. Because of the holy service they have professed, or because of dread of hell and for the glory of everlasting life, they carry out the superior's order as promptly as if the command came from God himself. The Lord says of men like this: No sooner did he hear than he obeyed me (Ps 17[18]:45); again, he tells teachers: Whoever listens to you, listens to me (Luke 10:16). Such people as these immediately put aside their own concerns, abandon their own will, and lay down whatever they have in hand, leaving it unfinished. With the ready step of obedience, they follow the voice of authority in their actions. Almost at the same moment, then, as the master gives the instruction the disciple quickly puts it into practice in the fear of God; and both actions together are swiftly completed as one.

It is love that impels them to pursue everlasting life; therefore, they are eager to take the narrow road of which the Lord says: Narrow is the road that leads to life (Matt 7:14). They no longer live by their own judgment, giving in to their whims and appetites; rather they walk according to another's decisions and directions, choosing to live in monasteries and to have an abbot over them. Men of this resolve unquestionably conform to the saying of the Lord: I have come not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me (John 6:38).

This very obedience, however, will be acceptable to God and agreeable to men only if compliance with what is commanded is not cringing or sluggish or half-hearted, but free from any grumbling or any reaction of unwillingness. For the obedience shown to superiors is given to God, as he himself said: Whoever listens to you, listens to me (Luke 10:16). Furthermore, the disciples' obedience must be given gladly, for God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor 9:7). If a disciple obeys grudgingly and grumbles, not only aloud but also in his heart, then, even though he carries out the order, his action will not be accepted with favor by God, who sees that he is grumbling in his heart. He will have no reward for service of this kind; on the contrary, he will incur punishment for grumbling, unless he changes for the better and makes amends.

Ch. 6 Restraint of Speech

Let us follow the Prophet's counsel: I said, I have resolved to keep watch over my ways that I may never sin with my tongue. I have put a guard on my mouth. I was silent and was humbled, and I refrained even from good words (Ps 38[39]:2-3). Here the Prophet indicates that there are times when good words are to be left unsaid out of esteem for silence. For all the more reason, then, should evil speech be curbed so that punishment for sin may be avoided. Indeed, so important is silence that permission to speak should seldom be granted even to mature disciples, no matter how good or holy or constructive their talk, because it is written: In a flood of words you will not avoid sin (Prov 10:19); and elsewhere, The tongue holds the key to life and death (Prov 18:21). Speaking and teaching are the master's task; the disciple is to be silent and listen.

Therefore, any requests to a superior should be made with all humility and respectful submission. We absolutely condemn in all places any vulgarity and gossip and talk leading to laughter, and we do not permit a disciple to engage in words of that kind.

Ch. 7 Humility

Brothers, divine Scripture calls to us saying: Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled, and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted (Luke 14:11; 18:14). In saying this, therefore, it shows us that every exaltation is a kind of pride, which the Prophet indicates he has shunned, saying: Lord, my heart is not exalted; my eyes are not lifted up and I have not walked in the ways of the great nor gone after marvels beyond me (Ps 130[131]:1). And why? If I had not a humble spirit, but were exalted instead, then you would treat me like a weaned child on

its mother's lap (Ps 130[131]:2).

Accordingly, brothers, if we want to reach the highest summit of humility, if we desire to attain speedily that exaltation in heaven to which we climb by the humility of this present life, then by our ascending actions we must set up that ladder on which Jacob in a dream saw angels descending and ascending (Gen 28:12). Without doubt, this descent and ascent can signify only that we descend by exaltation and ascend by humility. Now the ladder erected is our life on earth, and if we humble our hearts the Lord will raise it to heaven. We may call our body and soul the sides of this ladder, into which our divine vocation has fitted the various steps of humility and discipline as we ascend.

The first step of humility, then, is that a man keeps the fear of God always before his eyes (Ps 35[36]:2) and never forgets it. He must constantly remember everything God has commanded, keeping in mind that all who despise God will burn in hell for their sins, and all who fear God have everlasting life awaiting them. While he guards himself at every moment from sins and vices of thought or tongue, of hand or foot, of self-will or bodily desire, let him recall that he is always seen by God in heaven, that his actions everywhere are in God's sight and are reported by angels at every hour.

The Prophet indicates this to us when he shows that our thoughts are always present to God, saying: God searches hearts and minds (Ps 7:10); again he says: The Lord knows the thoughts of men (Ps 93[94]:11); likewise, From afar you know my thoughts (Ps 138[139]:3); and, The thought of man shall give you praise (Ps 75[76]:11). That he may take care to avoid sinful thoughts, the virtuous brother must always say to himself: I shall be blameless in his sight if I guard myself from my own wickedness (Ps 17[18]:24).

Truly, we are forbidden to do our own will, for Scripture tells us: Turn away from your desires (Sir 18:30). And in the Prayer too we ask God that his will be done in us (Matt 6:10). We are rightly taught not to do our own will, since we dread what Scripture says: There are ways which men call right that in the end plunge into the depths of hell (Prov 16:25). Moreover, we fear what is said of those who ignore this: They are corrupt and have become depraved in their desires (Ps 13[14]:1).

As for the desires of the body, we must believe that God is always with us, for All my desires are known to you (Ps 37[38]:10), as the Prophet tells the Lord. We must then be on guard against any base desire, because death is stationed near the gateway of pleasure. For this reason Scripture warns us, Pursue not your lusts (Sir 18:30).

Accordingly, if the eyes of the Lord are watching the good and the wicked (Prov 15:3), if at all times the Lord looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see whether any understand and seek God (Ps 13[14]:2); and if every day the angels assigned to us report our deeds to the Lord day and night, then, brothers, we must be vigilant every hour or, as the Prophet says in the psalm, God may observe us falling at some time into evil and so made worthless (Ps 13[14]:3). After sparing us for a while because he is a loving father who waits for us to improve, he may tell us later, This you did, and I said nothing (Ps 49[50]:21).

The second step of humility is that a man loves not his own will nor takes pleasure in the satisfaction of his desires; rather he shall imitate by his actions that saying of the Lord: I have come not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me (John 6:38). Similarly we read, "Consent merits punishment; constraint wins a crown."

The third step of humility is that a man submits to his superior in all obedience for the love of God, imitating the Lord of whom the Apostle says: He became obedient even to death (Phil 2:8).

The fourth step of humility is that in this obedience under difficult, unfavorable, or even unjust conditions, his heart quietly embraces suffering and endures it without weakening or seeking escape. For Scripture has it: Anyone who perseveres to the end will be saved (Matt 10:22), and again, Be brave of heart and rely on the Lord (Ps 26[27]:14). Another passage shows how the faithful must endure everything, even contradiction, for the Lord's sake, saying in the person of those who suffer, For your sake we are put to death continually; we are regarded as sheep marked for slaughter (Rom 8:36; Ps 43[44]:22). They are so confident in their expectation of reward from God that they continue joyfully and say, But in all this we overcome because of him who so greatly loved us (Rom 8:37). Elsewhere Scripture says: God, you have tested us, you have tried us as silver is tried by fire; you have led us into a snare, you have placed afflictions on our backs (Ps 65[66]:10-11). Then, to show that we ought to be under a superior, it adds: You have placed men over our heads (Ps 65[66]:12).

In truth, those who are patient amid hardships and unjust treatment are fulfilling the Lord's command: When struck on one cheek, they turn the other; when deprived of their coat, they offer their cloak also; when pressed into service for one mile, they go two (Matt 5:39-41). With the Apostle Paul, they bear with false brothers, endure persecution, and bless those who curse them (2 Cor 11:26; 1 Cor 4:12).

The fifth step of humility is that a man does not conceal from his abbot

any sinful thoughts entering his heart, or any wrongs committed in secret, but rather confesses them humbly. Concerning this, Scripture exhorts us: Make known your way to the Lord and hope in him (Ps 36[37]:5). And again, Confess to the Lord, for he is good; his mercy is forever (Ps 105[106]:1; Ps 117 [118]:1). So too the Prophet: To you I have acknowledged my offense; my faults I have not concealed. I have said: Against myself I will report my faults to the Lord, and you have forgiven the wickedness of my heart (Ps 31[32]:5).

The sixth step of humility is that a monk is content with the lowest and most menial treatment, and regards himself as a poor and worthless workman in whatever task he is given, saying to himself with the Prophet: I am insignificant and ignorant, no better than a beast before you, yet I am with you always (Ps 72[73]:22-23).

The seventh step of humility is that a man not only admits with his tongue but is also convinced in his heart that he is inferior to all and of less value, humbling himself and saying with the Prophet: I am truly a worm, not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people (Ps 21[22]:7). I was exalted, then I was humbled and overwhelmed with confusion (Ps 87[88]:16). And again, It is a blessing that you have humbled me so that I can learn your commandments (Ps 118[119]:71, 73).

The eighth step of humility is that a monk does only what is endorsed by the common rule of the monastery and the example set by his superiors.

The ninth step of humility is that a monk controls his tongue and remains silent, not speaking unless asked a question, for Scripture warns, In a flood of words you will not avoid sinning (Prov 10:19), and, A talkative man goes about aimlessly on earth (Ps 139[140]:12).

The tenth step of humility is that he is not given to ready laughter, for it is written: Only a fool raises his voice in laughter (Sir 21:23).

The eleventh step of humility is that a monk speaks gently and without laughter, seriously and with becoming modesty, briefly and reasonably, but without raising his voice, as it is written: "A wise man is known by his few words."

The twelfth step of humility is that a monk always manifests humility in his bearing no less than in his heart, so that it is evident at the Work of God, in the oratory, the monastery or the garden, on a journey or in the field, or anywhere else. Whether he sits, walks or stands, his head must be bowed and his eyes cast down. Judging himself always guilty on account of his sins, he should consider that he is already at the

fearful judgment, and constantly say in his heart what the publican in the Gospel said with downcast eyes: Lord, I am a sinner, not worthy to look up to heaven (Luke 18:13). And with the Prophet: I am bowed down and humbled in every way (Ps 37[38]:7-9; Ps 118 [119]:107).

Now, therefore, after ascending all these steps of humility, the monk will quickly arrive at that perfect love of God which casts out fear (1 John 4:18). Through this love, all that he once performed with dread, he will now begin to observe without effort, as though naturally, from habit, no longer out of fear of hell, but out of love for Christ, good habit and delight in virtue. All this the Lord will by the Holy Spirit graciously manifest in his workman now cleansed of vices and sins.

Ch. 16 The Celebration of the Divine Office During the Day

The Prophet says: Seven times a day have I praised you (Ps 118[119]:164). We will fulfill this sacred number of seven if we satisfy our obligations of service at Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers and Compline, for it was of these hours during the day that he said: Seven times a day have I praised you (Ps 118[119]:164). Concerning Vigils, the same Prophet says: At midnight I arose to give you praise (Ps 118[119]:62). Therefore, we should praise our Creator for his just judgments at these times: Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers and Compline; and let us arise at night to give him praise (Ps 118[119]:164, 62).

Ch. 19 The Discipline of Psalmody

We believe that the divine presence is everywhere and that in every place the eyes of the Lord are watching the good and the wicked (Prov 15:3). But beyond the least doubt we should believe this to be especially true when we celebrate the divine office.

We must always remember, therefore, what the Prophet says: Serve the Lord with fear (Ps 2:11), and again, Sing praise wisely (Ps 46[47]:8); and, In the presence of the angels I will sing to you (Ps 137[138]:1). Let us consider, then, how we ought to behave in the presence of God and his angels, and let us stand to sing the psalms in such a way that our minds are in harmony with our voices.

Ch. 20 Reverence in Prayer

Whenever we want to ask some favor of a powerful man, we do it humbly and respectfully, for fear of presumption. How much more important, then, to lay our petitions before the Lord God of all things

with the utmost humility and sincere devotion. We must know that God regards our purity of heart and tears of compunction, not our many words. Prayer should therefore be short and pure, unless perhaps it is prolonged under the inspiration of divine grace. In community, however, prayer should always be brief; and when the superior gives the signal, all should rise together.

Ch. 23 Excommunication for Faults

If a brother is found to be stubborn or disobedient or proud, if he grumbles or in any way despises the holy rule and defies the orders of his seniors, he should be warned twice privately by the seniors in accord with our Lord's injunction (Matt 18:15-16). If he does not amend, he must be rebuked publicly in the presence of everyone. But if even then he does not reform, let him be excommunicated, provided that he understands the nature of this punishment. If however he lacks understanding, let him undergo corporal punishment.

Ch. 24 Degrees of Excommunication

There ought to be due proportion between the seriousness of a fault and the measure of excommunication or discipline. The abbot determines the gravity of faults.

If a brother is found guilty of less serious faults, he will not be allowed to share the common table. Anyone excluded from the common table will conduct himself as follows: in the oratory he will not lead a psalm or a refrain nor will he recite a reading until he has made satisfaction, and he will take his meals alone, after the brothers have eaten. For instance, if the brothers eat at noon, he will eat in midafternoon; if the brothers eat in midafternoon, he will eat in the evening, until by proper satisfaction he gains pardon.

Ch. 25 Serious Faults

A brother guilty of a serious fault is to be excluded from both the table and the oratory. No other brother should associate or converse with him at all. He will work alone at the tasks assigned to him, living continually in sorrow and penance, pondering that fearful judgment of the Apostle: Such a man is handed over for the destruction of his flesh that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord (1 Cor 5:5). Let him take his food alone in an amount and at a time the abbot considers appropriate for him. He should not be blessed by anyone

passing by, nor should the food that is given him be blessed.

Ch. 27 The Abbot's Concern for the Excommunicated

The abbot must exercise the utmost care and concern for wayward brothers, because it is not the healthy who need a physician, but the sick (Matt 9:12). Therefore, he ought to use every skill of a wise physician and send in senpectae, that is, mature and wise brothers who, under the cloak of secrecy, may support the wavering brother, urge him to be humble as a way of making satisfaction, and console him lest he be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow (2 Cor 2:7). Rather, as the Apostle also says: Let love for him be reaffirmed (2 Cor 2:8), and let all pray for him.

It is the abbot's responsibility to have great concern and to act with all speed, discernment and diligence in order not to lose any of the sheep entrusted to him. He should realize that he has undertaken care of the sick, not tyranny over the healthy. Let him also fear the threat of the Prophet in which God says: What you saw to be fat you claimed for yourselves, and what was weak you cast aside (Ezek 34:3-4). He is to imitate the loving example of the Good Shepherd who left the ninety-nine sheep in the mountains and went in search of the one sheep that had strayed. So great was his compassion for its weakness that he mercifully placed it on his sacred shoulders and so carried it back to the flock (Luke 15:5).

Ch. 31 Qualifications of the Monastery Cellarer

As cellarer of the monastery, there should be chosen from the community someone who is wise, mature in conduct, temperate, not an excessive eater, not proud, excitable, offensive, dilatory or wasteful, but God-fearing, and like a father to the whole community. He will take care of everything, but will do nothing without an order from the abbot. Let him keep to his orders.

He should not annoy the brothers. If any brother happens to make an unreasonable demand of him, he should not reject him with disdain and cause him distress, but reasonably and humbly deny the improper request. Let him keep watch over his own soul, ever mindful of that saying of the Apostle: He who serves well secures a good standing for himself (1 Tim 3:13). He must show every care and concern for the sick, children, guests and the poor, knowing for certain that he will be held accountable for all of them on the day of judgment. He will regard all utensils and goods of the monastery as sacred vessels

of the altar, aware that nothing is to be neglected. He should not be prone to greed, nor be wasteful and extravagant with the goods of the monastery, but should do everything with moderation and according to the abbot's orders.

Above all, let him be humble. If goods are not available to meet a request, he will offer a kind word in reply, for it is written: A kind word is better than the best gift (Sir 18:17). He should take care of all that the abbot entrusts to him, and not presume to do what the abbot has forbidden. He will provide the brothers their allotted amount of food without any pride or delay, lest they be led astray. For he must remember what the Scripture says that person deserves who leads one of the little ones astray (Matt 18:6).

If the community is rather large, he should be given helpers, that with their assistance he may calmly perform the duties of his office. Necessary items are to be requested and given at the proper times, so that no one may be disquieted or distressed in the house of God.

Ch. 33 Monks and Private Ownership

Above all, this evil practice must be uprooted and removed from the monastery. We mean that without an order from the abbot, no one may presume to give, receive or retain anything as his own, nothing at all—not a book, writing tablets or stylus—in short, not a single item, especially since monks may not have the free disposal even of their own bodies and wills. For their needs, they are to look to the father of the monastery, and are not allowed anything which the abbot has not given or permitted. All things should be the common possession of all, as it is written, so that no one presumes to call anything his own (Acts 4:32).

But if anyone is caught indulging in this most evil practice, he should be warned a first and a second time. If he does not amend, let him be subjected to punishment.

Ch. 34 Distribution of Goods According to Need

It is written: Distribution was made to each one as he had need (Acts 4:35). By this we do not imply that there should be favoritism — God forbid — but rather consideration for weaknesses. Whoever needs less should thank God and not be distressed, but whoever needs more should feel humble because of his weakness, not self-important because of the kindness shown him. In this way all the members will be at peace. First and foremost, there must be no word or sign of the evil

of grumbling, no manifestation of it for any reason at all. If, however, anyone is caught grumbling, let him undergo more severe discipline.

Ch. 36 The Sick Brothers

Care of the sick must rank above and before all else, so that they may truly be served as Christ, for he said: I was sick and you visited me (Matt 25:36), and, What you did for one of these least brothers you did for me (Matt 25:40). Let the sick on their part bear in mind that they are served out of honor for God, and let them not by their excessive demands distress their brothers who serve them. Still, sick brothers must be patiently borne with, because serving them leads to a greater reward. 6Consequently, the abbot should be extremely careful that they suffer no neglect.

Let a separate room be designated for the sick, and let them be served by an attendant who is God-fearing, attentive and concerned. The sick may take baths whenever it is advisable, but the healthy, and especially the young, should receive permission less readily. Moreover, to regain their strength, the sick who are very weak may eat meat, but when their health improves, they should all abstain from meat as usual.

The abbot must take the greatest care that cellarers and those who serve the sick do not neglect them, for the shortcomings of disciples are his responsibility.

Ch. 37 The Elderly and Children

Although human nature itself is inclined to be compassionate toward the old and the young, the authority of the rule should also provide for them. Since their lack of strength must always be taken into account, they should certainly not be required to follow the strictness of the rule with regard to food, but should be treated with kindly consideration and allowed to eat before the regular hours.

Ch. 38 The Reader for the Week

Reading will always accompany the meals of the brothers. The reader should not be the one who just happens to pick up the book, but someone who will read for a whole week, beginning on Sunday. After Mass and Communion, let the incoming reader ask all to pray for him so that God may shield him from the spirit of vanity. Let him begin this verse in the oratory: Lord, open my lips, and my mouth

shall proclaim your praise (Ps 50[51]:17), and let all say it three times. When he has received a blessing, he will begin his week of reading.

Let there be complete silence. No whispering, no speaking — only the reader's voice should be heard there. The brothers should by turn serve one another's needs as they eat and drink, so that no one need ask for anything. If, however, anything is required, it should be requested by an audible signal of some kind rather than by speech. No one should presume to ask a question about the reading or about anything else, lest occasion be given [to the devil] (Eph 4:27; 1 Tim 5:14). The superior, however, may wish to say a few words of instruction.

Because of holy Communion and because the fast may be too hard for him to bear, the brother who is reader for the week is to receive some diluted wine before he begins to read. Afterward he will take his meal with the weekly kitchen servers and the attendants.

Brothers will read and sing, not according to rank, but according to their ability to benefit their hearers.

Ch. 42 Silence After Compline

Monks should diligently cultivate silence at all times, but especially at night. Accordingly, this will always be the arrangement whether for fast days or for ordinary days. When there are two meals, all the monks will sit together immediately after rising from supper. Someone should read from the Conferences or the Lives of the Fathers or at any rate something else that will benefit the hearers, but not the Heptateuch or the Books of Kings, because it will not be good for those of weak understanding to hear these writings at that hour; they should be read at other times.

On fast days there is to be a short interval between Vespers and the reading of the Conferences, as we have indicated. Then let four or five pages be read, or as many as time permits. This reading period will allow for all to come together, in case any were engaged in assigned tasks. When all have assembled, they should pray Compline; and on leaving Compline, no one will be permitted to speak further. If anyone is found to transgress this rule of silence, he must be subjected to severe punishment, except on occasions when guests require attention or the abbot wishes to give someone a command, but even this is to be done with the utmost seriousness and proper restraint.

Ch. 46 Faults Committed in Other Matters

If someone commits a fault while at any work — while working in the kitchen, in the storeroom, in serving, in the bakery, in the garden, in any craft or anywhere else — either by breaking or losing something or failing in any other way in any other place, he must at once come before the abbot and community and of his own accord admit his fault and make satisfaction. If it is made known through another, he is to be subjected to a more severe correction.

When the cause of the sin lies hidden in his conscience, he is to reveal it only to the abbot or to one of the spiritual elders, who know how to heal their own wounds as well as those of others, without exposing them and making them public.

Ch. 48 The Daily Manual Labor

Idleness is the enemy of the soul. Therefore, the brothers should have specified periods for manual labor as well as for prayerful reading.

We believe that the times for both may be arranged as follows: From Easter to the first of October, they will spend their mornings after Prime till about the fourth hour at whatever work needs to be done. From the fourth hour until the time of Sext, they will devote themselves to reading. But after Sext and their meal, they may rest on their beds in complete silence; should a brother wish to read privately, let him do so, but without disturbing the others. They should say None a little early, about midway through the eighth hour, and then until Vespers they are to return to whatever work is necessary. They must not become distressed if local conditions or their poverty should force them to do the harvesting themselves. When they live by the labor of their hands, as our fathers and the apostles did, then they are really monks. Yet, all things are to be done with moderation on account of the fainthearted.

From the first of October to the beginning of Lent, the brothers ought to devote themselves to reading until the end of the second hour. At this time Terce is said and they are to work at their assigned tasks until None. At the first signal for the hour of None, all put aside their work to be ready for the second signal. Then after their meal they will devote themselves to their reading or to the psalms.

During the days of Lent, they should be free in the morning to read until the third hour, after which they will work at their assigned tasks until the end of the tenth hour. During this time of Lent each one is to

receive a book from the library, and is to read the whole of it straight through. These books are to be distributed at the beginning of Lent.

Above all, one or two seniors must surely be deputed to make the rounds of the monastery while the brothers are reading. Their duty is to see that no brother is so apathetic as to waste time or engage in idle talk to the neglect of his reading, and so not only harm himself but also distract others. If such a monk is found—God forbid—he should be reproved a first and a second time. If he does not amend, he must be subjected to the punishment of the rule as a warning to others. Further, brothers ought not to associate with one another at inappropriate times.

On Sunday all are to be engaged in reading except those who have been assigned various duties. If anyone is so remiss and indolent that he is unwilling or unable to study or to read, he is to be given some work in order that he may not be idle.

Brothers who are sick or weak should be given a type of work or craft that will keep them busy without overwhelming them or driving them away. The abbot must take their infirmities into account.

Ch. 49 The Observance of Lent

The life of a monk ought to be a continuous Lent. Since few, however, have the strength for this, we urge the entire community during these days of Lent to keep its manner of life most pure and to wash away in this holy season the negligences of other times. This we can do in a fitting manner by refusing to indulge evil habits and by devoting ourselves to prayer with tears, to reading, to compunction of heart and self-denial. During these days, therefore, we will add to the usual measure of our service something by way of private prayer and abstinence from food or drink, so that each of us will have something above the assigned measure to offer God of his own will with the joy of the Holy Spirit (1 Thess 1:6). In other words, let each one deny himself some food, drink, sleep, needless talking and idle jesting, and look forward to holy Easter with joy and spiritual longing.

Everyone should, however, make known to the abbot what he intends to do, since it ought to be done with his prayer and approval. Whatever is undertaken without the permission of the spiritual father will be reckoned as presumption and vainglory, not deserving a reward. Therefore, everything must be done with the abbot's approval.

Ch. 53 The Reception of Guests

All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ, for he himself will say: I was a stranger and you welcomed me (Matt 25:35). Proper honor must be shown to all, especially to those who share our faith (Gal 6:10) and to pilgrims.

Once a guest has been announced, the superior and the brothers are to meet him with all the courtesy of love. First of all, they are to pray together and thus be united in peace, but prayer must always precede the kiss of peace because of the delusions of the devil.

All humility should be shown in addressing a guest on arrival or departure. By a bow of the head or by a complete prostration of the body, Christ is to be adored because he is indeed welcomed in them. After the guests have been received, they should be invited to pray; then the superior or an appointed brother will sit with them. The divine law is read to the guest for his instruction, and after that every kindness is shown to him. The superior may break his fast for the sake of a guest, unless it is a day of special fast which cannot be broken. The brothers, however, observe the usual fast. The abbot shall pour water on the hands of the guests, and the abbot with the entire community shall wash their feet. After the washing they will recite this verse: God, we have received your mercy in the midst of your temple (Ps 47[48]:10).

Great care and concern are to be shown in receiving poor people and pilgrims, because in them more particularly Christ is received; our very awe of the rich guarantees them special respect.

The kitchen for the abbot and guests ought to be separate, so that guests — and monasteries are never without them — need not disturb the brothers when they present themselves at unpredictable hours. Each year, two brothers who can do the work competently are to be assigned to this kitchen. Additional help should be available when needed, so that they can perform this service without grumbling. On the other hand, when the work slackens, they are to go wherever other duties are assigned them. This consideration is not for them alone, but applies to all duties in the monastery; the brothers are to be given help when it is needed, and whenever they are free, they work wherever they are assigned.

The guest quarters are to be entrusted to a God-fearing brother. Adequate bedding should be available there. The house of God should be in the care of wise men who will manage it wisely.

No one is to speak or associate with guests unless he is bidden; however, if a brother meets or sees a guest, he is to greet him humbly, as

we have said. He asks for a blessing and continues on his way, explaining that he is not allowed to speak with a guest.

Ch. 55 The Clothing and Footwear of the Brothers

The clothing distributed to the brothers should vary according to local conditions and climate, because more is needed in cold regions and less in warmer. This is left to the abbot's discretion. We believe that for each monk a cowl and tunic will suffice in temperate regions; in winter a woolen cowl is necessary, in summer a thinner or worn one; also a scapular for work, and footwear — both sandals and shoes.

Monks must not complain about the color or coarseness of all these articles, but use what is available in the vicinity at a reasonable cost. However, the abbot ought to be concerned about the measurements of these garments that they not be too short but fitted to the wearers.

Whenever new clothing is received, the old should be returned at once and stored in a wardrobe for the poor. To provide for laundering and night wear, every monk will need two cowls and two tunics, but anything more must be taken away as superfluous. When new articles are received, the worn ones — sandals or anything old — must be returned.

Brothers going on a journey should get under-clothing from the wardrobe. On their return they are to wash it and give it back. Their cowls and tunics, too, ought to be somewhat better than those they ordinarily wear. Let them get these from the wardrobe before departing, and on returning put them back.

For bedding the monks will need a mat, a woolen blanket and a light covering as well as a pillow.

The beds are to be inspected frequently by the abbot, lest private possessions be found there. A monk discovered with anything not given him by the abbot must be subjected to very severe punishment. In order that this vice of private ownership may be completely uprooted, the abbot is to provide all things necessary: that is, cowl, tunic, sandals, shoes, belt, knife, stylus, needle, handkerchief and writing tablets. In this way every excuse of lacking some necessity will be taken away.

The abbot, however, must always bear in mind what is said in the Acts of the Apostles: Distribution was made to each one as he had need (Acts 4:35). In this way the abbot will take into account the weaknesses of the needy, not the evil will of the envious; yet in all his

judgments he must bear in mind God's retribution.

Ch. 58 The Procedure for Receiving Brothers

Do not grant newcomers to the monastic life an easy entry, but, as the Apostle says, Test the spirits to see if they are from God (1 John 4:1). Therefore, if someone comes and keeps knocking at the door, and if at the end of four or five days he has shown himself patient in bearing his harsh treatment and difficulty of entry, and has persisted in his request, then he should be allowed to enter and stay in the guest quarters for a few days. After that, he should live in the novitiate, where the novices study, eat and sleep.

A senior chosen for his skill in winning souls should be appointed to look after them with careful attention. The concern must be whether the novice truly seeks God and whether he shows eagerness for the Work of God, for obedience and for trials. The novice should be clearly told all the hardships and difficulties that will lead him to God.

If he promises perseverance in his stability, then after two months have elapsed let this rule be read straight through to him, and let him be told: "This is the law under which you are choosing to serve. If you can keep it, come in. If not, feel free to leave." If he still stands firm, he is to be taken back to the novitiate, and again thoroughly tested in all patience. After six months have passed, the rule is to be read to him, so that he may know what he is entering. If once more he stands firm, let four months go by, and then read this rule to him again. If after due reflection he promises to observe everything and to obey every command given him, let him then be received into the community. But he must be well aware that, as the law of the rule establishes, from this day he is no longer free to leave the monastery, nor to shake from his neck the yoke of the rule which, in the course of so prolonged a period of reflection, he was free either to reject or to accept.

When he is to be received, he comes before the whole community in the oratory and promises stability, fidelity to monastic life, and obedience. This is done in the presence of God and his saints to impress on the novice that if he ever acts otherwise, he will surely be condemned by the one he mocks. He states his promise in a document drawn up in the name of the saints whose relics are there, and of the abbot, who is present. The novice writes out this document himself, or if he is illiterate, then he asks someone else to write it for him, but himself puts his mark to it and with his own hand lays it on the altar. After he has put it there, the novice himself begins the verse: Receive me, Lord,

as you have promised, and I shall live; do not disappoint me in my hope (Ps 118[119]:116). The whole community repeats the verse three times, and adds “Glory be to the Father.” Then the novice prostrates himself at the feet of each monk to ask his prayers, and from that very day he is to be counted as one of the community.

If he has any possessions, he should either give them to the poor beforehand, or make a formal donation of them to the monastery, without keeping back a single thing for himself, well aware that from that day he will not have even his own body at his disposal. Then and there in the oratory, he is to be stripped of everything of his own that he is wearing and clothed in what belongs to the monastery. The clothing taken from him is to be put away and kept safely in the wardrobe, so that, should he ever agree to the devil’s suggestion and leave the monastery—which God forbid—he can be stripped of the clothing of the monastery before he is cast out. But that document of his which the abbot took from the altar should not be given back to him but kept in the monastery.

Ch. 63 Community Rank

The monks keep their rank in the monastery according to the date of their entry, the virtue of their lives, and the decision of the abbot. The abbot is not to disturb the flock entrusted to him nor make any unjust arrangements, as though he had the power to do whatever he wished. He must constantly reflect that he will have to give God an account of all his decisions and actions. Therefore, when the monks come for the kiss of peace and for Communion, when they lead psalms or stand in choir, they do so in the order decided by the abbot or already existing among them. Absolutely nowhere shall age automatically determine rank. Remember that Samuel and Daniel were still boys when they judged their elders (1 Sam 3; Dan 13:44-62). Therefore, apart from those mentioned above whom the abbot has for some overriding consideration promoted, or for a specific reason demoted, all the rest should keep to the order of their entry. For example, someone who came to the monastery at the second hour of the day must recognize that he is junior to someone who came at the first hour, regardless of age or distinction. Boys, however, are to be disciplined in everything by everyone.

The younger monks, then, must respect their seniors, and the seniors must love their juniors. When they address one another, no one should be allowed to do so simply by name; rather, the seniors call the younger monks “brother” and the younger monks call their seniors *nonnus*,

which is translated as “venerable father.” But the abbot, because we believe that he holds the place of Christ, is to be called “lord” and “abbot,” not for any claim of his own, but out of honor and love for Christ. He, for his part, must reflect on this, and in his behavior show himself worthy of such honor.

Wherever brothers meet, the junior asks his senior for a blessing. When an older monk comes by, the younger rises and offers him a seat, and does not presume to sit down unless the older bids him. In this way, they do what the words of Scripture say: They should each try to be the first to show respect to the other (Rom 12:10).

In the oratory and at table, small boys and youths are kept in rank and under discipline. Outside or anywhere else, they should be supervised and controlled until they are old enough to be responsible.

Ch. 64 The Election of an Abbot

In choosing an abbot, the guiding principle should always be that the man placed in office be the one selected either by the whole community acting unanimously in the fear of God, or by some part of the community, no matter how small, which possesses sounder judgment. Goodness of life and wisdom in teaching must be the criteria for choosing the one to be made abbot, even if he is the last in community rank.

May God forbid that a whole community should conspire to elect a man who goes along with its own evil ways. But if it does, and if the bishop of the diocese or the abbots or Christians in the area come to know of these evil ways to any extent, they must block the success of this wicked conspiracy, and set a worthy steward in charge of God’s house. They may be sure that they will receive a generous reward for this, if they do it with pure motives and zeal for God’s honor. Conversely, they may be equally sure that to neglect to do so is sinful.

Once in office, the abbot must keep constantly in mind the nature of the burden he has received, and remember to whom he will have to give an account of his stewardship (Luke 16:2). Let him recognize that his goal must be profit for the monks, not preeminence for himself. He ought, therefore, to be learned in divine law, so that he has a treasury of knowledge from which he can bring out what is new and what is old (Matt 13:52). He must be chaste, temperate and merciful. He should always let mercy triumph over judgment (Jas 2:13) so that he too may win mercy. He must hate faults but love the brothers. When he must punish them, he should use prudence and avoid extremes; otherwise, by rubbing too hard to remove the rust, he may break the vessel. He

is to distrust his own frailty and remember not to crush the bruised reed (Isa 42:3). By this we do not mean that he should allow faults to flourish, but rather, as we have already said, he should prune them away with prudence and love as he sees best for each individual. Let him strive to be loved rather than feared.

Excitable, anxious, extreme, obstinate, jealous or oversuspicious he must not be. Such a man is never at rest. Instead, he must show forethought and consideration in his orders, and whether the task he assigns concerns God or the world, he should be discerning and moderate, bearing in mind the discretion of holy Jacob, who said: If I drive my flocks too hard, they will all die in a single day (Gen 33:13). Therefore, drawing on this and other examples of discretion, the mother of virtues, he must so arrange everything that the strong have something to yearn for and the weak nothing to run from.

He must, above all, keep this rule in every particular, so that when he has ministered well he will hear from the Lord what that good servant heard who gave his fellow servants grain at the proper time: I tell you solemnly, he said, he sets him over all his possessions (Matt 24:47).

Ch. 66 The Porter of the Monastery

At the door of the monastery, place a sensible old man who knows how to take a message and deliver a reply, and whose age keeps him from roaming about. This porter will need a room near the entrance so that visitors will always find him there to answer them. As soon as anyone knocks, or a poor man calls out, he replies, "Thanks be to God" or "Your blessing, please"; then, with all the gentleness that comes from the fear of God, he provides a prompt answer with the warmth of love. Let the porter be given one of the younger brothers if he needs help.

The monastery should, if possible, be so constructed that within it all necessities, such as water, mill and garden are contained, and the various crafts are practiced. Then there will be no need for the monks to roam outside, because this is not at all good for their souls.

We wish this rule to be read often in the community, so that none of the brothers can offer the excuse of ignorance.

Ch. 67 Brothers Sent on a Journey

Brothers sent on a journey will ask the abbot and community to pray for them. All absent brothers should always be remembered at the closing prayer of the Work of God. When they come back from a

journey, they should, on the very day of their return, lie face down on the floor of the oratory at the conclusion of each of the customary hours of the Work of God. They ask the prayers of all for their faults, in case they may have been caught off guard on the way by seeing some evil thing or hearing some idle talk.

No one should presume to relate to anyone else what he saw or heard outside the monastery, because that causes the greatest harm. If anyone does so presume, he shall be subjected to the punishment of the rule. So too shall anyone who presumes to leave the enclosure of the monastery, or go anywhere, or do anything at all, however small, without the abbot's order.

Ch. 68 Assignment of Impossible Tasks to a Brother

A brother may be assigned a burdensome task or something he cannot do. If so, he should, with complete gentleness and obedience, accept the order given him. Should he see, however, that the weight of the burden is altogether too much for his strength, then he should choose the appropriate moment and explain patiently to his superior the reasons why he cannot perform the task. This he ought to do without pride, obstinacy or refusal. If after the explanation the superior is still determined to hold to his original order, then the junior must recognize that this is best for him. Trusting in God's help, he must in love obey.

Ch. 71 Mutual Obedience

Obedience is a blessing to be shown by all, not only to the abbot but also to one another as brothers, since we know that it is by this way of obedience that we go to God. Therefore, although orders of the abbot or of the priors appointed by him take precedence, and no unofficial order may supersede them, in every other instance younger monks should obey their seniors with all love and concern. Anyone found objecting to this should be reprovved.

If a monk is reprovved in any way by his abbot or by one of his seniors, even for some very small matter, or if he gets the impression that one of his seniors is angry or disturbed with him, however slightly, he must, then and there without delay, cast himself on the ground at the other's feet to make satisfaction, and lie there until the disturbance is calmed by a blessing. Anyone who refuses to do this should be subjected to corporal punishment or, if he is stubborn, should be expelled from the monastery.

Ch. 72 The Good Zeal of Monks

Just as there is a wicked zeal of bitterness which separates from God and leads to hell, so there is a good zeal which separates from evil and leads to God and everlasting life. This, then, is the good zeal which monks must foster with fervent love: They should each try to be the first to show respect to the other (Rom 12:10), supporting with the greatest patience one another's weaknesses of body or behavior, and earnestly competing in obedience to one another. No one is to pursue what he judges better for himself, but instead, what he judges better for someone else. To their fellow monks they show the pure love of brothers; to God, loving fear; to their abbot, unfeigned and humble love. Let them prefer nothing whatever to Christ, and may he bring us all together to everlasting life.

Ch. 73 This Rule Only a Beginning of Perfection

The reason we have written this rule is that, by observing it in monasteries, we can show that we have some degree of virtue and the beginnings of monastic life. But for anyone hastening on to the perfection of monastic life, there are the teachings of the holy Fathers, the observance of which will lead him to the very heights of perfection. What page, what passage of the inspired books of the Old and New Testaments is not the truest of guides for human life? What book of the holy catholic Fathers does not resoundingly summon us along the true way to reach the Creator? Then, besides the Conferences of the Fathers, their Institutes and their Lives there is also the rule of our holy father Basil. For observant and obedient monks, all these are nothing less than tools for the cultivation of virtues; but as for us, they make us blush for shame at being so slothful, so unobservant, so negligent. Are you hastening toward your heavenly home? Then with Christ's help, keep this little rule that we have written for beginners. After that, you can set out for the loftier summits of the teaching and virtues we mentioned above, and under God's protection you will reach them. Amen.

al-Ghazālī,
Deliverance from Error

One power to fill the vacuum left by Roman collapse was Islam, which surpassed Rome in forging the first empire to fully span the ancient Near East, as well as swallowing substantial territory that had once belonged to the Western Roman Empire. Indeed, no empire of the ancient world would extend as far. Only Cyrus (with his Achaemenid Empire) and Alexander (who destroyed that first Persian Empire) had accomplished anything approaching such a geopolitical unity of “East” and “West.” And it united this empire not only politically—but also culturally, in terms of a new religion.

No other regime of antiquity realized ecumenic consciousness so successfully. The Christianization of Rome prepared the way in that it involved a monotheistic funding of monarchy, which intensified a preceding tendency to sacralize the emperor reminiscent of ancient Near Eastern political mythology—so different from the stand taken by Athens and other Greek city-states in the name of liberty against the imperial power of Persia. The Emperor Diocletian’s resolution of Rome’s Crisis of the Third Century in the naked acknowledgment that the imperial regime is not a magistracy (the Principate) but rather a Dominate is, ironically, ratified by the ideology of the Christian emperors who followed. The caliphs were able to step into a role prepared for them.

Muhammad (c.570-632) founded Islam (“submission” to the one God) based on visions he received from the archangel Gabriel. The Quran (“recitation”) would be a verbatim record of words directly from God. These revelations disturbed the polytheist interests in his hometown of Mecca, so he fled to Medina. This event in 622 constitutes the beginning of the Islamic calendar. In 629, he led an army which captured Mecca. Muhammad united the tribes of the Arabian Peninsula, and Islam rapidly expanded through conquest.

The Umayyad Caliphate (661-750), when the political-religious authority of the caliph was maximalized, and the first centuries of the Abbasid Caliphate (750-1517) saw Islamic power at its height. Within the latter falls what is called the Islamic Golden Age, from the establishment of the House of Wisdom in the late eighth century to the sack of Baghdad (and the destruction of that House) by the Mongols in 1258—though already by the end of the eighth century, the Muslim world was fragmenting into autonomous dynastic states. The Abbasid caliphs moved the capital from Damascus to a newly constructed city in the ancient land of Mesopotamia: Baghdad. In the Persian orbit, the Abbasids dispersed power more broadly (into new administrative structures, beyond Arab kin groups). With the

House of Wisdom (a grand library, research center, and academy), Caliph Harun al-Rashid initiated a translation movement around 786: a massive effort to gather every intellectually significant manuscript or book in the world and translate them into Arabic, an undertaking dependent on the crucial technological advance of papermaking, presumably learned from the Chinese. Decisive for the future of Western Civilization, the texts to be translated included the riches of classical Greece, as well as of Hellenized and Syriac Christianity. Al-Rashid's son, al-Mamun, devoted even more resources to this project as caliph. The population of the Islamic world was still majority Christian at this time, and Christian translators were employed in this great program. Ibn Ishāq, an Arab Nestorian Christian, was the most important leader of the translation effort. He and his team translated Galen, Hippocrates, Plato's *Republic*, and most of Aristotle. Western progress is indebted to this work, and on Muslim advances in science, math, medicine, and philosophy.

Deliverance from Error is the spiritual autobiography of al-Ghazālī (c.1058-1111), the most influential thinker of medieval Islam, still considered by Muslims to be one of their greatest religious thinkers (indeed, second only to Muhammad). He was learned in philosophy, but deeply suspicious of philosophy's effect on religious belief—comparison with Saint Augustine would not be out of order.

He did, however, secure the place of Aristotelian logic in Islamic religious education. Born in Persia, at a time when the Abbasid Caliphate had been commandeered by the Seljuk Turks, al-Ghazālī became an acclaimed professor at Nizāmīyyah Academy in Baghdad.

But a few years later, an intellectual crisis of doubt overtook him, and he gave it all up, his wealth included, becoming a wandering ascetic. He made the Hajj, lived in Damascus, and visited Jerusalem, finally receiving Sufi mystical illumination. In this work, al-Ghazālī argues for the superiority of the way of life he's found: mysticism—as opposed to a somewhat philosophical theology (*kalām*), exclusivist-insider religious instruction (the allegorical method of Ismā'īlism), and philosophy (*falsafa*)—the great practitioners of which up to that time in the Muslim world were al-Fārābī and Avicenna, whose metaphysics had an immense effect on scholasticism.

**DELIVERANCE FROM ERROR AND ATTACHMENT
TO THE LORD OF MIGHT AND MAJESTY**

In the name of God, the Merciful and Compassionate

I. INTRODUCTION

Praise be to Him with Whose praise every message and every discourse commences. And blessings be upon Muhammad the Chosen, the Prophet and Messenger, and on his house and his Companions, who guide men away from error.

You have asked me my brother in religion, to show you the aims and inmost nature of the sciences and the perplexing depths of the religious systems. You have begged me to relate to you the difficulties I encountered in my attempt to extricate the truth from the confusion of contending sects and to distinguish the different ways and methods, and the venture I made in climbing from the plain of naive and second-hand belief (*taqlīd*) to the peak of direct vision. You want me to describe, firstly what profit I derived from the science of theology (*kalām*) secondly, what I disapprove of in the methods of the party of ta'lim (authoritative instruction), who restrict the apprehension of truth to the blind following (*taqlīd*) of the Imam, thirdly, what I rejected of the methods of philosophy, and lastly, what I approved in the Sufi way of life. You would know, too, what essential truths became clear to me in my manifold investigations into the doctrines held by men, why I gave up teaching in Baghdad although I had many students, and why I returned to it at Naysābūr (Nishāpūr) after a long interval. I am proceeding to answer your request, for I recognise that your desire is genuine. In this I seek the help of God and trust in Him; I ask His succour and take refuge with Him.

You must know— may God most high perfect you in the right way and soften your hearts to receive the truth— that the different religious observances and religious communities of the human race and likewise the different theological systems of the religious leaders, with all the multiplicity of sects and variety of practices, constitute ocean depths in which the majority drown and only a minority reach safety. Each separate group thinks that it alone is saved, and 'each party is rejoicing in what they have' (Q. 23, 55; 30, 31). This is what was foretold by the prince of the Messengers (God bless him), who is true and trustworthy, when he said, 'My community will be split up into seventy-three sects, and but one of them is saved'; and what he foretold has indeed almost come about.

From my early youth, since I attained the age of puberty before I was

twenty, until the present time when I am over fifty, I have ever recklessly launched out into the midst of these ocean depths, I have ever bravely embarked on this open sea, throwing aside all craven caution; I have poked into every dark recess, I have made an assault on every problem, I have plunged into every abyss, I have scrutinized the creed of every sect, I have tried to lay bare the inmost doctrines of every community. All this have I done that I might distinguish between true and false, between sound tradition and heretical innovation. Whenever I meet one of the Bātinīyah, I like to study his creed; whenever I meet one of the Zāhirīyah, I want to know the essentials of his belief. If it is a philosopher, I try to become acquainted with the essence of his philosophy; if a scholastic theologian I busy myself in examining his theological reasoning; if a Sufi, I yearn to fathom the secret of his mysticism; if an ascetic (*muta'abbid*), I investigate the basis of his ascetic practices; if one of the Zanādiqah or Mu'attilah, I look beneath the surface to discover the reasons for his bold adoption of such a creed.

To thirst after a comprehension of things as they really are was my habit and custom from a very early age. It was instinctive with me, a part of my God-given nature, a matter of temperament and not of my choice or contriving. Consequently as I drew near the age of adolescence the bonds of mere authority (*taqlīd*) ceased to hold me and inherited beliefs lost their grip upon me, for I saw that Christian youths always grew up to be Christians, Jewish youths to be Jews and Muslim youths to be Muslims. I heard, too, the Tradition related of the Prophet of God according to which he said: 'Everyone who is born is born with a sound nature; it is his parents who make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian'. My inmost being was moved to discover what this original nature really was and what the beliefs derived from the authority of parents and teachers really were. The attempt to distinguish between these authority-based opinions and their principles developed the mind, for in distinguishing the true in them from the false differences appeared.

I therefore said within myself: 'To begin with, what I am looking for is knowledge of what things really are, so I must undoubtedly try to find what knowledge really is.' It was plain to me that sure and certain knowledge is that knowledge in which the object is disclosed in such a fashion that no doubt remains along with it, that no possibility of error or illusion accompanies it, and that the mind cannot even entertain such a supposition. Certain knowledge must also be infallible; and this infallibility or security from error is such that no attempt to show the falsity of the knowledge can occasion doubt or denial, even though the attempt is made by someone who turns stones into gold or a rod into

a serpent. Thus, I know that ten is more than three. Let us suppose that someone says to me: 'No, three is more than ten, and in proof of that I shall change this rod into a serpent'; and let us suppose that he actually changes the rod into a serpent and that I witness him doing so. No doubts about what I know are raised in me because of this. The only result is that I wonder precisely how he is able to produce this change. Of doubt about my knowledge there is no trace.

After these reflections I knew that whatever I do not know in this fashion and with this mode of certainty is not reliable and infallible knowledge; and knowledge that is not infallible is not certain knowledge.

II. PRELIMINARIES: SCEPTICISM AND THE DENIAL OF ALL KNOWLEDGE

Thereupon I investigated the various kinds of knowledge I had, and found myself destitute of all knowledge with this characteristic of infallibility except in the case of sense-perception and necessary truths. So I said: 'Now that despair has come over me, there is no point in taking problems except in the sphere of what is self-evident, namely, necessary truths and the affirmations of the senses. I must first bring these to be judged in order that I may be certain on this matter. Is my reliance on sense-perception and my trust in the soundness of necessary truths of the same kind as my previous trust in the beliefs I had merely taken over from others and as the trust most men have in the results of thinking? Or is it a justified trust that is in no danger of being betrayed or destroyed?'

I proceeded therefore with extreme earnestness to reflect on sense-perception and on necessary truths, to see whether I could make myself doubt them. The outcome of this protracted effort to induce doubt was that I could no longer trust sense-perception either. Doubt began to spread here and say: 'From where does The interpretation of this tradition has been much discussed; cp. art. *Fitra* by D. B. Macdonald in *EI*. The above meaning appears to be that adopted by al-Ghazālī. this reliance on sense-perception come? The most powerful sense is that of sight. Yet when it looks at the shadow (sc. of a stick or the gnomon of a sundial), it sees it standing still, and judges that there is no motion. Then by experiment and observation after an hour it knows that the shadow is moving and, moreover, that it is moving not by fits and starts but gradually and steadily by infinitely small distances in such a way that it is never in a state of rest. Again, it looks at the heavenly body (sc. the sun) and sees it small, the size of

a shilling; yet geometrical computations show that it is greater than the earth in size’.

In this and similar cases of sense-perception the sense as judge forms his judgements, but another judge, the intellect, shows him to be wrong in such a way that the charge of falsity cannot be rebutted.

To this I said: ‘My reliance on sense-perception also has been destroyed. Perhaps only those intellectual truths which are first principles (or derived from first principles) are to be relied upon, such as the assertion that ten are more than three, that the same thing cannot be both affirmed and denied at one time, that one thing is not both generated in time and eternal, nor both existent and non-existent, nor both necessary and impossible’.

Sense-perception replied: ‘Do you not expect that your reliance on intellectual truths will fare like your reliance on sense-perception? You used to trust in me; then along came the intellect-judge and proved me wrong; if it were not for the intellect-judge you would have continued to regard me as true. Perhaps behind intellectual apprehension there is another judge who, if he manifests himself, will show the falsity of intellect in its judging, just as, when intellect manifested itself, it showed the falsity of sense in its judging. The fact that such a supra-intellectual apprehension has not manifested itself is no proof that it is impossible’.

My ego hesitated a little about the reply to that, and sense-perception heightened the difficulty by referring to dreams. ‘Do you not see’, it said, ‘how, when you are asleep you believe things and imagine circumstances, holding them to be stable and enduring, and, so long as you are in that dream-condition, have no doubts about them? And is it not the case that when you awake you know that all you have imagined and believed is unfounded and ineffectual? Why then are you confident that all your waking beliefs, whether from sense or intellect, are genuine? They are true in respect of your present state; but it is possible that a state will come upon you whose relation to your waking consciousness is analogous to the relation of the latter to dreaming. In comparison with this state your waking consciousness would be like dreaming! When you have entered into this state, you will be certain that all the suppositions of your intellect are empty imaginings. It may be that that state is what the Sufis claim as their special ‘state’ (sc. mystic union or ecstasy), for they consider that in their ‘states’ (or ecstasies), which occur when they have withdrawn into themselves and are absent from their senses, they witness states (or circumstances) which do not tally with these principles of the intellect. Perhaps that

'state' is death; for the Messenger of God (God bless and preserve him) says: 'The people are dreaming; when they die, they become awake'. So perhaps life in this world is a dream by comparison with the world to come; and when a man dies, things come to appear differently to him from what he now beholds, and at the same time the words are addressed to him: 'We have taken off thee thy covering, and thy sight today is sharp' (Q. 50, 21).

When these thoughts had occurred to me and penetrated my being, I tried to find some way of treating my unhealthy condition; but it was not easy. Such ideas can only be repelled by demonstration; but a demonstration needs a combination of first principles; since this is not admitted, however, it is impossible to make the demonstration. The disease was baffling, and lasted almost two months, during which I was a sceptic in fact though not in theory nor in outward expression. At length God cured me of the malady; my being was restored to health and an even balance; the necessary truths of the intellect became once more accepted, as I regained confidence in their certain and trustworthy character.

This did not come about by systematic demonstration or marshalled argument, but by a light which God most high cast into my breast. That light is the key to the greater part of knowledge. Whoever thinks that the understanding of things Divine rests upon strict proofs has in his thought narrowed down the wideness of God's mercy. When the Messenger of God (peace be upon him) was asked about 'enlarging' (*sharh*) and its meaning in the verse, 'Whenever God wills to guide a man, He enlarges his breast for islām (i.e. surrender to God)' (Q. 6, 125), he said, 'It is a light which God most high casts into the heart'. When asked, 'What is the sign of it?', he said, 'Withdrawal from the mansion of deception and return to the mansion of eternity.' It was about this light that Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, 'God created the creatures in darkness, and then sprinkled upon them some of His light.' From that light must be sought an intuitive understanding of things Divine. That light at certain times gushes from the spring of Divine generosity, and for it one must watch and wait— as Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: 'In the days of your age your Lord has gusts of favour; then place yourselves in the way of them'.

The point of these accounts is that the task is perfectly fulfilled when the quest is prosecuted up to the stage of seeking what is not sought (but stops short of that). For first principles are not sought, since they are present and to hand; and if what is present is sought for, it becomes hidden and lost. When, however, a man seeks what is sought (and that only), he is not accused of falling short in the seeking of what is sought.

III. THE CLASSES OF SEEKERS

When God by His grace and abundant generosity cured me of this disease, I came to regard the various seekers (sc. after truth) as comprising four groups:—

(1) the *Theologians* (*mutakallimūn*), who claim that they fire the exponents of thought and intellectual speculation;

(2) the *Bātinīyah*, who consider that they, as the party of ‘authoritative instruction’ (ta’lim), alone derive truth from the infallible imam;

(3) the *Philosophers*, who regard themselves as the exponents of logic and demonstration;

(4) the *Sufis* or *Mystics*, who claim that they alone enter into the ‘presence’ (sc. of God), and possess vision and intuitive understanding.

I said within myself: ‘The truth cannot be outside these four classes. These are the people who tread the paths of the quest for truth. If the truth is not with them, no point remains in trying to apprehend the truth. There is certainly no point in trying to return to the level of naive and derivative belief (taqlid) once it has been left., since a condition of being at such a level is that one should not know one is there; when a man comes to know that, the glass of his naive beliefs is broken. This is a breakage which cannot be mended, a breakage not to be repaired by patching or by assembling of fragments. The glass must be melted once again in the furnace for a new start, and out of it another fresh vessel formed’.

I now hastened to follow out these four ways and investigate what these groups had achieved, commencing with the science of theology and then taking the way of philosophy, the ‘authoritative instruction’ of the Bātinīyah, and the way of mysticism, in that order.

1. *The Science of Theology: its Aims and Achievements.*

I commenced, then, with the science of Theology (‘ilm al-kalām), and obtained a thorough grasp of it. I read the books of sound theologians and myself wrote some books on the subject. But it was a science, I found, which, though attaining its own aim, did not attain mine. Its aim was merely to preserve the creed of orthodoxy and to defend it against the deviations of heretics. Now God sent to His servants by the mouth of His messenger, in the Qur’an and Traditions, a creed which is the truth and whose contents are the basis of man’s welfare

in both religious and secular affairs. But Satan too sent, in the suggestions of heretics, things contrary to orthodoxy; men tended to accept his suggestions and almost corrupted the true creed for its adherents. So God brought into being the class of theologians, and moved them to support traditional orthodoxy with the weapon of systematic argument by laying bare the confused doctrines invented by the heretics at variance with traditional orthodoxy. This is the origin of theology and theologians.

In due course a group of theologians performed the task to which God invited them; they successfully preserved orthodoxy, defended the creed received from the prophetic source and rectified heretical innovations. Nevertheless in so doing they based their arguments on premises which they took from their opponents and which they were compelled to admit by naive belief (*taqlīd*), or the consensus of the community, or bare acceptance of Qur'an and Traditions. For the most part their efforts were devoted to making explicit the contradictions of their opponents and criticizing them in respect of the logical consequences of what they admitted.

This was of little use in the case of one who admitted nothing at all save logically necessary truths. Theology was not adequate to my case and was unable to cure the malady of which I complained. It is true that, when theology appeared as a recognized discipline and much effort had been expended in it over a considerable period of time, the theologians, becoming very earnest in their endeavours to defend orthodoxy by the study of what things really are, embarked on a study of substances and accidents with their nature and properties. But, since that was not the aim of their science, they did not deal with the question thoroughly in their thinking and consequently did not arrive at results sufficient to dispel universally the darkness of confusion due to the different views of men. I do not exclude the possibility that for others than myself these results have been sufficient; indeed, I do not doubt that this has been so for quite a number. But these results were mingled with naive belief in certain matters which are not included among first principles.

My purpose here, however, is to describe my own case, not to disparage those who sought a remedy thereby, for the healing drugs vary with the disease. How often one sick man's medicine proves to be another's poison

2. Philosophy.

After I had done with theology I started on philosophy. I was convinced that a man cannot grasp what is defective in any of the sciences unless he has so complete a grasp of the science in question that he

equals its most learned exponents in the appreciation of its fundamental principles, and even goes beyond and surpasses them, probing into some of the tangles and profundities which the very professors of the science have neglected. Then and only then is it possible that what he has to assert about its defects is true.

So far as I could see none of the doctors of Islam had devoted thought and attention to philosophy. In their writings none of the theologians engaged in polemic against the philosophers, apart from obscure and scattered utterances so plainly erroneous and inconsistent that no person of ordinary intelligence would be likely to be deceived, far less one versed in the sciences.

I realized that to refute a system before understanding it and becoming acquainted with its depths is to act blindly. I therefore set out in all earnestness to acquire a knowledge of philosophy from books, by private study without the help of an instructor. I made progress towards this aim during my hours of free time after teaching in the religious sciences and writing, for at this period I was burdened with the teaching and instruction of three hundred students in Baghdad. By my solitary reading during the hours thus snatched God brought me in less than two years to a complete understanding of the sciences of the philosophers. Thereafter I continued to reflect assiduously for nearly a year on what I had assimilated, going over it in my mind again and again and probing its tangled depths, until I comprehended surely and certainly how far it was deceitful and confusing and how far true and a representation of reality.

Hear now an account of this discipline and of the achievement of the sciences it comprises. There are various schools of philosophers, I perceived, and their sciences are divided into various branches; but throughout their numerous schools they suffer from the defect of being infidels and irreligious men, even although of the different groups of philosophers older and most ancient, earlier and more recent some are much closer to the truth than others.

A. The schools of philosophers, and how the defect of unbelief affects them all.

The many philosophical sects and systems constitute three main groups: the Materialists (*Dahrīyūn*), the Naturalists (*Tabī'īyūn*) and the Theists (*Ilāhīyūn*).

The first group, the *Materialists*, are among the earliest philosophers. They deny the Creator and Disposer of the world, omniscient and omnipotent, and consider that the world has everlastingly existed just

as it is, of itself and without a creator, and that everlastingly animals have come from seed and seed from animals; thus it was and thus it will ever be. These are the *Zanādiqah* or irreligious people.

The second group, the *Naturalists*, are a body of philosophers who have engaged in manifold researches into the world of nature and the marvels of animals and plants and have expended much effort in the science of dissecting the organs of animals. They see there sufficient of the wonders of God's creation and the inventions of His wisdom to compel them to acknowledge a wise Creator Who is aware of the aims and purposes of things. No one can make a careful study of anatomy and the wonderful uses of the members and organs without attaining to the necessary knowledge that there is a perfection in the order which the framer gave to the animal frame, and especially to that of man.

Yet these philosophers, immersed in their researches into nature, take the view that the equal balance of the temperament has great influence in constituting the powers of animals. They hold that even the intellectual power in man is dependent on the temperament, so that as the temperament is corrupted intellect also is corrupted and the man ceases to exist. Further when he ceases to exist, it is unthinkable in their opinion that the non-existent should return to existence. Thus it is their view that the soul dies and does not return to life, and they deny the future life heaven, hell resurrection and judgment; there does not remain, they hold, any reward for obedience or any punishment for sin. With the curb removed they give way to a bestial indulgence of their appetites.

These are also irreligious for the basis of faith is faith in God and in the Last Day, and these, though believing in God and His attributes, deny the Last Day.

The third group, the *Theists*, are the more modern philosophers and include Socrates, his pupil Plato, and the latter's pupil Aristotle. It was Aristotle who systematized logic for them and organized the sciences, securing a higher degree of accuracy and bringing them to maturity.

The Theists in general attacked the two previous groups, the Materialists and the Naturalists, and exposed their defects so effectively that others were relieved of the task. 'And God relieved the believers of fighting' (Q. 33, 25) through their mutual combat. Aristotle, moreover, attacked his predecessors among the Theistic philosophers, especially Plato and Socrates, and went so far in his criticisms that he separated himself from them all. Yet he too retained a residue of their unbelief and heresy from which he did not manage to free him-

self. We must therefore reckon as unbelievers both these philosophers themselves and their followers among the Islamic philosophers, such as Ibn Sīna, al-Fārābī and others; in transmitting the philosophy of Aristotle, however, none of the Islamic philosophers has accomplished anything comparable to the achievements of the two men named. The translations of others are marked by disorder and confusion, which so perplex the understanding of the student that he fails to comprehend; and if a thing is not comprehended how can it be either refuted or accepted?

All that, in our view, genuinely is part of the philosophy of Aristotle, as these men have transmitted it, falls under three heads: (1) what must be counted as unbelief; (2) what must be counted as heresy; (3) what is not to be denied at all. Let us proceed, then, to the details.

B. The Various Philosophical Sciences.

For our present purpose the philosophical sciences are six in number: mathematics, logic, natural science, theology, politics, ethics.

1. MATHEMATICS. This embraces arithmetic, plane geometry and solid geometry. None of its results are connected with religious matters, either to deny or to affirm them. They are matters of demonstration which it is impossible to deny once they have been understood and apprehended. Nevertheless there are two drawbacks which arise from mathematics.

(a) The first is that every student of mathematics admires its precision and the clarity of its demonstrations. This leads him to believe in the philosophers and to think that all their sciences resemble this one in clarity and demonstrative cogency. Further, he has already heard the accounts on everyone's lips of their unbelief, their denial of God's attributes, and their contempt for revealed truth; he becomes an unbeliever merely by accepting them as authorities (*bi'l-taqlīd al-mahd*), and says to himself, 'If religion were true, it would not have escaped the notice of these men since they are so precise in this science'. Thus, after becoming acquainted by hearsay with their unbelief and denial of religion, he draws the conclusion that the truth is the denial and rejection of religion. How many have I seen who err from the truth because of this high opinion of the philosophers and without any other basis!

Against them one may argue: 'The man who excels in one art does not necessarily excel in every art. It is not necessary that the man who excels in law and theology should excel in medicine, nor that the man who is ignorant of intellectual speculations should be ignorant of

grammar. Rather, every art has people who have obtained excellence and preeminence in it, even though stupidity and ignorance may characterize them in other arts. The arguments in elementary matters of mathematics are demonstrative whereas those in theology (or metaphysics) are based on conjecture. This point is familiar only to those who have studied the matter deeply for themselves’.

If such a person is fixed in this belief which he has chosen out of respect for authority (*taqlīd*), he is not moved by this argument but is carried by strength of passion, love of vanity and the desire to be thought clever to persist in his good opinion of the philosophers with regard to all the sciences.

This is a great drawback, and because of it those who devote themselves eagerly to the mathematical sciences ought to be restrained. Even if their subject-matter is not relevant to religion, yet, since they belong to the foundations of the philosophical sciences, the student is infected with the evil and corruption of the philosophers. Few there are who devote themselves to this study without being stripped of religion and having the bridle of godly fear removed from their heads.

(b) The second drawback arises from the man who is loyal to Islam but ignorant. He thinks that religion must be defended by rejecting every science connected with the philosophers, and so rejects all their sciences and accuses them of ignorance therein. He even rejects their theory of the eclipse of sun and moon, considering that what they say is contrary to revelation. When that view is thus attacked, someone hears who has knowledge of such matters by apodeictic demonstration. He does not doubt his demonstration, but, believing that Islam is based on ignorance and the denial of apodeictic proof, grows in love for philosophy and hatred for Islam.

A grievous crime indeed against religion has been committed by the man who imagines that Islam is defended by the denial of the mathematical sciences, seeing that there is nothing in revealed truth opposed to these sciences by way of either negation or affirmation, and nothing in these sciences opposed to the truths of religion. Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, ‘The sun and the moon are two of the signs of God; they are not eclipsed for anyone’s death nor for his life; if you see such an event, take refuge in the recollection of God (most high) and in prayer’. There is nothing here obliging us to deny the science of arithmetic which informs us specifically of the orbits of sun and moon, and their conjunction and opposition. (The further saying of Muhammad (peace be upon him), ‘When God manifests Himself to a thing, it submits to Him’, is an addition which does not occur at all

in the collections of sound Traditions.)

This is the character of mathematics and its drawbacks.

2. LOGIC. Nothing in logic is relevant to religion by way of denial or affirmation. Logic is the study of the methods of demonstration and of forming syllogisms, of the conditions for the premises of proofs, of the manner of combining the premises, of the conditions for sound definition and the manner of ordering it. Knowledge comprises (a) the concept (*tasawwur*), which is apprehended by definition, and (b) the assertion or judgement (*tasdiq*), which is apprehended by proof. There is nothing here which requires to be denied. Matters of this kind are actually mentioned by the theologians and speculative thinkers in connection with the topic of demonstrations. The philosophers differ from these only in the expressions and technical terms they employ and in their greater elaboration of the explanations and classifications. An example of this is their proposition, 'If it is true that all A is B, then it follows that some B is A', that is, 'If it is true that all men are animals, then it follows that some animals are men'. They express this by saying that 'the universal *affirmative* proposition has as its converse a particular affirmative proposition'. What connection has this with the essentials of religion, that it should be denied or rejected? If such a denial is made, the only effect upon the logicians is to impair their belief in the intelligence of the man who made the denial and, what is worse, in his religion, inasmuch as he considers that it rests on such denials. Moreover, there is a type of mistake into which students of logic are liable to fall. They draw up a list of the conditions to be fulfilled by demonstration, which are known without fail to produce certainty. When, however, they come at length to treat 'of religious questions, not merely are they unable to satisfy these conditions, but they admit an extreme degree of relaxation (sc. of their standards of proof). Frequently, too, the student who admires logic and sees its clarity, imagines that the infidel doctrines attributed to the philosophers are supported by similar demonstrations, and hastens into unbelief before reaching the theological (or metaphysical) sciences. Thus this drawback too leads to unbelief.

3. NATURAL SCIENCE OR PHYSICS. This is the investigation of the sphere of the heavens together with the heavenly bodies, and of what is beneath the heavens, both simple bodies like water, air, earth, fire, and composite bodies like animals, plants and minerals, and also of the causes of their changes, transformations and combinations. This is similar to the investigation by medicine of the human body with its principal and subordinate organs, and of the causes of the changes of temperament. Just as it is not a condition of religion to reject medical

science, so likewise the rejection of natural science is not one of its conditions, except with regard to particular points which I enumerate in my book, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*. Any other points on which a different view has to be taken from the philosophers are shown by reflection to be implied in those mentioned. The basis of all these objections is the recognition that nature is in subjection to God most high, not acting of itself but serving as an instrument in the hands of its Creator. Sun and moon, stars and elements, are in subjection to His command. There is none of them whose activity is produced by or proceeds from its own essence.

4. THEOLOGY OR METAPHYSICS. Here occur most of the errors of the philosophers. They are unable to satisfy the conditions of proof they lay down in logic, and consequently differ much from one another here.

The views of Aristotle, as expounded by al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīna, are close to those of the Islamic writers. All their errors are comprised under twenty heads, on three of which they must be reckoned infidels and on seventeen heretics. It was to show the falsity of their views on these twenty points that I composed *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*. The three points in which they differ from all the Muslims are as follows:

(a) They say that for bodies there is no resurrection; it is bare spirits which are rewarded or punished; and the rewards and punishments are spiritual, not bodily. They certainly speak truth in affirming the spiritual ones, since these do exist as well; but they speak falsely in denying the bodily ones and in their pronouncements disbelieve the revelation.

(b) They say that God knows universals but not particulars. This too is plain unbelief. The truth is that 'there does not escape Him the weight of an atom in the heavens or in the earth' (Q. 34, 3).

(c) They say that the world is everlasting, without beginning. But no Muslim has adopted any such view on this question.

On the further points— their denial of the attributes of God, their doctrine that God knows by His essence and not by a knowledge which is over and above His essence, and the like— their position approximates to that of the Mu'tazilah; and the Mu'tazilah must not be accounted infidels because of such matters. In my book, *The Decisive Criterion for distinguishing Islam from Heresy*, I have presented the grounds for regarding as corrupt the opinion of those who hastily pronounce a man an infidel if he deviates from their own system of doctrine.

5. POLITICS. All their discussion of this is based on considerations of worldly and governmental advantages. These they borrow from the Divine scriptures revealed through the prophets and from the maxims handed down from the saints of old.

6. ETHICS. Their whole discussion of ethics consists in defining the characteristics and moral constitution of the soul and enumerating the various types of soul and the method of moderating and controlling them. This they borrow from the teaching of the mystics, those men of piety whose chief occupation is to meditate upon God, to oppose the passions, and to walk in the way leading to God by withdrawing from worldly pleasure. In their spiritual warfare they have learnt about the virtues and vices of the soul and the defects in its actions, and what they have learned they have clearly expressed. The philosophers have taken over this teaching and mingled it with their own disquisitions, furtively using this embellishment to sell their rubbishy wares more readily. Assuredly there was in the age of the philosophers, as indeed there is in every age, a group of those godly men, of whom God never denudes the world. They are the pillars of the earth, and by their blessings mercy comes down on the people of the earth, as we read in the Tradition where Muhammad (peace be upon him) Says: ‘Through them you receive rain, through them you receive sustenance; of their number were the men of the Cave’. And these, as the Qur’an declares, existed in early times (cp. Surah 18).

From this practice of the philosophers of incorporating in their books conceptions drawn from the prophets and mystics, there arise two evil tendencies, one in their partisans and one in their opponents.

(a) The evil tendency in the case of the opponent is serious. A crowd of men of slight intellect imagines that, since those ethical conceptions occur in the books of the philosophers mixed with their own rubbish, all reference to them must be avoided, and indeed any person mentioning them must be considered a liar. They imagine this because they heard of the conceptions in the first place only from the philosophers, and their weak intellects have concluded that, since their author is a falsifier, they must be false.

This is like a man who hears a Christian assert, ‘There is no god but God, and Jesus is the Messenger of God’. The man rejects this, saying, ‘This is a Christian conception’, and does not pause to ask himself whether the Christian is an infidel in respect of this assertion or in respect of his denial of the prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him). If he is all infidel only in respect of his denial of Muhammad, then he need not be contradicted in other assertions true in themselves

and not connected with his unbelief, even though these are also true in his eyes.

It is customary with weaker intellects thus to take the men as criterion of the truth and not the truth as criterion of the men. The intelligent man follows 'Ali (may God be pleased with him) when he said., 'Do not know the truth by the men, but know the truth, and then you will know who are truthful'. The intelligent man knows the truth; then he examines the particular assertion. If it is true, he accepts it, whether the speaker is a truthful person or not. Indeed he is often anxious to separate out the truth from the discourses of those who are in error, for he knows that gold is found mixed in gravel with dross. The money-changer suffers no harm if he puts his hand into the counterfeiter's purse; relying on his skill he picks the true gold from among the spurious and counterfeit coins. It is only the simple villager, not the experienced money-changer who is made to abstain from dealings with the counterfeiter. It is not the strong swimmer who is kept back from the shore, but the clumsy tiro; not the accomplished snake-charmer who is barred from touching the snake, but the ignorant boy.

The majority of men, I maintain, are dominated by a high opinion of their own skill and accomplishments, especially the perfection of their intellects for distinguishing true from false and sure guidance from misleading suggestion. It is therefore necessary, I maintain, to shut the gate so as to keep the general public from reading the books of the misguided as far as possible. The public are not free from the infection of the second bad tendency we are about to discuss, even if they are uninfected by the one just mentioned.

To some of the statements made in our published works on the principles of the religious sciences an objection has been raised by a group of men whose understanding has not fully grasped the sciences and whose insight has not penetrated to the fundamentals of the systems. They think that these statements are taken from the works of the ancient philosophers, whereas the fact is that some of them are the product of reflections which occurred to me independently- it is not improbable that one shoe should fall on another shoe-mark- while others come from the revealed Scriptures, and in the case of the majority the sense though perhaps not the actual words is found in the works of the mystics.

Suppose, however, that the statements are found only in the philosophers' books. If they are reasonable in themselves and supported by proof, and if they do not contradict the Book and the Sunnah (the ex-

ample of Muhammad), then it is not necessary to abstain from using them. If we open this door, if we adopt the attitude of abstaining from every truth that the mind of a heretic has apprehended before us, we should be obliged to abstain from much that is true. We should be obliged to leave aside a great number of the verses of the Qur'an and the Traditions of the Messenger and the accounts of the early Muslims, and all the sayings of the philosophers and the mystics. The reason for that is that the author of the book of the 'Brethren of Purity' has cited them in his work. He argues from them, and by means of them he has gradually enticed men of weaker understanding to accept his falsehoods; he goes on making those claims until the heretics wrest truth from our hands by thus depositing it in their writings.

The lowest degree of education is to distinguish oneself from the ignorant ordinary man. The educated man does not loathe honey even if he finds it in the surgeon's cupping-glass; he realizes that the cupping-glass does not essentially alter the honey. The natural aversion from it in such a case rests on popular ignorance, arising from the fact that the cupping-glass is made only for impure blood. Men imagine that the blood is impure because it is in the cupping-glass, and are not aware that the impurity is due to a property of the blood itself. Since this property is absent from the honey, the fact that the honey is in such a container does not produce this property in it. Impurity, therefore, should not be attributed to the honey. To do so is fanciful and false.

Yet this is the prevalent idea among the majority of men. Wherever one ascribes a statement to an author of whom they approve, they accept it, even although it is false; wherever one ascribes it to an author of whom they disapprove, they reject it even although it is true. They always make the man the criterion of truth and not the criterion of the man; and that is erroneous in the extreme.

This is the wrong tendency towards rejection of the ethics of the philosophers.

(b) There is also a wrong tendency towards accepting it. When a man looks into their books, such as the 'Brethren of Purity' and others, and sees how, mingled with their teaching, are maxims of the prophets and utterances of the mystics, he often approves of these, and accepts them and forms a high opinion of them. Next, however, he readily accepts the falsehood they mix with that, because of the good opinion resulting from what he noticed and approved. That is a way of gradually slipping into falsehood.

Because of this tendency it is necessary to abstain from reading their books on account of the deception and danger in them. Just as the

poor swimmer must be kept from the slippery banks, so must mankind be kept from reading these books; just as the boy must be kept from touching the snake, so must the ears be kept from receiving such utterances. Indeed, just as the snake-charmer must refrain from touching the snake in front of his small boy, because he knows that the boy imagines he is like his father and will imitate him, and must even caution the boy by himself showing caution in front of him, so the first-rate scholar too must act in similar fashion. And just as the good snake-charmer on receiving a snake distinguishes between the antidote and the poison, and extracts the antidote while destroying the poison, and would not withhold the antidote from any in need; and just as the acute and experienced money-changer, after putting his hand into the bag of the counterfeiter and extracting from it the pure gold and throwing away the spurious and counterfeit coins, would not withhold the good and acceptable money from one in need; even so does the scholar act.

Again, when a man has been bitten by a snake and needs the antidote, his being turns from it in loathing because he learns it is extracted from the snake, the source of the poison, and he requires to be shown the value of the antidote despite its source. Likewise, a poor man in need of money, who shrinks from receiving the gold taken out of the bag of the counterfeiter, ought to have it brought to his notice that his shrinking is pure ignorance and is the cause of his missing the benefit he seeks; he ought to be informed that the proximity between the counterfeit and the good coin does not make the good coin counterfeit nor the counterfeit good. In the same way the proximity between truth and falsehood does not make truth falsehood nor falsehood truth.

This much we wanted to say about the baneful and mischievous influence of philosophy.

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4. The Ways of Mysticism.

When I had finished with these sciences, I next turned with set purpose to the method of mysticism (or Sufism). I knew that the complete mystic 'way' includes both intellectual belief and practical activity; the latter consists in getting rid of the obstacles in the self and in stripping off its base characteristics and vicious morals, so that the heart may attain to freedom from what is not God and to constant recollection of Him.

The intellectual belief was easier to me than the practical activity. I began to acquaint myself with their belief by reading their books,

such as *The Food of The Hearts by Abū Tālib al-Makkī* (God have mercy upon him), the works of al-Hārith al-Muhāshibī, the various anecdotes about al-Junayd, ash-Shiblī and Abū Yazīd al-Bistāmī (may God sanctify their spirits), and other discourses of their leading men. I thus comprehended their fundamental teachings on the intellectual side, and progressed, as far as is possible by study and oral instruction, in the knowledge of mysticism. It became clear to me, however, that what is most distinctive of mysticism is something which cannot be apprehended by study, but only by immediate experience (dhawq—literally ‘tasting’), by ecstasy and by a moral change. What a difference there is between *knowing* the definition of health and satiety, together with their causes and presuppositions, and *being* healthy and satisfied! What a difference between being acquainted with the definition of drunkenness—namely, that it designates a state arising from the domination of the seat of the intellect by vapours arising from the stomach— and being drunk! Indeed, the drunken man while in that condition does not know the definition of drunkenness nor the scientific account of it; he has not the very least scientific knowledge of it. The sober man, on the other hand, knows the definition of drunkenness and its basis, yet he is not drunk in the very least. Again the doctor, when he is himself ill, knows the definition and causes of health and the remedies which restore it, and yet is lacking in health. Similarly there is a difference between knowing the true nature and causes and conditions of the ascetic life and actually leading such a life and forsaking the world.

I apprehended clearly that the mystics were men who had real experiences, not men of words, and that I had already progressed as far as was possible by way of intellectual apprehension. What remained for me was not to be attained by oral instruction and study but only by immediate experience and by walking in the mystic way.

Now from the sciences I had laboured at and the paths I had traversed in my investigation of the revelational and rational sciences (that is, presumably, theology and philosophy), there had come to me a sure faith in God most high, in prophethood (or revelation), and in the Last Day. These three credal principles were firmly rooted in my being, not through any carefully argued proofs, but by reason of various causes, coincidences and experiences which are not capable of being stated in detail.

It had already become clear to me that I had no hope of the bliss of the world to come save through a God fearing life and the withdrawal of myself from vain desire. It was clear to me too that the key to all this was to sever the attachment of the heart to worldly things by

leaving the mansion of deception and returning to that of eternity, and to advance towards God most high with all earnestness. It was also clear that this was only to be achieved by turning away from wealth and position and fleeing from all time-consuming entanglements.

Next I considered the circumstances of my life, and realized that I was caught in a veritable thicket of attachments. I also considered my activities, of which the best was my teaching and lecturing, and realized that in them I was dealing with sciences that were unimportant and contributed nothing to the attainment of eternal life.

After that I examined my motive in my work of teaching, and realized that it was not a pure desire for the things of God, but that the impulse moving me was the desire for an influential position and public recognition. I saw for certain that I was on the brink of a crumbling bank of sand and in imminent danger of hell-fire unless I set about to mend my ways.

I reflected on this continuously for a time, while the choice still remained open to me. One day I would form the resolution to quit Baghdad and get rid of these adverse circumstances; the next day I would abandon my resolution. I put one foot forward and drew the other back. If in the morning I had a genuine longing to seek eternal life, by the evening the attack of a whole host of desires had reduced it to impotence. Worldly desires were striving to keep me by their chains just where I was, while the voice of faith was calling, 'To the road! to the road! What is left of life is but little and the journey before you is long. All that keeps you busy, both intellectually and practically, is but hypocrisy and delusion. If you do not prepare now for eternal life, when will you prepare? If you do not now sever these attachments, when will you sever them?' On hearing that, the impulse would be stirred and the resolution made to take to flight.

Soon, however, Satan would return. 'This is a passing mood', he would say; 'do not yield to it, for it will quickly disappear; if you comply with it and leave this influential position, these comfortable and dignified circumstances where you are free from troubles and disturbances, this state of safety and security where you are untouched by the contentions of your adversaries, then you will probably come to yourself again and will not find it easy to return to all this'.

For nearly six months beginning with Rajab 488 A.H. (=July 1095 A.D.), I was continuously tossed about between the attractions of worldly desires and the impulses towards eternal life. In that month the matter ceased to be one of choice and became one of compulsion. God caused my tongue to dry up so that I was prevented from lectur-

ing. One particular day I would make all effort to lecture in order to gratify the hearts of my following, but my tongue would not utter a single word nor could I accomplish anything at all.

This impediment in my speech produced grief in my heart, and at the same time my power to digest and assimilate food and drink was impaired; I could hardly swallow or digest a single mouthful of food. My powers became so weakened that the doctors gave up all hope of successful treatment. 'This trouble arises from the heart', they said, 'and from there it has spread through the constitution; the only method of treatment is that the anxiety which has come over the heart should be allayed'.

Thereupon, perceiving my impotence and having altogether lost my power of choice, I sought refuge with God most high as one who is driven to Him, because he is without further resources of his own. He answered me, He who 'answers him who is driven (to Him by affliction) when he calls upon Him' (Qur'an 27, 63) He made it easy for my heart to turn away from position and wealth, from children and friends. I openly professed that I had resolved to set out for Mecca, while privately I made arrangements to travel to Syria. I took this precaution in case the Caliph and all my friends should oppose my resolve to make my residence in Syria. This stratagem for my departure from Baghdad I gracefully executed, and had it in my mind never to return there. There was much talk about me among all the religious leaders of 'Iraq, since none of them would allow that withdrawal from such a state of life as I was in could have a religious cause, for they looked upon that as the culmination of a religious career; that was the sum of their knowledge.

Much confusion now came into people's minds as they tried to account for my conduct. Those at a distance from 'Iraq supposed that it was due to some apprehension I had of action by the government. On the other hand those who were close to the governing circles and had witnessed how eagerly and assiduously they sought me and how I withdrew from them and showed no great regard for what they said, would say, 'This is a supernatural affair; it must be an evil influence which has befallen the people of Islam and especially the circle of the learned'.

I left Baghdad then. I distributed what wealth I had, retaining only as much as would suffice myself and provide sustenance for my children. This I could easily manage, as the wealth of 'Iraq was available for good works, since it constitutes a trust fund for the benefit of Muslims. Nowhere in the world have I seen better financial arrangements to

assist a scholar to provide for his children.

In due course I entered Damascus and there I remained for nearly two years with no other occupation than the cultivation of retirement and solitude, together with religious and ascetic exercises, as I busied myself purifying my soul, improving my character and cleansing my heart for the constant recollection of God most high, as I had learnt from my study of mysticism. I used to go into retreat for a period in the mosque of Damascus, going up the minaret of the mosque for the whole day and shutting myself in so as to be alone.

At length I made my way from Damascus to the Holy House (that is, Jerusalem). There I used to enter into the precinct of the Rock every day and shut myself in.

Next there arose in me a prompting to fulfill the duty of the Pilgrimage, gain the blessings of Mecca and Medina, and perform the visitation of the Messenger of God most high, (peace be upon him) after first performing the visitation of al-, the Friend of God (God bless him). I therefore made the journey to the Hijaz. Before long, however, various concerns, together with the entreaties of my children, drew me back to my home (country); and so I came to it again, though at one time no one had seemed less likely than myself to return to it. Here, too, I sought retirement, still longing for solitude and the purification of the heart for the recollection (of God). The events of the interval, the anxieties about my family, and the necessities of my livelihood altered the aspect of my purpose and impaired the quality of my solitude, for I experienced pure ecstasy only occasionally, although I did not cease to hope for that; obstacles would hold me back, yet I always returned to it.

I continued at this stage for the space of ten years, and during these periods of solitude there were revealed to me things innumerable and unfathomable. This much I shall say about that in order that others may be helped: I learnt with certainty that it is above all the mystics who walk on the road of God; their life is the best life, their method the soundest method, their character the purest character; indeed, were the intellect of the intellectuals and the learning of the learned and the scholarship of the scholars, who are versed in the profundities of revealed truth, brought together in the attempt to improve the life and character of the mystics, they would find no way of doing so; for to the mystics all movement and all rest, whether external or internal, brings illumination from the light of the lamp of prophetic revelation; and behind the light of prophetic revelation there is no other light on the face of the earth from which illumination may be received.

In general, then, how is a mystic 'way' (tarīqah) described? The purity which is the first condition of it (sc. as bodily purity is the prior condition of formal Worship for Muslims) is the purification of the heart completely from what is other than God most high; the key to it, which corresponds to the opening act of adoration in prayer, is the sinking of the heart completely in the recollection of God; and the end of it is complete absorption (fanā') in God. At least this is its end relatively to those first steps which almost come within the sphere of choice and personal responsibility; but in reality in the actual mystic 'way' it is the first step, what comes before it being, as it were, the antechamber for those who are journeying towards it.

With this first stage of the 'way' there begin the revelations and visions. The mystics in their waking state now behold angels and the spirits of the prophets; they hear these speaking to them and are instructed by them. Later, a higher state is reached; instead of beholding forms and figures, they come to stages in the "way" which it is hard to describe in language; if a man attempts to express these, his words inevitably contain what is clearly erroneous.

In general what they manage to achieve is nearness to God; some, however, would conceive of this as 'inherence' (*hulūl*) some as 'union' (*ittihād*), and some as 'connection' (wusūl). All that is erroneous. In my book, *The Noblest Aim*, I have explained the nature of the error here. Yet he who has attained the mystic 'state' need do no more than say:

Of the things I do not remember, what was, was;
Think it good; do not ask an account of it.
(Ibn al-Mu'tazz).

In general the man to whom He has granted no immediate experience at all, apprehends no more of what prophetic revelation really is than the name. The miraculous graces given to the saints are in truth the beginnings of the prophets; and that was the first 'state' of the Messenger of God (peace be upon him) when he went out to Mount Hirā', and was given up entirely to his Lord, and worshipped, so that the bedouin said, 'Muhammad loves his Lord passionately'.

Now this is a mystical 'state' which is realized in immediate experience by those who walk in the way leading to it. Those to whom it is not granted to have immediate experience can become assured of it by trial (sc. contact with mystics or observation of them) and by hearsay, if they have sufficiently numerous opportunities of associating with mystics to understand that (sc. ecstasy) with certainty by means of what accompanies the 'states'. Whoever sits in their company derives

from them this faith; and none who sits in their company is pained.

Those to whom it is not even granted to have contacts with mystics may know with certainty the possibility of ecstasy by the evidence of demonstration, as I have remarked in the section entitled *The Wonders of the Heart* of my *Revival of the Religious Sciences*.

Certainty reached by demonstration is *knowledge* ('ilm); actual acquaintance with that 'state' is *immediate experience* (dhawq); the acceptance or it as probable from hearsay and trial (or observation) is *faith* (imān). These are three degrees. 'God will raise those of you who have faith and those who have been given knowledge in degrees (sc. of honour)' (Q. 58, 12).

Behind the mystics, however, there is a crowd of ignorant people. They deny this fundamentally, they are astonished at this line of thought, they listen and mock. 'Amazing', they say. 'What nonsense they talk!' About such people God most high has said: 'Some of them listen to you, until, upon going out from you, they say to those to whom knowledge has been given, 'What did he say just now'? These are the people on whose hearts God sets a seal and they follow their passions'. (Q. 47, 18) He makes them deaf, and blinds their sight.

Among the things that necessarily became clear to me from my practice of the mystic 'way' was the true nature and special characteristics of prophetic revelation. The basis of that must undoubtedly be indicated in view of the urgent need for it.

IV. THE TRUE NATURE OF PROPHECY AND THE COMPELLING NEED OF ALL CREATION FOR IT

You must know that the substance of man in his original condition was created in bareness and simplicity without any information about the worlds of God most high. These worlds are many, not to be reckoned save by God most high Himself. As He said, 'None knows the hosts of thy Lord save He' (Q. 74, 34). Man's information about the world is by means of perception; and each and every form of perception is created so that thereby man may have some acquaintance with a world (or sphere) from among existents. By 'worlds (or spheres)' we simply mean 'classes of existents'.

The first thing created in man was the sense of touch, and by it he perceives certain classes of existents, such as heat and cold, moisture and dryness, smoothness and roughness. Touch is completely unable to apprehend colours and noises. These might be nonexistent so far as concerns touch.

Next there is created in him the sense of sight, and by it he apprehends colours and shapes. This is the most extensive of the worlds of sensibles. Next *hearing* is implanted in him, so that he hears sounds of various kinds. After that *taste* is created in him; and so on until he has completed the world of sensibles.

Next, when he is about seven years old, there is created in him *discernment* (or the power of distinguishing *-tamyīz*). This is a fresh stage in his development. He now apprehends more than the world of sensibles; and none of these additional factors (sc. relations, etc.) exists in the world of sense.

From this he ascends to another stage, and *intellect* (or reason) (*'aql*) is created in him. He apprehends things necessary, possible, impossible, things which do not occur in the previous stages.

Beyond intellect there is yet another stage. In this another eye is opened, by which he beholds the unseen, what is to be in the future, and other things which are beyond the ken of intellect in the same way as the objects of intellect are beyond the ken of the faculty of discernment and the objects of discernment are beyond the ken of sense. Moreover, just as the man at the stage of discernment would reject and disregard the objects of intellect were these to be presented to him, so some intellectuals reject and disregard the objects of prophetic revelation. That is sheer ignorance. They have no ground for their view except that this is a stage which they have not reached and which for them does not exist; yet they suppose that it is non-existent in itself. When a man blind from birth, who has not learnt about colours and shapes by listening to people's talk, is told about these things for the first time, he does not understand them nor admit their existence.

God most high, however, has favoured His creatures by giving them something analogous to the special faculty of prophecy, namely dreams. In the dream-state a man apprehends what is to be in the future, which is something of the unseen; he does so either explicitly or else clothed in a symbolic form whose interpretation is disclosed.

Suppose a man has not experienced this himself, and suppose that he is told how, some people fall into a dead faint, in which hearing, sight and the other senses no longer function, and in this condition perceive the unseen. He would deny that this is so and demonstrate its impossibility. 'The sensible powers', he would say, 'are the causes of perception (or apprehension); if a man does not perceive things (sc. the unseen) when these powers are actively present, much less will he do so when the senses are not functioning'. This is a form of analogy which is shown to be false by what actually occurs and is

observed. Just as intellect is one of the stages of human development in which there is in 'eye' which sees the various types of intelligible objects, which are beyond the ken of the senses, so prophecy also is the description of a stage in which there is an eye endowed with light such that in that light the unseen and other supra-intellectual objects become visible.

Doubt about prophetic revelation is either (a) doubt of its possibility in general, or (b) doubt of its actual occurrence, or (c) doubt of the attainment of it by a specific individual.

The proof of the possibility of there being prophecy and the proof that there has been prophecy is that there is knowledge in the world the attainment of which by reason is inconceivable; for example, in medical science and astronomy. Whoever researches in such matters knows of necessity that this knowledge is attained only by Divine inspiration and by assistance from God most high. It cannot be reached by observation. For instance there are some astronomical laws based, on phenomena which occur only once in a thousand years; how can these be arrived at by personal observation? It is the same with the properties of drugs.

This argument shows that it is possible for there to be a way of apprehending these matters which are not apprehended by the intellect. This is the meaning of prophetic revelation. That is not to say that prophecy is merely an expression for such knowledge. Rather, the apprehending of this class of extra-intellectual objects is one of the properties of prophecy; but it has many other properties as well. The said property is but a drop in the ocean of prophecy. It has been singled out for mention because you have something analogous to it in what you apprehend in dreaming, and because you have medical and astronomical knowledge belonging to the same class, namely, the miracles of the prophets, for the intellectuals cannot arrive at these at all by any intellectual efforts.

The other properties of prophetic revelation are apprehended only by immediate experience (*dhawq*) from the practice of the mystic way, but this property of prophecy you can understand by an analogy granted you, namely, the dream-state. If it were not for the latter you would not believe in that. If the prophet possessed a faculty to which you had nothing analogous and which you did not understand, how could you believe in it? Believing presupposes understanding. Now that analogous experience comes to a man in the early stages of the mystic way. Thereby he attains to a kind of immediate experience, extending as far as that to which he has attained, and by analogy to a kind of

belief (or assent) in respect of that to which he has not attained. Thus this single property is a sufficient basis for one's faith in the principle of prophecy.

If you come to doubt whether a specific person is a prophet or not, certainty can only be reached by acquaintance with his conduct, either by personal observation, or by hearsay as a matter of common knowledge. For example, if you are familiar with medicine and law, you can recognise lawyers and doctors by observing what they are, or, where observation is impossible, by hearing what they have to say. Thus you are not unable to recognise that al-Shāfi'ī (God have mercy upon him) is a lawyer and Galen a doctor; and your recognition is based on the facts and not on the judgement of someone else. Indeed, just because you have some knowledge of law and medicine, and examine their books and writings, you arrive at a necessary knowledge of what these men are.

Similarly, if you understand what it is to be a prophet, and have devoted much time to the study of the Qur'an and the Traditions, you will arrive at a necessary knowledge of the fact that Muhammad (God bless and preserve him) is in the highest grades of the prophetic calling. Convince yourself of that by trying out what he said about the influence of devotional practices on the purification of the heart— how truly he asserted that 'whoever lives out what he knows will receive from God what he does not know'; how truly he asserted that 'if anyone aids an evildoer, God will give that man power over him'; how truly he asserted that 'if a man rises up in the morning with but a single care (sc. to please God), God most high will preserve him from all cares in this world and the next. When you have made trial of these in a thousand or several thousand instances, you will arrive at a necessary knowledge beyond all doubt.

By this method, then, seek certainty about the prophetic office, and not from the transformation of a rod into a serpent or the cleaving of the moon. For if you consider such an event by itself, without taking account of the numerous circumstances accompanying it— circumstances readily eluding the grasp of the intellect— then you might perhaps suppose that it was magic and deception and that it came from God to lead men astray; for 'He leads astray whom He will, and guides whom He will'. Thus the topic of miracles will be thrown back upon you; for if your faith is based on a reasoned argument involving the probative force of the miracle, then your faith is destroyed by an ordered argument showing the difficulty and ambiguity of the miracle.

Admit, then, that wonders of this sort are one of the proofs and accompanying circumstances out of the totality of your thought on the matter; and that you attain necessary knowledge and yet are unable to say specifically on what it is based. The case is similar to that of a man who receives from a multitude of people a piece of information which is a matter of common belief... He is unable to say that the certainty is derived from the remark of a single specific person; rather, its source is unknown to him; it is neither from outside the whole, nor is it from specific individuals. This is strong, intellectual faith. Immediate experience, on the other hand, is like actually witnessing a thing and taking it in one's hand. It is only found in the way of mysticism.

This is a sufficient discussion of the nature of prophetic revelation for my present purpose. I proceed to speak of the need for it.

V. THE REASON FOR TEACHING AGAIN AFTER MY WITHDRAWAL FROM IT

I had persevered thus for nearly ten years in retirement and solitude. I had come of necessity— from reasons which I do not enumerate, partly immediate experience, partly demonstrative knowledge, partly acceptance in faith— to a realization of various truths. I saw that man was constituted of body and heart; by 'heart' I mean the real nature of his spirit which is the seat of his knowledge of God, and not the flesh and blood which he shares with the corpse and the brute beast. I saw that just as there is health and disease in the body, respectively causing it to prosper and to perish, so also there is in the heart, on the one hand, health and soundness— and 'only he who comes to God with a sound heart' (Q. 26, 89) is saved— and, on the other hand, disease, in which is eternal and other worldly destruction— as God most high says, 'in their hearts is disease' (Q. 2, 9). I saw that to be ignorant of God is destructive poison, and to disobey Him by following desire is the thing which produces the disease, while to know God most high is the life-giving antidote and to obey Him by opposing desire is the healing medicine. I saw, too, that the only way to treat the heart, to end its disease and procure its health, is by medicines, just as that is the only way of treating the body.

Moreover, the medicines of the body are effective in producing health through some property in them which the intellectuals do not apprehend with their intellectual apparatus, but in respect of which one must accept the statement of the doctors; and these in turn are dependent on the prophets who by the property of prophethood have grasped the properties of things. Similarly I came of necessity to re-

alize that in the case of the medicines of formal worship, which have been fixed and determined by the prophets, the manner of their effectiveness is, not apprehended by the intellectual explanations of the intellectuals; one must rather accept the statements (*taqlīd*) of the prophets who apprehended those properties by the light of prophecy, not by intellectual explanation.

Again, medicines are composed of ingredients differing in kind— one, for instance, is twice another in weight and amount; and this quantitative difference involves secret lore of the same type as knowledge of the properties. Similarly, formal worship, which is the medicine for the disease of the hearts is compounded of acts differing in kind and amount; the prostration (*sujūd*) is the double of the bowing (*rukū'*) in amount, and the morning worship half of the afternoon worship; and such arrangements are not without a mystery of the same type as the properties which are grasped by the light of prophecy. Indeed a man is very foolish and very ignorant if he tries to show by intellectual means that these arrangements are wise, or if he fancies that they are specified accidentally and not from a Divine mystery in them which fixes them by way of the property.

Yet again, medicines have bases, which are the principal active ingredients, and 'additions' (auxiliaries or correctives), which are complementary, each of them having its specific influence on the action of the bases. Similarly, the supererogatory practices and the 'customs' are complements which perfect the efficacy of the basic elements of formal worship.

In general, the prophets are the physicians of the diseases of hearts. The only advantage of the intellect is that it informed us of that, bearing witness to prophetic revelation by believing (sc. the trustworthiness of the prophets) and also to its own inability to apprehend what is apprehended by the eye of prophecy; then it took us by the hand and entrusted us to prophetic revelation, as the blind are entrusted to their guides and anxious patients to sympathetic doctors. Thus far may the intellect proceed. In what lies beyond it has no part, save in the understanding of what the physician communicates to it.

These, then, are matters which we learnt by a necessity like that of direct vision in the period of solitude and retirement.

We next observed the laxity of men's belief in the principle of prophecy and in its actuality and in conduct according to the norms elucidated by prophecy; we ascertained that this was widespread among the people. When I considered the reasons for people's laxity and weakness of faith, I found there were four:

- (a) a reason connected with those who engage in Philosophy;
- (b) a reason connected with those who engage in the mystic way;
- (c) a reason connected with those who profess the doctrine of *ta'lim*;
- (d) a reason based on the practice of those who are popularly described as having knowledge.

For a time I went after individual men, questioning those who fell short in observing the Law. I would question one about his doubts and investigate his inmost beliefs. 'Why is it', I said, 'that you fall short in that? If you believe in the future life and, instead of preparing for it, sell it in order to buy this world, then that is folly! You do not normally sell two things for one; how can you give up an endless life for a limited number of days? If, on the other hand, you do not believe in it, then you are an infidel! Dispose yourself to faith. Observe what is the cause of your hidden unbelief, for that is the doctrinal system you inwardly adopt and the cause of your outward daring, even though you do not give expression to it out of respect towards the faith and reverence for the mention of the law!'

(1) One would say: 'If it were obligatory to observe this matter, then those learned in religious questions would be foremost in doing so; but, among persons of distinction, A does not perform the Worship, B drinks wine, C devours the property of trusts and orphans, D accepts the munificence of the sovereign and does not refrain from forbidden things, E accepts bribes for giving judgement or bearing witness; and so on'.

A second man claims to have knowledge of mysticism and considers that he has made such progress that he is above the need for formal worship.

A third man is taken up with another of the doubts of the 'Latitudinarians' (*Ahl al-Ibāhah*; cp. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s.v. 'Ibāhiya'). These are those who stray from the path of mysticism.

(2) A fourth man, having met the party of *tā'lim* would say: 'Truth is difficult, the way to it blocked, and the disputes over it numerous. No one system of doctrine is preferable to any other. Rational proofs contradict one another, and no confidence can be placed in the speculations of the speculative thinkers (*ashāb al-ra'y*). He who summons to *ta'lim* makes assertions without proof. How then through doubt can I keep certainty?'

(3) A fifth man says: 'I do not perform these acts out of obedience to authority (*taqlīdan*). I have studied philosophy and I know that

prophecy actually exists and that its achievement is wise and beneficial. I see that the acts of worship it prescribes aim at keeping order among the common people and restraining them from fighting and quarreling with one another and from giving rein to their desires. But I am not one of the ignorant common people that I should enter within the narrow confines of duty. On the contrary I am one of the wise, I follow wisdom, and thereby see clearly (for myself) so that I do not require to follow authority’.

This is the final word of the faith of those who study the system of the theistic philosophers, as you may learn from the works of Ibn Sīnā and Abū Nasr al-Fārābī.

These are the people who show politeness to Islam. Often you see one of them reading the Qur’an, attending the Friday assembly and public Worship and praising the sacred Law. Nevertheless he does not refrain from drinking wine and from various wicked and immoral practices! If someone says to him, ‘If the prophetic revelation is not genuine, why do you join in the prayers?’ perhaps he will reply, ‘To exercise my body, and because it is a custom in the place, and to keep my wealth and family’. Or perhaps he says, ‘The sacred Law is genuine; the prophetic revelation is true’; then he is asked, ‘And why then do you drink wine?’ and he replies, ‘Wine is forbidden only because it leads to enmity and hatred; I am sufficiently wise to guard against that, and so I take wine to make my mind more lively’. Ibn Sina actually writes in his *Testament* that he swore to God that he would do various things, and in particular that he would praise what the sacred Law prescribed, that he would not be lax in taking part in the public worship of God, and that he would not drink for pleasure but only as a tonic or medicine. Thus the net result of his purity of faith and observance of the obligations of worship was that he made an exception of drinking wine for medical purposes!

Such is the faith of those philosophers who profess religious faith. Many have been deceived by them; and the deceit has been the greater because of the ineffectiveness of the criticism levelled against the philosophers, since that consisted, as we have shown above, in denying geometry and logic and others of their sciences which possess necessary truth.

I observed, then, to what an extent and for what reasons faith was weak among the various classes of men; and I observed how I myself was occupied with the resolving of this doubt, indeed I had devoted so much time and energy to the study of their sciences and methods— I mean those of the mystics, the philosophers, the ‘authoritarian

instructionists' (*ta'limiyah*) and the outstanding scholars (mutawas-simun)— that to show up their errors was easier for me than drinking water. As I observed all this, the impression was formed in me: 'That is a fixed and determinate character of this time; what benefit to you, then, are solitude and retirement, since the sickness has become general, the doctors have fallen ill, and mankind has reached the verge of destruction?' I said to myself, however: 'When will you busy yourself in resolving these difficulties and attacking these obscurities, seeing it is an age of slackness, an era of futility? Even if you were to labour at summoning men from their worthless ways to the truth, the people of this age would be united in showing hostility to you. How will you stand up to them? How will you live among them, seeing that such a project is only to be executed with the aid of time and through a pious sovereign who is all-powerful?'

I believed that it was permissible for me in the sight of God to continue in retirement on the ground of my inability to demonstrate the truth by argument. But God most high determined Himself to stir up the impulse of the sovereign of the time, though not by any external means; the latter gave me strict orders to hasten to Naysābūr (Nīshāpār) to tackle the problem of this lukewarmness in religious matters. So strict was the injunction that, had I persisted in disobeying it, I should at length have been cut off! I came to realize, too, that the grounds which had made retirement permissible had lost their force. 'It is not right that your motive for clinging to retirement should be laziness and love of ease, the quest for spiritual power and preservation from worldly contamination. It was not because of the difficulty of restoring men to health that you gave yourself this permission'.

Now God most high says: 'In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Alif, Lām, Mīm. Do the people think that they will be left in the position that they say, 'We have believed', without their being tried? We tried those who were before them' (Q. 29, 1), and what follows. He (may He be exalted!) says to His messenger who is the noblest of His creatures: 'Messengers have been counted false before thee, but they patiently endured the falsehood laid to their charge and the insults done them, until Our help came to them; no one can change the words of God, and surely there has come to thee some information about those who were sent (as messengers).' (Q. 6, 34). He (may He be exalted) says too: 'In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Yā', Sīn. By the Qur'an that decides . . . Thou wilt only warn him who follows the Reminder' (Q. 36, I and II).

On this matter I consulted a number of men skilled in the science of the heart and with experience of contemplation. They unanimously advised me to abandon my retirement and leave the *zāwiyah* (hospice). My resolution was further strengthened by numerous visions of good men in all of which alike I was given the assurance that this impulse was a source of good, was genuine guidance, and had been determined by God most high for the beginning of this century; for God most high has promised to revive His religion at the beginning of each century. My hope became strong, and all these considerations caused the favourable view of the project to prevail.

God most high facilitated my move to Naysābūr to deal with this serious problem in Dhu'l-Qa'dah, the eleventh month of 499 (=July, 1106 A.D.). I had originally left Baghdad in Dhu'l-Qa'dah, 488, (=November, 1095), so that my period of retirement had extended to eleven years. It was God most high who determined this move, and it is an example of the wonderful way in which He determines events, since there was not a whisper of it in my heart while I was living in retirement. In the same way my departure from Baghdad and withdrawal from my position there had not even occurred to my mind as a possibility. But God is the upsetter of hearts⁹ and positions. As the Tradition has it, 'The heart of the believer is between two of the fingers of the Merciful'.

In myself I know that, even if I went back to the work of disseminating knowledge, yet I did not go back. To go back is to return to the previous state of things. Previously, however, I had been disseminating the knowledge by which worldly success is attained; by word and deed I had called men to it; and that had been my aim and intention. But now I am calling men to the knowledge whereby worldly success is given up and its low position in the scale of real worth is recognized. This is now my intention, my aim, my desire; God knows that this is so. It is my earnest longing that I may make myself and others better. I do not know whether I shall reach my goal or whether I shall be taken away while short of my object. I believe, however, both by certain faith and by intuition that there is no power and no might save with God, the high, the mighty, and that I do not move of myself but am moved by Him, I do not work of myself but am used by Him. I ask Him first of all to reform me and then to reform through me, to guide me and then to guide through me, to show me the truth of what is true and to grant of His bounty that I may follow it, and to show me the falsity of what is false and to grant of His bounty that I may turn away from it.

We now return to the earlier topic of the causes for the weakness of faith, and consider how to guide men aright and deliver them from the perils they face.

...

In reply to those who through philosophy have corrupted their faith to the extent of denying prophecy in principle, we have discussed the reality of prophecy and how it exists of necessity, by showing that there exists a knowledge of the properties of medicines, stars, and so forth. We introduced this preliminary study precisely for this purpose; we based the demonstration on medical and astronomical properties precisely because these are included in the science of the Philosophers. To every one who is expert in some branch of science, be it astronomy (? astrology) or medicine, physics, magic or charm-making, we offer proof of prophecy based on his own branch of science.

The man who verbally professes belief in prophecy, but equates the prescriptions of the revealed scriptures with (philosophic) wisdom, really disbelieves in prophecy, and believes only in a certain judge (v.l. philosopher) the ascendancy of whose star is such that it determines men to follow him. This is not prophecy at all. On the contrary, faith in prophecy is to acknowledge the existence of a sphere beyond reason; into this sphere an eye penetrates whereby man apprehends special objects-of-apprehension. From these reason is excluded in the same way as the hearing is excluded from apprehending colours and sight from apprehending sounds and all the senses from apprehending the objects-of-reason.

...

These are the points I wanted to discuss in criticism of the faults of the philosophers and the party of ta'lim and the faults of those who oppose them without using their methods.

We pray God Almighty that He will number us among those whom He has chosen and elected, whom He has led to the truth and guided, whom He has inspired to recollect Him and not to forget Him, whom He has preserved from the evil in themselves so that they do not prefer ought to Him, and whom He has made His own so that they serve only Him.

Peter Abelard,
*Dialogue Between a
Philosopher, a Jew,
and a Christian*

The glories of the High Middle Ages (from, say, 1000 to 1300) depended most fundamentally on a reversal of the catastrophic demographic trends initiated by the Antonine Plague that broke out during the reign of Marcus Aurelius. Demographic facts made the fall of the Western Roman Empire inevitable, but factors rearranged themselves during the Early Middle Ages to prepare for a recovery in which the population of Europe doubled during the High Middle Ages. With the Justinianic Plague, the bubonic bacterium would be introduced into Europe in the sixth century, killing perhaps half of the population, but it burned itself out after a couple of centuries, not to reappear until the fourteenth century. Viking and Magyar raids on Europe ceased by 1000. And the large-scale slavery underpinning agricultural estates under the Empire evolved into serfdom, a less brutal version of slavery that allowed serfs to have families. The demanding agricultural conditions of northern Europe stimulated more recourse to technological innovation than under the Empire, and the heavy plow, padded horse collar, horseshoe, and water mill fostered increasing agricultural productivity, which in turn improved health and sustained more people. The European climate also entered a salutary warming phase between about 950 and 1250 (“the Medieval Warm Period”). These factors allowed for the appearance in Europe of more people than the continent had ever held before, and this meant civilizational recovery: urbanization returned and commerce revived, exposing Europe to dynamic influences from the Islamic and Byzantine worlds—and beyond.

How to live out the Carolingian ideal of Christendom under these circumstances? No longer at a civilizational minimum, struggling to stay alive, Europe began to indulge its own ecumenic consciousness: most obviously by setting out eastwards on the Crusades. The first of these armed pilgrimages was called by Urban II in 1095. The pope was seeking to heal the rift created when a papal legate sent by one of his predecessors, Leo IX, excommunicated the Patriarch of Constantinople in 1054—in the context of Leo’s centralizing reforms. This Great Schism broke the communion of Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism (and has never been healed), a long-brewing result of the division of the Roman Empire and the failure of the elites of East and West to maintain the Greco-Roman synthesis. The First Crusade resulted in the Latin conquest of Jerusalem in 1099, and the wholesale slaughter of the Holy City’s inhabitants—Muslims and Jews. This kind of confident Christendom was perhaps wanting as an evangelical demonstration of the charity of Jesus. Feeding this confidence were the measures known as the Gregorian Reforms, named for Gregory VII (pope from 1073-85), but stemming from Leo

IX. The Gregorian movement was a clerical assumption of initiative in the matter of church reform (in contrast to Charlemagne's lay efforts), and correlated to a consolidation of papal supremacy. It sought to enforce the canons on clerical celibacy, to stop the sale of ecclesiastical office, and to end lay investiture: a ceremony enacting the claim of a right made by secular rulers, especially the Holy Roman Emperor, to choose bishops and abbots. This led to half a century of civil war in the German lands, thwarting its national unification. The reform movement included an echo of

Charlemagne's call for an expansion of education, and with the renewal of urban life, cathedral schools grew up in cities—a phase in the transition from monastic schools to universities. In this world of commercial vitality, those who wanted to learn could pay masters to teach them, even if they were not clerics.

Peter Abelard (1079-1142) lived by the energy of thinking. As an eldest son of a nobleman, he gave up his inheritance to become an academic. The air was electric with ideas in the twelfth century, with the possibility of moving beyond a monastic quiescence relative to tradition (*lectio* without disputation) towards a systematic synthesis of faith and reason pioneered by Saint Anselm of Canterbury (c.1033-1109)—though Anselm was paradoxically a Benedictine. If one could *understand* the faith through reason, one could enter into persuasive dialogue with non-Christians. Abelard takes up the dialogue genre, congenial to this new age, in *Dialogue between a Philosopher, a Jew, and a Christian*. Among Parisian teachers, Abelard became a superstar, drawing huge crowds at the Notre-Dame cathedral school. He contributed to the development of the scholastic method in theology, indeed coining the term “Christian theology” to describe a specific enterprise. (The contrasting monastic method of theology was exemplified by Abelard's opponent, the Cistercian Saint Bernard of Clairvaux.) However, Abelard is best known for his relationship with his student Heloise, a truly remarkable woman of astonishing love, ardent personality, fierce independent-mindedness, piety, brilliance, and intelligence (learned in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew). Their intellectual partnership was consequential, and their tragic romance inspired the development of courtly love.

(1) I was looking around in a dream one night, and here came three men along another path and stood in front of me. In a dreamlike way, I ask them straight out what their profession is and why they've come to me.

(2) "We are men inclined to different religious faiths," they say. "To be sure, we all alike confess that we are worshippers of the one God, but we serve him by different faiths and different kinds of life. One of us is a pagan, from among those they call philosophers; he is satisfied with the natural law. But the other two have Scriptures. One of them is called a Jew and the other a Christian. After conversing and disputing with one another for a long time about our different religious faiths, we have finally submitted to your judgment."

(3) So I am very astonished at this, and ask who brought or gathered them together for this purpose, and most of all why they picked me as the judge in this affair.

(4) THE PHILOSOPHER replies: "It was begun at my doing," he says. "For it's the philosophers' job to investigate the truth by means of reasons, and in all things to follow not people's opinion but reason's lead. So having devoted myself to our schools for a long time, and having been educated in both their reasons and their authorities, at last I brought myself to moral philosophy, which is the aim of all the disciplines and for the sake of which I judged all the rest should be mere preliminaries.

(5) "After being taught all I could there about ultimate good and ultimate evil, and about things that make a person happy or wretched, I at once went on to explore eagerly for myself the different religious faiths facing me, into which the world is now divided. After looking into all of them and comparing them with one another, I decided to follow the one that is more in agreement with reason.

(6) "I therefore applied myself to the doctrine of the Jews, and of the Christians too, and examined the belief and the laws or reasonings of both groups. I found the Jews were fools and the Christians crazy — so to speak, no offense to you who are called a Christian. I have conversed with both for a long time, and since the debate has not yet brought an end to our discussion, we have decided to submit its parties' reasonings to your judgment. Of course we know you're not unaware of the powers of philosophical reasonings or of each Law's defenses. For the Christian religion relies on its own Law, which they call the 'New Testament,' but in such a way that yet it does not presume to spurn the Old. It devotes a lot of effort to studying both. We had to pick someone as our judge, so that our debate would reach an end, and we were unable to find anyone who did not belong to one of these three groups."

(7) Then, as if selling flattery-oil and daubing my head with the salve, he went on at once: “So the more word gets around of your pre-eminence in mental keenness and in knowledge of all the Scriptures, the more certain it is that you can support or defend your judgment and are able to withstand a revolt by any one of us. That amazing work of theology, which jealousy couldn’t bear but was unable to do away with, and instead made it all the more glorious by persecuting it, provided for us a sure test that there is indeed a keenness to your mind, and how much the storehouse of your memory is overflowing with philosophical and sacred teachings beyond the usual studies of your schools. For these reasons, it’s obvious you’ve flourished in both fields beyond all the masters, your own as well as the writers we find in the known sciences.”

(8) Then I said: “I’m not soliciting this honor you have saved for me, seeing that in passing over the wise you appoint a fool for a judge. Since I too am used to the empty controversies of this world, therefore, like you, I won’t take seriously things I’ve been accustomed to entertain myself with. Yet don’t regard it as a great thing, philosopher, if you appear to win this contest, you who profess no Law but submit only to reasons. For in fact you have two swords for the fight, whereas the others are armed against you with only one. You can go after them with both Scripture and reason, but they cannot use anything in the Law as an objection, because you don’t follow the Law. And also, the more extensive the philosophical armor you have, being more accustomed to reasons, the less able they are to argue against you with reasons. (9) “Nevertheless, because you’ve settled on this by agreement and common consent, and because I see each of you is confident of his own powers, don’t by any means let our modesty get in the way of your ventures, particularly since I think I’ll learn something from them. Indeed, as one of our own people remarks, ‘There is no teaching so false that there is no true teaching mixed in.’ And I don’t think any argument is so silly that it doesn’t have some lesson in it. Thus even the greatest of the wise, getting the attentive reader ready, says at the very beginning of his Proverbs, ‘Hearing, the wise person will be wiser; the intelligent will get guidance.’ And James the apostle says, ‘Let every person be quick to hear but slow to speak.’ ”

(10) They gladly agree to my agreement.

(11) THE PHILOSOPHER says, “It’s my job to question the others first, I who am satisfied with the natural law, which is primary. I gathered you together in order to inquire about the Scriptures that were added on later. I say the natural law is ‘primary,’ not only in time but in nature as well. For everything simpler is naturally prior to the more multiple. Now the natural law, the science of morals we call

'ethics,' consists of moral lessons alone. But your Laws' teaching adds to them certain commands involving external signs. To us they seem altogether superfluous; we must discuss them too in their place."

(12) They both allow the philosopher to go first in contesting this fight.

(13) "To begin with," he says then, "I ask you together about one thing I see applies to both of you equally, you who rely mainly on Scripture. Did some reason lead you into these religious faiths, or are you here following mere human opinion and the love of your own kind of people? If the first of these alternatives is so, that is certainly to be highly commended, just as the other is to be utterly deplored. Yet I believe no discerning person's conscience will deny that the latter alternative is the true one, especially since we experience it with frequent examples. For it often happens that, among some married couples, when one or the other party converts to a different religious faith, their children hold unshaken the faith of whichever of the parents they are close to. How they were raised has more power with them than does their bloodline or reason, since children would also do this no matter who they were raised by, and would recognize them as 'fathers' in faith as well as in rearing.

(14) "This didn't escape him who said, 'The Son cannot do anything but what he sees the Father doing.' For love of their own kind of people and of those they were raised with is so naturally implanted in all human beings that they shrink from whatever is said contrary to their faith. 'Turning custom into nature,' they stubbornly maintain as adults whatever they learned as children. Before they are able to grasp the things said, they assert they believe them. For as the poet remarks, 'A jug will keep for a long time the odor of what it was once filled with when it was new.' Indeed one of the philosophers argues things like this, saying, 'If they got something from their childish lessons, they shouldn't regard it as sacred. For surely an advanced treatise of philosophy often gets rid of things fit for tender ears.'

(15) "For it's an amazing fact that, although in all other affairs human understanding increases over the course of life and throughout the ages, there's no progress in faith, where an error is threatened by extreme peril. Instead young and old alike, yokels as well as the learned, are claimed to have a view about it, and the one who doesn't depart from people's common view is called strongest in the faith.

(16) "This is surely why it happens that among one's own people no one is allowed to inquire about what is to be believed, or to doubt with impunity things said by all. For people are ashamed to be asked about what they are unable to reply to. Certainly no one who distrusts his own powers gladly engages in struggle; it is the one who hopes for

victory's glory who voluntarily runs to the battle.

(17) "Often, these people even break into such craziness that they aren't embarrassed to profess they believe what they admit they can't understand, as if faith consists more of uttering words than of the mind's comprehension, and belongs more to the mouth than to the heart. Thus too they pride themselves most when they appear to believe so many things they are unable to discuss orally or conceive mentally. The uniqueness of their own sect even makes them so pretentious and superior that whomever they see divided from them in faith they regard as unfit for God's mercy. Once they have condemned all others, they proclaim that they alone are blessed.

(18) "So after reflecting a long time on this blindness and pride of the human race, I have turned to divine mercy, humbly and continually begging it to see fit to lead me out of so great a whirlpool of errors, so miserable a Charybdis, and to direct me from such great tempests to the harbor of salvation. You see me anxious for this even now and, like a student, fiercely eager for the lessons contained in your answers."

(19) THE JEW: "You have questioned two people at once, but two people cannot properly reply at once. Otherwise the number of speakers interferes with understanding. I'll reply first, if that's all right. For we came first to the worship of God and received the first discipline of the Law. This brother who professes himself a Christian will supply what's missing from my imperfection, wherever he sees me falling short or being less capable. Wearing so to speak two horns in the two Testaments he's armed with, he'll be able to resist and fight the enemy more strongly."

(20) THE PHILOSOPHER: "All right."

(21) THE JEW: "Now I do want to warn you in advance about one thing, before the battle of our proposed debate. If perhaps you seem to overwhelm my simpleness with the power of philosophical arguments, do not pride yourself on having thereby defeated us. Don't turn one little person's weakness into the shame of a whole people, or refute the faith from one person's failing, or accuse it of error because I'm little able to discourse on it."

(22) THE PHILOSOPHER: "That too seems judiciously said. But there wasn't any need to postulate it, since you shouldn't doubt that I'll work toward searching out the truth, not for showing off superiority, or that I'll not bicker like a sophist but rather explore arguments like a philosopher and, most of all, seek my soul's salvation."

(23) THE JEW: "May the Lord himself — who appears to have inspired you with this zeal so that you inquire about him with such care for the salvation of your soul — bring us this conversation whereby you may profitably be able to find him. For me, to the extent that he

grants it, it remains now to reply to your questions.”

(24) THE PHILOSOPHER: “That certainly conforms to the agreement before us.”

(25) THE JEW: “All human beings, while they are children and haven’t yet reached the age of discernment, certainly do follow the faith and custom of the people who take care of them, most of all the ones they love more. But after they’ve grown up, so that they can now be ruled by their own choice, they should be turned over to their own judgment, not someone else’s. It is not as fitting to follow opinion as it is to search out the truth.

(26) “Now I’ve touched on these matters in advance, because perhaps love for our physical forebears and the custom we first learned did lead us at the outset to this faith. But now reasoning more than opinion keeps us here.”

(27) THE PHILOSOPHER: “I beg you, disclose that reasoning to us, and that is enough.”

(28) THE JEW: “If, as we believe, the Law we follow is given to us by God, then we’re not to be blamed for complying with it. Indeed, we should be rewarded for obedience, and those who scorn the Law are making a big mistake.

(29) “Now if we can’t compel you to grant it’s been given by God, you aren’t able to refute it either. But to take an example from ordinary human life, I beg you to give me some advice. I am a certain master’s slave, and am powerfully afraid of offending him. I’ve many fellow-slaves anxious with the same fear. They tell me that in my absence our master has commanded something of all his slaves, but I don’t know about it. They’re working at it, and urge me to work with them.

(30) “What do you recommend I should do if I have a doubt about that command, at which I wasn’t present? I don’t believe you or anyone else will advise me to spurn all the slaves’ advice and, following my own opinion, set myself apart all alone from what they’re doing together and what they all attest the master to have commanded — especially since the command appears to be such that it cannot be refuted by any reasoning.

(31) “What need is there for me to doubt a danger from which I can be free? If the master did command what is confirmed by many people’s testimony and has good reason, I who don’t obey am altogether inexcusable. But if, deceived by the advice or by the urging and example of my fellow-slaves, I do what wasn’t commanded even though it didn’t have to be done, that has to be blamed on them, not on me. Respect for the lord prompted me to it.”

(32) THE PHILOSOPHER: “Surely you yourself have come up with the advice you asked for, and no discerning person will feel the contrary. But apply the example of the proposed analogy to what we are aiming for.”

(33) THE JEW: “Many generations have passed, as you yourself know, during which time our people have obediently maintained the Testament they think was given to them by God. They instructed all their descendants equally in observing it, both by word and by example. Almost the entire world agrees that this Law was given us by God. If perhaps we can’t force some unbelievers to agree about this Law, nevertheless there’s no one who can refute by any reasoning what we believe.

(34) “Surely it is pious, entirely in agreement with reason, and in accord both with divine goodness and human salvation to hold that God shows so much care for human beings that he also sees fit to instruct them by a written Law and to curb our maliciousness, at least by fear of the penalties. If secular princes’ laws have been profitably set up for this purpose, who denies that the highest and kindest prince of all has also taken care of this? For how can one govern a subject people without law if everyone, left to his own choice, pursues whatever he picks? Or how will he restrain their maliciousness by justly punishing evil people, unless a law was set up in advance that prohibits evils from being done?

(35) “For this reason, I believe it is plain that the divine Law first came among human beings so that the world might also take the source and authority of this good from God, since he wanted to bridle maliciousness by setting up *some* laws. Otherwise, it could easily have seemed that God didn’t care about human affairs, and that the state of the world is produced by chance rather than ruled by providence. Now if it’s believed that *some* law was given to the world by God, which one should we suppose this about more than ours, which has got so much authority from its ancientness and from general human opinion?

(36) “Lastly, suppose it *is* doubtful to me, as it is to you, that God set up this Law, even though it is confirmed by so many testimonies and by reason. Nevertheless, you will be forced by the inference in the assumed analogy [(29)-(30)] to advise me to obey it, especially since my own conscience urges me to do so.

(37) “You and I have a common faith in the truth of the one God. Perhaps I have just as much love for him as you do. In addition, I also show it through deeds, which you *don’t* have. If they do no good, what harm do they do me even if they’re not commanded, since they’re not prohibited? Who too can fault me, if labor more for the Lord even when not constrained by any command? Who can fault this faith that

most highly acclaims the divine goodness, as was said [(34)], and very greatly kindles our charity for him who is so concerned about our salvation that he saw fit to instruct us by a written Law? So either find some fault in his Law, or else stop asking why we follow it.

(38) “Whoever regards the steadfastness of our zeal, which puts up with so much, as devoid of reward asserts God to be most cruel. Certainly no race is known or even believed ever to have borne so much for God’s sake as we endlessly put up with for his sake. There can be no rust of sin that the furnace of this affliction shouldn’t be conceded to eat away. Scattered among all the nations, alone without a king or earthly prince, are we not weighed down with such impositions that we pay off the unbearable ransom of our miserable life almost day by day?”

(48) THE PHILOSOPHER: “It is agreed that before the Law or the legal sacraments were handed down, most people were content with the natural law, consisting of love for God and neighbor. They cultivated justice and were most acceptable to God. For example, Able, Enoch, Noah and his sons, Abraham too, Lot and Melchizedek. Even your Law recalls and praises them highly. Among them, in fact, Enoch is reported to have so pleased God that the Lord is said to have transported him alive into paradise, even as one of you asserts in the words, ‘Enoch pleased God and was transported into paradise, to give an example of penitence to the nations.’ And how much the Lord loved Noah — plain facts, when the Lord saved him and his household alone as the seed of the human race, while all others drowned in the flood.

(50) “From this it is plainly gathered how much the earlier fathers’ voluntary compliances were accepted by God, to which no law yet constrained them. We still serve him in this freedom.

(51) “But if you say the Law had in a certain sense begun in Abraham on account of the sacrament of circumcision, you’ll certainly find that he gets no reward from it before God (so that there’s no bragging for you from the Law), that he neither got any justification nor was even commended by the Lord for it. Indeed, it is written that like the earlier fathers he was justified through faith while he wasn’t yet circumcised, when it is said, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was counted as justice for him.’

(55) “Carefully consider too what reward the Lord promises and arranges in advance for observing the whole Law. You certainly can’t expect from him anything but earthly prosperity for this. For you see nothing else promised there. Since it isn’t apparent whether you get even this — you who in your own judgement are afflicted more than all mortals — the faith in this obedience to the Law, whereby you put up with so many and such great things, is quite amazing. For you’re

obviously especially frustrated from gaining the advantage that's to be expected from the very thing owed to you by the promise."

(94) THE JEW: "Look, the Lord is clearly offering an everlasting reward for obeying the Law, not a reward that comes to an end. Moses too, after the earthly reward you mentioned earlier for those who keep the Law [(58)], added the mercy that's to be exercised by God toward them. He was plainly holding out for us another reward than an earthly one. For when he said, 'And that it go well with you all the days of your life, even as it does today,' he at once added, 'And he will be merciful toward us, if we keep and do all his commandments, as he has decreed to us.' And after some things in between, when he had said 'The Lord has picked you, that you may be a special people to him among all peoples,' he added further down, 'And you will know that the Lord our God is a strong and faithful God who for a thousand generations keeps the covenant and continues the mercy toward those who love him and those who keep his commandments.'

(95) "Now I think it doesn't escape you that the Law itself commands perfect love of God or neighbor, which is what you say the natural law consists of[(48)]. Indeed, in summing up the Law at the end of his life, Moses says:

And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but that you fear the Lord your God, and walk in his ways and love him, and serve the Lord your God with your whole heart and your whole soul, and that you keep the Lord's decrees and his rites, which I command today, so that it may go well with you? Come on! The heaven, the heaven's heaven, the earth, and all the things in them are the Lord your God's. And when the Lord was closely bound to your fathers and loved them, he also chose their seed after them — that is, you — from among all peoples, as is proved today.

(96) "The Law so carefully explains that the love of God should be perfect, and so elaborates the point, that it commands that God is to be loved with the whole heart and with the whole soul and with our whole strength. On the other hand, we are ordered to love our neighbor like ourselves, so that the love of God, which extends even above ourselves, is contained by no measure. We are also commanded to love the outsiders who abide among us as we do our very selves. The Law expands the bosom of love to such an extent that its benefits are not lacking even to our very enemies or to criminals. Let's now set out some texts on these matters: (a) 'If you run across your enemy's ox or stray ass, return it to him. If you see an ass belonging to someone who hates you collapse under a burden, you will not pass by but will help him lift it up.' (b) 'You will not annoy the wanderer; you were wanderers too in Egypt.' (c) 'Do not look for revenge. You

will not be mindful of your fellow-citizen's injuries against you.' 'If an outsider lives in your land and abides among you, do not reproach him. Instead, let him be among you like a native. And you will love him as you do yourselves. For you too were outsiders in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.'

(97) "And elsewhere: 'The poor will not be lacking in the land where you live. For that reason I command you to open your hand to your brother, to the destitute, and to the poor who dwell in the land with you.'

(98) "So I beg you, consider on the basis of these passages how much the Law extends the feeling of love both to human beings and to God, so you may recognize that your law, which you call 'natural,' is included also in ours. Thus if the other commandments were to cease to apply, these belonging to perfect love would be enough for our salvation, even as they are for yours. You don't deny that our early fathers were saved by them, so that a greater certainty of salvation is passed on to us the more the Law's additional commandments establish a more restricted life for us. In fact, this addition seems to me to pertain not so much to religion's holy practices as it does to fortifying it more securely.

(99) "Certainly a true love of God and man is enough for every mental virtue. Even if deeds are lacking, still a good and perfect will is by no means lessened in its merit. But as I said [(73)], just as the Lord wanted to separate us in location from the faithless so that we would not be corrupted by them, so too he decided that this should be done by ritual deeds as well. Therefore, although love's perfection is enough to yield true blessedness, surely the additional commandments of the more restricted life deserved to have gained at least something extra, even in this life, so that we would be made more eager and sure toward God by the solace of an earthly benefit. Since his gifts to us would be increased, our devotion to him would grow, and the outside population of unbelievers who saw this would be more easily incited by our advantages to venerate God.

(100) "Now as for the fact that the Lord seems to mention earthly benefits as a reward for the Law more often or more plainly than he does eternal ones, understand that this was done mainly on account of a people who were still carnal and rebellious, whom he led out of Egypt's wealth, which they were continually muttering about, into a harsh loneliness. It also seemed pointless, in the promise, to mention the matter of eternal blessedness. It was plain that our ancestors had gotten that earlier, even without the Law's being handed down.

(101) "Finally, infer how great the Law's perfection is from this one concluding remark that Moses writes at the end of his life, in these

words: ‘And now, Israel, hear the commandments and judgments I teach you, etc. You will not add to or take away from the word I say to you.’ And again, ‘Do for the Lord only what I command you. Do not add or subtract anything.’

(122) THE PHILOSOPHER: “When David composed the Psalms for God’s honor, or solemnly brought the Lord’s ark into Jerusalem, or when Solomon built and dedicated the Lord’s temple, they certainly did what Moses hadn’t commanded in any way. All the prophets as well were selected without any commandment from Moses or from the Law that was handed down to him. After Moses countless things were done by the holy fathers, either from the Lord’s commandment or for the sake of their obvious usefulness, that are in no way contained in Moses’ commandments.

(123) “For commandments from the Lord shouldn’t be expected in matters that have an obvious usefulness. Sin isn’t doing what is not commanded, but rather acting against a commandment. Otherwise you couldn’t go through a single day of the present life, or carry out your household business for a single day, since we have to do many things — buying, making deals, going from this place to that, or even eating or sleeping — that aren’t covered in a commandment.

(124) “Moreover, who doesn’t see that if nothing more or less than what Moses commanded is to be done, then all who keep the Law are of equal merit, and among those whose merits cannot be unequal one person is not better than another?

(125) “From the preceding, therefore, it’s clear there’s no way you can commend the Law’s perfection by your understanding that if something is added on that isn’t commanded in it, it is against the Law for it to be done. Realize that when the Lord was urging obedience to the Law, you aren’t giving him a good enough excuse for leaving out what I said [(58)] is the greatest thing in its reward [eternal blessedness, as opposed to earthly prosperity], if he regarded obedience as enough for him to promise that too.

(126) “But I’m surprised you’re sure that spiritual good follows from the purification of sins through sacrifices [(103)], or through any of the Law’s external works, if — as you yourself acknowledge [(98)] and as plain truth has it — your love of God and neighbor is enough for the justification of holiness. For without the latter, purification will be of no help at all, as far as the soul’s salvation is concerned. And there’s no doubt that when the love of God and neighbor has made someone just, he’s no longer in a state of guilt for sin so as to need spiritual purification. Thus you have it written about the repentant sinner, ‘An afflicted spirit is a sacrifice to God,’ etc. And again, ‘I said, “I will confess against myself my injustice, and you took away my sin’s impi-

ety.” ‘Look how the Psalmist commends this sacrifice of the contrite heart. Elsewhere, speaking in the Lord’s person, he completely rejects what is external, saying:

Hear, people, and I will speak. I will not take calves from your house, Israel, or goats from your flocks. If I get hungry, I will not tell you. For the earth’s globe and its bounty are mine. Shall I eat bull-meat? Or drink goats’ blood? Offer God a sacrifice of praise, and carry out your vows to the most high. Call on me in the day of tribulation, and I will rescue you, and you will do me honor.

(127) “The Lord is hungry for the sacrifice of the heart, not of animals, and he’s renewed by it. When he finds the former, he doesn’t look for the latter; when he doesn’t find the former, the latter is altogether superfluous — I mean as far as the soul’s justification is concerned, not for getting around the legal penalties. Nevertheless your sins are said to be pardoned in accordance with these penalties. (128) “Indeed your Law, which assigns merits for fulfilling or breaking it only in this life, and in either case pays a remuneration only here, fits all things to this bodily life, so that it rates nothing as clean or unclean according to the soul.

(133) “Just as the soul’s guilt is brought on by its willing, so it is at once pardoned through its contrite heart and true remorse of penitence, with the result that it isn’t condemned for it any longer. As was said [(126)], ‘I said, “I will confess against myself.”’ For after the repentant sinner has thus decided within himself to accuse himself through confession, by that very fact he permits his perverse will’s fault, through which he did wrong, to be now lacking in guilt, and his perpetual penalty is pardoned, although a temporal one may still be kept for the sake of correction, as your same prophet remarks elsewhere, saying, ‘Chastising, the Lord chastised me; and he did not tum me over to death.

(134) “I think in asking these things about my soul’s salvation I have conversed with you enough about your faith and my faith. Indeed, in summarizing our conversation, I consider it to have been established that, on your own Law’s authority, even if you take it to be given to you by God, you can recognize the law Job prescribes for us by his example, or to the moral discipline our philosophers left posterity regarding the virtues that suffice for blessedness.

(175) THE PHILOSOPHER: “Indeed. For it is all right, and we should resolve to do this above all. Let’s try as hard as we can, and attempt to insist on the natural law in the truer ethics’ lessons.

(176) “We believe this will be brought to completion rightly and in good order if, in accordance with the summary of ethics recounted by you above [(150)], we discuss what the ultimate good is and by what

road one can reach it, so that the treatment of our ethics is divided into these two parts.”

(177) THE CHRISTIAN: “I concur with you on your recommendation. But in accordance with our proposal’s agreement, our views are to be compared with yours so that we can pick the stronger features of each. And you have claimed you get to go first because of the natural law’s ancientness [(11)]. Thus you who are content with what you call the ‘earlier’ (that is, the natural) law and use it alone, it’s your task to make your own or your people’s views known, and afterwards to hear the reasons for ours if we disagree on anything.”

(178) THE PHILOSOPHER: “As a great many of your own people have remarked, they have defined the ultimate good or final good — that is, its summation or completion — as ‘what makes anyone who has arrived at it blessed,’ just as conversely the ultimate evil is that the attaining of which makes one wretched. We earn either one of these by our morals. Now it is certain that virtues or the vices contrary to them are called ‘morals.’ But as Augustine remarks in Book Eight of *On the City of God*, some of our own people have said that virtue itself is the ultimate good, others that pleasure is.”

(179) THE CHRISTIAN: “So what, please, did they understand by pleasure?”

(180) THE PHILOSOPHER: “Not the dishonorable and shameful delight of carnal allurements, as many people suppose, but rather a kind of inner tranquillity of the soul whereby it remains calm and content with its own goods in disasters and good fortune alike, while no sense of sin consumes it. Far be it from philosophers, those greatest despisers of earthly happiness, those distinguished flesh-tamers, to set up the ultimate good in this life’s shamefulnesses! Many people attribute this to Epicurus and his followers (that is, the Epicureans) out of ignorance, not really understanding, as we said, what the latter would call pleasure. Otherwise, as we said, if Epicurus had departed as far as is said from the path of soberness and respectability, then Seneca, that greatest morals-builder, who lived a most self-restrained life as you yourselves acknowledge, would hardly have brought in Epicurus’ views so often for moral instruction, as if they were his own master’s.”

(181) THE CHRISTIAN: “Be it as you suppose. But please answer this: Do those who understand pleasure in this way disagree in meaning too, as they do in words, with those who call the ultimate good ‘virtue’?”

(182) THE PHILOSOPHER: “There’s little or no distance between them, as far as their overall view is concerned. Indeed, to be strong in virtues is itself to have this tranquillity of the soul, and conversely.”

(183) THE CHRISTIAN: "So there is one view for both of them about the ultimate good, but the nomenclature is different. And so the two apparent views about the ultimate good are reduced to one."

(184) THE PHILOSOPHER: "So I think."

(185) THE CHRISTIAN: "And what way have they settled on, I ask, for reaching this ultimate good, namely virtue?"

(186) THE PHILOSOPHER: "Certainly the study of moral literature or exercise in taming the flesh, so that the good will that is firmed up into a habit can be called 'virtue.'"

(187) THE CHRISTIAN: "And whom do they define as blessed?"

(188) THE PHILOSOPHER: "They say the 'blessed' is one who is 'well suited,' so to speak — that is, deals well and easily in all things. Thus being blessed is the same as being strong in good morals, that is, in the virtues."

(189) THE CHRISTIAN: "Do they put any value on the soul's immortality and on a kind of blessedness in a future life, and expect it in return for their merits?"

(205) THE PHILOSOPHER: "Please, where are these remarks going?"

(206) THE CHRISTIAN: "They are so that you may understand, I say, that the better life is the one that surely is altogether devoid of these evils and so absolutely removed from sin that not only does one not sin but one cannot sin there either. Unless it's better or more pleasant than the present life, it's pointless to put it forward as a reward. But if it's neither more pleasant nor better, there's no reason it's preferred to this one, and those who desire it more do so uncritically."

(207) THE PHILOSOPHER: "To tell the truth, I'm learning now that you're a first-class philosopher, and it's wrong to resist shamelessly such a plain argument. But according to the argument you've set out, a human being's ultimate good is to be looked for there rather than here. Perhaps this was Epicurus' view when he said the ultimate good is pleasure. For the soul's tranquillity is so great that bodily affliction doesn't disturb it from outside, and neither does any sense of sin disturb the mind nor vice get in its way from inside. Thus its best will is entirely fulfilled."

(208) "On the other hand, as long as something opposes our will or is lacking to it, there's no true blessedness at all. Surely this is always occurring as long as one is alive here, and the soul, weighed down by its earthly body's mass and confined in it as though in a jail, doesn't enjoy true freedom. For who doesn't sometimes want heat when it's too cold, or conversely, good weather when he's tired of rain, or often want more food or clothes than he has? And unless we resist the plain truth, there are countless other things that are pressed upon us against

our will or are denied when we want them. Now if as the argument stands the future life's good is to be regarded as ultimate for us, then I think the virtues we are furnished with here are the way to get there. We'll have to discuss them more carefully later on [(253)-(295)]."

(209) THE CHRISTIAN: "See, our disputation has brought us to the point of maintaining that a human being's ultimate good, or 'final good' as it was called [(178)], is the future life's blessedness, and virtues are the way to get there.

(210) "But first I want to compare our (that is, Christian) teaching about this ultimate good with yours, in order that the teaching with the more fertile doctrine or exhortation may be both regarded as more perfect and complied with more fully.

(211) "Now you suppose you've decisively shown, blessedness was promised there, and no use is made there of any exhortation based on it. But when he handed down the New Testament, the Lord Jesus put just such a foundation for his doctrine right at the very beginning where he stirred up both contempt for the world and a desire for this blessedness alike, saying: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit. For the kingdom of heaven is theirs.' And later on: 'Blessed are those who suffer persecution on account of justice. For the kingdom of heaven is theirs.' If we pay careful attention to these passages, all his commandments or exhortations are used for the purpose that all good fortune might be despised and adversities put up with in the hope of that higher and eternal life.

(212) "I think your teachers haven't touched on this at all or summoned your souls as much to this final good. But if there were some who did, then run through all the ordinances of your ethics and point them out. Or if you can't point them out, then confess that Christ's doctrine is the more perfect and better one insofar as it exhorts us to virtues with better reason or hope. For you suppose instead that virtues or their contraries are to be striven after or shunned for their own sakes more than for the sake of something else. Thus you suppose the former should be called 'honorable' and the latter 'dishonorable.' Indeed, you call 'honorable' what is pleasant through itself and is to be striven after for its own sake, not for the sake of something else, just as conversely you call 'dishonorable' what is to be run away from on account of its own shamefulfulness. For things that are to be either sought after or shunned on account of something else you instead call 'useful' or 'unuseful.'"

(213) THE PHILOSOPHER: "It certainly did seem that way to our forebears, as Cicero describes rather fully in his Rhetoric. But surely when it is said that virtue is to be aspired after for its own sake, not for the sake of something else, reward for merits isn't being ruled

out entirely; rather the inclination to earthly advantages is taken away. Otherwise we wouldn't have correctly set up blessedness as the virtues' goal — that is, their final cause — as your Boethius remarks in Book Two of his Topics, following Themistius. In fact, while giving an example there of the topic 'from the goal,' he says 'If to be blessed is good, justice is good too.' For here, he says, justice's goal is such that if someone lives in accordance with justice, he is led to blessedness. Look, he plainly shows here that blessedness is awarded as payment for a just life, and that our purpose in living justly is that we might reach it. Epicurus I think calls this blessedness 'pleasure'; your Christ calls it 'the kingdom of heaven.'

(214) "But what difference does it make what name it is called by, provided that the thing stays the same, the blessedness is different, and no other purpose for living justly is proposed for philosophers than for Christians? For we, like you, arrange to live justly here that we may be glorified there. We fight against vices here that we may be crowned there with virtues' merits, receiving the ultimate good as our reward."

(215) THE CHRISTIAN: "On the contrary. As far as I can tell, our purpose and merits are quite different from yours, and we disagree quite a bit too about the ultimate good itself."

(216) THE PHILOSOPHER: "Please explain that, if you can."

(217) THE CHRISTIAN: "No one correctly calls that than which something greater is found the 'ultimate good.' For what is below or less than something cannot by any means be called 'supreme' or 'ultimate.' But it is agreed that every human blessedness or glory is far and inexpressibly exceeded by the divine one. Therefore, none besides it is to be called 'ultimate.' Nothing besides it is justly said to be the 'ultimate good.'"

(218) THE PHILOSOPHER: "In this context we do not mean the ultimate good absolutely, but the ultimate human good."

(219) THE CHRISTIAN: "But neither do we correctly call 'ultimate human good' that than which some greater human good is found."

(220) THE PHILOSOPHER: "That's plain, certainly."

(221) THE CHRISTIAN: "I ask therefore whether in that blessedness [(213)] one person is more blessed than another (as it happens here that one person is more just or holy than another), so that the repayment is different according to the difference in the merits."

(222) THE PHILOSOPHER: "What if that's so?"

(223) THE CHRISTIAN: "Precisely because it is so, you have to grant that one person is made more blessed there than another. And because of this, the person's blessedness that is the less shouldn't be said to be the ultimate human good. Thus it's inappropriate for the one who's less blessed than another to be called 'blessed' any longer. For you

in fact defined the ultimate good as that whereby someone is blessed when he reaches it.

(224) “Therefore, either grant that the one who’s less blessed there than another has received the ultimate good, or else grant that he is not blessed at all, but rather only the one than whom no one there is more blessed. For if what’s received makes him blessed, then surely in accordance with the definition given above, it is properly called the ultimate good.”

(225) THE PHILOSOPHER: “Hold on a moment, please! Pay attention to what I now submit in reply to this most recent line of inquiry. It’s still legitimate for someone to correct things badly stated, since as was said, we are having this conversation to investigate what’s true, not to show off talent.”

(226) THE CHRISTIAN : “I approve, and I grant what you’re saying. For it’s unseemly for us, who are entirely taken up with the investigation of truth, to squabble with one another like children or with uncouth bawling. Or if things are granted rather incautiously, it’s unseemly for one who means to teach or be taught to take the opportunity from that to produce embarrassment where sometimes it’s permissible to grant even falsehoods for the sake of arguing. And so we give full license to either completely changing or correcting a view.”

(227) THE PHILOSOPHER: “Recall what I said, and remember the condition imposed where it was said, ‘What if that is so?’. For it’s seemed to many philosophers that all the virtues are present together in all good people, that one who’s missing some virtue isn’t regarded as good at all, and that therefore among all good people there’s no difference either in their life’s merits or in the repayment that is blessedness.

(230) THE CHRISTIAN: “I see you’re now for the first time not ashamed to get boorish and squabble rather than philosophize. Surely, in order not to appear forced into a confession of plain truth, you turn to the craziness of the most blatant falsehood, so that you regard all good people as equally good, all criminals as equally criminal, and all people as deserving the same glory or penalty to the same degree.”

(231) THE PHILOSOPHER: “If only the matter stays at the level of reality, not at the level of people’s opinion! People judge and repay the effects of deeds more than they do the quality of morals. They judge some people more just, stronger, better, or worse than others according to the things that outwardly seem to be performed .

(232) “Actually, I think you’re not far from this view, if you consider your own teaching. Indeed as your greatest philosopher Augustine asserts, charity encompasses all the virtues under one name. It alone, as he himself says, differentiates between the sons of God and of the Devil. Thus he remarks in a certain passage: ‘Where there is charity,

what is there that can be lacking? But where there is not, what is there that can help? “In fact, love is the fulfillment of the Law.”’ The Apostle himself who says this, in following up on this fulfillment and both removing evils from it and including goods in it, says: ‘Charity is patient, it is kind. Charity is not envious, it does not act badly,’ etc. Charity is also the topic when among other things it’s said that it ‘suffers all things’ or ‘bears all things,’ surely even death. Now as Christ remarks, ‘No one has more love than this, that someone lays down his soul for his friends.’

(233) “Therefore one person doesn’t abound with charity more than another one does, since charity contains in itself all these things and carries them with it. Now if no one surpasses anyone else in charity, surely neither does he in virtues or merits, since charity, as you say, embraces every virtue.”

(234) THE CHRISTIAN: “Really, if virtue is understood properly — that is, as what obtains merit with God — then only charity is to be called a virtue. But if it’s understood as what makes one just or strong or moderate, then it’s correct to call it justice, strength or moderation.

(235) “But just as those who have charity are not all equally on fire with it, and not all prudent people understand equally, so not all just people are equally just or all the strong or moderate people equally so. And although we grant that all the virtues, according to the distinction of their species, are present in some people — that is, when any of them is just and strong and moderate — nevertheless we don’t agree that they are on a par in virtues or merits, since it happens that one person is more just or stronger or more forbearing than another. For even though we hold that individual people agree in the previously mentioned species of the virtues, there’s nevertheless a big difference among the individual instances of those species, since one person’s justice or strength or moderation is greater than another’s.

(236) “So even though charity brings together all the things you said, nevertheless it doesn’t bestow them all on the individuals it is present in. For just as all things advantageous to the body are imparted by nature, but not all of them to all bodies, so it happens with the soul’s goods or virtues too that not all people are enhanced equally by them all.

(239) “Finally, who is there who doesn’t understand how it is the worst craziness to say all sins are on a par? For whether you locate sin in the will or in the doing, it’s clear that among evil persons one has a viler will than another, and is more harmful or acts worse. Certainly the will leads to the act, and when the ability is given to do harm, one person does more harm than another, or persecutes some just person more because he hates him and wants to torment him more. Likewise

not all good people are beneficial or want to be beneficial equally. It's plain from this that good people aren't on a par with one another and evil people aren't either. Neither should their merits be equated, so that their repayment is understood to be on a par too.

(240) “Moreover, disregarding the opinion of fools, if you consider the approved philosophers’ lofty doctrines about the virtues, and notice the careful four-part distinction of the virtues given by that most eloquent man Plotinus — he calls some political, some purgatorial, others virtues of the purged soul, and others exemplary — you will be forced by their very names and descriptions to confess at once that people differ greatly in virtues.

(241) “The Apostle too, about whom you raised an objection against us, doesn't pass over this difference when he's talking about self-restraint and allowing marriage. He says: ‘I want all people to be like myself. But everyone has his own gift from God, one person this way, one that way,’ etc. He also distinguishes the future life's rewards according to the quality of virtues or merits, saying: ‘Star differs from star in brightness. So too will be the resurrection of the dead.’ And elsewhere, ‘One who sows frugally will also reap frugally.’

(242) “Now the fact that he said the fulfillment of the Law is charity — that is, the Law is carried out through charity—doesn't show all people are equal in charity, since charity extends beyond what's decreed. Hence there's also Truth's exhortation, ‘When you have done all things, whatever are commanded, say: “We are useless slaves. We have done what we were supposed to do.”’ That is, if you carry out only what you're supposed to on the basis of a command, then regard it as little if you don't add something extra, in addition to the command's duty. His expression, ‘We have done what we were supposed to do,’ is as though he'd said, ‘In fulfilling the commands we carry out only our duties, and perform necessary deeds, as it were, not gratuitous ones.’ Now when someone perseveres to the pinnacle of virginity, he certainly thereby goes beyond commandment, and isn't compelled to it by commandment. Thus the same Apostle remarks: ‘Now I do not have a commandment of the Lord's about virgins; rather I give advice.’

(299) “As far as I can see, you understand both the ultimate evil and the ultimate human evil as nothing but the penalties of the future world, exacted in proportion to merits.”

(300) THE PHILOSOPHER: “I do indeed.”

(309) THE CHRISTIAN: “For now, let it be as you say. That is, from what you've granted you can't be accused of granting that what's good is the ultimate human evil, even though you don't deny that a penalty that's good and just is that ultimate evil. But I ask again, since both

the preceding fault and the penalty arising from it are an evil, which of them is to be called the worse and greater human evil? Is it his fault that makes the person evil, or the penalty imposed by God that effects a just judgment on him?"

(310) THE PHILOSOPHER: "In my view, his fault is clearly a worse human evil than its penalty is. For since between any evils whatever, there's no doubt that the one more displeasing to God and deserving of penalty is greater than the other, who doubts that the fault is worse than the fault's penalty? Certainly a person displeases God through the fault whereby he's called evil, not through the penalty imposed for the fault. The former certainly is an injustice; the latter is justice's due effect, arising from a correct intention. So it's clear that what there is in a person that makes him guilty is worse than what inflicts a just judgment on him by punishing him."

(311) THE CHRISTIAN: "Therefore, since a person's fault is a greater human evil than the penalty for it is, how do you call a person's penalty his ultimate evil? The fault is a greater evil than that, as was said."

(312) THE PHILOSOPHER: "So if you reject our opinion, please let me hear your view on this. That is, what do you think should be called the ultimate human evil?"

(313) THE CHRISTIAN: "What can make him worse, certainly. So too conversely, his ultimate good is plainly that whereby he's made better."

(314) THE PHILOSOPHER: "And what are they, please?"

(315) THE CHRISTIAN: "His ultimate hatred or ultimate love for God. Plainly, through these two we more displease or please him who is simply and properly called the ultimate good. Both of these surely follow after this life. For the more those who are tortured by the greatest everlasting penalties feel themselves burdened thereby, the more they burn from the very despair of pardon with a greater hatred for him by whose judgment they're being punished. They'd want him not to exist at all, so that then at least they could be released from the penalty. So they are much worse there for hating than they were here in scorning.

(316) "So too conversely, those who enjoy the vision of God that the Psalmist speaks of ('When your glory appears, I will be satisfied' — that is, after you've shown me your divinity's majesty through your very self, I will not need to seek anything more) are then made better insofar as they love more fully him whom they see in himself more truly. Thus ultimate love in the enjoyment of the ultimate good which is our true blessedness should rightly be called the ultimate human good.

(317) "Indeed, divine majesty's glory is so great that no one can gaze

on it who doesn't at once become blessed in the very vision of it. Hence it's said, 'Let the impious be removed, lest he see God's glory.' Thus when his faithful, who loved him above all things, gaze on such blessedness as they could in no way have envisioned by faith, this ultimate exultation of theirs will be their everlasting blessedness."

(318) THE PHILOSOPHER: "It's all right to understand ultimate human good or evil as that whereby a person is made better or worse, as you say. But if this comes about in the future life, so that we're made better or worse there than here, then surely we seem to merit something more there than here. For to the extent we're made better or worse than before, we're judged worthy of a greater penalty or reward (319) "Now if there's an advance in merits there too, so that the more we know God the more we love him, and if our love for God grows with the repayment as well, so that we're always being made better, then surely the growth in our blessedness is stretched out to infinity, so that it's never complete because it's always being increased.

(320) THE CHRISTIAN: "You don't understand that the time for meriting is in this life only, for reward in that one — that is, here 'for sowing,' there 'for gathering.' Therefore, even though we're made better there by the prize for merits than we were here by the merits themselves, nevertheless it's not necessary that we merit something there all over again. The very fact that we're made better there than here is the reward for merits had here. Although, having been bestowed for merits, it makes us better, it doesn't merit a prize again. It's established only as a reward for merits, not as being had for meriting something all over again.

(321) "For among us too, when someone receives from a friend a repayment for friendship and loves him all the more because of it, he's not judged to merit a reward from him again because of the greater love that comes from the prize given — so that the merits are thus stretched out to infinity. For by a kind of force of necessity, love is increased by the payment of a prize, so that it seems not so much voluntary as necessary. Thus surely there's an emotion naturally implanted in all people, so that the very payment of a prize brings with it a kind of increase in love, and sets us on fire with love for him by a kind of necessity or self-love rather than by virtue or love for the payer.

(322) "Therefore, if among people a friend gets a reward from his friend, and is compelled to love him more by that very reward, yet isn't said to merit all over again from this growth in love, what is there surprising if, in the other life too, we who love God more for the reward received don't in any way turn the reward itself into a merit again?"

(323) “Or what in the end prevents it from being granted that the divine majesty’s glory is so great that there can always be some advance of ours in seeing it, with the result that the longer we gaze on it and the more it makes itself known to us, the more blessed it makes us? Surely this continual increase of blessedness is worth more than a lesser blessedness that stays at one level only and doesn’t advance by any increment.”

(324) THE PHILOSOPHER: “How, I ask you, can there be any advance in seeing God, or any difference among those who see him, since the ultimate good is altogether simple? Nothing but the whole of it can ever be gazed on by another.”

(325) THE CHRISTIAN: “Surely the diversity isn’t in the thing gazed on, but in the way of gazing on it, so that our blessedness in see in him is increased the better God is understood. For in understanding a soul or some spirit we don’t all understand equally, even though such incorporeal natures aren’t said to have parts in their essence’s quantity. And when a body (or some part of one) is looked at by several people at once, it’s nevertheless seen better by one person than by another and, in accordance with some nature of the body, is better known by this person than by that one, and is understood more completely. While the same thing is understood, nevertheless it’s not understood equally.

(326) “So too, even though it’s through understanding that all people see the divine essence, which is altogether indivisible, nevertheless they don’t perceive his nature equally. Thus in accordance with their merits, God imparts a better and more complete knowledge of himself to this person than to that one, and shows himself more fully. It surely can happen that even though this person knows all the things that one does, yet this one knows individual details better and more completely than that one does, and even though as many things are known by this person as by that one, nevertheless the one doesn’t have as much knowledge about the same things as the other one does, or doesn’t know the same things as well.”

(327) THE PHILOSOPHER: “Did the angels that you call ‘fallen’ ever have the vision of God that true blessedness consists of, or did the main one, at least, who in comparison with the rest is compared to a ‘Light-Bearer’?”

(328) THE CHRISTIAN: “Certainly he shouldn’t by any means be believed to have had it! And none of those who failed did either. Even those who didn’t fail didn’t receive that vision in repayment for their humility until after the others’ fall, the vision whereby they were made both blessed and confirmed at once, so they wouldn’t be able to fall any more.

(329) “Indeed all the angels, like human beings, were created such that they were able to act both well and badly. Otherwise those who didn’t sin would’ve had no merit from the fact that they didn’t accede to the others in sinning.

(330) “Now the fact that Lucifer was endowed with the privilege of a kind of excellence came about not so much because of his blessedness as because of the acuteness of his knowledge, insofar as he was made superior to the rest with respect to the light of knowledge, and made more subtle in understanding all the natures of things. Reflecting on this within himself, he swelled up, inflated with the very extent of his knowledge whereby he saw himself above the others. He ventured greater things than he would’ve been able to hope for, so that because he knew himself to be set above others, he thought he could become equal to God and would acquire a kingdom all by himself, just like God. Thus, the higher he raised himself up through pride, the worse he failed through his fault.”

(331) THE PHILOSOPHER: “Please settle this too: Should this ultimate human good — I mean that ultimate love of God a person takes on from the vision of God — be called an accident of a human being? Is it appropriate for an accident to be called a substance’s ultimate good, as if it should be preferred to the underlying substance?”

(332) THE CHRISTIAN: “When you distinguish accidents and their underlying substances, you’re resorting to the vocabulary of philosophical teaching and measuring things belonging only to the earthly life, not the heavenly one. Indeed, this secular and earthly discipline was content only with lessons adapted to the present life’s state, not to the future life’s quality, where neither this vocabulary nor any human teaching is needed. People applied their arts’ rules when they investigated the natures of things, but, as is written, ‘He who is of the earth speaks about the earth.’ Therefore, if you endeavor to scale the heavenly life’s summit that goes far beyond every earthly discipline, don’t rely too much on earthly philosophy’s rules. Earthly things still haven’t been able to be fully comprehended and defined by them, much less heavenly ones.

(333) “Now there’s no use in deciding whether the love that’s said to be had in the heavenly life is an accident or some kind of quality. It can’t be truly known except by experiencing it, since it goes far beyond all sense of earthly knowledge. But what does it matter to blessedness whether we maintain it’s an accident or a substance, or neither one? For whatever we say or decide, it isn’t changed for that reason, and doesn’t diminish our blessedness.

(334) “If you pay careful attention to what your philosophers have said about accidental and substantial forms, you will see it isn’t substantial

for us human beings, since it isn't present in all of us. It isn't accidental either; for after it is present, it cannot be absent. Thus even your own view describes an accident as what can be present and absent.

(335) "Also, what is there to prevent us if we grant that the future love there, like the present kind we have here, is an accident? For even though our substance is regarded as better or more worthy than any accident of it, nevertheless it doesn't seem incongruous that what renders a person best and most worthy through participation in it, should be called the ultimate human good. To speak more truly and with greater likelihood, let's settle it that God himself, who alone is properly and absolutely called the ultimate good, is also the ultimate human good. That is, we're made truly blessed by the participation we enjoy in the vision of it that we've spoken of [(316)-(317)].

(336) "Indeed, his ultimate love flows to us from him whom we see in himself. So he who isn't from another and makes us so blessed is more rightly to be called the ultimate human good."

(337) THE PHILOSOPHER: "This view about the ultimate good is certainly all right. It's not unknown to our own philosophy.

(373) "As far as I see it, if these things are as you say, then God whose glory you preach above all in everything seems to owe many things to your faith. But now it remains for you also to explain carefully what one's view of hell should be. For just as the ultimate human good will be more striven for the more it's known, so conversely the ultimate evil will be more avoided the less it's unknown."

(374) THE CHRISTIAN: "In fact for a long time now there's been a difference of opinion on this topic, among us as among you. Some people think hell is a kind of corporeal place underground that's called 'hell' because of its location, which is lower than the other parts of the world. Others think hell isn't a corporeal torment so much as a spiritual one. Thus just as we distinguish souls' ultimate blessedness by the name 'heaven,' which is the world's higher part, so too their ultimate misery by the name 'hell,' which is said to lie lower the farther away it's recognized to be from that ultimate blessedness, and the more contrary it's seen to be to it. For just as what's better is called 'high' on account of the excellence of its worth, so conversely what's worse is called 'lowest' on account of its being debased.

(376) "How can what the Lord relates in the Gospel about the rich person and Lazarus, who are dead, be taken literally? For surely the rich man's soul cannot have a corporeal grave in hell. Or what is Abraham's corporeal bosom where Lazarus's soul is said to be carried off by angels? What tongue does the rich man's soul have there, or what finger does Lazarus's soul have? Or what is the corporeal water there, a drop of which poured on the burning tongue can put out or lessen its

fire? Thus, since these things can't happen literally with souls already sweated out of the flesh, neither can what's said elsewhere: 'Bind his hands and feet. Send him into the shadows outside. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth there.'

(377) "It seems to be implied by both the Old and the New Testament that the things said about hell should be taken mystically rather than corporeally. Thus for example just as Abraham's bosom, where Lazarus's soul is taken, is to be understood as spiritual and not corporeal, so too hell is the spiritual torture where it is recounted that the rich person's soul is buried.

(378) "For as long as souls lack bodies, where can they be carried or moved locally, or forced as if being surrounded by the body? They aren't localized at all, and by their own nature are far subtler than any body. Or what corporeal force of the elements is there, either of fire or the other elements, that can touch or torture souls without bodies? All this can't easily be described or understood.

(379) "Thus even demons after the fall are said to have been spun off into certain airy bodies they took on as a prison, so to speak, so that they can suffer corporeally too. For this reason they were called 'airy powers,' since they can do a great many things in the element they're embodied in, just as people who rule on earth are called 'earthly powers.'

(382) "Thus if it seems to someone that divine judgment's power is great enough to be able to punish equally in all the places it wants to, and that the qualities of places are irrelevant to the penalty or to the glory, then I have no doubt that this view will find assent more easily the more it seems to commend divine power and to come closer to reason. For let's follow the general view of almost all people, who say that some who are put in the same fire are tortured more, some less, in accordance with their merits, not in accordance with the amount of fire. I don't see how so great an adjustment in the same fire's pain can come about through divine power, and that power not be more able to afflict people with different torments who're put in different places — or even to rack them all, no matter where they are, with any pains he wants and to turn all the elements against them into whatever pains. As it's written, 'The earth's globe will fight for God against the irrational.'

(383) "For by their reckoning the common faith asserts that the bodies of the blessed will stay in the ethereal heaven without any damage, where the fire burns and shines more purely the more acute and intense it is, and this is bestowed on them after the resurrection for their glory. Our weakness couldn't withstand that earlier. So indeed does light restore healthy eyes and aggravate weak ones.

(384) “Also, who doesn’t daily experience animals’ natures so different that what preserves the life of some snuffs out others’, and according to the different structure of bodies, what helps one thing hinders another for both animate and inanimate things? Human beings die under water, fish in the air. Salamanders are known to live in fire, which brings a quick destruction to other animals. Venom is the snake’s life, a human being’s death. The same things provide a needed diet for some animals, but a deadly one for others. There’s nothing whatever that can be adapted to all natures. People who come from the same womb, begotten together by the same father, don’t live by the same customs at all. They aren’t amused or offended alike by the same things, and aren’t tormented alike when they’re together in the same heat or cold. This difference in their sufferings certainly doesn’t come from the quality of the things that do the punishing, but from that of the punished.

(385) “And so why should it be surprising if divine justice’s power adjusted the restored bodies for pain according to each person’s merits, whether in the same place or different ones, so that all things might be everywhere equally painful to them? He who admitted he could not escape God’s vengeance certainly had this in mind when he said, ‘Where will I go, away from your spirit? Where will I flee from your face? If I climb up to heaven, you are there. If I go down to hell, you are present.’

(392) “From all these things, I now think it’s clear that the place’s quality is irrelevant to the penalty of the damned and to the glory of the blessed. Rather, being tortured in hell or handed over to perpetual fire is to be racked with the ultimate pains. They are especially compared to fire because torture by this element seems more piercing. Also, it seems to commend the divine power’s glory most if he who is no doubt everywhere present through his power dispenses damnation’s penalty and blessedness’s glory in all places equally.”

(393) THE PHILOSOPHER: “I see you’re eager to tum the damned’s penalty and the elect’s glory equally to the praise of the divine power, in order to proclaim his great goods even in ultimate evils.”

(394) THE CHRISTIAN: “And that’s certainly fitting. For there’re no deeds of his but noble ones, full of amazement. But I think it’s superfluous to define the places these things occur in, so long as we can get or avoid them.”

(395) THE PHILOSOPHER: “Of course, there’s still a discussion to be had after this. Now that in accordance with our plan [(296)] you’ve described both our ultimate good and our ultimate evil, as they appeared to you, explain no less carefully the roads by which they’re reached, so that the more we know them the better we can hold to the former or avoid the latter. But because it seems that what the

ultimate good or the ultimate evil is can't be understood well enough yet, I want it first to be determined what should be called good or evil in general; I want you to define that, if you can. Of course, we know many kinds of these things, but nevertheless we aren't able to understand or examine well enough in what respect things are called good or evil. Indeed, our authors who call some things good, others evil, and others indifferent, didn't distinguish these by any definitions, but were content to illustrate them with certain examples."

(396) THE CHRISTIAN: "I realize how hard they thought it was for things to be defined the names for which seem hardly ever to consist of a single signification. Indeed, when 'good person,' 'good blacksmith,' 'good horse' and the like are said, who doesn't know that the name 'good' borrows different senses from the words joined to it. For we call a person good because of his morals, a blacksmith because of his knowledge, a horse because of its strength and speed or whatever things are relevant to its use. On the other hand, the signification of 'good' is varied so much by what is joined to it that we aren't afraid of attaching it even to the names of vices. We say, for example, 'a good thief or 'the best thief,' insofar as he's adroit and cunning in performing this maliciousness. Sometimes we apply the expression 'good' not only to the things themselves, but also to things said about those things — that is, to the dicta of propositions — so that we even say 'It's good for evil to be,' even though we in no way grant evil is good. Indeed, it's one thing to say 'Evil is good,' which is completely false, and another to say 'It's good for evil to be,' which is not to be denied.

(397) "And so what's surprising if, like them, we aren't able to define the signification of these words, which is so unfixed? Nevertheless as it strikes me now, I think that is called 'good' simply — that is, a 'good thing' — which, while it's fit for some use, mustn't impede the advantage or worthiness of anything. Contrariwise, I believe a thing is called 'evil' that necessarily carries one of these features with it. The 'indifferent,' on the other hand — that is, a thing that's neither good nor evil — I think is one such that necessarily no good is delayed or impeded by its existence. For example, the casual movement of a finger or any actions like that. For actions aren't judged good or evil except according to their root, the intention. Rather, by themselves they're all indifferent. If we look into it carefully, things not good or evil by themselves contribute nothing to merit, since they're equally appropriate both to reprobates and to the elect."

(398) THE PHILOSOPHER: "I think we should stop here and linger awhile, to consider if perhaps the things you've said can serve as definitions."

(399) THE CHRISTIAN: "It's extremely difficult to circumscribe all

things with their own definitions, so that they can be separated from all other things — especially now, since we don't have time enough for thinking through the definitions. With most names, we've come to know which things they go together with from their use in speech, although we're unable to determine what the correct meaning or understanding of them is. We also find many things for which we can't outline the correct nomenclature or meaning in a definition. For even if we aren't ignorant of the things' natures, nevertheless expressions for them are not in use. And often the mind is quicker to understand than the tongue is to utter or discuss what we perceive. Look, from the daily use of the word we all know which things are called stones. Yet I believe we're still unable to determine what the proper differences of 'stone' are, or what the characteristic of this species is, in any expression whereby a definition or description of 'stone' can be achieved. It shouldn't seem surprising to you either if you see me fail in matters on which we know that those great teachers of yours, whom you boast of as philosophers, weren't adequate. Yet I'll try to say what I can in reply to any objection raised by your investigations of these definitions I've offered."

(400) THE PHILOSOPHER: "What you're now saying too seems reasonable and likely enough. But really, unless things that are said are understood, they're uttered in vain. They can't teach others unless they can be discussed. Now, if you please — rather, because you've agreed to do so — I want you to clear up a little the things you've said. Why then didn't it seem enough, I say, for you to say 'what's fit for some use' — that is, suited for some usefulness when you were defining a 'good thing'?"

(401) THE CHRISTIAN: "It's a common and likely proverb that there's scarcely any good that does no harm, or an evil that does no good. For instance here's someone who, a long time ago now, trained himself in good deeds so much that, being praised quite often for it, either he's lifted up to pride, confident of his virtues, or else someone else is thereby set on fire with envy. And so it's plain that evil thus comes out of good, and often good is even the cause of evil. Indeed, our vices or sins, which are what are properly to be called evils, are unable to exist except in souls — that is, in good creatures. Neither can corruption arise except from a good. Conversely, who doesn't see that often after great catastrophes of sins people arise stronger or better through humility or penitence than they were before?"

(402) "Finally, it's plain that penitence for sins is an evil rather than a good because it's a mental affliction and, since it induces sorrow, cannot go together with perfect blessedness. Yet no one doubts it's necessary for forgiveness. Who also doesn't know that God's ultimate

goodness, which permits nothing to happen without a cause, preordains even evils well, and even uses them for the best, to such an extent that it's even good for evils to exist, although nevertheless evil isn't good at all? For just as the Devil's ultimate wickedness often uses even goods for the worst in such a way that he turns them into causes of the worst effects, and so he does the worst kinds of things through things that are good, so God acts the other way around, namely making many goods come out of evils and often using for the best what the Devil strives to use for the worst.

(403) "Both the tyrant and the prince, in fact, can use the same sword evilly and well, the former for violence, the latter for redress [(279)]. There aren't any instruments or any things adapted for our uses, I believe, that we can't use both evilly and well according to our intentions' quality. For this it isn't relevant what is done, but rather with what mind it's done.

(404) "Thus all men, both good ones and perverse, are the causes of both good and evil things, and through them it comes about that both goods and evils exist. For the good man doesn't seem to be at variance with the evil one insofar as he does what's good, but rather in that he does it well. For even if nowadays conversational usage holds that 'doing well' and 'doing good' are the same, nevertheless perhaps the peculiar force of the phrase doesn't work like that. For just as 'good' is often said where 'well' isn't — that is, 'with a good intention' — so too it seems that good can be done although it isn't done well. Indeed it often happens that the same thing is done by different people in such a way that the one does it well and the other evilly, according to their intention. For instance, if two people hang some criminal, the one solely because he hates him but the other because he has to carry out this justice, this hanging is accordingly done justly by the latter, because it was done with the right intention, but unjustly by the former, because it was done not out of love of justice but out of fervor for hatred or wrath.

(405) "Sometimes too, evil men, or even the Devil himself, are said to work together with God in doing the same deed, in such a way that the same thing is asserted to be done both by God and by them. For look, we see the things Job possessed taken away from him by Satan, and nevertheless Job himself professes they are taken away from him by God. He says, 'The Lord has given, the Lord has taken away.'

(406) "But let's move from that to what Christians' minds embrace more dearly, even if it seems laughable to you and to those like you. The Lord Jesus Christ's being handed over into the Jews' hands is mentioned as being done by Jesus himself, by God the Father, and by the traitor Judas. For the Father is said to have handed over the

Son, and the Son to have handed over himself, and Judas the same man. Yet although in such doings either the Devil or Judas did the very same thing God did, nevertheless they shouldn't be said to have done well, even if perhaps they seem to have done something good. Even if they did or wanted to be done what God wants to be done, or have the same will as God has in doing something, should they for that reason be said to do well because they do what God wants to be done? Or do they have a good will because they want what God wants? Of course not! For even if they do or want to be done what God wants to be done, nevertheless they don't do or want to do it because they believe God wants it to be done. Their intention isn't the same as God's in the same deed. And although they want what God wants, and God's will and theirs can be called the same because they want the same thing, nevertheless their will is evil and God's is good since they want it to be done for different causes. So too, although different people's action may be the same because they do the same thing, nevertheless according to the difference in intention this one's action is good and that one's evil. For although they accomplish the same result, nevertheless this one does the selfsame thing well, that one evilly.

(407) "And, it's surprising to say, sometimes there's even a good will when someone wants evil to be done by someone else, because he wants it with a good intention. For the Lord often decided to torment, through the Devil or through some tyrant, people who are either innocent or else didn't deserve that torment for purging some sin of theirs. They're tormented either to increase their merit or to give others an example of patience, or for whatever reasonable cause, even though it's hidden from us. Thus Job remarks on the fact that with the Lord permitting well, the Devil acted evilly. He says 'As it pleased the Lord, so it was done.' In giving him thanks, he shows he doesn't doubt how well this was permitted by the Lord, when he adds, 'Blessed be the name of the Lord.'

(408) "Also, the Third Book of Kings' teaches that the lying spirit had been sent by the Lord to deceive impious Ahab. For when the Lord said, 'Who will deceive Ahab?' the lying spirit came out and stood before the Lord and said, 'I will deceive him.' The Lord said to him, 'With what?' And he said, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And the Lord said, 'You will deceive and prevail over him. Go out and do so.' Indeed the prophet Micahiah, when he had explained before Ahab himself that this had been revealed to him, added 'Then look now, the Lord has allowed a lying spirit in the mouth of all your prophets who are here, and the Lord has spoken evil against you.'

(409) “Now whether the Lord permits the Devil to rage against the saints or against the impious, it’s surely plain he only permits well what’s good to be permitted, and the Devil only does the evil that nevertheless is good to be done and that has a reasonable cause why it’s done, although one unknown to us. For as that great philosopher of yours remarks in his *Timaeus*, when he proves God does all things for the best: ‘Everything begotten is begotten from some necessary cause. For nothing happens for which a lawful cause and reason does not precede its arising.’

(410) “It’s plainly shown in this that no matter what things are done, no matter by whom, because they occur from divine providence’s best governance, they take place reasonably and well in the way they turn out. For they have a reasonable cause why they’re done, even though he who does them may not do them reasonably or well, or in doing them pay attention to the same cause God does.

(411) “So since plainly nothing is done except with God’s permitting it indeed nothing can be done if he’s unwilling or resists — and since in addition it’s certain that God never permits anything without a cause and does nothing whatever except reasonably, so that both his permission and his action are reasonable, surely therefore, since he sees why he permits the individual things that are done to be done, he isn’t ignorant why they should be done, even if they’re evil or are evilly done. For it wouldn’t be good for them to be permitted unless it were good for them to be done. And he wouldn’t be perfectly good who would not interfere, even though he could, with what wouldn’t be good to be done. Rather, by agreeing that something be done that isn’t good to be done, he would obviously be to blame.

(412) “So obviously whatever happens to be done or happens not to be done has a reasonable cause why it’s done or not done. And for that reason it’s good for it to be done, or good for it not to be done, even if it’s done by someone by whom it’s not done well, or evilly not done by the one by whom it’s not done — that is, its being done is renounced because of an evil intention. Thus it’s good even for evils themselves to be or to be done, although the evils themselves aren’t good at all. Truth itself plainly acknowledges this when it says: ‘For it is necessary that scandals come about. But woe to the man through whom a scandal comes about’ — as if saying openly: ‘It’s useful and in keeping with human salvation that some people, offended or enraged because of me, thereby fall into scandal of the soul (that is, damnation), so that through some people’s maliciousness that deed should be done whereby all are saved who are predestined to be cured. But nevertheless woe to (that is, ere will be damnation for) the one by whose advice or persuasion the scandal is instigated. So the scandal

is evil, but it's good for the scandal to exist. So too it's good for any evil to exist, although nevertheless no evil is good.'

(413) "Noticing this and reflecting how much God orders even these evils for the best, Augustine, the great disciple of truth, says the following about God's goodness and the Devil's wickedness, 'Just as God is the best creator of good natures, so he is the most just orderer of evil wills, so that while they use good natures evilly, he uses even evil wills well.'

(414) "Again, the same man says about the Devil, 'When God created him, he was not ignorant of the latter's future wickedness, and foresaw what good he himself was going to make out of the latter's evils.'

(419) "Look, you've heard it shown by plain reason that it's good for there to be evil too, although it isn't true that evil is good. Surely it's one thing to say it's good for there to be evil, and another thing to say evil is good. For in the latter 'good' is applied to an evil thing, in the former to there being the evil thing — that is, in the latter to the thing, in the former to the thing's occurrence.

(421) "Now I think this is enough at present for describing a 'good thing.' But when we apply the expression 'good' to the occurrences of things — that is, to what are said by propositions and what they 'propose' as occurring, so that we call it good for this to be or not to be — it's as though the occurrence were said to be necessary for filling out some optimal arrangement of God's, even if that arrangement is completely hidden from us. For it's not good for someone even to do well, if his doing it doesn't agree with but rather opposes some divine ordering. For what doesn't have a reasonable cause why it should be done cannot be done well. But if something arranged by God were necessarily hampered if a thing came about, then it doesn't have a reasonable cause why it should be done.

(423) "In prayer too, we often through error ask for many things that won't be beneficial to us at all. They're most appropriately denied to us by God in the divine arrangement of things. He knows what's necessary for us better than we do. Thus the main thing is Truth's lesson, whereby in prayer one must always say to God, 'Your will be done.'

(425) "If there's anything left over that depends on investigating the ultimate good, and that you think ought to be asked further about it, it's all right to add it, or else hurry on to the remaining points."

Moses Maimonides,
*The Guide of the
Perplexed*

From 711 to 718, the Umayyad Caliphate, employing an army largely composed of Berbers (from the Maghreb, western North Africa), swept into Europe and conquered the Visigothic Kingdom of the Iberian Peninsula (al-Andalus, in Arabic)—what is now Spain. They even gained a foothold in Gaul, their advance into which being first checked by Charles Martel, Charlemagne's grandfather, at the Battle of Tours in 732. The prestige of this victory enabled the rise of the Frankish Carolingians as the great power in Western Europe. After the Abbasid Revolution of 750 overthrew the Umayyad Caliphate, the one member of the Umayyad ruling family left alive fled west and set up an independent state in al-Andalus: the Emirate of Córdoba.

(Under the Abbasid Caliphate, the Islamic world became a confederation of states.) The Emirate was the most tolerant and advanced society in Europe. (One might compare the Emirate's treatment of Jews and Christians to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella's expulsion of the Jews upon completion of the *Reconquista* in 1492—another strange fruit of a confident Christendom.) Córdoba itself became one of the great cities of the world, with perhaps a half-million inhabitants around 1000, when the largest cities in Christian Europe had maybe 40,000—and only a handful were that size.

By the time Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon (1135-1204), or Moses Maimonides, was born in Córdoba, the glory days of Muslim Iberian culture were in the past. The Umayyads had claimed the caliphate for itself, but fell in 1031 after civil war. The situation of non-Muslims became more precarious (the Granada massacre, a pogrom against Jews, occurred in 1066). Eventually, rule was assumed by the Berber Muslim Almoravid dynasty, of more puritanical bent than the Umayyads. But that dynasty was on the verge of being defeated by a new Berber Muslim power even more rigorous: the Almohads, who took over in 1147. They rejected the second-class yet protected status of Jews and Christians in their realm as *dhimmī*, which allowed freedom of religious practice as long as the subject was loyal to the state and paid a tax called the *jizya*. The Almohads represented a more fundamentalist form of Islam, and demanded conversion of all subjects to Islam. Maimonides's family chose exile and fled south. He would later defend his father's position that those who converted under compulsion should be welcomed back into the Jewish community (which might remind one of Saint Augustine's anti-Donatist stance). The family made its way eventually to the land of Israel, recently turned into Crusader

kingdoms, where they did not feel welcome. Ultimately, Maimonides settled in Egypt in the last years of the (Ismā‘īlī Shia) Fatimid Caliphate, which was soon overthrown by the Sunni Kurd Saladin.

Maimonides would rise to become the *nagid* or appointed royal leader of the Jewish community under Saladin (who would recapture Jerusalem from the Crusaders in 1187), and even became a physician in Saladin’s court.

Maimonides is one of the great religious geniuses of Judaism. His work the *Mishneh Torah*, is still an authoritative reference for Talmudic interpretation. *The Guide of the Perplexed* (written in Arabic around 1190) is his attempt to harmonize Aristotle with the Hebrew Bible and rabbinical theology. A pious Jew, as al-Ghazālī was a pious Muslim, Maimonides (a contemporary of the philosopher Averroes) differs from al-Ghazālī in holding to the compatibility of faith and philosophy. His work influenced Saint Thomas Aquinas. *The Guide* is framed as a letter to a student. He addresses a serious believer, devoted to the Law, who has also received philosophical training and is comfortable with employing methodical reasoning: “he may be worried about the literal meaning of some scriptural passages as well as the sense of those homonymous, metaphorical, or ambiguous expressions, as he has always understood them, or as they are explained to him.” Maimonides wishes to provide a guide for a person thus perplexed by the apparently contradictory claims of revelation and reason: “either he follows his reason and rejects those expressions as he understands them; then he will think that he is rejecting the dogmas of our religion. Or else he continues to accept them in the way he has been taught and refuses to be guided by his reason. He thus brusquely turns his back on his own reason, and yet he cannot help feeling that his faith has been gravely impaired. He will continue to hold those fanciful beliefs although they inspire him with uneasiness and disgust, and be continuously sick at heart and utterly bewildered in his mind.” This perplexity is still alive for people who want both to believe and to think, who feel the demands made by both religion and philosophy.

BOOK III

CHAPTER XII

IT frequently occurs to popular imagination that the evil things in the world are more numerous than the good things. This idea is implied in many of the sayings and songs of most nations. They say that it is a wonder if something good is found once in a while, but the evils of fate are many and persistent. This erroneous opinion is not only current among the vulgar, but also among those who think they know something. There is a well-known book by Rhazes, entitled *The Theology*, in which he put together many of his mad and foolish ideas. Among these is an assertion of his own invention: that more evil exists than good, i.e. when you compare the quiet times a man enjoys and the pleasure he derives from them with the pains and severe accidents, bodily defects, paralyse of limbs, terrors, worries and afflictions which he experiences, you find that man's existence is a scourge and a terrible evil inflicted upon him. To prove the truth of this view he sets about enumerating all those evils, so as to contradict all that men of truth have said concerning God's mercy towards His world and His manifest goodness, and His being without any doubt the absolute good, as well as that all things derived from Him are absolutely good. The cause of the error is that this fool and his fellows from among the vulgar look upon the world only from the point of view of a human. Every fool thinks the whole world exists for his sake, as if there were nothing but he himself: if things turn out contrary to his desires he concludes that all the universe is bad. If man would but examine the universe and picture it to himself, and realize clearly his small importance within it, he would understand the truth in all its clarity.

For this interminable drivel of men about the great number of evils in the world does, as they themselves admit, not apply to the angels, the spheres and stars, the elements and the minerals and plants composed of them, or even the various kinds of animals. All their thoughts are concentrated on some individuals of the human species. When a man goes on eating noxious food until he develops elephantiasis, they wonder how this great evil befell him and how it comes to exist at all. Similarly they find it strange if someone has practised excess in cohabitation until his eyes grew weak, and find it hard to understand why this man should have been stricken by blindness, and so in other cases. The truth of the matter is that all men alive, leave alone other animals, are in no way commensurable with the whole of the universe in its continuity, as is clearly stated in the verses: Man is like to a whiff of air (Psalm 144, 4); How much less man that is a worm, and the son of man that is a maggot? (Job 25, 6); How much less they

that dwell in houses of clay? (Job 4, 19); Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance (Isaiah 40, 15). More passages occur in the books of the prophets on this important topic, which is most useful to teach man his own value and to dispel the erroneous idea that the universe exists for his sake alone.

On the contrary, in our opinion the universe exists because of God's will alone. In it the human species is unimportant in comparison with the higher universe, i.e. spheres and stars. As for the angels, no comparison with man is at all possible. Man, however, is the most important among those things that have come into being, namely, in this lower world of ours. I mean to say he is the noblest among the creatures that are composed of the elements. Therefore, his existence is a great benefit and act of grace towards him on the part of God, seeing that he singled man out and gave him perfection. Most evils that befall individuals are due to themselves, that is to say to imperfect individuals. Because of our own imperfections we wail and ask to be delivered. When we suffer from the evils we have brought upon ourselves by our own free will, we attribute them to God — far be it from Him! — as He says in His own Book: Is corruption His? No; His children's is the blemish (Deuteronomy 32, 5), and as Solomon explains: The foolishness of man perverteth his way (Proverbs 19, 3).

CHAPTER XVI

WITH regard to the question whether God knows what exists beside Himself, the philosophers have produced some reckless, self-confident nonsense, and have come to grief in such a way that no one can help them any more to pick themselves up, nor those who follow them in this theory. I shall tell you exactly what erroneous processes of thought have enmeshed them in their reckless assertions, and shall then tell you the views of our religion concerning these things and our defence against their evil and absurd statements on the subject of God's knowledge.

The factor which most contributed to their becoming involved in those errors and indeed first caused them to conceive them was the impression, so easily gained by a superficial approach, that there is no order in the affairs of human individuals. Some men of good character lead lives of lowliness and suffering, while some wicked people enjoy an agreeable existence. This has led our philosophers to posit the following alternatives: either God is unaware of these personal conditions and does not perceive them, or He knows of them and perceives them.

If He does know and perceive them, then there are three alternatives: either He arranges them and directs them along the best and most perfect lines, or He is restrained by outside forces from arranging them and has no power over them, or He knows the proper way to arrange them and is able to carry it out, but neglects to do so either through contempt and scorn or out of jealousy.

Having posited these alternatives, they cut the discussion short and decide off-hand that two of these three alternatives — which could with equal cogency be stated of every one who is gifted with knowledge — are inadmissible in the case of God, namely that He should have no power, or that He should have the power and not be interested, since these two imply wickedness or lack of power, and He is above such things. There remains thus only the one possibility, that He knows nothing of those conditions at all, or else that He knows them and arranges them in the best possible way, but it is we who find them badly arranged and contrary to logic and incompatible with what should be expected. This they consider a proof that God is in no way or manner aware of those conditions.

It is this train of thought which trapped them first so as to fall into that reckless assertion. You will find all the details of those alternative propositions which I have here described in detail, as well as proof of my assertion that this was the point at which their argument went wrong, in the work on Providence, by Alexander of Aphrodisias.

You may well consider with amazement how they have fallen into something worse than that which they wanted to avoid, and how they have ignored the very thing which they constantly point out to us and never tire of explaining to us. As for their falling into something worse than what they sought to avoid: they tried to avoid attributing negligence to God, and without further ado credited him with ignorance, saying that all that belongs to this lower world is hidden from Him and impossible for Him to perceive. As for ignoring what they themselves constantly point out: they consider the universe from the point of view of the conditions of human individuals, whose misfortunes are either due to themselves or necessarily arise from the nature of matter, as they themselves perpetually state and explain; we ourselves have explained this point above as far as it is needed here.

Having established this principle which bids to destroy every decent moral principle and to sully the good name of every true belief, they further attempted to hide its absurdity by declaring that knowledge of those things was inadmissible in the case of God for a number of reasons. One of these is that individual objects or events can only be

apprehended by the senses, not by reason, but God does not perceive by any sense. Another is that individual objects or events are infinite in number, while knowledge is something that encompasses; what is infinite, however, cannot be encompassed by knowledge. A third argument is that knowledge of happenings — which are, of course, individual events — implies some change because individual acts of knowing occur one after another.

They arrive at many contradictory guesses. Some of them say that God only knows species, not individuals. Others say that He knows nothing at all outside His own substance, so as to avoid ascribing to Him any plurality of knowledge. Some philosophers held the same belief as we ourselves, namely that God knows every thing and that nothing whatsoever is hidden from Him. These were some great men who lived before Aristotle. Alexander mentions them in his above-mentioned treatise, but rejects their view. As its main shortcoming he mentions the trite fact that the good suffer and the wicked prosper.

To cut the matter short, you will have realized by now that all these thinkers would not have become involved in any speculation of this sort if they had found some consistent order in human affairs, the kind of order that the common people see in life, nor would they have made any such reckless statements. Their prime motive in undertaking this speculation was their observation of the fate of good and wicked men, which they assert to be inconsistent, just as ignorant people among ourselves say: the way of the Lord is not equitable (Ezekiel 33, 17).

Having thus proved that the discussions about God's knowledge and providence are closely bound up with each other, I shall proceed to set forth the views of those who speculated on the subject of providence. I shall then go on to resolve the doubts prevalent concerning the knowledge of God about individual acts and events.

CHAPTERS XVII-XVIII

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

[Chapter xvii enumerates five views about Providence:

1. That of the Epicureans, who do not acknowledge any influence of God upon the world, and therefore no providence. They derive all happenings from chance meetings of atoms.
2. That of Aristotle. He maintains that all cosmic happenings proceed by way of necessity from God. Providence is therefore the same as the eternal order of things established by God. In the sublunar world —

where, in contrast to the celestial spheres, the individuals are subject to generation and corruption, and the species alone are eternal — divine providence extends solely to the species. It is thus only another expression for the general purposeful arrangement of things. The fate of human and animal individuals is a product of mere chance.

3. That of the Ash‘arites, a group within the Moslem theological school of the Mutakallimun. They reduce all happenings to divine predestination. This even determines the will of each man, turning the one into a pious person, the other into a sinner. It bestows upon one man benefits and upon the other misfortunes. The divine will is not bound by any reasons or laws of causality.

4. The Mu‘tazilites, another Moslem school. They, too, accept the idea of individual providence, but at the same time recognize the free will of man. Providence, for them, is determined by God’s wisdom, which provides for the needs of the creatures. It does not inflict suffering on innocent men or animals without recompensing them for it in the world to come.

5. The view of the Torah, according to its usual interpretation. This, again, teaches free will, and sees in all human fate dispositions of divine justice. All benefits accorded to man are by way of reward, all misfortunes by way of punishment. Some teachers of the Talmud mention also ‘chastisements of love’, i.e. sufferings which do not constitute a punishment, but are to purify man so as to make him deserving of higher happiness. This resembles the teaching of the Mu‘tazilites.

Maimonides points out the difficulties inherent in each of these theories. He attempts to remove these in his own teaching which now follows, and in which he sees also the true interpretation of the words of the Torah.]

MY own beliefs on this principle, namely divine providence, are those that I shall now expound. In this belief I do not base myself upon conclusions reached by demonstrative proof, but upon what I have come to recognize as the meaning of the Pentateuch and the prophetic books. My own belief is in any event freer from absurdities than the beliefs previously described, and agrees more closely with rational methods of deduction.

I believe that divine providence extends, in this lower sublunar world, only and alone to human individuals. The human species is the only one in which all conditions of individuals and the good and evil that befalls them are according to deserts, as it is said: for all his ways are justice (Deuteronomy 32, 4). With regard to other animals, and

still more so to plants and other things, my view is identical with that of Aristotle: I do not believe in any manner whatsoever that this leaf has fallen because of any providential act, or that this spider has caught that fly through the personal and actual decree and will of God, or that Jack's spittle, in moving so that it descended upon this particular gnat at a particular spot and killed it, was directed by decree and destiny, or that the fact that this fish snapped that worm from the surface of the water was due to an act of the personal will of God. All this I hold to be pure chance, just as Aristotle does. Divine providence, in my opinion, follows in the wake of divine emanation. It is the species which is affected by this rational emanation, so that it possesses reason, and everything that is accessible to a rational being becomes accessible to it — it is that species, I say, which divine providence constantly attends and whose every action it assesses for reward and punishment. Though the sinking of a ship and the death of its passengers, or the collapse of the roof upon those who are in the house, may be due to pure chance, yet the fact that the ones travelled in that ship or the others sat in that house cannot in our opinion be anything but a result of divine will in accordance with their deserts, as dictated by His judgments, the principles of which our minds are insufficient to know.

The reason which led me to accept this belief is that I have never yet discovered a passage in any prophetic book relating that God exercised any providence with regard to any individual animal, but only with regard to humans. The prophets even have expressed wonder that providence should be exercised towards human beings, since man is too small that any interest should be taken in him. How much more so should this apply in the case of other living beings. Thus Scripture says: What is man that thou takest cognizance of him ... (Psalm 144, 3), What is the mortal that thou rememberest him ... (Psalm 8, 5). Scripture, however, is quite unequivocal with regard to the fact that providence attends all human individuals and that all their deeds are taken into account, e.g.: He fashioneth their hearts altogether; he hath regard to all their works (Psalm 33, 15); Whose eyes are open over all the ways of the sons of man, to give unto every one according to his ways (Jeremiah 32, 19); For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and all his steps doth he see (Job 34, 21). The Pentateuch, too, contains passages showing providence for individual human beings and examination of their deeds, e.g.: On the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them (Exodus 32, 34); Whosoever hath sinned against me, him I will blot out from my book (ibid. 33); I will destroy that person from among his people (Leviticus 23, 30); Then I will set my face against that person (ibid. 20, 6); and many more. All the stories

of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are lucid proof of personal providence.

With regard to other living beings the position is without any doubt as Aristotle saw it. For this reason it is not only permitted, but positively commanded to slaughter them, and we may use them for our purposes as we wish. Proof that the animals do not enjoy providence except in the way indicated by Aristotle, may be found in the words of the prophet who, upon contemplating Nebuchadnezzar's rise to power and the great slaughter he committed, said: O Lord, it is as if man had been disregarded and forsaken like fishes and creeping things — thereby implying that those species are in fact disregarded. These are his words: And thou makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things that have no ruler over them? All of them he bringeth up with the angle, etc. (Habakkuk 1, 14–15). Moreover the prophet explains that this is not the case; it is not a question of forgetting or withdrawal of providence; but of punishment for those people because they deserved what came upon them, as he says: O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment, and o Rock thou hast established them for correction (*ibid.* 12).

Do not presume that the idea put forward here is contradicted by verses such as: Who giveth to the beast its food, to the young ravens which cry (Psalm 147, 9); The young lions roar after their prey, and ask from God their food (Psalm 104, 21); Thou openest thy hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing (Psalm 145, 16); or the saying of the Rabbis: 'He sits and nourishes everything, from the horns of wild oxen to the eggs of lice' (Shabbath 107b, Abodah Zarah 3b). You may find many other passages like these. There is, however, nothing in them to controvert my view, since they all refer to providence for the species, not for the individual. They describe, in other words, God's generosity in providing for every species the food it requires and the material basis of its existence. This is, of course, self-evident. Aristotle, too, holds that this kind of providence must of necessity be available. Alexander of Aphrodisias even states this explicitly on the authority of Aristotle, namely that there is provision for the existence of the proper food of each species in sufficient quantities for its individuals. Were it not so, there is little doubt that the species would cease to exist. All this will be easily understood after a little reflection.

True, the Rabbis have said that 'the prohibition of causing suffering to animals is derived from the Torah' (Baba Metzi'a 32b), taking their authority from the verse: wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass? (Numbers 22, 32). This, however, is intended to perfect our own character, by preventing us from acquiring habits of cruelty. We should never inflict suffering needlessly and without purpose, but should en-

deavour to show mercy and kindness even to every animal, except when our needs demand otherwise, as in the case indicated by: when . . . thy soul longeth to eat flesh (Deuteronomy 12, 20). This means that we should not slaughter animals merely out of cruelty or for sport.

There is also no need to deal seriously with the question why God's providence should extend to individual human beings and not extend in the same manner to individual animals. He who asks thus ought to ask himself first why God gave reason to man and did not give it to other species of animals. The proper reply to the latter question is, of course, that God willed it thus, or that His wisdom decreed it thus, or that nature so required it, whichever of the three views discussed earlier on you care to choose. The same answers dispose also of the first question.

Follow up this theory in your own mind into its ultimate implications. I do not believe that anything is hidden from God, or ascribe to Him any lack of power, but I do believe that providence goes with reason and is a necessary consequence of its possession. This is because providence is exercised by a rational being, namely the One who is reason so perfect that no greater perfection is thinkable. Therefore, providence extends to every one who is affected by this emanation to the extent that that being is gifted with reason.

(Ch. xviii.) This means that divine providence does not extend to all individuals of the human race in the same way, but to a degree varying in proportion to their share of human perfection. From this consideration it necessarily results that God's providence for the prophets is particularly intensive, graded again according to their prophetic rank. His providence for the men of virtue and the pious will also correspond to the degree of virtue and piety they possess, since it is that quantity of divine emanation which makes the prophets speak, and produces the good deeds of the pious, and perfects the knowledge of the men of virtue. As for the ignorant and impious, the less they possess of this emanation, the less attention will they enjoy and the more they will approach the order of individuals of animal species: he is like the beasts that perish (Psalm 49, 12x). For this reason killing them is considered a small matter; if it is to the public benefit it is even commanded.

This rule constitutes one of the basic principles of the Law. Indeed the Law can be said to be founded on this concept, that different human individuals enjoy the benefits of providence to a varying degree.

(End of xvii.) This then, in my opinion, is the view which agrees both with reason and with the express statements of Scripture. The other

views discussed before say either too much or too little: either they exaggerate so much as to produce utter lunacy, estrangement from reason and obstinate denial of the evidence of the senses; or they fall into immense underestimation which leads to evil beliefs about God, corruption of the proper order of human existence, and effacement of the moral and intellectual superiority of man. I refer here, of course, to the theory of those who deny individual providence to man and place him upon one level with the animals.

CHAPTER XXIII

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

[The problem of Divine Providence is further discussed in chapters xxii and xxiii, taking the book of Job as its text. Chapter xxii interprets the story of Job; chapter xxiii discusses the opinions of Job and his friends. It finds in these the views of the philosophers and theologians as expounded in chapter xvii, though with some additions and modifications. The opinions of Job himself, as interpreted in the following extract, are of particular importance for Maimonides' own theory.]

JOB'S view about the fact that the most perfect and upright man is afflicted with the greatest and most acute pain was that this is proof that the just and the wicked are equal in the eyes of God, owing to His contempt for, and lack of interest in, the human race. This is expressed in His utterance: And I say, it is all one thing; therefore I say, the innocent and the wicked both he can bring to their end. Be it by a torrent that slays unawares, he will mock at the trial of the guiltless (Job 9, 22–23). He says that if the torrent comes suddenly and kills and carries off everyone it meets in its way, God mocks at the trial of the guiltless. He reinforces the argument by saying: This one dieth in the fullness of his health, all his life being restful and safe; his veins are full of milk, and his bones bathed in marrow. And another dieth with an embittered soul, and has never partaken of anything good. Yet together they must lie upon the dust, and decay shall cover them (21, 23–6). He attempts to draw similar inferences from the prosperity of the wicked and their success in life. He speaks about this at great length, and says: And yet when I think of it I am terrified, and shuddering takes hold of my body. Wherefore do the wicked live, become stout, yea, are mighty in wealth? Their posterity is established in their sight with them, and their progeny in their presence (21, 6–8). Having described this complete success, he turns to his two interlocutors and says: If it is as you assert, that the children of that prosperous sinner will perish after his death and their traces be effaced — what does

it matter to this man, in the midst of his own prosperity, what will befall his family after his death; for what care hath he of his household after him, when the number of his months is all accomplished to him? (21, 21). He proceeds to explain that there is nothing to hope for after death. The only possible conclusion is that all this is due to neglect. Now, however, he expresses astonishment that God did not neglect the original work of bringing man into being and fashioning him, yet neglects to govern him: Hast thou not poured me out as milk and curdled me like cheese? etc. (10, 10).

All this is in effect the same as one of the (above-mentioned) beliefs and theories about divine providence. You know well that the Rabbis pronounced these opinions of Job's heretical in the extreme and said: 'Dust into the mouth of Job! — Job wished to turn the bowl upside down — Job was one of those who disbelieve in the resurrection of the dead — Job began to curse and blaspheme' (Baba Bathra 16a). Yet God said to Eliphaz: for ye have not spoken before me the thing that is right concerning my servant Job (42, 7). The Rabbis, however, justify this by saying that 'no man is punishable for things done in grief' (Baba Bathra 16b), i.e., he was excused because of his intense pains.

This kind of talk, however, has no real bearing upon this parable. The reason for those words (of God) is another one, which I shall now explain, namely that Job subsequently gave up this opinion, which is indeed erroneous in the extreme, and adduced logical proofs to dispose of his error. After all, this is the idea that most readily at first suggests itself to one's mind, especially to one who has been affected by misfortunes, though he knows of himself that he is guiltless. This is a fact which no one will dispute. This is why this opinion is attributed to Job. However, he only said these things as long as he was not in possession of true knowledge, but knew of God by hearsay, as most adherents of revealed religions do. As soon as he obtained reliable knowledge of God he realized that true happiness, which consists in knowing God, is in store for all those who know Him, and none of all those afflictions can dull it. Job had imagined that those imaginary kinds of happiness such as health, possessions, and children, were the true aim of life, as long as he knew of God only by report, not by his own thinking. This is why he fell into all those perplexities and said such things. That is what he means when he says: I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye hath seen thee. Therefore I abhor and repent upon the dust and ashes (Job 42, 5–6). Completed according to the meaning this should read: 'I abhor all that I desired before and repent for having been in dust and ashes', as his state al-

legedly was while he was sitting down among the ashes (2, 8). Because of this last utterance, which indicates that he had grasped the truth, it is subsequently said of him 'for ye have not spoken before me the thing that is right concerning my servant Job'.

CHAPTER XXVII

Two things are the purpose of the entire Law: the welfare of the soul and the welfare of the body. The welfare of the soul is achieved through communicating to the mass of the people correct beliefs within their intellectual grasp. Some of these have to be imparted by explicit statements, others by parables, since on the whole the nature of the multitude is not so as to allow them to grasp those things as they are. The welfare of the body is achieved by setting aright the way they live together. This purpose is attained by two things. One of them is to remove injustice from their midst. This means that no man is permitted to do what he wants and has power to do, but is constrained to do only such things as are for the common benefit. The second means is to train every individual in socially useful habits so that the affairs of the state run smoothly.

You will appreciate that without any doubt one of these two purposes is the nobler, namely the achievement of welfare of the soul by imparting correct beliefs, while the other precedes it both in the order of nature and of time, I mean the welfare of the body, which is the administration of the state and the happy arrangement of the conditions of its inhabitants as far as this is in our power. This second aim is the more urgent; in the exposition of this subject and its details much effort has been expended, since the first purpose cannot be achieved before the second is attained. For it is proved that man can achieve perfection in two respects, firstly in his body and secondly in his soul. The first concerns his being as healthy and fit in his body as possible. This cannot be unless he finds his needs whenever he requires them, namely food and other requisites of his body, such as shelter, baths, etc. However, no man can succeed in this alone, but every individual can only achieve all this by combining into a state. As is well known, man is social by nature.

The second form of perfection is attained when he becomes actually rational, i.e. acquires an intellect in actuality, by knowing of all existing things everything man has the power to know in accordance with his ultimate state of perfection. It is obvious that this ultimate perfection does not carry with it any actions or moral qualities, but consists in opinions alone to which one has been led by speculation

and compelled by investigation. It is also obvious that this glorious ultimate perfection cannot be attained unless the first form of perfection has been achieved. Man is unable to conceive clearly an idea, even if it is explained to him, leave alone arrive at this idea through his own efforts, when he is affected by pain, violent hunger, thirst, heat, or violent cold. Only after attaining the first form of perfection is it possible to achieve the ultimate perfection, which is doubtlessly the nobler one and is alone the cause of everlasting life.

The true law, which, as we have explained, is the only and unique one, namely the Law of Moses, has been given so as to bestow upon us the two kinds of perfection together. It provides for the improvement of human relationships by removing injustice and inculcating good and generous habits, so that the community will last without any disturbance of its order, and thus every member of it attain to his first stage of perfection. At the same time it ordains for the improvement of men's beliefs and the instilling of correct opinions by which man can attain to ultimate perfection. The Torah expressly mentions these two stages of perfection and informs us that the aim of the entire Law is to attain these: And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, that it might be well with us at all times, and that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day (Deuteronomy 6, 24). In this passage the ultimate perfection is mentioned first, in keeping with its importance, since we have explained that it is the ultimate purpose. It is contained in the words 'that it might be well with us at all times'. You know well what the Rabbis have said in discussing the verse: that it may be well with thee and that thou mayest prolong thy days (Deuteronomy 22, 7); 'That it may be well with thee — for a world which is wholly good, and that thou mayest prolong thy days — for a world which is eternally extended' (Qiddushin 39b, Yalqut I, 930). Similarly the intention of 'that it may be well with us at all times' here is the attainment of the world that is wholly good and eternally extended, i.e. everlasting life, while the words 'that he might preserve us alive as it is at this day' refer to the first, corporeal existence which lasts only a certain time, and which does not achieve its perfect order except in society, as we have shown.

CHAPTER LI

THE chapter that now follows does not contain any new ideas other than those found in the preceding chapters of this treatise. It is a kind of conclusion or summary. At the same time it discusses the manner of worship proper for those who have apprehended the truths relating particularly to Him after apprehending what He is, and guides such

men towards achieving this worship, which is the highest purpose of mankind. It further informs them how divine providence affects them in this world until they are gathered into the bundle of life (I Samuel 25, 29).

I shall open this chapter with a simile: A prince is in his castle; his subjects are partly dwelling in the city and partly without. Of those in the city, some have turned their backs towards the prince's house and face another way. Others are making for the house of the prince and are directed towards it, seeking to obtain entry to it to have audience with the prince; but to this moment they have not yet seen the walls of the palace. Some of those who are going towards it have reached the palace and are wandering round it in search of the gate. A few have entered through the gate and are passing through the forecourt. Others again have got so far as to enter the inner courtyard of the palace and thus are in the same locality as the prince, i.e. in the palace itself. Penetrating as far as the inside of the palace does not yet mean that they see the prince or speak to him. Far from this, after entering the palace further efforts are required: then only does one reach the presence of the prince and see him from afar or nearby, hears him speak, or is allowed to address him.

I shall now explain this simile to you which I have invented: those who are outside the city are all those human beings who possess no religious belief whatever, be it of a speculative or of a traditional nature, such as the outlying tribes of the Turks in the distant north and the negroes in the distant south, as well as those in our own part of the world who resemble them in this respect. These are like animals devoid of reason; in my view they are not to be classed as human beings, but among the beings below the humans and above the apes, since they possess human shape and outline and higher intelligence than the ape.

Those who are in the city but turn their backs to the prince's palace are men of thought and speculation who have arrived at false opinions, be this due to some major error that crept into their reasoning or to their acceptance of erroneous ideas of others. Because of these opinions they are in such a position that with every step they become further removed from the palace. These are much worse off than the first group. It is they whose killing and the utter extermination of whose ideas is at times required by necessity, lest they cause others to go astray.

Those who are making for the palace and aim at entering it, but have never seen the palace yet, are the great mass of those who obey the Law, or in other words the ‘men without learning who occupy themselves with religious duties’.

Those who have arrived at the palace and are walking round it are those possessed of religious learning, who accept the right opinions as traditional beliefs and study the detailed ordinances of the works demanded in the service of God, but have never made an attempt to speculate on the principles of their faith or inquired in any way into the justification of any item of faith.

Those who have embarked on speculation concerning the principles of religion have entered the forecourts. No doubt the people there are of varying ranks. Those finally, who have succeeded in obtaining demonstrative proof of everything that can be demonstratively proved, and have reached certainty with regard to all those metaphysical matters on which certainty can be reached, and have almost reached certainty wherever no more than this was possible, those, I say, have penetrated to the presence of the prince in the inner parts of the palace.

Know, my dear son, that as long as you are occupied with the mathematical sciences and the technique of logic, you belong to those who walk around the palace in search of the gate, as our Sages have expressed it metaphorically: ‘Ben Zoma is still outside’ (Hagiga 15a). As soon as you learn the natural sciences you enter the palace and pass through its forecourts. When you complete your study of the natural sciences and get a grasp of metaphysics, you enter unto the prince into the inner courtyard (Ezekiel 44, 21, 27) and have achieved to be in the same house as he. This is the rank of the learned, though they are of different degrees of perfection. But as for the man who after having reached full perfection in metaphysics exercises his mind independently and inclines with his whole being to God, leaving aside everything else, and devotes all activities of his intellect to contemplation of the universe in order to find in it guidance towards God, so as to learn how God governs it — such men are those who have obtained admission to the audience-chamber of the prince. This is the rank of prophets. One among these, through the high degree of his perception and his complete abstraction from everything else, got so far that it was said of him and he was there with God (Exodus 34, 28). There he was, in that sacred place, asking and receiving replies, speaking and being spoken to. Owing to the supreme happiness caused by that which he perceived, he did neither eat bread, nor drink water (*ibid.*); for the intellect had grown so strong that every crude force in the body, that is the manifestations of the sense of touch, was put out of

action. Other prophets only saw from nearby and others again only from afar, as it is said: the Lord hath appeared from afar unto me (Jeremiah 31, 3xxvii). We have spoken above (part ii, ch. xl) of the different degrees of prophecy.

Let us now return to the subject of this chapter, which is the obligation of exercising one's independent power of thinking on the subject of God alone after having obtained the knowledge of Him, as we have explained before. This is the form of service to God which is reserved for those who have apprehended Truth. The more they think about God and let their minds dwell upon Him, the more intensive their service to Him.

Those, however, who think of God and mention Him frequently without any knowledge, but just following some imagination or a belief taken over on the authority of others, are in my opinion not only outside the palace, but far removed from it, and neither really mention God nor think of Him, since that idea which is in their imagination and which they mention with their lips does not correspond to any reality whatsoever. It is merely a figment of their imagination, as we have shown in our chapter on Attributes. Such a form of service to God can be undertaken only after intellectual ideation. It is only after having apprehended God and His works according as the intellect requires it, that you can attempt: to devote yourself to Him and strive to come near Him and to broaden the bond that links you with him, i.e. the intellectual function. It is said: Unto thee it was shewed that thou mightest know that the Lord he is God (Deuteronomy 4, 35); Know therefore this day and consider it in thine heart that the Lord he is God (ibid. 39); Know ye that the Lord he is God (Psalm 100, 3).

The Torah has made it quite clear that this ultimate form of service, to which we draw attention in this chapter, is possible only after God has been apprehended: to love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul (Deuteronomy 11, 13). We have on several occasions shown that love is proportionate to the degree of apprehension. After love follows that service, to which also our Sages allude (with reference to this verse): 'this is service in one's heart' (Taanith 2a, etc.). In my view it (the service) consists in exercising one's power of thinking with regard to the First Intelligible () and in concentrating upon Him as far as this is possible. For this reason you find that David in his last will enjoined upon Solomon these two duties, zeal in apprehending God and zeal in His service after apprehending Him: And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him . . . if thou seek him, he will be found of thee (I

Chronicles 28, 9).

The stress is in every instance on intellectual apprehension, not on imaginations, for thinking about imaginations is not called 'knowing' but that which cometh into your mind (Ezekiel 20, 32). It has also become clear that, after apprehending, the aim should be complete devotion to God and perpetual exercising of intellectual thought in His love. This succeeds mostly in a state of solitude and seclusion; which is why every man of virtue secludes himself as much as possible and keeps company with others only when this is unavoidable.

EXCURSUS

WE have shown to you earlier on that this intellect which has come to us as an emanation from God is the bond that exists between us and Him. It is up to you: if you wish you can strengthen and broaden this bond, or you can weaken it and make it gradually thinner until you cut it off altogether. This bond is strengthened by exercising the intellect in the love of God, which is achieved in the way we have described before. Its weakening and thinning is the result of employing your powers of thinking on other things. Even if you were the most learned of all men in the truths of metaphysics, the moment that you empty your mind of God and are with your entire being engaged in some unavoidable act of eating or other necessary business, you thereby cut off the bond between yourself and God. You are at that moment not with Him, nor is He with you. The relationship which exists between you and God is at that time actually severed. For this reason the people of virtue begrudge the times during which they are occupied with other things and warn us against this mistake: 'do not remove God from your thoughts' (Shabbath 149a). David says: I have set the Lord always before me; since he is thus my right hand I shall not be moved (Psalm 16, 8). He says, in effect: I have never let Him out of my mind, He is therefore in a way like my right hand, which I never for a moment can dismiss from my consciousness because of its rapid movement; for this reason I shall not be moved, i.e. shall not fall.

You must clearly understand that all acts of service to God, such as the Reading of the Law, prayer, and the performance of other commandments have as their sole purpose to train you to busy yourself with God's ordinances rather than with worldly affairs, or in other words to be too much taken up with God to pay any attention to anything else. If you pray with your lips, with your face to the wall, and all the while are thinking of your business; or if you utter the words of the Law with your tongue while your mind is occupied with the

building of your house, so that you attach no meaning to what you read; and likewise each time you perform a commandment by acting with your limbs in the manner of one who digs a ditch or cuts firewood in a copse, without giving yourself any account of the meaning of your action, from whom it emanates, or what is its purpose — if you do any of these, then don't imagine that you have achieved any purpose. You are at that moment very much like those of whom it is said: Thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins (Jeremiah 12, 2).

Now I shall start to instruct you in the correct method of training through which you will achieve this noble aim. The first thing to which you must accustom yourself is to free your mind from every thought while you recite the Shema' and the Amidah, instead of being satisfied if you have fully concentrated during the first verse of the Shema and the opening benediction of the Amidah. When you have for a number of years been successful in this and have control over yourself, accustom yourself further, whenever you recite the Law or hear it recited, to concentrate uninterruptedly with your whole being and all your thoughts upon the meaning of what you hear or read. When you have mastered this for some time you should train yourself to apply your mind wholeheartedly to whatever you recite of other passages from the prophets. In all benedictions, too, you should aim at pondering what you utter and realizing its meaning.

When you are able to perform all these forms of service with a pure intention, and your mind, while you are performing them, is free from all thought of worldly affairs, train yourself to direct your thoughts to the necessities or luxuries of your life, and generally to negotia mundi, only at times when you eat or drink or follow the call of nature or talk to your wife or your little children, or while you converse with common people. Thus I have provided you with ample time during which you may think over anything you need in the way of money matters, the management of your house, and your physical needs. At those times, on the other hand, when you are busy with religious matters, your mind should not be engaged on anything but the act you are performing, as we have indicated above. However, when you enjoy complete solitude or lie awake upon your couch, you ought to be extremely careful not to allow your thoughts in those precious moments to dwell on anything but that worship with the intellect. This is the nearness to God and the true method of appearing before Him which I have taught you, not the way through emotions based on imaginations.

It is, to my mind, perfectly possible for an educated person who trains himself in the way indicated, to get as far as that. It is also thinkable that a man should achieve such a degree of perception of the Truths,

and of happiness through such perception, that he is able to talk to people and to occupy himself with the actions necessary for his life while at the same time his intellect is turned towards God and he is with his heart constantly before God, though his outer form is with men, as is said in those poetical similes intended to describe this state: I sleep, but my heart waketh, it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh . . . (Canticles 5, 2). I should, however, not like to assert that this was the case with all prophets; all I can say is that it was the position of Moses, of whom it is said: and Moses alone shall come near unto the Lord, but they shall not come nigh (Exodus 24, 2); and he was there with the Lord (ibid. 34, 28); but as for thee, stand thou here by Me (Deuteronomy 5, 31). We have explained the meaning of those verses in former chapters. This rank was also held by the Patriarchs, who were so close to God that His name became known to the world through their name as God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob. . . . This is my name forever (Exodus 3, 15). Their intellects were so completely taken up with the perception of God that He concluded with each of them an eternal covenant: Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, etc. (Leviticus 26, 42). For these four, Moses and the three Patriarchs, were distinguished by a high degree of pre-occupation with God, i.e. perception of Him and love for Him, as witnessed by Scripture, and likewise God's providence for them and their descendants was very great indeed; yet at the same time they would be occupied with managing other people, increasing their fortune, and tending their property. This, in my view, is a clear proof that while engaged in these pursuits they were attending to them with their limbs only, while their intellect was constantly in the presence of God.

It further appears to me that I can state the reason why these four remained constantly perfect before God and enjoyed His uninterrupted providence even while they were engaged in increasing their wealth, i.e. in the labours of stockbreeding, agriculture, and house-management. It was that their purpose in all these pursuits was to come nearer to God. And what a nearness that was! For the purpose of all their efforts during their lifetime was to bring into being a nation that would know God and serve Him: For I have known him, that he will command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice (Genesis 18, 19). It has been shown earlier in this book that all their labours were directed towards the purpose of spreading 'the exclusive worship of God in the world' and to guide men towards the love of Him. This is why they were worthy of reaching that rank: for all those worldly occupations were a magnificent and pure form of service to God. This is, of course,

not the rank which a man like me can presume to teach you to attain; but that degree of achievement which I have described before can be aimed at and attained by the method of training which I have indicated. The right attitude towards God is humility: then He may remove the obstacles that lie between us and Him — though most of those obstacles are due to ourselves, as we have shown in former chapters of this treatise: Your iniquities have separated between you and your God (Isaiah 59, 2).

In this connection a most remarkable speculation has occurred to my mind, through which various doubts are resolved and divine secrets laid open. We have shown in the chapters on Divine Providence that the degree of providence extended to every intellectual being is proportionate to its intellect. Therefore a person of perfect perception whose intellect never severs its bond with God will enjoy constant providence. In the case of a person of perfect perception whose intellect sometimes for a time departs from God, providence rests upon him only while he thinks of God and departs from him while he is otherwise occupied. It does, however, not withdraw from him to the same extent that it is withdrawn from one who never exercised his intellect. It merely diminishes, since that person of perfect perception does at the time when he is busy not possess an actual intellect, but he only perceives potentially, though to a degree close to actuality. He may thus be compared to a skilful scribe who is not actually writing. The one who has never comprehended God, however, is like him who is in darkness and has never seen any light, as we have explained when discussing the verse: and the wicked shall be silent in darkness (1 Samuel 2, 9), while he who perceives and directs his whole being to the object of his intellect is like one who is in the full light of the sun; the one who perceives but is otherwise occupied resembles, while he is occupied, a man on a dull day, when the sun does not shine because of the clouds that veil it from his sight.

For that reason it appears to me that every one of the prophets or men of perfect virtue who was afflicted by a worldly misfortune, was so affected at such a moment of distraction; and the gravity of his affliction was in proportion to the length of that distraction or the sordidness of the matter which caused that preoccupation. If this is correct, then it offers a solution for the tremendous problem which has caused the philosophers to deny Divine Providence as applying to individual human beings and to put men on the same footing as individuals of other animal species. Their proof for this assertion, as we know, was the fact that virtuous and good men are suddenly overwhelmed by terrible misfortunes. Now the secret of this has become

clear, even if we admit their general argument. It results that Divine Providence is constantly guarding those who have obtained a share of that emanation which is granted to all who make an effort to obtain it. When a man has achieved purity of thought, clear perception of God by the proper methods, and beatitude through that which he perceives, it will never be possible for evil of any kind to befall this man, because he is with God and God is with him. However, when he averts himself from God, in which state he is hidden from God and God is hidden from him, he is a target for every evil thing that happens to come his way. The thing which induces Providence and saves man from the raging sea of chance happenings, is just that intellectual emanation. It may fail to reach that virtuous and good man for a limited time, or it may never reach at all that other imperfect and evil man, and for this reason they are affected by chance happenings.

The philosophers have proved that in youth the bodily forces prevent the attainment of most ethical virtues. This applies more emphatically to that pure thought which results from the perfect development of the concepts which lead man to love God. It is absurd to believe that this can be achieved at a time when the bodily humours are at boiling point. However, to the extent that the bodily forces become weaker and the fire of the lusts dies down, the powers of the intellect become stronger, its lights more extensive, its perception clearer, and it derives enjoyment from that which it perceives. When an accomplished person reaches a ripe old age and approaches death, that faculty of perception increases greatly, and his joy in perception, and love for what he perceives becomes overpowering, until his soul finally leaves his body in that state of happiness. This is what the Sages meant when they said of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam that ‘all three of them died as through a kiss’. In commenting upon the verse: So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moah through the mouth of the Lord (Deuteronomy 34, 5), they say: ‘hence we learn that he died through a kiss’. Similarly it is said of Aaron . . . at the mouth of the Lord, and died there (Numbers 33, 38). They also say about Miriam that she, too, died through a kiss, but the phrase ‘through the mouth of the Lord’ is not employed in her case because she was a woman and it would not be decorous to use this simile with regard to her (Baba Bathra 17a). The intention is that the three of them died in the happiness of that perception, caused by their intense love. In this statement the Sages employ the well-known poetical image which refers to the perception derived from intense love to God as a kiss, as in the verse: Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for thy love is better than wine (Canticles 1, 2).

This kind of death, which is in truth escape from death, is only mentioned by the Sages as having been accorded to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. The other prophets and people of virtue did not reach this rank, but with all of them the faculty of perception in their intellect grew stronger at the moment of the separation (of body and soul), as it is said: when thy righteousness goes before thee, the glory of the Lord shall gather thee in (Isaiah 58, 8). Once it has entered upon eternal life, that intellect remains permanently in one state, for the obstacle which separated it at times from its object is now removed. Its eternal survival is in that state of immense happiness which is not comparable with the pleasures of the body, as we ourselves in our various works and others before us have shown.

Train yourself to understand this chapter, and make every effort to increase the number of occasions when you are with God or at least striving towards Him, and to diminish the occasions when you are with things other than He and not striving towards Him. This guidance is sufficient for the purpose of this treatise.

CHAPTER LIV

ANCIENT and modern philosophers have shown that four types of perfection are attainable for man:

The first and lowest is the one for which the inhabitants of the earth destroy each other, i.e. the perfection of wealth. It comprises the property, clothes, instruments, slaves, lands and suchlike which a man owns. If a man is a powerful king, this also falls into this class. This is a perfection which has no real connection of any kind with that person, but only a relation. The pleasure derived from it is in any event for the most part purely imaginary, i.e. the pleasure of saying: this is my house, or this is my slave, or this property is mine, or this is my army. If he were to look at himself he would discover that all this is outside his own self and that every single one of these possessions exists on account of itself. Therefore, as soon as the relation ceases, that individual who was a powerful king, may one bright morning find that there is no difference between him and the lowliest of mankind, though no change has occurred in any one of those things that had stood in a relation to him. The philosophers show that he who devotes his energy and efforts to the acquisition of this kind of perfection strives for something purely imaginary, for it is a thing which has no permanence. Even if the wealth remains in his possession throughout his life, no perfection in his own self will ever result from it.

The second kind of perfection is more closely connected with man's

own self. This is the perfection of physique and appearance, as when a man's constitution is perfectly balanced and his limbs and organs are in proper proportion and of the requisite strength. This kind of perfection is also not considered to be a final purpose, because it is physical perfection which is given to man not in so far as he is human, but in so far as he is animal, and he shares it with the lowest beasts. Moreover, if a man were to reach the utmost degree of strength possible for him it would not be equal to that of a strong mule, leave alone that of a lion or elephant. The only purpose of this perfection, even if it reached the degree just described, would be to carry a heavy burden or break a thick bone, or similar things in which there is not even great profit for the body; as for any spiritual benefit, that is entirely lacking in this class.

The third kind of perfection affects the substance of the person more deeply than the second. It is the perfection of ethical virtues, when a man's character is of its most virtuous constitution. Most religious prescriptions are designed for the attainment of this kind of perfection. This kind of perfection is, however, merely a prerequisite to something else, not a purpose in itself, because all ethical qualities refer to relations between a person and others. In a way this perfection in his ethical qualities is nothing but a prerequisite for the benefit of society. It thus becomes an instrument for something else. Just suppose that a man is all alone and has no business with anyone: in that case all his ethical qualities will be found to be vain and void. There would in such a case be no need of them and they would in no way contribute to his personal perfection. It is only with regard to others that man needs them and receives any benefit from them.

The fourth kind is the true human perfection; that is the attainment of rational virtues. By this I mean, of course, the conception of ideas which lead to correct opinions on metaphysical matters. This is the ultimate purpose, and this is the one which bestows upon man true perfection, being peculiar to him alone. It brings him eternal life, and by it man is man. Consider each one of the three preceding types of perfection, and you will discover that they belong to others, not to yourself — or if you must needs have it according to the conventional view, they belong to you and others at the same time. This last perfection, however, belongs to yourself exclusively, and no one else has any share in it: Let them be only thine own, and not strangers' with thee (Proverbs 5, 17).

For this reason it is only proper that you should be eager to acquire that which remains your own instead of toiling and suffering for others. Woe to you, if you are oblivious of your own soul until its former

splendid white colour turns black under the domination of the physical instincts, as it says in the opening lines of those well-known poetical allegories which describe just this subject: my mother's sons were incensed against me; they made me keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept (Canticles 1, 6). On that very same matter it is said: Lest thou give thy vigour unto others, and thy years unto strangers (Proverbs 5, 9).

The prophets, too, have explained to us those selfsame matters and have elucidated them for us in the same way as the philosophers have done. They have stated unambiguously that neither the perfection of wealth, nor that of health, nor that of ethical qualities is the kind of perfection in which one can glory or which one should desire, but that the only perfection worthy of glory and desire is the knowledge of God, which is the only true knowledge. Jeremiah says on the subject of these four kinds of perfection: Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me (Jeremiah 9, 23–24). Note how he enumerates these things according to their rank in the mind of the vulgar. The greatest perfection for them is the rich man in his riches; below him is the mighty man in his might, and below him again the wise man in his wisdom, i.e. the man possessed of ethical qualities. Still, the latter, too, is honoured by the multitude, who are here addressed, and for that reason they have been arranged in that order.

The Sages have discovered exactly the same meaning in this verse as we have mentioned. The latter also clearly state the same as I have expounded in this chapter, namely that wherever Wisdom is mentioned in a general way as being the highest purpose, the perception of God is meant. They also state that the wealth man acquires, such as the treasures which men so ardently desire and consider a form of perfection, is not a perfection at all; neither are the religious practices, that is the various forms of worship, nor the moral rules which are so useful to all men in their dealings with each other — all this has nothing to do with the ultimate purpose or is equal to it in value, but is only a series of preparatory steps for that purpose. But we must let them speak to us on all these subjects in their own words, as expressed in Bereshith Rabba (xxxv, 16 end):

One verse says: and all things desirable are not to be compared unto her (Proverbs 8, 11), while another says: And all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her (ibid. 3, 15). 'Things desirable' are religious actions and good deeds, while 'things thou canst desire'

are precious stones and pearls. Both 'things desirable' and 'things thou canst desire' are not to be compared unto her, 'but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me'.

Note how concisely this is expressed and what an accomplished man its author is; how he has incorporated the essence of our lengthy arguments and preliminary remarks.

Having discussed the wonderful thoughts contained in this verse and the observations of the Sages upon it, let us deal in full with its contents. For this verse, in indicating the noblest purpose, does not restrict itself to telling us that it is the perception of God. If that were its intention, it would have said 'but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me' and stopped there, or would have said 'understandeth and knoweth that I am One' or 'that I have no image' or 'that there is no one like me', or something to that effect. In fact the verse says that the cause for glory is comprehending Me and knowing My attributes, i.e. God's actions — as we have shown when commenting on the verse: shew me now thy ways (Exodus 33, 13, cf. above p. 72). In this verse we are informed that the actions one must know and imitate are 'mercy, justice and righteousness'.

Then Jeremiah adds another important idea by saying in the earth. This is the pivot of the Law. It is not so, as the destructive critics think, that divine providence stops short at the sphere of the moon and that the earth with all that is on it receives no attention, the Lord hath forsaken the earth (Ezekiel 9, 9). No, it is as God has informed us through the Prince of the Learned, that the earth is the Lord's (Exodus 9, 29). He means by this that His providence extends to the earth, corresponding to its needs, as it extends to Heaven according to its needs. This is indicated by Jeremiah in the words: that I am the Lord who exercise mercy, justice, and righteousness in the earth. Finally, he completes the thought by saying, for in these things I delight, saith the Lord, meaning, thereby, that it is My purpose that you should exercise mercy, justice, and righteousness in the earth, similarly as we have explained before, when speaking of the Thirteen Dispositions, that the intention was that we should imitate them and that they should form our model of conduct. The full purpose of the exposition contained in this verse is thus to inform us that the perfection of man in which he can truly glory is that achieved by him who has attained comprehension of God to the extent of his powers, and knows in what manner God provides for His creatures in creating them and governing them, and who after comprehending this aims in his own conduct at mercy, justice, and righteousness, so as to imitate God's actions, as we have repeatedly explained in this treatise.

This, then, is all that I intended to lay down in this treatise, believing that it would be of great benefit to the likes of you. I hope for your sake that after thorough study you will grasp every idea which I have included in this book with the help of God. May He grant me and all our brethren in Israel what He hath promised us. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped (Isaiah 35, 5). The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined (Isaiah 9, 2).

Amen.

To each who calls Him, God is near indeed,

If he but call in truth nor turn away.

By each who seeks Him He is found with ease,

If straight to Him he strives and does not stray.

Guillaume de
Lorris/Jean de Meun,
*The Romance of the
Rose*

Chivalry was a clerically produced ideology meant to tame the barbarisms of male nobles and to canalize their violent spiritedness.

From the Early Middle Ages, social “order” resulted from the application of raw power by the generally illiterate Germanic warrior aristocracy which had defeated the Romans in the West. This aristocracy became militarized as technological innovations (the stirrup and high saddle) made possible the heavily armed mounted knight (chevalier, or horseman, gives us the word chivalry). These expensively equipped men rampaged among the peasantry, sometimes as bands of armed thugs serving a man who had managed to build a castle, arrogating to himself the right to dominate the peasants within range. Roman law and a rational conceptualization of sovereignty had long been forgotten: there remained only the brute force of those who were well-known (“noble”), lording it over an anonymous peasantry. The only restraints were local traditions—and the preaching of churchmen.

Aristocratic courts became more substantial concerns in the twelfth century and included “clerks,” who were the literate ones, men of learning. These clerics were not necessarily ordained, unless in major orders. They would have been the authors of romance (from *mettre en romanz*, to place into the French vernacular), the first examples of which were translations that reworked Latin epics such as the *Aeneid*. Ovid was an immense influence. After 1160, a clerk under the name Chrétien de Troyes produced several long poems based on the legend of Arthur, which included his seeming innovation of the stories of Lancelot and Guinevere and the quest for the Holy Grail. The literary enterprise of romance encompassed the Church’s aim to provide a social code that might gentle aristocratic manners.

Chivalry would be a Christian warrior ethos: a knight should serve God, be obedient to the Church, and protect the weak and poor; he should display loyalty to his lord, valor, prowess, mercy. Then there is the aspect we call “courtly love,” or the ideals of *fin’ amor*. This is a mysterious grafting onto the chivalric code, as it tended to run counter to the feudal order: the knight who falls in love with an unattainable lady (sometimes married to his lord) treats her as if she were his feudal lord. In any case, what is celebrated is passionate love, a new kind of subjectivity that seems to have simply sprung up in the middle of the Middle Ages: the root of the romantic subjectivity that is still ours today, indeed is that of the citizen of the nation-state. The clerical impetus can be recognized in that “love” encompasses everything from earth to heaven. Christianity

and the West do seem to collaborate here: this telescoping of all onto the one word “love” is absurd unless “God is love”—and everything has unfolded analogically from this Love. The ones who elaborated courtly love were the troubadours, lyric poets originally from southern France (Occitania or Languedoc), whose most active period seems to have been the forty years or so after 1170. Duke William IX of Aquitaine (d.1127) is the first troubadour whose name we know; Eleanor of Aquitaine was his granddaughter. The center of gravity of the troubadours seems to move eastward across southern France, towards Provence. The Albigensian Crusade (1209-29) destroyed the courtly civilization that supported the troubadours. It was directed against the Cathars, dualists who believed matter to be evil, and their belief system seems to have taken root close in time and place to the origins of courtly love. The crusade was a horrific campaign that basically pitted the north of France against the south. (The Capetians leveraged it to advance the consolidation of their royal power.)

The Romance of the Rose, an allegorical dream-vision poem stemming from the troubadour tradition and written in Old French (of northern France), was perhaps the most widely read book in the Late Middle Ages. During the century of high scholasticism (the thirteenth), this most influential of all works of medieval romance emerged. It was composed in two stages. Around 1230, Guillaume de Lorris came out with the first 4,058 lines, without quite rounding off his tale. Around 1275 (the year after the death of both Aquinas and Bonaventure), Jean de Meun, a very different personality, produced a massive amplification of Guillaume’s work, adding 17,724 lines. Trained at the University of Paris, Jean translated the letters of Abelard and Heloise and warred against the mendicant orders. He shifts *The Romance* towards the encyclopedic and dialectic, going from earnest to satiric, from court gentility to university disputatiousness, from ideal love to real sensuality. (In our selection, Jean’s contribution begins with “Discourse of Reason.”) The forty years of European history separating the two parts have left an imprint. This poem displays the massive tensions between idealism and embodiment contained within eros.

Prologue

In the twentieth year of my life, at the time when Love exacts his tribute from young people, I lay down one night, as usual, and slept very soundly. During my sleep I saw a very beautiful and pleasing dream; but in this dream was nothing which did not happen almost as the dream told it. Now I wish to tell this dream in rhyme, the more to make your hearts rejoice, since Love both begs and commands me to do so. And if anyone asks what I wish the romance to be called, which I begin here, it is the Romance of the Rose, in which the whole art of love is contained. Its matter is good and new; and God grant that she for whom I have undertaken it may receive it with grace. It is she who is so precious and so worthy to be loved that she should be called Rose.

I became aware that it was May, five years or more ago; I dreamed that I was filled with joy in May, the amorous month, when everything rejoices, when one sees no bush or hedge that does not wish to adorn itself with new leaves.

Happy, light-hearted, and full of joy, I turned toward a river that I heard murmuring nearby, for I knew no place more beautiful to enjoy myself than by that river, whose water gushed deep and swift from a nearby hill. It was as clear and cold as that from a well or fountain, and it was but little smaller than the Seine, but was spread out wider. I had never seen a stream so attractively situated, and I was pleased and happy to look upon that charming place. As I washed my face and refreshed myself with the clear, shining water, I saw that the bottom of the stream was all covered and paved with gravel. The wide, beautiful meadow came right to the edge of the water. The mild morning air was clear, pure, and beautiful. Then I walked out away through the meadow, enjoying myself as I kept to the river bank in descending the stream.

When I had gone ahead thus for a little, I saw a large and roomy garden, entirely enclosed by a high crenelated wall, sculptured outside and laid out with many fine inscriptions. I willingly admired the images and paintings, and I shall recount to you and tell you the appearance of these images as they occur to my memory.

In the middle I saw Hatred, who certainly seemed to be the one who incites anger and strife. In appearance the image was choleric, quarrelsome, and full of malice; it was not pleasing, but looked like a woman crazy with rage. Her face was sullen and wrinkled, with a pug nose; she was hideous and covered with filth and repulsively wrapped up in a towel.

Beside her, to the left, was another image of the same size. I read her name, Felony, beneath her head.

I looked back to the right and saw another image named Villainy, who was of the same nature and workmanship as the other two. She seemed a creature of evil, an insolent and unbridled scandalmonger. He who could produce an image of such a truly contemptible creature knew how to paint and portray; she seemed full of all sorts of defamation, a woman who knew little of how to honor what she should.

Covetousness was painted next. It is she who entices men to take and to give nothing, to collect valuable possessions; it is she who, in her great passion for heaping up treasure, loans money at usury to many. She excites thieves and rascals to theft; and it is a great evil and sorrow that in the end many of them must hang. It is she who causes people to take the goods of others, to rob, to ravish, to commit fraud, to keep false accounts, and to tally falsely. It is she who leads people to the trickery and trumped-up litigation by which boys and girls have often been defrauded of their rightful inheritances. This image had hands that were clawlike and hooked, appropriate to Covetousness, who is always in a fever to get the possessions of another. She understands nothing else, but esteems most highly what belongs to another.

There was another image, called Avarice, seated side by side with Covetousness. This image was ugly; dirty, badly shaped, thin and miserable-looking, she was as green as a shallot; she was so discolored that she looked sick. She seemed a thing dying of hunger, one who lived on bread kneaded with strong, bitter caustic. She was not only thin but poorly clothed: she had an old coat, torn as if it had been among dogs, that was poor and worn out and full of old patches. Beside her, on a little thin clothespole, hung a mantle and a coat of sleazy material. The mantle had no fur linings, but very poor and shabby ones of heavy, shaggy black lamb. Her dress was at least ten years old, but, in anything to do with clothing, Avarice rarely had any desire to hurry. It weighed heavily on her to use the dress at all, for when it was worn out and tattered, she would be very distressed over a new one and would suffer great privation before she would have another made. In her hand Avarice held a purse which she hid and tied up so tightly that she had to wait a long time before she could draw anything out of it. But she would have none of it; she went to the purse hoping only that she might take nothing away from it.

Envy was portrayed next. She never laughed in her life nor enjoyed anything unless she saw or heard a report of some disaster. Nothing could please her so much as unhappiness and misfortune. She is very

pleased when she sees misfortune fall on any good man, and she rejoices in her heart when she sees a great ancestral house fall from its eminence or come into shame. But she is deeply wounded when anyone rises to honor through his intelligence and ability. Understand that she must be angry when good things happen. Envy is so cruel that she bears no loyalty to any companion. However closely a relative may hold to her, she has none to whom she is not an enemy; for, certainly, she would not want good fortune to come even to her father. But understand too that she pays a heavy price for her malice. When men do good she is in such terrible torment and grief that she is just short of melting in the heat of her passion. Her wicked heart so cuts her in pieces that God and men are revenged on her. Envy finishes no hour without imputing some evil to blameless men. I believe that if she knew the noblest gentleman here or beyond the sea, she would want to defame him; and if he were so well trained that she could neither entirely ruin his reputation nor bring him into low esteem, then she would want at least to deprecate his ability and, through her gossip, to minimize his honor.

Next, quite close to Envy, Sorrow was painted on the wall. Her color seemed to show that she had some great sorrow in her heart. She looked as though she had jaundice, and Avarice was nothing like as pale and gaunt as she. The dismay, the distress, the burdens and troubles that she suffered, day and night, had made her grow yellow and lean and pale. Nothing in the world ever lived in such martyrdom nor was ever so greatly enraged as it seemed that she was; I believe that no one ever knew how to do anything for her that could please her. She did not even want to be consoled at any price nor to let go of the sorrow she had in her heart; she had angered her heart too much, and her grief was too deep-rooted.

I looked over the images well, for, as I have described, they were done in gold and azure, painted all along the wall. The wall itself was high and formed a perfect square; it took the place of a hedge in enclosing and shutting off a garden where no shepherd had ever entered. This garden stood in a very beautiful place, and I would have been very grateful to anyone who had been willing to lead me inside, either by ladder or over steps; for, to my belief, no man ever saw such joy or diversion as there was in that garden. The birds' dwelling was not to be scorned, nor was it cheap. No place was ever so rich with trees or songbirds: there were three times as many birds as in the whole kingdom of France. The harmony of their moving song was very good to hear; all the world should enjoy it. For my part, I was so overjoyed when I heard them that I would not have taken a hundred pounds, if

the way into the garden had been open, not to enter and see the flock of birds (God save them!) who sang the dances of love in melodies that were sweet, courteous, and charming.

When I heard the birds singing, I began to go out of my mind wondering by what art or what device I could enter the garden. Then I set out rapidly, tracing the outline of the enclosure and extent of the square walled area until I found a little door that was very narrow and tight. No man entered there by any other place. Since I didn't know how to look for any other entrance, I began to knock on the door. I knocked and rapped a great deal and listened many times to see whether I might hear anyone coming. Finally a very sweet and lovely girl opened the wicket, which was made of hornbeam. She had hair as blond as a copper basin, flesh more tender than that of a baby chick, a gleaming forehead, and arched eyebrows. The space between her eyes was not small but very wide in measure. She had a straight, well-made nose, and her eyes, which were gray-blue like those of a falcon, caused envy in the harebrained. Her breath was sweet and savory her face white and colored, her mouth small and a little full; she had a dimple in her chin. Her neck was of good proportion, thick enough and reasonably long, without pimples or sores. From here to Jerusalem no woman has a more beautiful neck; it was smooth and soft to the touch. She had a bosom as white as the snow upon a branch, when it has just fallen. Her body was well made and svelte; you would not have had to seek anywhere on earth to find a woman with a more beautiful body. She had a pretty chaplet of gold embroidery. There was never a girl more elegant or better arrayed; nor would I have described her right. Above the chaplet of gold embroidery was one of fresh roses, and in her hand she held a mirror, and she had arranged her hair with a rich head-band. Both sleeves were well sewn into a beautifully snug fit, and she had white gloves to keep her white hands from turning brown. She wore a coat of rich green from Ghent, cord-stitched all around. It certainly seemed from her array that she was hardly busy. By the time that she had combed her hair carefully and prepared and adorned herself well, she had finished her day's work. She led a good and happy life, for she had no care nor trouble except only to turn herself out nobly.

When the girl with gracious heart had opened the door to me, I thanked her nicely and asked her name and who she was. She was not haughty toward me, nor did she disdain to reply.

"I am called Idleness," she said, "by people who know me. I am a rich and powerful lady, and I have a very good time, for I have no other purpose than to enjoy myself and make myself comfortable, to comb

and braid my hair. I am the intimate acquaintance of Diversion, the elegant charmer who owns this garden and who had the trees imported from Saracen land and planted throughout the garden.

“When the trees were grown, Diversion had the wall, that you have seen, built all around them, and on the outside he arranged to have portrayed the images that are painted there. They are neither elegant nor delightful, but, as you saw just now, sad and mournful. Many times Diversion and those who follow him, and who live in joy and comfort, come to this place to have a good time in the cool shade. Without doubt, he is at this moment still there within, listening to the song of the nightingales, the mavises, and other birds. There, with his followers, he enjoys and comforts himself, for he could find no better place or spot to indulge in pleasure. The fairest people that you ever found anywhere, you know, are the companions of Diversion, who leads and guides them.”

When Idleness had told me these things, and I had listened closely to all of them, I then said to her, “Lady Idleness, never doubt any of these things, since Diversion, the fair and gentle one, is now in this garden with his people, and, if it lies in my power, I shall not be robbed of the chance of still seeing this assembly today. I must see it, for I believe that this company is fair, courteous, and well instructed.”

Then I entered into the garden, without saying another word, by the door that Idleness had opened for me, and, when I was inside, I was happy and gay and full of joy. Believe me, I thought that I was truly in the earthly paradise. So delightful was the place that it seemed to belong to the world of spirit, for, as it seemed to me then, there was no paradise where existence was so good as it was in that garden which so pleased me. There were many singing birds, collected together, throughout the whole garden. In one place were nightingales, in another jays and starlings; elsewhere again were large schools of wrens and turtledoves, of goldfinches, swallows, larks, and titmice. In another place were assembled the calender-larks, who were tired out from singing in spite of themselves; there, too, were blackbirds and redwings, who aspired to outdo the other birds in singing. Elsewhere again were parrots and many birds that, in the woods and groves where they lived, had a wonderful time with their beautiful songs.

Know, then, that when I heard the song and saw the burgeoning green of the place, I was seized with joy; no one had ever been so happy as I became then, full of gaiety as I was over the garden’s delectable charm. Then I realized and saw that Idleness, who had placed me in the midst of this delight, had served me well. My love was due her

when she unlocked the wicket gate of the branching garden.

From now on, I shall recount to you, as well as I know, how I went to work. First I want to tell you, without any long story, about what Diversion served and about his companions, and then I will tell in a full and orderly way about the appearance of the garden. I cannot speak of everything together, but I will recount it all in such order that no one will have any criticism to make.

The birds went along performing their wondrously sweet and pleasing service, in which they sang love lays and elegant songs, one high, the other low. Without joking, the sweetness and melody of their singing brought great joy to my heart. But when I had heard the birds just a little, I couldn't hold myself back from going oft then to see Diversion, for I wanted very much to see how he carried on and what he was. I went off then straight to the right, by a little path full of fennel and mint, and I found Diversion nearby when I penetrated to a secluded place where he was. There he enjoyed himself, and with him he had people so fair that, when I saw them, I did not know where people so beautiful could have come from, for, in absolute truth, they seemed winged angels. No man born ever saw such beautiful people.

These people of whom I tell you were formed into a carol, and a lady called Joy was singing to them. She knew how to sing well and pleasingly; no one presented her refrains more beautifully or agreeably. Singing suited her wonderfully, for she had a clear, pure voice. Moreover, she was not vulgar, but knew how to move her body well in dancing, to kick up her heels and enjoy herself. Everywhere she went, she was, customarily, always the first in singing, for singing was the activity that she performed most willingly.

On the other side the God of Love stayed near to her. It is he who apportions the gifts of love according to his desire, who governs lovers, and who humbles the pride of men, making sergeants of seigneurs and servants of ladies, when he finds them too haughty. In his bearing the God of Love did not resemble a boy. His beauty, indeed, was greatly to be valued. But I fear that I should be grievously burdened in describing his dress, since it was not of silk but of tiny flowers made by delicate loves. The gown was covered in every part with images of losenges, little shields, birds, lion cubs, leopards, and other animals, and it was worked with flowers in a variety of colors. There were flowers of many sorts, placed with great skill. No flower born in the summertime was missing from it, not even the flower of the broom, the violet, the periwinkle, or any yellow, indigo, or white flower. Intermingled in places there were large, wide rose leaves. On his head he wore a

chaplet of roses; but the nightingales that fluttered around his head kept knocking them down to the earth. He was completely covered with birds, with parrots, nightingales, calender-larks, and titmice. It seemed that he was an angel come straight from heaven. He had a young man, called Sweet Looks, whom he kept there beside him.

This young fellow watched the carols and kept the two Turkish bows that belonged to the God of Love. One of these bows was made of the wood of a tree whose fruit tastes bitter. The bow was filled, below and above, with knots and burls, and it was blacker than mulberry. The other bow was made from the trunk of a shrub, a little long and of fine workmanship. It was well made, planed smooth, and very well ornamented. All over it were painted gay and clever ladies and young men. Sweet Looks, who seemed no lowborn fellow, held, along with the two bows, ten of his master's arrows. Five of them he held in his right hand, and these five arrows had flights and nocks that were very well made, and all were painted gold. The points were strong and sharp and keen for piercing well, but without iron or steel, for there was nothing that was not made of gold, except the feathers and shaft. These arrows were tipped with barbed golden points.

Of these arrows, the best, the swiftest, the most beautiful, and the one with the best feathers fixed on it, was named Beauty. And the name of that one which wounds the most was, in my opinion, Simplicity. Another of them was called Openness; this arrow was feathered with valor and courtesy. The name of the fourth was Company, an arrow that, because of its very heavy point, was not prepared to travel very far but if anyone wanted to fire it at close range he could do a lot of damage. The fifth had the name Fair Seeming, and, although it was the least harmful of all, nevertheless, it made a very large wound. However, he who is wounded by this arrow may expect good grace: his pain is of good use, for he can soon expect health, and by it his sorrow must be cured.

There were five arrows of another sort. The shafts and points were blacker than a devil from first had the name Pride. The second, worth no more, was called Villainy, and it was all stained and poisoned with felony. The third was called Shame, the fourth, Despair, and the last, without doubt, was called New Thought. These five arrows were of one sort, all alike. The one bow that was hideous and full of knots and burls was very suitable; it should indeed shoot such arrows. Undoubtedly, the power of these five arrows was contrary to that of the other five, but I shall not now tell all about their force and power. I shall indeed recount to you the truth about them and their significance, and I shall not forget to do so; before I finish my story I will tell you what all this

signifies.

When I had seen the appearances of those who led the dances, I then had a desire to go see and explore the garden, to contemplate those lovely laurels, the pines, cedars, and mulberry trees. Already they were stopping the carols, for most of them were going off with their sweethearts to shelter under the shade of the trees in order to make love. God! What a good life they led! He who does not long for such a life is a fool. He who could have such a life might dispense with a greater good, since there is no greater paradise than to have one's beloved at one's desire. At this point I left there and went off alone to enjoy myself here and there throughout the garden. Immediately the God of Love called Sweet Looks. Now he no longer cared to have him keep his golden bow: without waiting further he commanded him to string the bow, and Sweet Looks did not delay in doing so. Immediately he strung the bow and gave it to him along with five arrows, strong and shining, ready to shoot. Straightway the God of Love began to follow me, bow in hand, from a distance. Now may God protect me from a mortal wound if he goes so far as to shoot at me! Knowing nothing of all this, always enjoying myself, I went along quite freely through the garden, while the God of Love set his intent on following me; but he did not stop me in any place until I had been everywhere.

I went so far, to left and to right, that I searched out and saw the entire condition and nature of the garden. And the God of Love followed me, watching me all the time, as does the hunter who waits until the animal is in good position before he lets fly his arrow.

At last I arrived at a very good spot, when I found a fountain under a pine. Not since the time of Charles or Pepin has such a fair pine been seen. It had grown so tall that no tree in the garden was taller. Nature, with consummate skill, had placed the fountain under the pine within a marble stone, and in the stone, on the border of the upper side, had cut small letters saying that there the fair Narcissus died.

Narcissus was a young man whom Love caught in his snares. Love knew so well how to torment him, to make him weep and complain, that he had to give up his soul. For Echo, a great lady, had loved him more than anything born, and was so ill-used on his account that she told him that she would die if he did not give her his love. But he, because of his great beauty, was so full of pride and disdain that he did not wish to grant her his love, for all her tears and prayers. When she heard him refuse, her grief and anger were so great and she held him in such great despite that she died without delay. But just before she died she prayed to God and asked that hardhearted

Narcissus, whom she had found so indifferent to love, might one day be tormented and burned by a love from which he could expect no joy, and that he might know and understand the grief of those loyal lovers who are so basely denied. Since the prayer was reasonable, God confirmed it: one day when Narcissus was returning from hunting he came by chance to rest at the clear, pure fountain under the pine. He had endured such labor in pursuing the hunt by hill and valley that he was very thirsty, what with the fierce heat and the fatigue that had left him out of breath, and when he saw the fountain, covered by the branches of the pine, he thought that there he would drink. Lying flat on his stomach over the fountain, he began to drink from it and saw his face, his nose and mouth, clear and sharp. Then he was struck with wonder, for these shadows so deceived him that he saw the face of a child beautiful beyond measure. Then Love knew how to avenge himself for the great pride and the resistance that Narcissus had directed toward him. And Narcissus was well repaid: he mused so long at the fountain that he fell in love with his own reflection and died of his love in the end. This was the outcome of the affair, for, when he saw that he could not accomplish his desire and that he was captured so inescapably that he could in no way take any comfort, he became so distressed that he lost his reason and died in a short time. Thus did he receive his deserved retribution from the girl whom he had scorned. You ladies who neglect your duties toward your sweethearts, be instructed by this exemplum, for if you let them die, God will know how to repay you well for your fault.

When the inscription had made clear to me that this was indeed the true fountain of the fair Narcissus, I drew back a little, since I dared not look within. When I remembered Narcissus and his evil misfortune, I began to be afraid. But then I thought that I might be able to venture safely to the fountain, without fear of misfortune, and that I was foolish to be frightened of it. I approached the fountain, and when I was near I lowered myself to the ground to see the running water and the gravel at the bottom, clearer than fine silver. It is the fountain of fountains; there is none so beautiful in all the world. The water is always fresh and new; night and day it issues in great waves from two deep, cavernous conduits. All around, the short grass springs up thick and close because of the water. In winter it cannot die, nor can the water stop flowing.

At the bottom of the fountain were two crystal stones upon which I gazed with great attention. There is one thing I want to tell you which, I think, you will consider a marvel when you hear it: when the sun, that sees all, throws its rays into the fountain and when its light

descends to the bottom, then more than a hundred colors appear in the crystals which, on account of the sun, become yellow, blue, and red. The crystals are so wonderful and have such power that the entire place — trees, flowers, and whatever adorns the garden — appears there all in order. To help you understand, I will give you an example. Just as the mirror shows things that are in front of it, without cover, in their true colors and shapes, just so, I tell you truly, do the crystals reveal the whole condition of the garden, without deception, to those who gaze into the water, for always, wherever they are, they see one half of the garden, and if they turn, then they may see the rest. There is nothing so small, however hidden or shut up, that is not shown there in the crystal as if it were painted in detail.

It is the perilous mirror in which proud Narcissus gazed at his face and his gray eyes; on account of this mirror he afterward lay dead, flat on his back. Whoever admires himself in this mirror can have no protection, no physician, since anything that he sees with his eyes puts him on the road of love. This mirror has put many a valiant man to death, for the wisest, most intelligent and carefully instructed are all surprised and captured here. Out of this mirror a new madness comes upon men: Here hearts are changed; intelligence and moderation have no business here, where there is only the simple will to love, where no one can be counseled. For it is here that Cupid, son of Venus, sowed the seed of love that has dyed the whole fountain, here that he stretched his nets and placed his snares to trap young men and women; for Love wants no other birds. Because of the seed that was sown this fountain has been rightly called the Fountain of Love, about which several have spoken in many places in books and in romances; but, when I have revealed the mystery, you will never hear the truth of the matter better described.

I wanted to remain there forever, gazing at the fountain and the, crystals, which showed me the hundred thousand things that appeared there; but it was a painful hour when I admired myself there. Alas! How I have sighed since then because of that deceiving mirror. If I had known its powers and qualities, I would never have approached it, for now I have fallen into the snare that has captured and betrayed many a man.

Among a thousand things in the mirror, I saw rosebushes loaded with roses; they were off to one side, surrounded closely by a hedge. I was seized by so great a desire for them that not for Pavia or Paris would I have left off going there where I saw this splendid thicket. When this madness, by which many other men have been seized, had captured me, I straightway drew near to the rosebushes. Mark well: when I was

near, the delicious odor of the roses penetrated right into my entrails. Indeed, if I had been embalmed, the perfume would have been nothing in comparison with that of the roses. Had I not feared to be attacked or roughly treated, I would have cut at least one, that I might hold it in my hand to smell the perfume; but I was afraid that I might repent such an action, which might easily provoke the wrath of the lord of the garden. There were great heaps of roses; none under heaven were as beautiful. There were small, tight buds, some a little larger, and some of another size that were approaching their season and were ready to open. The little ones are not to be despised; the broad, open ones are gone in a day, but the buds remain quite fresh at least two or three days. These buds pleased me greatly. I did not believe that there were such beautiful ones anywhere. Whoever might grasp one should hold it a precious thing. If I could have a chaplet of them, I would love no possession as much.

Among these buds I singled out one that was so very beautiful that, after I had examined it carefully, I thought that none of the others was worth anything beside it; it glowed with a color as red and as pure as the best that Nature can produce, and she had placed around it four pairs of leaves, with great skill, one after the other. The stem was straight as a sapling, and the bud sat on the top, neither bent nor inclined. Its odor spread all around; the sweet perfume that rose from it filled the entire area. And when I smelled its exhalation, I had no power to withdraw, but would have approached to take it if I had dared stretch out my hand to it. But the sharp and piercing thorns that grew from it kept me at a distance. Cutting, sharp spikes, nettles, and barbed thorns allowed me no way to advance, for I was afraid of hurting myself.

The God of Love and the Affair of the Heart

The God of Love, who had maintained his constant watch over me and had followed me with drawn bow, stopped near a fig tree, and when he saw that I had singled out the bud that pleased me more than did any of the others, he immediately took an arrow and, when the string was in the nock, drew the bow — a wondrously strong one — up to his ear and shot at me in such a way that with great force he sent the point through the eye and into my heart. Then a chill seized me, one from which I have, since that time, felt many a shiver, even beneath a warm fur-lined tunic. Pierced thus by the arrow, I fell straightway to the earth. My heart failed; it played me false. For a long time I lay there in swoon, and when I came out of it and had my senses and reason, I was very weak and thought that I had shed a great quantity of blood. But the point that pierced me drew no blood whatever; the

wound was quite dry. I took the arrow in my two hands and began to pull hard at it, sighing as I pulled. I pulled so hard that I drew out the feathered shaft, but the barbed point called Beauty was so fixed inside my heart that it could not be withdrawn. It remains within; I still feel it, and yet no blood has ever come from there.

I was in great pain and anguish because of my doubled danger: I didn't know what to do, what to say, or where to find a physician for my wound, since I expected no remedy for it, either of herbs or roots. But my heart drew me toward the rosebud, for it longed for no other place. If I had had it in my power, it would have restored my life. Even the sight and scent alone were very soothing for my sorrows.

I began then to draw toward the bud with its sweet exhalations. Love selected another arrow, worked in gold. It was the second arrow and its name was Simplicity. It has caused many a man and woman all over the world to fall in love. When Love saw me approach, he did not threaten me, but shot me with the arrow that was made of neither iron nor steel so that the point entered my heart through my eye. No man born, I believe, will ever dislodge it from there, for I tried, without any great joy, to pull the shaft from me, but the point remained within. Now know for a truth that if I had been full of desire for the rosebud before, my wish was greater now. As my woes gave me greater distress, I had an increased desire to go always toward the little rose that smelled sweeter than violets. I would have done better to go farther away, but I could not refuse what my heart commanded. I had to go perforce, always where it aspired to be. But the bowman, who strove mightily and with great diligence to wound me, did not let me move without hurt in that direction. To madden me further he caused the third arrow, called Courtesy, to fly to my heart. The wound was deep and wide, and I had to fall in a swoon beneath a branching olive tree. I lay there a long time without moving. When I was able to stir, I took the arrow and straightway removed the shaft from my side, but, no matter what I might do, I could not draw out the point.

When I revived, I wailed and sighed, for my anguish was growing so much worse that I had no hope, either of cure or of relief. I would rather have been dead than alive, for, in my opinion, Love would make a martyr of me in the end. I could not part from him by any other means. Meanwhile he had taken another arrow, one that I value highly and consider very powerful. This arrow is Fair Seeming; it does not allow any lover to repent of serving Love, no matter what woes he may suffer. It has a point for piercing and an edge as keen as a steel razor. But Love had anointed it very well with a precious unguent so that it might not hurt too greatly. He did not want me to die

but to be relieved by the power of the unguent, one which was full of healing comfort. Love had made it with his own hands to comfort pure lovers and to help them support their troubles. When he shot the arrow at me he made a great wound in my heart, but the ointment, spreading throughout the wound, gave me back the heart which I had lost. Without the sweet ointment I would have been dead and in an evil plight.

Then I drew the shaft from me, but the head, newly polished, remained inside. Thus five of them were so well embedded that they would never be removed. Although the ointment was worth a great deal to me, nevertheless my wound hurt so much that the pain made me change color. This arrow has an unusual property; it brings both sweetness and bitterness. Indeed I felt and understood that it helped me at the same time that it harmed; while the point gave me anguish, the ointment gave relief. One part heals, the other pains, and thus it helps and harms.

Then straightway Love came toward me with quick steps, and as he came he cried out: "Vassal, you are taken. There is no chance for escape or struggle. Surrender without making any resistance. The more willingly you surrender the sooner will you receive mercy. He is a fool who resists the one whom he should fatter and before whom he would do better to beg. You cannot struggle against me, and I want to teach you that you can gain nothing through folly or pride. Rather submit yourself as a prisoner, as I wish, in peace and with a good will."

I replied simply: "Sir, I surrender willingly, and I shall never defend myself against you. May it never please God for me even to think of ever resisting you, for to do so is neither right nor reasonable. You may do with me what you wish, hang me or kill me. I know very well that I cannot change things, for my life is in your hand. Only through your will can I live until tomorrow, and, since I shall never have joy and health from any other, I await them from you. If your hand, which has wounded me, does not give me a remedy, if you wish to make me your prisoner or if you do not deign to do so, I shall not count myself deceived. Know too that I feel no anger whatever. I have heard so much good spoken about you that I want to give my heart and body over to your service, to be used entirely at your discretion, for if I do your will I cannot complain of anything. I still believe that at some time I shall receive the mercy that I await, and under such conditions I submit myself prostrate before you."

With these words, I wanted to kiss his foot, but he took me by the hand and said, “I love you very much and hold you in esteem for the way that you have replied here. Such a reply never came from a lowborn fellow with poor training. Moreover, you have won so much that, for your benefit, I want you to do homage to me from now on: You will kiss me on my mouth, which no base fellow touches. I do not allow any common man, any butcher, to touch it; anyone whom I take thus as my man must be courteous and open. Serving me is, without fail, painful and burdensome; but I do you a great honor, and you should be very glad — since Love carries the standard and banner of courtesy — that you have so good a master and a lord of such high renown. His bearing is so good, so sweet, open, and gentle, that no villainy, no wrong or evil training can dwell in anyone who is bent on serving and honoring him.”

“For the grace of God, before you move from here charge me with your commandments charge me with your commandments. I am in good heart to perform them, but perhaps if I didn’t know them I could go astray immediately. Therefore, since I don’t want to be mistaken anything, I desire very much to learn them.”

Love replied: “What you say is very good. Now listen and remember them. A master tastes his effort when the disciple does not turn his heart toward retaining what he hears so that he might remember it.” The God of Love then charged me, word by word, with his commandments; this romance portrays them well. Let him who wishes to love give his attention to it, for the romance improves from this point on. From now on one will do well to listen to it, if he is one who knows how to recount it, for the end of the dream is very beautiful, and its matter is new. I tell you that he who will hear the end of the dream can learn a great deal about the games of Love, provided that he wishes to wait while I tell the tale in French and explain the dream’s significance. The truth, which is hidden, will be quite open to you when you hear me explain the dream, for it doesn’t contain a lying word.

“First of all,” said Love, “I wish and command that, if you do not want to commit a wrong against me, you must abandon villainy forever. I curse and excommunicate all those who love villainy. Since villainy makes them base, it is not right that I love it. A villain is cruel and pitiless; he does not understand the idea of service or friendship.

“Next, guard well against repeating anything about other people which should be kept quiet. Slandering is not a good characteristic. Take, for example, the seneschal Kay: in former days, he was hated on account of his jeers, and he had a bad reputation. Just as men praised Gawain,

who was well trained, on account of his courtesy, so they blamed Kay because he was wicked and cruel, insolent and evil-tongued beyond all other knights.

“Be reasonable and easy to know, soft-spoken and just toward men of both high and low rank. Cultivate the habit, when you go along the streets, of being the first to greet other people; if someone greets you first, before you have opened your mouth, take care to return his greeting without delay.

“Next, take care not to utter dirty words or anything bawdy. You should never open your mouth to name anything base. I do not consider any man courteous who names anything that is filthy or ugly.

“Honor all women and exert yourself to serve them. If you hear any slanderer who goes around detracting women, take him to task and tell him to keep quiet. If you can, do something that is pleasing to ladies and girls, so that they will hear good reports told and retold about you. By this means you can rise in people’s esteem.

“After all this, guard against pride, for pride, rightly understood and considered, is madness and sin. He who is tainted with pride cannot bend his heart to serve nor to make an entreaty. The proud man does the contrary of what a pure lover should do.

“He, however, who wants to take trouble for love must conduct himself with elegance. The man who seeks love is worth nothing without elegance. Elegance is not pride. One is worth more for being elegant, provided that he be empty of pride, so that he is neither foolish nor presumptuous. Outfit yourself beautifully, according to your income, in both dress and footwear. Beautiful garments and adornments improve a man a great deal. Therefore you should give your clothes to someone who knows how to do good tailoring, who will seat the seams well and make the sleeves fit properly. You should have fine laced shoes and small boots and get new ones often, and you must see that they are so close-fitting that the vulgar will go around arguing over the way you are going to get into or out of them. Deck yourself out with gloves, a belt, and a silk purse; if you are not rich enough to do so, then restrain yourself. You should, however, maintain yourself as beautifully as you can without ruining yourself. A chaplet of flowers that costs little, or of roses at Pentecost — everyone can have these, since great wealth is not required for them.

“Allow no dirt on your person: wash your hands and scrub your teeth. If the least black shows under your fingernails, don’t let it remain there. Sew your sleeves and comb your hair, but do not rouge or paint

your face, for such a custom belongs only to ladies or to men of bad repute, who have had the misfortune to find a love contrary to Nature.

“Next, you should remember to keep a spirit of liveliness. Seek out joy and delight. Love cares nothing for a gloomy man. It’s a courtly disease through which one laughs, plays, and has a good time. It is thus that lovers have hours of joy and hours of torment. At one hour they feel that the sickness of love is sweet, at another, bitter. The disease of love is very changeable. Now the lover is playful, now tormented, now desolated; at one hour he weeps and at another sings. If, then, you can produce some diverting entertainment by which you might be agreeable to people, I command you to do so. Everyone in all places should do what he knows suits him best, for such conduct brings praise, esteem, and gratitude.

“If you feel yourself active and light, don’t resist the impulse to jump; if you are a good horseman, you should spur your mount over hill and dale; if you know how to break lances, you can gain great esteem from doing so; and if you are graceful at arms, you will be ten times loved for that quality. If you have a clear, sound voice and are urged to sing, you should not try to excuse yourself, for a beautiful song is very pleasing. Moreover, it is very advantageous for a young fellow to know how to play the viol, to flute, and to dance. By these means he can further himself a great deal.

“Don’t let yourself be thought miserly, for such a reputation could be very troublesome. It is fitting for lovers to give more freely of what they have than do those vulgar, stupid simpletons. No man who doesn’t like to give can ever know anything about love. If anyone wants to take pains in loving, he must certainly avoid avarice, for he who, for the sake of a glance or a pleasant smile, has given his heart away completely should certainly, after so rich a gift, give his possessions away without any reserve.

“Now I want to recall briefly what I have told you so that you will remember, for a speech is less difficult to retain when it is short. Whoever wants to make Love his master must be courteous and without pride; he should keep himself elegant and gay and be esteemed for his generosity. “Next, I ordain that night and day, in a penitential spirit and without turning back, you place your thought on love, that you think of it always, without ceasing, and that you recall the sweet hour whose joy dwells so strongly in you. And in order that you may be a pure lover, I wish and command you to put your heart in a single place so that it be not divided, but whole and without deceit, for I do not like division. Whoever divides his heart among several places

has a little bit of it everywhere. But I do not in the least fear him who puts his whole heart in one place; therefore I want you to do so. Take care, however, that you do not lend it, for if you had done so, I would think it a contemptible act; give it rather as a gift with full rights of possession, and you will have greater merit. The favor shown in lending something is soon returned and paid for, but the reward for something given as a gift should be great. Then give it fully and freely, and do so with an easy manner, for one must prize that which is given with a pleasant countenance. I would not give one pea for a gift that one gave in spite of himself.

“When you have given your heart away, as I have been exhorting you to do, things will happen to you that are painful and hard for lovers to bear. Often, when you remember your love, you will be forced to leave other people so that they might not notice the suffering which racks you. You will go all alone to a place apart; then sighs and laments, shivers, and many other sorrows will come to you. You will be tormented in several ways, one hour hot, another cold, ruddy at one time and pale at another. You have never had any fever as bad, neither daily nor quartan agues. Before this fever leaves you, you will indeed have tested the sorrows of love. Now it will happen many times, as you are thinking, that you will forget yourself and for a long time will be like a mute image that neither stirs nor moves, without budging a foot, a hand, or a finger, without moving your eyes or speaking. At the end of this time you will come back in your memory and will give a start of fright upon returning, just like a man who is afraid, and you will sigh from the depths of your heart, for you well know that thus do those who have tested the sorrows that now so torment you.

“Then you will be in deep misery and be visited again by sighs, pangs, and shivers, that pricks more sharply than a hedgehog. Let him who does not know this fact ask it of those who are loyal lovers. You will not be able to calm your heart, but will continue to go around trying to see by chance what you long for so much. And if you can struggle until you attain a glimpse, you will want to be very intent on satisfying and feasting your eyes. As a result of the beauty that you see, great joy will dwell in your heart; know, too, that by looking you will make your heart fry and burn, and as you look you will always quicken the burning fire. The more anyone looks upon what he loves, the more he lights and burns his heart. This fat lights and keeps blazing the fire that makes men love. By custom every lover follows the fire that burns him and lights him. When he feels the fire from close by, he goes away by approaching closer. The fire consists in his contemplation of his sweetheart, who makes him burn. The closer he stays to her the

more avid he is for love. Wise men and simpletons all follow this rule: he who is nearer the fire burns more.

“When you have finished your discussion — without saying a single word of villainy — you will think yourself tricked because you forgot something you should have said. Then again you will feel your martyrdom. This is the battle, the fire, this the struggle that lasts forever. A lover will never possess what he seeks; something is always missing, and he is never at peace. This war will never finish until I wish to seek the peace.

“When night comes, then you will have more than a thousand torments. You will lie down in your bed with small delight, for when you think that you are about to sleep, you will begin to tremble, to shudder and shake. You will have to turn on one side, then on the other, then on your stomach, like someone with toothache. Then you will remember her incomparable manner and appearance. And I will tell you of a great wonder: there will be a time when you will think that you are holding her, with shining face, quite naked in your arms, just as if she had become wholly your sweetheart and your companion. Then you will build castles in Spain and will take joy in nothing as much as in going around deluding yourself with this delectable thought that contains only lies and fables. But you will not be able to dwell long on this thought. Then you will begin to weep and will say:

“God! Have I been dreaming? What is this? Where was I lying? Where did this thought come from? Certainly I would wish that it might come back ten or twenty times a day, for it nourishes me completely and fills me with joy and good fortune. But it is death to me that it lasts for so little. God! Shall I ever see the day when I may actually be in the situation that I imagine? I would want it even with the condition that I should die straightway. Death would not trouble me if I might die in my sweetheart’s arms. It is Love that troubles and torments me: I often complain and lament my state. But if Love arranges that I may have complete joy of my sweetheart, my woes will be well purchased.

“Alas! I ask for a possession too dear. I do not think myself wise in making such an outrageous request. It is right to refuse him who makes a stupid request.

“Thus, if I ever knew the sickness of love, you will carry on with little sleep, throughout the night. And when you can’t bear your suffering lying awake in your bed, you will have to dress, put on your shoes, and adorn yourself. Then, whether it is raining or freezing, you will go in secret directly to the house of your sweetheart, who will be sound

asleep, with hardly a thought of you. One hour you will go to the back door to see if it were left unclosed, and there you will perch like a crane all alone, outside in the wind and rain. Afterward you will come to the front door, and if you find a chink, a window or lock, put your ear to it to hear if they are lying asleep. And if the fair one alone wakes up, I advise and counsel you to lament and sigh so that she hears you and knows that for love of her you cannot rest in your bed. A woman who is not hardhearted ought certainly to have pity on him who endures such pain for her sake.

“Now I will tell you what you should do for the love of that high sanctuary whose comfort you cannot possess: on your return, kiss the door, and in order that no one sees you in front of the house or in the street, take care that you have left before the light of day. These comings and goings, these night watches and conversations make lovers waste away under their garments, as you know very well from your own experience. It is normal that you should waste away, for love, you understand, leaves no color or fat on pure lovers. Those who go around betraying women are readily recognizable by this test. In order to fatter they say that they have lost their taste for food and drink, but I see these tricksters fatter than an abbot or a prior.

“Furthermore, I command and charge you to be generous toward the servant girl of the house. Give her something to adorn herself such that she will call you a worthy man. You should honor and hold dear both your sweetheart and all those who wish her well. Through them much good can come to you. When those close to her tell her that they have found you upright, courteous, and accomplished, she will value you half again as much for their praise.

“Don’t leave the country often; if some great necessity compels you to do so, take care that your heart remains, and plan to return quickly. You should delay very little; pretend that any delay keeps you from the sight of her who has your heart in her keeping.

“Now I have told you how and in what manner a lover should perform my service. Do so if you wish to have your pleasure of the fair one.”

When Love had made these commands, I asked him: “Sir, how and in what way can these lovers endure the woes that you have told me about? I am greatly terrified by them. How can one keep on living when he is in burning pain and sorrow, weeping and sighing, weighed down by the care and attention that he must give every detail and every condition? God help me; I marvel greatly how any man, even one of iron, can live for a year in such hell.”

The God of Love then replied to my question with a good explanation: "Fair friend, no one has anything good unless he pays for it. Men love a possession more when they have bought it at a higher price, and the good things for which one has suffered are received with greater thanks. It is true that no woe measures up to that which colors lovers. No more than one can empty the sea could any man recount in a romance or a book the woes of love. And in any case, lovers must live, for life is their occupation. Everyone willingly flees death: he who is put into a dark prison, in a verminous, filthy place, with nothing to eat but barley or oat bread, does not die from his suffering. Hope brings him comfort, and he always thinks that some change will see him free. He whom I love keeps in his prison has exactly the same expectation: he hopes for a remedy; this hope comforts him, and his heart's desire brings him to offer his body in martyrdom. Hope makes him bear pains that no one can tell for the joy that is worth a hundred times as much. Hope triumphs through suffering and enables lovers to live. Blessed be Hope, who thus furthers the cause of lovers! Hope is very courteous: right up to the end, she will never leave any valiant man, in any peril or distress, by so much as one fathom. Even to the robber whom men want to hang she always brings the expectation of her grace. She will protect you and will never part from you without helping you in your need.

Discourse of Reason

From now on my sorrow will strengthen. Certainly it is true that the God of Love by his grace gave me three gifts, but I lose them here: Sweet Thought, who helps me not at all; Sweet Talk, whose aid has also failed me; the third, named Sweet Looks, I have, God keep me, lost as well. Certainly they are fine gifts, but they will never be worth anything if Fair Welcoming does not come forth from the prison where he is being held unjustly. In my opinion, I shall die for him, since, believe me, he will never escape from there alive.

Escape? Certainly not. By what force could we ever break out of such a fortress? It will certainly never come about through my efforts. Nor, believe me, did I show a grain of sense, but rather folly and madness, when I gave homage to the God of Love. It was Lady Idleness who made me do so. Shame to her and to her busybodying for giving in to my plea for shelter in the lovely garden; if she had known anything good, she would never have believed me. One should not believe a foolish man to the value even of an apple; he should be condemned and reproved before one allows him to commit folly. I was just such a fool, and she believed me. But she never believed me for any good. She brought about my desires too well, and now I must lament and

sorrow. Reason warned me well of this situation. I may count myself as bereft of reason when from that time I neither renounced love nor trusted Reason's advice.

Reason was right to blame me for ever setting out to love. It is fitting that I should feel these burdensome woes, and, believe me, I want to repent. Repent? Alas! What would I be doing? I should be a false, shameful traitor. The devil would indeed have attacked me: I would have betrayed my lord, and Fair Welcoming as well. Should he have my hatred if, to do me a courtesy, he languishes in the tower of Jealousy? Has he done me a courtesy? Indeed, one so great that no one could have believed it when he wanted me to trespass beyond the hedge and kiss the rose. I should not give him ill thanks for that courtesy, nor truly shall I ever do so. Never, please God, shall I utter complaints or cries against the God of Love, nor against Fair Welcoming or Hope, or against Idleness, who has been so gracious toward me, for it would be wrong of me to complain of their beneficence.

So there is nothing to do but suffer and offer my body to martyrdom and wait in good hope until Love sends me solace. I must wait for his mercy, for he said to me, I well remember: "I shall take your service in grace and exalt you to a high place, as long as evil does not put you down again. But perhaps your advancement will not come about quickly." This was his whole speech, word for word. It is very clear that he loved me tenderly. Therefore I have only to serve well if I wish to merit his grace; any fault could lie only in me, not in the God of Love, for indeed a god is never deficient in any respect. The fault then lies certainly in me, and I do not know where it comes from, nor, perhaps, shall I ever know.

So let things go as they can, let the God of Love do as he wishes whether it be to let me escape, to go on farther, or, if he wishes, to let me die. I shall never come to the end of my task, and I shall die if either I or another for me do not finish it. But if Love, who grieves me sorely, wished to finish it for me, no trouble that I encountered in his service could daunt me. Now may all go according to his design. Let him turn his thought toward my affair if he wishes; I can no longer undertake it alone. But whatever happens, I pray that after my death he remember Fair Welcoming who, without doing harm to me, has killed me. In any case, to divert him, and since I cannot bear the burden of his misfortune, I make my confession to you before I die, O Love, as do all loyal lovers, and I wish to make my testament here: at my departure I leave my heart to Fair Welcoming; I have no other goods to bequeath.

While I raved thus about the great sorrows I was suffering, not knowing where to seek a remedy for my grief and wrath, I saw fair Reason coming straight back to me; as she descended from her tower she heard my complaints.

“Fair friend,” said Reason the fair, “how does your dispute progress? Will you ever be tired of loving? Have you not had enough suffering? How do the woes of love seem to you now? Are they too sweet or too bitter? Do you know how to choose the mean among them, the mean which can give you aid and sufficiency? Have you chosen a good lord, this one who has thus captured and subjugated you and who torments you without respite? The day you ever swore homage to him was an unhappy one for you; you were a fool when you set out on this affair. But undoubtedly you do not know about the lord with whom you are dealing; for if you knew him well you would never have become his man, or if you had become, you would not have served him for a summer, nor for a day, nor for an hour, but without delay, I think, you would have renounced your homage to him and would never have loved *par amour*. Do you really know him at all?”

“Yes, lady.”

“You do not.”

“Yes, I do.”

“How? By your soul?”

“Because he said to me, ‘You should be very joyful since you have such a good master and a lord of so great renown.’”

“Do you know him any further?”

“No, except that he gave me his commandments, then few away quicker than an eagle while I remained in peril.”

“Indeed that’s a poor acquaintance; but now I want you to understand him. You have drunk so much bitterness that your outlook is distorted. No unhappy wretch can support a greater load. It is a good thing to know one’s lord; if you knew this God of Love well, you could escape easily from the prison where you are thus wasting away.”

“Truly, lady, since he is my sire and I his liege man wholly, my heart would listen willingly and would learn more if there were someone who could teach it.”

“By my head, I want to teach you, since your heart wants to hear. Now I shall show you without fable what is not demonstrable. You shall know straightway without knowledge and understand without

understanding what can never be better known, demonstrated, or understood by any man who fixes his heart on love; but one will not suffer the less on account of this knowledge unless he is the sort that may wish to flee from love. Then I will have untied for you the knot that you will always find tied. Now give me your attention; here is the description of love.

“Love is hateful peace and loving hate. It is disloyal loyalty and loyal disloyalty, fear that is completely confident and despairing hope. It is reason gone mad and reasonable madness, the sweet danger of drowning, a heavy burden easily handled. It is the treacherous Charybdis, repellent but attractive. It is a healthful languor and diseased health, a hunger satiated in the midst of abundance, a sufficiency always covetous. It is the thirst that is always drunk, a drunkenness intoxicated by its own thirst. False delight, joyous sorrow, enraged happiness, sweet ill, malicious sweetness, and a foul-smelling sweet perfume, love is a sin touched by pardon but a pardon stained by sin. It is suffering which is too joyous, a piteous cruelty, a movement without any certainty, a state of rest both too fixed and too movable. It is a spineless force, a strong weakness that moves all by its efforts. It is foolish sense, wise folly, a prosperity both sad and pleasant. It is the laugh filled with tears and weeping, and the repose always occupied by labor. Sweet hell and heaven of sorrow, it is the prison which solaces captivity. It is the springtime full of cold winter, the moth that refuses nothing but consumes everything from purple robes to homespun, for lovers are as good beneath coarse clothing as under fine.

“There is no one, however high his lineage nor however wise he may be found, of such proved strength, bravery, or other good qualities, who may not be subjugated by the God of Love. The whole world travels that road. He is the god who turns them all from their road, if they are not those of genuinely evil life whom Genius excommunicates because they commit wrongs against Nature. However, since I have nothing to do with these, I do not wish people to love with that love by which at the end they proclaim themselves unhappy and sorrowful wretches because the God of Love goes about making fools of them. But if indeed you wish to win through to the point where the God of Love will be unable to harm you, and to be cured of that madness, you can drink nothing better than the thought of fleeing from him. You can become happy in no other way. If you follow him, he will follow you; if you flee, he will flee.”

But Reason argued in vain, for when I had heard her through I replied: “Lady, I flatter myself that I know no more than before of how I can extricate myself from love. There are so many contraries in this lesson

that I can learn nothing from it; and yet I can repeat it well by heart, for my heart never forgot any of it; indeed, I can make a public lecture of the whole thing, but to me alone it means nothing. But since you have described love to me, and have praised and blamed it so much, I beg you to define it in such a way that I may better remember it, for I have never heard it defined.”

“Willingly,” she replied. “Now listen carefully. Love, if I think right, is a sickness of thought that takes place between two persons of different sex when they are in close proximity and open to each other. It arises among people from the burning desire, born of disordinate glances, to embrace and kiss each other and to have the solace of one another’s body. A lover so burns and is so enraptured that he thinks of nothing else; he takes no account of bearing fruit, but strives only for delight.

“There are those of a certain kind who do not hold this love dear, but who always pretend to be pure lovers and do not deign to love *par amour* thus they deceive ladies by promising them their hearts and souls and by swearing lies and fables to those whom they find gullible, until they have taken their pleasure with them. But such people are less deceived than the others; for it is always better, good master, to deceive than to be deceived, particularly in this battle, when one never knows where to seek the mean.

“But I know very well without divination that whoever lies with a woman ought to wish with all his might to continue his divine self and to maintain himself in his likeness in order that the succession of generations might never fail, since all such likenesses are subject to decay. Nature wills, since father and mother disappear, that children rise up to continue the work of generation, and that one’s life may be regained by means of another. For this purpose Nature has implanted delight in man because she wants the workman to take pleasure in his task in order that he might neither fee from it nor hate it, for there are many who would never make a move toward it if there were no delight to attract them. Thus Nature uses this subtle means of gaining her end.

Youth pushes men into folly, debauchery, ribaldry, lechery, excesses, and fickle changes of heart; it creates situations so complex that they are scarcely ever untangled. Into such perils does Youth put those who turn their hearts to Delight. Delight thus ensnares and directs both the body and the mind of man by means of his chambermaid, youth, whl habitually does evil and attracts men to delight; she seeks to do no other task.

“But Age takes men away from Delight. Let whoever does not know

this either learn it here, or ask it of the old whom youth has held in her grasp. They will still recall enough of the many great perils which they have passed through and the follies that they have committed. When Old Age, their good companion on their journey, has taken from them the forces which ruled them in youth and the willful follies by which they were habitually tempted, she leads them back to the right path and guides them right up to the end of their course. But her favors badly employed, since no one loves her or values her, at least, I know, not to the extent where he would wish to have old age for himself. No one wants to grow old, nor does Youth want to finish her life. So the old are amazed and marvel when their memories awaken and, as they must, they remember their follies and how they did this or that without any shame or remorse. or if they did feel any shame or hurt, they wonder how they may escape such perils without worse consequences for their souls, their bodies, or their property.

“But however the matter may go, whoever wants to enjoy love, without fail, man or woman, whether lady or girl, should seek its fruit, although they should not deny their share of delight. But I know that there are a lot of these women who don’t want to become pregnant, and, when they become so, they are very chagrined and utter no complaint nor show any sign of distress except something silly or stupid when Shame has no control whatever over them.

“Briefly then, everyone who gives himself over to the work of love turns only to Delight, except for those worthless ones who, corrupted by their filthy lives, are not bound by any laws and basely give themselves for money. Certainly there would never be a good woman who would abandon herself to take gifts. No man should ever take to himself a woman who wants to sell her flesh. Does he think that any woman who wants to fay her living body will hold it dear? A man so vilely tricked is indeed a wretch led astray when he believes that such a woman loves him just because she calls him her lover, smiles at him, and makes much of him. Certainly no such animal ought to be called friend or lover, nor is she worth being loved. A woman who seeks to despoil a man should be valued at nothing. I do not say that she may not, for pleasure and solace, wear an ornament given or sent by her friend, but she must not ask, for it, since she would then be taking it basely; in return she should give him something of hers if she wants to act blamelessly. In this way their hearts join together, they love each other and pledge themselves by their gifts. Don’t think that I would separate them; I want them to unite and do whatever they ought that is courteous and well behaved, but I want them to keep themselves from that foolish love which inflames hearts and makes them burn

with desire. I want their love to be free of that covetousness that excites false hearts to grasp. Good love should be born of a pure heart; love should not be mastered by gifts any more than by bodily pleasures.

“But the love which holds you in its bonds gives you the prospect of carnal delight so that your intention, runs nowhere but upon wishing to have the rose; you dream of no other possession. but you are not within two fingers, length of having it, and that is what is making your skin waste away, what takes away all your strength. When you took in the God of Love you received a burdensome guest; you have an evil guest in your inn. Therefore I advise you to eject him lest he rob you of all the thoughts which should turn to your profit; don’t let him dwell there any longer.

Thus Reason preached to me. But Love prevented anything from being put into practice, although I heard the whole matter; word for word, for Love drew me strongly and hunted through all my thoughts like a hunter whose course lies everywhere. He kept my heart constantly under his wing, and when I was seated for the sermon, he kept watch over me, outside of my head, with a shovel. Whenever Reason cast a word into one ear, he threw one into the other, with the result that she wasted all her efforts and only filled me with anger and wrath. Then, filled with ire, I said to her:

“Lady, you wish to betray me. Should I now hate people? Shall I despise everyone? If love were not good, I would never love with refined love, but live always in hatred. Then I would be a mortal sinner, in fact worse, by God, than a sneak thief ; I couldn’t help sinning. I have to get out of this difficulty by one of two ways: either I love or I hate. But perhaps I should Pay more in the end for hatred, even though love weren’t worth a Penny’ You would have given me good advice, then, you who have kept on preaching to me that I should renounce Love. He who wants to believe you is a fool.

“But you have recalled to me another, little-known love which people may feel for each other. I have not heard you decry it; if you would define it, I should consider myself a fool if I did not listen and find out at least if I might learn the nature of love, if it would please you to explain it.”

“Certainly, fair friend,” she replied, “you are a fool when you don’t consider the sermon I have given you for your own profit as worth a straw; I will give you another one, for I am ready with all my power to fulfill your good request, but I do not know if it will do you any good.

“Love is of several sorts other than that which has transformed you and taken away your rightful sense. You encountered it in an evil hour; for God’s sake, see that you know it no further’ One kind of love is named Friendship. It consists of mutual good will among men, without any discord, in accordance with the benevolence-of God. Through the power of charity, goods are held in common in such a way that there may be no exception by any intention. No friend is slow to help another, but all are dependable, wise, discreet, and loyal, for the mind where loyalty is lacking is worthless. Whatever a man dares to think, he may as safely recount it to his friend as to himself alone, without any fear of denunciation. Such are the manners that those who wish to love perfectly ought to have as habitual practices’ No man may be truly friendly if he is not so reliable and dependable that he will not change because of changing Fortune, so that his friend, who has put his whole heart in him, always finds him, rich or poor, in the same state of mind. And if he sees his friend being pushed toward poverty, he should not wait until he has to ask for help, for a favor granted upon request is sold at a price too niggardly to hearts of great value. A worthy man is very ashamed when he asks someone to give him something. He thinks about it and worries about it a great deal and is extremely uncomfortable before he will ask, because he is ashamed to say what he has to and fears a refusal. But when a person has been found who has previously proved trustworthy in his love, then every occasion that one dare think of is one for rejoicing and gladness, with no shame about anything. For how could a person be ashamed before anyone of this sort I have described? When one has told a secret to him, no third person will ever know it; nor will the teller fear any reproach, for a wise man keeps watch over his tongue, a thing no fool could do, for a fool doesn’t know how to keep his tongue still. A friend will do even more; he will help one with everything that he can, and will be happier to do so, to tell the truth, than his friend will be to receive his help. Moreover, so great is the mastery of love, that if he does not fulfill the request for the friend, he will be no less troubled by his failure than will he who asked him. He who comforts a friend, in any way he can, bears half his sorrow and partakes of his joy as long as their love is rightly shared.

“Tully says, in one of his works, that as long as our request is honest, we should make it of our friends according to the law of this friendship, and in the same way should perform the request, if it is made with right and reason. Without such a just request, one should act in only two cases, which he excepts. If anyone wanted to send them to death, we should try to deliver them from it; and if their reputation is assailed, we should take care that they are not defamed. In these two cases it

is possible to defend them without waiting for right and reason. No man should refuse to do so in so far as love can excuse the case.

“This love which I put forward to you is not contrary to my purpose. I certainly want you to follow it and to avoid the other love. This love is connected with every virtue, but the other leads men to death.

“Ah, lady, for the king of angels, teach me by all means what things can be mine, and if I can have anything of my own. I would very much like to know this.”

“Yes,” replied Reason, “but do not expect fields or houses, clothing or such adornment, or any earthly dwelling, or furnishings of any sort. You have a much better and more precious thing’ All the good things that you sense within, and which you so well understand in yourself, which will dwell in you constantly nor can ever leave you to perform similar service for another — these good things are yours in a right way. The other benefits which you have, alien ones, are not worth an old bridle rein; neither you nor any man living has anything worth a shallot; for know that all your possessions are enclosed within yourself. Every other good belongs to Fortune, who disperses and collects them, gives and takes them away as she pleases and with them makes fools laugh and weep. But nothing Fortune did would entrap a wise man nor would the revolution of her turning wheel bind him or make him sorrowful. All her deeds are too dangerous, because they are not stable. For this reason, love of her is neither profitable nor in any way pleasing to a worthy man nor is it just that it should be pleasing when it falls into eclipse for so small reason. Therefore I want you to know that your heart is not for anything to be attached to it. You are not tainted by it, but it would be a very great sin if, later on, you were infatuated and sinned against men to the extent of proclaiming yourself their friend only in order to collect their wealth or the esteem which would come to you from them. No worthy man would consider this esteem a good thing. Fly from this love that I have described as from a thing base and despicable. Renounce loving *par armor*; be wise and believe me’ But I see that you are stupid about another thing in that you have reproached me, saying that I have commanded you to hate’ But I ask ‘When? In what place? How?’”

“You haven’t stopped telling me today that I should despise my lord, on account of some primitive love, I don’t know what. If a man were to search as far as Carthage, from east to west; if he lived until his teeth fell out from old age; if he ran, without stopping to idle, visiting south and north until he had seen everything; still he would not have attained the love you have told me of. indeed the world was washed

clean of it from the time that the gods fed, when the giants attacked them and when Right and Chastity and Faith fed at the same time. That love was so confounded that it also fed and is lost. Justice, who was heavier, fed last. They deserted all lands, since they couldn't endure wars, and made their dwelling in the heavens; never since, except by a miracle, have they dared descend to earth. Fraud, who has inherited control of the earth by his strength and insolence, has made them all leave the earth.

"Even Tully, who took great pains to search out the secrets of ancient writings, could not so flog his ingenuity that he ever found more than three or four pairs of such pure loves in all the centuries since this earth was created. And I believe that he found less of it among those who lived at his time and who were his dinner-mates. I haven't yet read anywhere that he had ever had any such. And am I wiser than Tully? I would be a stupid fool indeed if I wanted to seek such loves, since there are no more of them on earth. Where then would I seek such a love when I wouldn't find it here below? Can I fly with the cranes, or indeed, like Socrates' swan, leap beyond the clouds? I don't wish to speak of it any longer; I'll be quiet. I have no such foolish hope. Perhaps the gods thought that, like the giants of old, I would attack paradise, and that I could then be struck down by their thunder. I don't know if that's what you want, but I shouldn't remain in any doubt."

"Fair friend," she said, "now listen. If you cannot attain to this love — for it can just as well fail through your fault as through that of another — I will now teach you of another. Another? No, but the same kind that everyone can be capable of as long as he grasps a somewhat more comprehensive understanding of love. He must love generally and leave particular loves. Let him form there a lasting union in which many participate. You can lawfully love all those of the world in a general way: love them all as much as one, at least with the love of what is common to all. Act in such a way that you may be toward all as you would wish them all to be toward you. Neither act nor pursue a course of action toward any man except that course that you want men to take toward you. If you want to love in this way, men should proclaim you free from any blame for it. You are bound to pursue this love; no man should live without it.

"Because those who strive to do evil neglect this kind of love, judges are established on earth as the defense and refuge of those treated unjustly by the world, to see that the injustice is made up to them, and to punish and chastise those who, to deny this love, assassinate men or kill, rape, rob, or steal, or who harm by detraction, false accusation, or

by whatever evildoing, either open or hidden. They must be brought to justice.”

“Lady, since we are speaking of Justice, formerly in such great renown, and you are troubling to teach me, teach me a little of this Justice.”

“Say what you want to know.”

“Willingly. I ask you to make a reasoned statement about love and justice and their relationship. Which is worth more, as it seems to you?”

“Which love are you talking about?”

“About the one you want me to devote myself to, for I don’t aspire to submit to judgment the kind which has been implanted in me.”

“Certainly, fool, I believe that; but if you are seeking a true judgment, the good love is worth more.”

“Prove it.”

“Willingly. When you find two things which are compatible, necessary, and profitable, the one which is more necessary is worth more.”

“Lady, that is true.”

“Now take care then in this matter; consider the nature of both. These two things, wherever they exist, are necessary and useful.”

“True.”

“Then I possess as much of each as is consistent with the value of the more profitable?”

“I certainly agree with that, lady.”

“Then I don’t wish to say more about it. But Love which comes from charity possesses greater necessity by far than does Justice.”

“Prove it, lady, before you go on.”

“Willingly. I tell you without feigning that the good which can suffice itself is more necessary and greater, therefore the better choice, than that which needs help. You will not contradict me.”

“Why not? Make yourself understood, and I can then know if there is any objection. I should like to hear an example before I can know if I might agree.”

“My faith, when you bid me give examples and proofs, they become great burdens. Nevertheless you shall have your example, since by it

you will know better. If a man can, without the necessity of any other help, drag a boat easily which already you were unable to drag by yourself, wouldn't he pull better than you?"

"Yes, lady, at least by cable."

"Now take here your likeness. If Justice were always asleep, still Love would be enough to lead a good and pure life, without judging anyone. But Justice without Love? No. It is for this reason that I call Love the better."

"Prove this to me."

"Willingly. Now keep quiet while I do so. If Justice, who reigned formerly at the time when Saturn held power — Saturn, whose testicles Jupiter, his hard and bitter son, cut off as though they were sausages and threw into the sea, thus giving birth to Venus, as the book tells — if Justice, I say, were to return to earth and were as well esteemed today as she was then, there would still be need for men to love each other, no matter how they maintained Justice; for, from the time that Love might wish to flee, Justice would cause great destruction. But if men loved, they would never harm each other; and since Transgression would leave, what end would Justice serve?"

"I don't know what end, lady."

"I well believe you, for everyone in the world would then live peacefully and tranquilly, and they would never have a king or prince; there would be neither bailiff nor provost as long as people lived honestly. Judges would never hear any clamor. So — I say that Love by itself is worth more than Justice, even though the latter works against Malice, the mother of lordships, by-which freedom has perished; for if there had been no evil or sin to stain the world, man would never have seen a king nor known a judge on earth. Judges judge evilly where they ought first to make themselves just, since men want to trust in them. In order to do right by the complainants, they should observe law, be diligent, not lazy and negligent, nor covetous, false, and feigning. But now they sell their decisions, and turn the elements of the legal process upside down; they tally, they count, they erase, and poor men all pay. Each strives to take from the other. Such a judge makes a robber hang when he himself ought rather to be hanged, if a judgment were rendered against him for the rapines and the wrongs that he has committed through his power.

"Now, if you have understood well, I have answered what you have asked, and you have seen the reasons which seem to me appropriate to this judgment."

“Lady, you have certainly repaid me well, and I consider myself well recompensed; I thank you. But I heard you speak at one point, it seems to me, some words so shameless and excessive that I believe that if anyone wanted to waste time in undertaking to excuse you, he wouldn’t be able to find any defense.”

“I see well,” she said, “what you are thinking about. At another time, whenever you wish, you will hear an explanation, if you will please remember.”

“Indeed, I will remind you,” I said, with a lively memory, “of the very word you used. My master has forbidden me — I heard him very clearly — ever to let fall from my mouth any word approaching ribaldry. But as long as I didn’t use the word originally, I can easily repeat it; I will name it right out without restriction. He does well who reveals folly to him whom he sees commit folly. Now I can chastise you to that extent, and you who pretend to be so wise will see as well your own trespass.”

“I will await that,” she said, “but meanwhile I must answer what you have objected to me about hatred. I wonder how you dare say it. Don’t you know that it doesn’t follow at all that, if I wish to leave off one folly, I must commit a similar or greater one? If I wish to destroy the mad love to which you aspire, do I order you to hate to that end? Don’t you remember Horace, who had such good sense and grace? Horace, no fool, said that when madcaps flee from vices, they turn to the contraries, and their affairs go no better. I do not wish to forbid love which one ought to understand as good, only that which is harmful to men. If I forbid drunkenness, I do not wish to forbid drinking. Such a course would not be worth a grain of pepper. When I forbid senseless generosity, I would be counted mad were I to counsel avarice, for one is just as great a vice as the other. I do not make such arguments.”

“Yes, indeed you do.”

“Certainly you lie; I’m not trying to fatter you. You have not, to overcome me, examined old books; you are not a good logician. I do not explain love in that way. Never, out of my mouth, has come the counsel that one ought to hate anything. One must find the right mean. It is the love which I love and esteem so much that I have taught You to love.

“There is another love, a natural one, which Nature has created in beasts, by means of which they rear their young, suckle them, and nourish them. If you want me to tell you the definition of this love

of which I speak, it is a natural inclination to wish to preserve one's likeness by a suitable intention, either by engendering or by caring for nourishment. Male and female of man as well as beast are prepared for this love. However much good it does, this love carries neither praise nor blame nor merit; it is to be neither praised nor blamed; Nature makes creatures give themselves to it; in truth, they are forced to it. Nor does this love bring any victory over vice. But, without fail, if men do not perform this duty, they should be blamed. When a man eats, what praise is due him? But if he foreswears food, he should certainly be shamed. But I know very well that you are not interested in this love, and I therefore pass on. You have undertaken, in this love of yours, a much more senseless enterprise. It would be better for you to leave it, if you wish to advance toward your own profit.

"Nevertheless I don't want you to live without a friend. If it pleases you, turn your attention to me. Am I not a lady beautiful, noble, fit to serve a worthy man, even the emperor of Rome? I want to become your friend, and if you wish to hold to me, do you know what my love will be worth to you? So much that you will never lack anything you need, no matter what misfortune comes to you. You will then be a lord so great that no one ever heard tell of a greater. I will do whatever you wish; you can never make a wish too high provided only that you carry out my work. You must never work in any other way. Furthermore, you will have a lover of such noble family that there is none to compare with her; I am the daughter of God, the sovereign father who made and shaped me so. See here His form, and see yourself in my clear face. No girl of such descent ever had such power of loving as have I, for I have leave of my father to take a friend and be loved. I shall never be blamed for it, nor need you worry about sin, since you will be in my father's keeping, and he will feed us both together. Do I say well? Answer me: how does it seem to you? Does the god who has made you mad know how to pay his followers as well? Does he dress them at such cost, these fools whose homage he demands? Before God, take care lest you refuse me. Maidens unaccustomed to begging are thrown into great sorrow and turmoil when they are refused. You can prove this fact yourself by the case of Echo, without seeking other proofs.

"Now tell me, not in Latin, but in French, what you want me to serve."

"Allow me to be your servant and you my loyal friend. You will leave the god who has put you in this plight and will not value at one prune the whole wheel of Fortune.

"And if you know how to listen well to me, I can teach you, in our talks, that riches and reverences, dignities, honors, and powers, and

all other gifts of Fortune — for I do not except even one — are not powerful enough to make good men of those who possess them or to make them worthy of having wealth, honors, or high station. But if they have inner qualities of harshness, pride, or some other evil, they show and reveal these qualities sooner in the grand estate to which they raise themselves than if they had occupied low stations, in which they could do no such harm; for, when they use their powers, their deeds reveal their wills and give a demonstration, an outward sign, that they are neither good nor worthy of riches, dignities, honors, or powers.

“In this connection, men have a common saying that is very foolish, if their silly reasoning gets them off the track and they take it as entirely true. Honors, they say, change manners. But they reason badly, for honors work no change, but give a demonstration, an outward sign that those who have taken the roads by which they came to these honors had just such manners in themselves before, when they were in low estate. If they are cruel and proud, spiteful and malicious after they have come to receive honors, you may know that, if they had then had the power, they would formerly have been such as you can see them afterward.

“However, I do not give the name of power to evil or unregulated power, for our text says, and says well, that all power comes from the good and that no man fails to do good except through weakness and omission; and he who understood clearly would see that evil is nothing, for so the text says. If you do not care for authority, for perhaps you do not believe that all authorities are true, I am ready to find reasons, for there is nothing that God cannot do. But if you want to extract the truth from this observation, it is that God cannot do evil; and if you understand well, and see that God, who has not the power to do evil, is all-powerful, then you can see clearly that no matter who numbers the being of things, evil contributes nothing to their number. Just as the shadow places nothing in the air that is darkened except a lack of light, so in an exactly similar way, in a creature in whom good is lacking, evil puts nothing except a simple lack of goodness and can put there nothing more. The text, which embraces the whole range of evil things, goes on to say that the wicked are not men, and it brings lively reasons to this conclusion I but I do not want to take the trouble now to prove all that I say when you can find it in writing. Nevertheless, if it does not disturb you, I can very well bring out some of the reasons in a short talk. The wicked are not men because they abandon the common goal toward which things that receive being aspire and must aspire. That goal, which we call the first, is the sovereign of ail good things. I

have another reason, fair master, why the evil have no existence, if you will listen carefully to the conclusion: since they are not in the order in which all things existing have placed their being, then it follows, for him who sees clearly, that the evil are nothing.

“And if you do me the service that I here enjoin and describe to you, you will never, at any time, find a man richer than you, nor will you ever be angered, no matter how much the condition of your body, your friends, or your possessions may decline, but instead you will want to have patience. And you will want to have it as soon as you wish to be my friend. Why then do you dwell in sorrow? Many times I see you crying as an alembic does into an aludel. You should be stirred into a mud-puddle like an old rag. Certainly I would consider anyone a big joke who said that you were a man, for no man at any time, provided that he used his understanding, ever encouraged sorrow or sadness. The living devils, the evil ones, have heated your furnace, which makes your eyes thus flow with tears; but if you had used your understanding you should never have been downcast by anything that happened to you. This is the work of the god who put you here, your good master, your good friend; it is Love who fans and inflames the coals that he has put in your heart, who makes the tears come back to your eyes. He wants to sell his company at a high price, for it might not be suitable for a man to make his intelligence and prowess widely known. Certainly you are badly defamed. Leave weeping to children and women, weak and inconstant animals; be strong and firm when you see Fortune coming. Do you want to hold back her wheel that cannot be held back by the great or the small?”

If you are too weak to sustain this triple feat, I am ready to lighten it so that it may be more lightly carried. Take the first alone; and if you understand me sensibly you will be relieved of the others, for if you are not lazy or drunk, you should know and mark it well — that whoever accords with Reason will never love *par amour* nor value Fortune. For this reason Socrates was such that he was my true friend. He did not fear the God of Love in any way, nor did he budge on account of Fortune. Therefore I want you to be like him and bring your whole heart together with mine. If you have planted it in mine, you have satisfied me in great plenty. Now you see how the matter stands: I make only one request of you; take the first of those that I have told you and I will pronounce the others paid. Now keep your mouth closed no longer. Reply: Will you do this thing?”

“Lady,” I said, “I can be nothing other than I am. I must serve my master, who will make me a hundred thousand times more rich when it pleases him, for he should give me the rose if I know well how to

exert myself for it. And if, through him, I can possess it, I would have no need of any other possession. I wouldn't give three chick-peas for Socrates, no matter how rich he were, and I don't seek to hear any more talk of him. I should go back to my master: I want to keep my covenant with him because it is right and pleasing. If it must lead me to hell, I cannot hold back my heart. My heart! It is never mine. I never impaired, nor do I hope to impair my testament in order to love another. I left it all to Fair Welcoming, for I know the whole of my legacy by heart, and through my great impatience, I had confession without repentance. Therefore I would not want to exchange the rose with you for anything. You must see my thought on that subject.

But I do beg your grace for the sake of God: do not blame me any more for loving here. If I am a fool, it is my misfortune. At least — and I think that I am quite certain of it — I am doing what is wise when I pay homage to my master. It makes no difference to you if I am a fool. However it goes, I want to love the rose to which I am pledged; no other will ever fill my heart. If I promised my love to you, I would never keep my promise; and then if I did not keep my word, I would either deceive you or rob my master. But I have told you often that I do not want to think elsewhere than on the rose, where my thoughts are turned. When you make me think elsewhere, by means of the speeches that you repeat here, until I am constantly tired of hearing them, you will see me fee away from here if you do not immediately keep quiet, for my heart's attention is turned elsewhere." When Reason heard me, she turned back and again left me pensive and sad.

St. Thomas Aquinas,
Summa Theologiae

The twelfth and thirteenth centuries held the high tide of crusading. The trigger came from Central Asia. The Seljuks, Persianized Turks and Muslim converts originally from the Aral Sea region, forged a large empire within the Abbasid Caliphate, which had devolved into fractious states. The caliphs lacked temporal authority by this time, serving only as ceremonial heads of the House of Islam; the Seljuk “sultan” now wielded the real power. (It was a vizier of the Seljuk Empire who founded the Nizāmīyyah Academy and appointed al-Ghazālī a professor there.) The Seljuks defeated Byzantium at the Battle of Manzikert in 1071, which cleared the way for the Turkification of Anatolia. This serious defeat induced Byzantine Emperor Alexios I Komnenos to seek military aid from the pope. Urban II saw an opportunity to channel aristocratic violence outside of Christendom and to foster the reunification of the “Roman” world. It was also an opportunity to gain advantage in the Investiture Controversy, vis-à-vis the Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV—a basis on which to claim primacy over Christendom, both spiritual and political. Crusading outfitted the popes with armies, to back up the Donation of Constantine, a forgery that purported to be a grant of imperial authority to the pope by Constantine: authorizing the pope’s rule over the papal states and a theoretical primacy in temporal jurisdiction (a papocaesarism). Urban’s successors in the thirteenth century would unleash crusading within Christendom: against Christian heretics and, for political reasons, even against Christian rulers, such as Frederick II, “the wonder of the world,” the last Holy Roman Emperor to rule from Italy (at his Sicilian court in Palermo). One crusade would lead to the Sack of Constantinople (1204), a profound atrocity and crime against civilization. A crusader was *cruce signatus* (“one signed by the cross”), in what might be understood as a blasphemous use of the central symbol of the religion founded by Jesus, who sought to reconcile all of humanity within the peace of a Kingdom not built on the sword but on self-sacrificial love. So alongside the rebirth of civilization in Western Europe with its reurbanization, the ideology of a Christian kingdom most emphatically of this world, Christendom, was advanced by popes.

But there were also authentically spiritual initiatives within Europe.

Monasticism was always at the heart of Christendom, but monasteries could not seem to escape the cycles of reform and decadence. They could not help becoming massive landed corporations. A revolutionary way to be religious, no longer on the Benedictine model, one that corresponded to the new urbanization, appeared at the beginning of the thirteenth century: the mendicant, or begging, orders—the Franciscans and Dominicans. They begged for their sustenance and centered their preaching ministry in cities, where there was lay uneasiness about the new commercial wealth and lifestyle. Saint Francis appeared to be an *alter Christus*, and his Little Brothers were the first to vow poverty, chastity, and obedience.

The Dominicans were founded to convert the Cathars (and later staffed the Papal Inquisition).

By the canon law of the Catholic Church, the Dominican Saint Thomas Aquinas (c.1225-1274), the Angelic Doctor, is to be embraced as a uniquely important teacher in the study of dogmatic theology. But it had not always been so. Aquinas's defense of the rights of reason, philosophy, and nature within the realm of theology was controversial in the university and ecclesiastical world of the thirteenth century. The greatest of the high medieval scholastics, Aquinas and Bonaventure (a Franciscan), were colleagues at the University of Paris, which grew out of the Notre-Dame cathedral school. Aquinas in particular had to thread a needle. On one side were radical Aristotelians (Averroists) among the Faculty of Arts masters, tending in their rationalism to challenge the dominance of theologians over philosophers. On the other side were theologians in the Augustinian tradition, who were suspicious of all Aristotelianism (a stance similar to that of al-Ghazālī). By integrating Aristotle into Christian theology, Aquinas harmonized faith and reason, grace and nature, and chartered the relative autonomy of "nature": each thing has an intrinsic intelligibility that can be explored by the light of natural reason. He thereby rejected the preemption of philosophy and science by theologians, opening the door for the West to advance human knowledge and to think the possibilities of a secular social order. Aquinas composed his incomplete masterwork, the *Summa theologiae*, because he was concerned that moral theology and

confessional practice were being taught to young Dominicans without sufficient systematic-theological context. The pattern defining most of the *Summa* is *exitus-reditus* (going-out-from and returning-to): the proceeding of all things from God in creation and their return to God in free moral action—and ultimately through Christ. The following “questions,” an inherently dialectic genre, focus on the final end, or goal, of human life: happiness.

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Of Those Things in which Man's Happiness Consists

We have now to consider happiness: and (1) in what it consists; (2) what it is; (3) how we can obtain it.

Concerning the first there are eight points of inquiry:

- (1) Whether happiness consists in wealth?
- (2) Whether in honor?
- (3) Whether in fame or glory?
- (4) Whether in power?
- (5) Whether in any good of the body?
- (6) Whether in pleasure?
- (7) Whether in any good of the soul?
- (8) Whether in any created good?

Whether man's happiness consists in wealth?

Objection 1: It would seem that man's happiness consists in wealth. For since happiness is man's last end, it must consist in that which has the greatest hold on man's affections. Now this is wealth: for it is written (Eccles. 10:19): "All things obey money." Therefore man's happiness consists in wealth.

Objection 2: Further, according to Boethius (De Consol. iii), happiness is "a state of life made perfect by the aggregate of all good things." Now money seems to be the means of possessing all things: for, as the Philosopher says (Ethic. v, 5), money was invented, that it might be a sort of guarantee for the acquisition of whatever man desires. Therefore happiness consists in wealth.

Objection 3: Further, since the desire for the sovereign good never fails, it seems to be infinite. But this is the case with riches more than anything else; since "a covetous man shall not be satisfied with riches" (Eccles. 5:9). Therefore happiness consists in wealth.

On the contrary, Man's good consists in retaining happiness rather than in spreading it. But as Boethius says (De Consol. ii), "wealth shines in giving rather than in hoarding; for the miser is hateful, whereas the generous man is applauded." Therefore man's happiness does not consist in wealth.

I answer that, it is impossible for man's happiness to consist in wealth. For wealth is twofold, as the Philosopher says (Polit. i, 3), viz. natural and artificial. Natural wealth is that which serves man as a remedy for his natural wants: such as food, drink, clothing, cars, dwellings, and such like, while artificial wealth is that which is not a direct help to

nature, as money, but is invented by the art of man, for the convenience of exchange, and as a measure of things salable.

Now it is evident that man's happiness cannot consist in natural wealth. For wealth of this kind is sought for the sake of something else, viz. as a support of human nature: consequently it cannot be man's last end, rather is it ordained to man as to its end. Wherefore in the order of nature, all such things are below man, and made for him, according to Ps. 8:8: "Thou hast subjected all things under his feet."

And as to artificial wealth, it is not sought save for the sake of natural wealth; since man would not seek it except because, by its means, he procures for himself the necessaries of life. Consequently much less can it be considered in the light of the last end. Therefore it is impossible for happiness, which is the last end of man, to consist in wealth.

Reply to Objection 1: All material things obey money, so far as the multitude of fools is concerned, who know no other than material goods, which can be obtained for money. But we should take our estimation of human goods not from the foolish but from the wise: just as it is for a person whose sense of taste is in good order, to judge whether a thing is palatable.

Reply to Objection 2: All things salable can be had for money: not so spiritual things, which cannot be sold. Hence it is written (Prov. 17:16): "What doth it avail a fool to have riches, seeing he cannot buy wisdom."

Reply to Objection 3: The desire for natural riches is not infinite: because they suffice for nature in a certain measure. But the desire for artificial wealth is infinite, for it is the servant of disordered concupiscence, which is not curbed, as the Philosopher makes clear (Polit. i, 3). Yet this desire for wealth is infinite otherwise than the desire for the sovereign good. For the more perfectly the sovereign good is possessed, the more it is loved, and other things despised: because the more we possess it, the more we know it. Hence it is written (Ecclus. 24:29): "They that eat me shall yet hunger." Whereas in the desire for wealth and for whatsoever temporal goods, the contrary is the case: for when we already possess them, we despise them, and seek others: which is the sense of Our Lord's words (Jn. 4:13): "Whosoever drinketh of this water," by which temporal goods are signified, "shall thirst again." The reason of this is that we realize more their insufficiency when we possess them: and this very fact shows that they are imperfect, and the sovereign good does not consist therein.

Whether man's happiness consists in honors?

Objection 1: It would seem that man's happiness consists in honors. For happiness or bliss is "the reward of virtue," as the Philosopher says (Ethic. i, 9). But honor more than anything else seems to be that by which virtue is rewarded, as the Philosopher says (Ethic. iv, 3). Therefore happiness consists especially in honor.

Objection 2: Further, that which belongs to God and to persons of great excellence seems especially to be happiness, which is the perfect good. But that is honor, as the Philosopher says (Ethic. iv, 3). Moreover, the Apostle says (1 Tim. 1:17): "To . . . the only God be honor and glory." Therefore happiness consists in honor.

Objection 3: Further, that which man desires above all is happiness. But nothing seems more desirable to man than honor: since man suffers loss in all other things, lest he should suffer loss of honor. Therefore happiness consists in honor.

On the contrary, Happiness is in the happy. But honor is not in the honored, but rather in him who honors, and who offers deference to the person honored, as the Philosopher says (Ethic. i, 5). Therefore happiness does not consist in honor.

I answer that, it is impossible for happiness to consist in honor. For honor is given to a man on account of some excellence in him; and consequently it is a sign and attestation of the excellence that is in the person honored. Now a man's excellence is in proportion, especially to his happiness, which is man's perfect good; and to its parts, i.e. those goods by which he has a certain share of happiness. And therefore honor can result from happiness, but happiness cannot principally consist therein.

Reply to Objection 1: As the Philosopher says (Ethic. i, 5), honor is not that reward of virtue, for which the virtuous work: but they receive honor from men by way of reward, "as from those who have nothing greater to offer." But virtue's true reward is happiness itself, for which the virtuous work: whereas if they worked for honor, it would no longer be a virtue, but ambition.

Reply to Objection 2: Honor is due to God and to persons of great excellence as a sign of attestation of excellence already existing: not that honor makes them excellent.

Reply to Objection 3: That man desires honor above all else, arises from his natural desire for happiness, from which honor results, as

stated above. Wherefore man seeks to be honored especially by the wise, on whose judgment he believes himself to be excellent or happy.

Whether man's happiness consists in fame or glory?

Objection 1: It would seem that man's happiness consists in glory. For happiness seems to consist in that which is paid to the saints for the trials they have undergone in the world. But this is glory: for the Apostle says (Rm. 8:18): "The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us." Therefore happiness consists in glory.

Objection 2: Further, good is diffusive of itself, as stated by Dionysius (Div. Nom. iv). But man's good is spread abroad in the knowledge of others by glory more than by anything else: since, according to Ambrose [*Augustine, Contra Maxim. Arian. ii. 13], glory consists "in being well known and praised." Therefore man's happiness consists in glory.

Objection 3: Further, happiness is the most enduring good. Now this seems to be fame or glory; because by this men attain to eternity after a fashion. Hence Boethius says (De Consol. ii): "You seem to beget unto yourselves eternity, when you think of your fame in future time." Therefore man's happiness consists in fame or glory.

On the contrary, Happiness is man's true good. But it happens that fame or glory is false: for as Boethius says (De Consol. iii), "many owe their renown to the lying reports spread among the people. Can anything be more shameful? For those who receive false fame, must needs blush at their own praise." Therefore man's happiness does not consist in fame or glory.

I answer that, Man's happiness cannot consist in human fame or glory. For glory consists "in being well known and praised," as Ambrose [*Augustine, Contra Maxim. Arian. ii, 13] says. Now the thing known is related to human knowledge otherwise than to God's knowledge: for human knowledge is caused by the things known, whereas God's knowledge is the cause of the things known. Wherefore the perfection of human good, which is called happiness, cannot be caused by human knowledge: but rather human knowledge of another's happiness proceeds from, and, in a fashion, is caused by, human happiness itself, inchoate or perfect. Consequently man's happiness cannot consist in fame or glory. On the other hand, man's good depends on God's knowledge as its cause. And therefore man's beatitude depends, as on its cause, on the glory which man has with God; according to Ps. 90:15,16: "I will deliver him, and I will glorify him; I will fill him with

length of days, and I will show him my salvation.”

Furthermore, we must observe that human knowledge often fails, especially in contingent singulars, such as are human acts. For this reason human glory is frequently deceptive. But since God cannot be deceived, His glory is always true; hence it is written (2 Cor. 10:18): “He . . . is approved . . . whom God commendeth.”

Reply to Objection 1: The Apostle speaks, then, not of the glory which is with men, but of the glory which is from God, with His Angels. Hence it is written (Mk. 8:38): “The Son of Man shall confess him in the glory of His Father, before His angels” [*St. Thomas joins Mk. 8:38 with Lk. 12:8 owing to a possible variant in his text, or to the fact that he was quoting from memory].

Reply to Objection 2: A man’s good which, through fame or glory, is in the knowledge of many, if this knowledge be true, must needs be derived from good existing in the man himself: and hence it presupposes perfect or inchoate happiness. But if the knowledge be false, it does not harmonize with the thing: and thus good does not exist in him who is looked upon as famous. Hence it follows that fame can nowise make man happy.

Reply to Objection 3: Fame has no stability; in fact, it is easily ruined by false report. And if sometimes it endures, this is by accident. But happiness endures of itself, and for ever.

Whether man’s happiness consists in power?

Objection 1: It would seem that happiness consists in power. For all things desire to become like to God, as to their last end and first beginning. But men who are in power, seem, on account of the similarity of power, to be most like to God: hence also in Scripture they are called “gods” (Ex. 22:28), “Thou shalt not speak ill of the gods.” Therefore happiness consists in power.

Objection 2: Further, happiness is the perfect good. But the highest perfection for man is to be able to rule others; which belongs to those who are in power. Therefore happiness consists in power.

Objection 3: Further, since happiness is supremely desirable, it is contrary to that which is before all to be shunned. But, more than aught else, men shun servitude, which is contrary to power. Therefore happiness consists in power.

On the contrary, Happiness is the perfect good. But power is most imperfect. For as Boethius says (De Consol. iii), “the power of man cannot relieve the gnawings of care, nor can it avoid the thorny path

of anxiety”: and further on: “Think you a man is powerful who is surrounded by attendants, whom he inspires with fear indeed, but whom he fears still more?”

I answer that, it is impossible for happiness to consist in power; and this for two reasons. First because power has the nature of principle, as is stated in *Metaph.* v, 12, whereas happiness has the nature of last end. Secondly, because power has relation to good and evil: whereas happiness is man’s proper and perfect good. Wherefore some happiness might consist in the good use of power, which is by virtue, rather than in power itself.

Now four general reasons may be given to prove that happiness consists in none of the foregoing external goods. First, because, since happiness is man’s supreme good, it is incompatible with any evil. Now all the foregoing can be found both in good and in evil men. Secondly, because, since it is the nature of happiness to “satisfy of itself,” as stated in *Ethic.* i, 7, having gained happiness, man cannot lack any needful good. But after acquiring any one of the foregoing, man may still lack many goods that are necessary to him; for instance, wisdom, bodily health, and such like. Thirdly, because, since happiness is the perfect good, no evil can accrue to anyone therefrom. This cannot be said of the foregoing; for it is written (*Eccles.* 5:12) that “riches” are sometimes “kept to the hurt of the owner”; and the same may be said of the other three. Fourthly, because man is ordained to happiness through principles that are in him; since he is ordained thereto naturally. Now the four goods mentioned above are due rather to external causes, and in most cases to fortune; for which reason they are called goods of fortune. Therefore it is evident that happiness nowise consists in the foregoing.

Reply to Objection 1: God’s power is His goodness: hence He cannot use His power otherwise than well. But it is not so with men. Consequently it is not enough for man’s happiness, that he become like God in power, unless he become like Him in goodness also.

Reply to Objection 2: Just as it is a very good thing for a man to make good use of power in ruling many, so is it a very bad thing if he makes a bad use of it. And so it is that power is towards good and evil.

Reply to Objection 3: Servitude is a hindrance to the good use of power: therefore is it that men naturally shun it; not because man’s supreme good consists in power.

Whether man's happiness consists in any bodily good?

Objection 1: It would seem that man's happiness consists in bodily goods. For it is written (Ecclus. 30:16): "There is no riches above the riches of the health of the body." But happiness consists in that which is best. Therefore it consists in the health of the body.

Objection 2: Further, Dionysius says (Div. Nom. v), that "to be" is better than "to live," and "to live" is better than all that follows. But for man's being and living, the health of the body is necessary. Since, therefore, happiness is man's supreme good, it seems that health of the body belongs more than anything else to happiness.

Objection 3: Further, the more universal a thing is, the higher the principle from which it depends; because the higher a cause is, the greater the scope of its power. Now just as the causality of the efficient cause consists in its flowing into something, so the causality of the end consists in its drawing the appetite. Therefore, just as the First Cause is that which flows into all things, so the last end is that which attracts the desire of all. But being itself is that which is most desired by all. Therefore man's happiness consists most of all in things pertaining to his being, such as the health of the body.

On the contrary, Man surpasses all other animals in regard to happiness. But in bodily goods he is surpassed by many animals; for instance, by the elephant in longevity, by the lion in strength, by the stag in fleetness. Therefore man's happiness does not consist in goods of the body.

I answer that, it is impossible for man's happiness to consist in the goods of the body; and this for two reasons. First, because, if a thing be ordained to another as to its end, its last end cannot consist in the preservation of its being. Hence a captain does not intend as a last end, the preservation of the ship entrusted to him, since a ship is ordained to something else as its end, viz. to navigation. Now just as the ship is entrusted to the captain that he may steer its course, so man is given over to his will and reason; according to Ecclus. 15:14: "God made man from the beginning and left him in the hand of his own counsel." Now it is evident that man is ordained to something as his end: since man is not the supreme good. Therefore the last end of man's reason and will cannot be the preservation of man's being.

Secondly, because, granted that the end of man's will and reason be the preservation of man's being, it could not be said that the end of man is some good of the body. For man's being consists in soul and body; and though the being of the body depends on the soul, yet the being

of the human soul depends not on the body, as shown above; and the very body is for the soul, as matter for its form, and the instruments for the man that puts them into motion, that by their means he may do his work. Wherefore all goods of the body are ordained to the goods of the soul, as to their end. Consequently happiness, which is man's last end, cannot consist in goods of the body.

Reply to Objection 1: Just as the body is ordained to the soul, as its end, so are external goods ordained to the body itself. And therefore it is with reason that the good of the body is preferred to external goods, which are signified by "riches," just as the good of the soul is preferred to all bodily goods.

Reply to Objection 2: Being taken simply, as including all perfection of being, surpasses life and all that follows it; for thus being itself includes all these. And in this sense Dionysius speaks. But if we consider being itself as participated in this or that thing, which does not possess the whole perfection of being, but has imperfect being, such as the being of any creature; then it is evident that being itself together with an additional perfection is more excellent. Hence in the same passage Dionysius says that things that live are better than things that exist, and intelligent better than living things.

Reply to Objection 3: Since the end corresponds to the beginning; this argument proves that the last end is the first beginning of being, in Whom every perfection of being is: Whose likeness, according to their proportion, some desire as to being only, some as to living being, some as to being which is living, intelligent and happy. And this belongs to few.

Whether man's happiness consists in pleasure?

Objection 1: It would seem that man's happiness consists in pleasure. For since happiness is the last end, it is not desired for something else, but other things for it. But this answers to pleasure more than to anything else: "for it is absurd to ask anyone what is his motive in wishing to be pleased" (Ethic. x, 2). Therefore happiness consists principally in pleasure and delight.

Objection 2: Further, "the first cause goes more deeply into the effect than the second cause" (De Causis i). Now the causality of the end consists in its attracting the appetite. Therefore, seemingly that which moves most the appetite, answers to the notion of the last end. Now this is pleasure: and a sign of this is that delight so far absorbs man's will and reason, that it causes him to despise other goods. Therefore it seems that man's last end, which is happiness, consists principally

in pleasure.

Objection 3: Further, since desire is for good, it seems that what all desire is best. But all desire delight; both wise and foolish, and even irrational creatures. Therefore delight is the best of all. Therefore happiness, which is the supreme good, consists in pleasure.

On the contrary, Boethius says (*De Consol.* iii): “Any one that chooses to look back on his past excesses, will perceive that pleasures had a sad ending: and if they can render a man happy, there is no reason why we should not say that the very beasts are happy too.”

I answer that, because bodily delights are more generally known, “the name of pleasure has been appropriated to them” (*Ethic.* vii, 13), although other delights excel them: and yet happiness does not consist in them. Because in every thing, that which pertains to its essence is distinct from its proper accident: thus in man it is one thing that he is a mortal rational animal, and another that he is a risible animal. We must therefore consider that every delight is a proper accident resulting from happiness, or from some part of happiness; since the reason that a man is delighted is that he has some fitting good, either in reality, or in hope, or at least in memory. Now a fitting good, if indeed it be the perfect good, is precisely man’s happiness: and if it is imperfect, it is a share of happiness, either proximate, or remote, or at least apparent. Therefore it is evident that neither is delight, which results from the perfect good, the very essence of happiness, but something resulting therefrom as its proper accident.

But bodily pleasure cannot result from the perfect good even in that way. For it results from a good apprehended by sense, which is a power of the soul, which power makes use of the body. Now good pertaining to the body, and apprehended by sense, cannot be man’s perfect good. For since the rational soul excels the capacity of corporeal matter, that part of the soul which is independent of a corporeal organ, has a certain infinity in regard to the body and those parts of the soul which are tied down to the body: just as immaterial things are in a way infinite as compared to material things, since a form is, after a fashion, contracted and bounded by matter, so that a form which is independent of matter is, in a way, infinite. Therefore sense, which is a power of the body, knows the singular, which is determinate through matter: whereas the intellect, which is a power independent of matter, knows the universal, which is abstracted from matter, and contains an infinite number of singulars. Consequently it is evident that good which is fitting to the body, and which causes bodily delight through being apprehended by sense, is not man’s perfect good, but is quite a trifle as compared with

the good of the soul. Hence it is written (Wis. 7:9) that “all gold in comparison of her, is as a little sand.” And therefore bodily pleasure is neither happiness itself, nor a proper accident of happiness.

Reply to Objection 1: It comes to the same whether we desire good, or desire delight, which is nothing else than the appetite’s rest in good: thus it is owing to the same natural force that a weighty body is borne downwards and that it rests there. Consequently just as good is desired for itself, so delight is desired for itself and not for anything else, if the preposition “for” denote the final cause. But if it denote the formal or rather the motive cause, thus delight is desirable for something else, i.e. for the good, which is the object of that delight, and consequently is its principle, and gives it its form: for the reason that delight is desired is that it is rest in the thing desired.

Reply to Objection 2: The vehemence of desire for sensible delight arises from the fact that operations of the senses, through being the principles of our knowledge, are more perceptible. And so it is that sensible pleasures are desired by the majority.

Reply to Objection 3: All desire delight in the same way as they desire good: and yet they desire delight by reason of the good and not conversely, as stated above (ad 1). Consequently it does not follow that delight is the supreme and essential good, but that every delight results from some good, and that some delight results from that which is the essential and supreme good.

Whether some good of the soul constitutes man’s happiness?

Objection 1: It would seem that some good of the soul constitutes man’s happiness. For happiness is man’s good. Now this is threefold: external goods, goods of the body, and goods of the soul. But happiness does not consist in external goods, nor in goods of the body, as shown above. Therefore it consists in goods of the soul.

Objection 2: Further, we love that for which we desire good, more than the good that we desire for it: thus we love a friend for whom we desire money, more than we love money. But whatever good a man desires, he desires it for himself. Therefore he loves himself more than all other goods. Now happiness is what is loved above all: which is evident from the fact that for its sake all else is loved and desired. Therefore happiness consists in some good of man himself: not, however, in goods of the body; therefore, in goods of the soul.

Objection 3: Further, perfection is something belonging to that which is perfected. But happiness is a perfection of man. Therefore happiness is something belonging to man. But it is not something belonging to

the body, as shown above. Therefore it is something belonging to the soul; and thus it consists in goods of the soul.

On the contrary, As Augustine says (*De Doctr. Christ.* i, 22), “that which constitutes the life of happiness is to be loved for its own sake.” But man is not to be loved for his own sake, but whatever is in man is to be loved for God’s sake. Therefore happiness consists in no good of the soul.

I answer that, as stated above, the end is twofold: namely, the thing itself, which we desire to attain, and the use, namely, the attainment or possession of that thing. If, then, we speak of man’s last end, it is impossible for man’s last end to be the soul itself or something belonging to it. Because the soul, considered in itself, is as something existing in potentiality: for it becomes knowing actually, from being potentially knowing; and actually virtuous, from being potentially virtuous. Now since potentiality is for the sake of act as for its fulfilment, that which in itself is in potentiality cannot be the last end. Therefore the soul itself cannot be its own last end.

In like manner neither can anything belonging to it, whether power, habit, or act. For that good which is the last end, is the perfect good fulfilling the desire. Now man’s appetite, otherwise the will, is for the universal good. And any good inherent to the soul is a participated good, and consequently a portioned good. Therefore none of them can be man’s last end.

But if we speak of man’s last end, as to the attainment or possession thereof, or as to any use whatever of the thing itself desired as an end, thus does something of man, in respect of his soul, belong to his last end: since man attains happiness through his soul. Therefore the thing itself which is desired as end, is that which constitutes happiness, and makes man happy; but the attainment of this thing is called happiness. Consequently we must say that happiness is something belonging to the soul; but that which constitutes happiness is something outside the soul.

Reply to Objection 1: Inasmuch as this division includes all goods that man can desire, thus the good of the soul is not only power, habit, or act, but also the object of these, which is something outside. And in this way nothing hinders us from saying that what constitutes happiness is a good of the soul.

Reply to Objection 2: As far as the proposed objection is concerned, happiness is loved above all, as the good desired; whereas a friend is loved as that for which good is desired; and thus, too, man loves

himself. Consequently it is not the same kind of love in both cases. As to whether man loves anything more than himself with the love of friendship there will be occasion to inquire when we treat of Charity.

Reply to Objection 3: Happiness, itself, since it is a perfection of the soul, is an inherent good of the soul; but that which constitutes happiness, viz. which makes man happy, is something outside his soul, as stated above.

Whether any created good constitutes man's happiness?

Objection 1: It would seem that some created good constitutes man's happiness. For Dionysius says (Div. Nom. vii) that Divine wisdom "unites the ends of first things to the beginnings of second things," from which we may gather that the summit of a lower nature touches the base of the higher nature. But man's highest good is happiness. Since then the angel is above man in the order of nature, it seems that man's happiness consists in man somehow reaching the angel.

Objection 2: Further, the last end of each thing is that which, in relation to it, is perfect: hence the part is for the whole, as for its end. But the universe of creatures which is called the macrocosm, is compared to man who is called the microcosm (Phys. viii, 2), as perfect to imperfect. Therefore man's happiness consists in the whole universe of creatures.

Objection 3: Further, man is made happy by that which lulls his natural desire. But man's natural desire does not reach out to a good surpassing his capacity. Since then man's capacity does not include that good which surpasses the limits of all creation, it seems that man can be made happy by some created good. Consequently some created good constitutes man's happiness.

On the contrary, Augustine says (De Civ. Dei xix, 26): "As the soul is the life of the body, so God is man's life of happiness: of Whom it is written: 'Happy is that people whose God is the Lord' (Ps. 143:15)."

I answer that, it is impossible for any created good to constitute man's happiness. For happiness is the perfect good, which lulls the appetite altogether; else it would not be the last end, if something yet remained to be desired. Now the object of the will, i.e. of man's appetite, is the universal good; just as the object of the intellect is the universal true. Hence it is evident that naught can lull man's will, save the universal good. This is to be found, not in any creature, but in God alone; because every creature has goodness by participation. Wherefore God alone can satisfy the will of man, according to the words of Ps. 102:5:

“Who satisfieth thy desire with good things.” Therefore God alone constitutes man’s happiness.

Reply to Objection 1: The summit of man does indeed touch the base of the angelic nature, by a kind of likeness; but man does not rest there as in his last end, but reaches out to the universal fount itself of good, which is the common object of happiness of all the blessed, as being the infinite and perfect good.

Reply to Objection 2: If a whole be not the last end, but ordained to a further end, then the last end of a part thereof is not the whole itself, but something else. Now the universe of creatures, to which man is compared as part to whole, is not the last end, but is ordained to God, as to its last end. Therefore the last end of man is not the good of the universe, but God himself.

Reply to Objection 3: Created good is not less than that good of which man is capable, as of something intrinsic and inherent to him: but it is less than the good of which he is capable, as of an object, and which is infinite. And the participated good which is in an angel, and in the whole universe, is a finite and restricted good.

What is Happiness

We have now to consider (1) what happiness is, and (2) what things are required for it.

Concerning the first there are eight points of inquiry:

- (1) Whether happiness is something uncreated?
- (2) If it be something created, whether it is an operation?
- (3) Whether it is an operation of the sensitive, or only of the intellectual part?
- (4) If it be an operation of the intellectual part, whether it is an operation of the intellect, or of the will?
- (5) If it be an operation of the intellect, whether it is an operation of the speculative or of the practical intellect?
- (6) If it be an operation of the speculative intellect, whether it consists in the consideration of speculative sciences?
- (7) Whether it consists in the consideration of separate substances viz. angels?
- (8) Whether it consists in the sole contemplation of God seen in His Essence?

Whether happiness is something uncreated?

Objection 1: It would seem that happiness is something uncreated.

For Boethius says (De Consol. iii): “We must needs confess that God is happiness itself.”

Objection 2: Further, happiness is the supreme good. But it belongs to God to be the supreme good. Since, then, there are not several supreme goods, it seems that happiness is the same as God.

Objection 3: Further, happiness is the last end, to which man’s will tends naturally. But man’s will should tend to nothing else as an end, but to God, Who alone is to be enjoyed, as Augustine says (De Doctr. Christ. i, 5,22). Therefore happiness is the same as God.

On the contrary, Nothing made is uncreated. But man’s happiness is something made; because according to Augustine (De Doctr. Christ. i, 3): “Those things are to be enjoyed which make us happy.” Therefore happiness is not something uncreated.

I answer that, as stated above, our end is twofold. First, there is the thing itself which we desire to attain: thus for the miser, the end is money. Secondly there is the attainment or possession, the use or enjoyment of the thing desired; thus we may say that the end of the miser is the possession of money; and the end of the intemperate man is to enjoy something pleasurable. In the first sense, then, man’s last end is the uncreated good, namely, God, Who alone by His infinite goodness can perfectly satisfy man’s will. But in the second way, man’s last end is something created, existing in him, and this is nothing else than the attainment or enjoyment of the last end. Now the last end is called happiness. If, therefore, we consider man’s happiness in its cause or object, then it is something uncreated; but if we consider it as to the very essence of happiness, then it is something created.

Reply to Objection 1: God is happiness by His Essence: for He is happy not by acquisition or participation of something else, but by His Essence. On the other hand, men are happy, as Boethius says (De Consol. iii), by participation; just as they are called “gods,” by participation. And this participation of happiness, in respect of which man is said to be happy, is something created.

Reply to Objection 2: Happiness is called man’s supreme good, because it is the attainment or enjoyment of the supreme good.

Reply to Objection 3: Happiness is said to be the last end, in the same way as the attainment of the end is called the end.

Whether happiness is an operation?

Objection 1: It would seem that happiness is not an operation. For the Apostle says (Rm. 6:22): “You have your fruit unto sanctification,

and the end, life everlasting.” But life is not an operation, but the very being of living things. Therefore the last end, which is happiness, is not an operation.

Objection 2: Further, Boethius says (*De Consol.* iii) that happiness is “a state made perfect by the aggregate of all good things.” But state does not indicate operation. Therefore happiness is not an operation.

Objection 3: Further, happiness signifies something existing in the happy one: since it is man’s final perfection. But the meaning of operation does not imply anything existing in the operator, but rather something proceeding therefrom. Therefore happiness is not an operation.

Objection 4: Further, happiness remains in the happy one. Now operation does not remain, but passes. Therefore happiness is not an operation.

Objection 5: Further, to one man there is one happiness. But operations are many. Therefore happiness is not an operation.

Objection 6: Further, happiness is in the happy one uninterruptedly. But human operation is often interrupted; for instance, by sleep, or some other occupation, or by cessation. Therefore happiness is not an operation.

On the contrary, The Philosopher says (*Ethic.* i, 13) that “happiness is an operation according to perfect virtue.”

I answer that, In so far as man’s happiness is something created, existing in him, we must needs say that it is an operation. For happiness is man’s supreme perfection. Now each thing is perfect in so far as it is actual; since potentiality without act is imperfect. Consequently happiness must consist in man’s last act. But it is evident that operation is the last act of the operator, wherefore the Philosopher calls it “second act” (*De Anima* ii, 1): because that which has a form can be potentially operating, just as he who knows is potentially considering. And hence it is that in other things, too, each one is said to be “for its operation” (*De Coel* ii, 3). Therefore man’s happiness must of necessity consist in an operation.

Reply to Objection 1: Life is taken in two senses. First for the very being of the living. And thus happiness is not life: since it has been shown that the being of a man, no matter in what it may consist, is not that man’s happiness; for of God alone is it true that His Being is His Happiness. Secondly, life means the operation of the living, by which operation the principle of life is made actual: thus we speak of

active and contemplative life, or of a life of pleasure. And in this sense eternal life is said to be the last end, as is clear from Jn. 17:3: "This is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God."

Reply to Objection 2: Boethius, in defining happiness, considered happiness in general: for considered thus it is the perfect common good; and he signified this by saying that happiness is "a state made perfect by the aggregate of all good things," thus implying that the state of a happy man consists in possessing the perfect good. But Aristotle expressed the very essence of happiness, showing by what man is established in this state, and that it is by some kind of operation. And so it is that he proves happiness to be "the perfect good" (*Ethic.* i, 7).

Reply to Objection 3: As stated in *Metaph.* ix, 7 action is twofold. One proceeds from the agent into outward matter, such as "to burn" and "to cut." And such an operation cannot be happiness: for such an operation is an action and a perfection, not of the agent, but rather of the patient, as is stated in the same passage. The other is an action that remains in the agent, such as to feel, to understand, and to will: and such an action is a perfection and an act of the agent. And such an operation can be happiness.

Reply to Objection 4: Since happiness signifies some final perfection; according as various things capable of happiness can attain to various degrees of perfection, so must there be various meanings applied to happiness. For in God there is happiness essentially; since His very Being is His operation, whereby He enjoys no other than Himself. In the happy angels, the final perfection is in respect of some operation, by which they are united to the Uncreated Good: and this operation of theirs is one only and everlasting. But in men, according to their present state of life, the final perfection is in respect of an operation whereby man is united to God: but this operation neither can be continual, nor, consequently, is it one only, because operation is multiplied by being discontinued. And for this reason in the present state of life, perfect happiness cannot be attained by man. Wherefore the Philosopher, in placing man's happiness in this life (*Ethic.* i, 10), says that it is imperfect, and after a long discussion, concludes: "We call men happy, but only as men." But God has promised us perfect happiness, when we shall be "as the angels . . . in heaven" (*Mt.* 22:30).

Consequently in regard to this perfect happiness, the objection fails: because in that state of happiness, man's mind will be united to God by one, continual, everlasting operation. But in the present life, in as far as we fall short of the unity and continuity of that operation so do

we fall short of perfect happiness. Nevertheless it is a participation of happiness: and so much the greater, as the operation can be more continuous and more one. Consequently the active life, which is busy with many things, has less of happiness than the contemplative life, which is busied with one thing, i.e. the contemplation of truth. And if at any time man is not actually engaged in this operation, yet since he can always easily turn to it, and since he ordains the very cessation, by sleeping or occupying himself otherwise, to the aforesaid occupation, the latter seems, as it were, continuous. From these remarks the replies to Objections 5 and 6 are evident.

Whether happiness is an operation of the sensitive part, or of the intellectual part only?

Objection 1: It would seem that happiness consists in an operation of the senses also. For there is no more excellent operation in man than that of the senses, except the intellectual operation. But in us the intellectual operation depends on the sensitive: since “we cannot understand without a phantasm” (De Anima iii, 7). Therefore happiness consists in an operation of the senses also.

Objection 2: Further, Boethius says (De Consol. iii) that happiness is “a state made perfect by the aggregate of all good things.” But some goods are sensible, which we attain by the operation of the senses. Therefore it seems that the operation of the senses is needed for happiness.

Objection 3: Further, happiness is the perfect good, as we find proved in Ethic. i, 7: which would not be true, were not man perfected thereby in all his parts. But some parts of the soul are perfected by sensitive operations. Therefore sensitive operation is required for happiness.

On the contrary, irrational animals have the sensitive operation in common with us: but they have not happiness in common with us. Therefore happiness does not consist in a sensitive operation.

I answer that, A thing may belong to happiness in three ways: (1) essentially, (2) antecedently, (3) consequentially. Now the operation of sense cannot belong to happiness essentially. For man’s happiness consists essentially in his being united to the Uncreated Good, Which is his last end, as shown above: to Which man cannot be united by an operation of his senses. Again, in like manner, because, as shown above, man’s happiness does not consist in goods of the body, which goods alone, however, we attain through the operation of the senses.

Nevertheless the operations of the senses can belong to happiness, both antecedently and consequentially: antecedently, in respect of imperfect

happiness, such as can be had in this life, since the operation of the intellect demands a previous operation of the sense; consequently, in that perfect happiness which we await in heaven; because at the resurrection, “from the very happiness of the soul,” as Augustine says (Ep. ad Dioscor.) “the body and the bodily senses will receive a certain overflow, so as to be perfected in their operations”; a point which will be explained further on when we treat of the resurrection. But then the operation whereby man’s mind is united to God will not depend on the senses.

Reply to Objection 1: This objection proves that the operation of the senses is required antecedently for imperfect happiness, such as can be had in this life.

Reply to Objection 2: Perfect happiness, such as the angels have, includes the aggregate of all good things, by being united to the universal source of all good; not that it requires each individual good. But in this imperfect happiness, we need the aggregate of those goods that suffice for the most perfect operation of this life.

Reply to Objection 3: In perfect happiness the entire man is perfected, in the lower part of his nature, by an overflow from the higher. But in the imperfect happiness of this life, it is otherwise; we advance from the perfection of the lower part to the perfection of the higher part.

Whether, if happiness is in the intellective part, it is an operation of the intellect or of the will?

Objection 1: It would seem that happiness consists in an act of the will. For Augustine says (De Civ. Dei xix, 10,11), that man’s happiness consists in peace; wherefore it is written (Ps. 147:3): “Who hath placed peace in thy end [Douay: ’borders]”. But peace pertains to the will. Therefore man’s happiness is in the will.

Objection 2: Further, happiness is the supreme good. But good is the object of the will. Therefore happiness consists in an operation of the will.

Objection 3: Further, the last end corresponds to the first mover: thus the last end of the whole army is victory, which is the end of the general, who moves all the men. But the first mover in regard to operations is the will: because it moves the other powers, as we shall state further on. Therefore happiness regards the will.

Objection 4: Further, if happiness be an operation, it must needs be man’s most excellent operation. But the love of God, which is an act of the will, is a more excellent operation than knowledge, which

is an operation of the intellect, as the Apostle declares (1 Cor. 13). Therefore it seems that happiness consists in an act of the will.

Objection 5: Further, Augustine says (De Trin. xiii, 5) that “happy is he who has whatever he desires, and desires nothing amiss.” And a little further on (6) he adds: “He is most happy who desires well, whatever he desires: for good things make a man happy, and such a man already possesses some good — i.e. a good will.” Therefore happiness consists in an act of the will.

On the contrary, Our Lord said (Jn. 17:3): “This is eternal life: that they may know Thee, the only true God.” Now eternal life is the last end, as stated above. Therefore man’s happiness consists in the knowledge of God, which is an act of the intellect.

I answer that, as stated above two things are needed for happiness: one, which is the essence of happiness: the other, that is, as it were, its proper accident, i.e. the delight connected with it. I say, then, that as to the very essence of happiness, it is impossible for it to consist in an act of the will. For it is evident from what has been said that happiness is the attainment of the last end. But the attainment of the end does not consist in the very act of the will. For the will is directed to the end, both absent, when it desires it; and present, when it is delighted by resting therein. Now it is evident that the desire itself of the end is not the attainment of the end, but is a movement towards the end: while delight comes to the will from the end being present; and not conversely, is a thing made present, by the fact that the will delights in it. Therefore, that the end be present to him who desires it, must be due to something else than an act of the will.

This is evidently the case in regard to sensible ends. For if the acquisition of money were through an act of the will, the covetous man would have it from the very moment that he wished for it. But at the moment it is far from him; and he attains it, by grasping it in his hand, or in some like manner; and then he delights in the money got. And so it is with an intelligible end. For at first we desire to attain an intelligible end; we attain it, through its being made present to us by an act of the intellect; and then the delighted will rests in the end when attained.

So, therefore, the essence of happiness consists in an act of the intellect: but the delight that results from happiness pertains to the will. In this sense Augustine says (Confess. x, 23) that happiness is “joy in truth,” because, to wit, joy itself is the consummation of happiness.

Reply to Objection 1: Peace pertains to man’s last end, not as though

it were the very essence of happiness; but because it is antecedent and consequent thereto: antecedent, in so far as all those things are removed which disturb and hinder man in attaining the last end: consequent inasmuch as when man has attained his last end, he remains at peace, his desire being at rest.

Reply to Objection 2: The will's first object is not its act: just as neither is the first object of the sight, vision, but a visible thing. Wherefore, from the very fact that happiness belongs to the will, as the will's first object, it follows that it does not belong to it as its act.

Reply to Objection 3: The intellect apprehends the end before the will does: yet motion towards the end begins in the will. And therefore to the will belongs that which last of all follows the attainment of the end, viz. delight or enjoyment.

Reply to Objection 4: Love ranks above knowledge in moving, but knowledge precedes love in attaining: for "naught is loved save what is known," as Augustine says (*De Trin.* x, 1). Consequently we first attain an intelligible end by an act of the intellect; just as we first attain a sensible end by an act of sense.

Reply to Objection 5: He who has whatever he desires, is happy, because he has what he desires: and this indeed is by something other than the act of his will. But to desire nothing amiss is needed for happiness, as a necessary disposition thereto. And a good will is reckoned among the good things which make a man happy, forasmuch as it is an inclination of the will: just as a movement is reduced to the genus of its terminus, for instance, "alteration" to the genus "quality."

Whether happiness is an operation of the speculative, or of the practical intellect?

Objection 1: It would seem that happiness is an operation of the practical intellect. For the end of every creature consists in becoming like God. But man is like God, by his practical intellect, which is the cause of things understood, rather than by his speculative intellect, which derives its knowledge from things. Therefore man's happiness consists in an operation of the practical intellect rather than of the speculative.

Objection 2: Further, happiness is man's perfect good. But the practical intellect is ordained to the good rather than the speculative intellect, which is ordained to the true. Hence we are said to be good, in reference to the perfection of the practical intellect, but not in reference to the perfection of the speculative intellect, according to which

we are said to be knowing or understanding. Therefore man's happiness consists in an act of the practical intellect rather than of the speculative.

Objection 3: Further, happiness is a good of man himself. But the speculative intellect is more concerned with things outside man; whereas the practical intellect is concerned with things belonging to man himself, viz. his operations and passions. Therefore man's happiness consists in an operation of the practical intellect rather than of the speculative.

On the contrary, Augustine says (De Trin. i, 8) that "contemplation is promised us, as being the goal of all our actions, and the everlasting perfection of our joys."

I answer that, Happiness consists in an operation of the speculative rather than of the practical intellect. This is evident for three reasons. First because if man's happiness is an operation, it must needs be man's highest operation. Now man's highest operation is that of his highest power in respect of its highest object: and his highest power is the intellect, whose highest object is the Divine Good, which is the object, not of the practical but of the speculative intellect. Consequently happiness consists principally in such an operation, viz. in the contemplation of Divine things. And since that "seems to be each man's self, which is best in him," according to Ethic. ix, 8, and x, 7, therefore such an operation is most proper to man and most delightful to him.

Secondly, it is evident from the fact that contemplation is sought principally for its own sake. But the act of the practical intellect is not sought for its own sake but for the sake of action: and these very actions are ordained to some end. Consequently it is evident that the last end cannot consist in the active life, which pertains to the practical intellect.

Thirdly, it is again evident, from the fact that in the contemplative life man has something in common with things above him, viz. with God and the angels, to whom he is made like by happiness. But in things pertaining to the active life, other animals also have something in common with man, although imperfectly. Therefore the last and perfect happiness, which we await in the life to come, consists entirely in contemplation. But imperfect happiness, such as can be had here, consists first and principally, in an operation of the practical intellect directing human actions and passions, as stated in Ethic. x, 7,8.

Reply to Objection 1: The asserted likeness of the practical intellect to God is one of proportion; that is to say, by reason of its standing in relation to what it knows, as God does to what He knows. But the likeness of the speculative intellect to God is one of union and “information”; which is a much greater likeness. And yet it may be answered that, in regard to the principal thing known, which is His Essence, God has not practical but merely speculative knowledge.

Reply to Objection 2: The practical intellect is ordained to good which is outside of it: but the speculative intellect has good within it, viz. the contemplation of truth. And if this good be perfect, the whole man is perfected and made good thereby: such a good the practical intellect has not; but it directs man thereto.

Reply to Objection 3: This argument would hold, if man himself were his own last end; for then the consideration and direction of his actions and passions would be his happiness. But since man’s last end is something outside of him, to wit, God, to Whom we reach out by an operation of the speculative intellect; therefore, man’s happiness consists in an operation of the speculative intellect rather than of the practical intellect.

Whether happiness consists in the consideration of speculative sciences?

Objection 1: It would seem that man’s happiness consists in the consideration of speculative sciences. For the Philosopher says (*Ethic. i, 13*) that “happiness is an operation according to perfect virtue.” And in distinguishing the virtues, he gives no more than three speculative virtues — “knowledge,” “wisdom” and “understanding,” which all belong to the consideration of speculative sciences. Therefore man’s final happiness consists in the consideration of speculative sciences.

Objection 2: Further, that which all desire for its own sake, seems to be man’s final happiness. Now such is the consideration of speculative sciences; because, as stated in *Metaph. i, 1*, “all men naturally desire to know”; and, a little farther on (*2*), it is stated that speculative sciences are sought for their own sakes. Therefore happiness consists in the consideration of speculative sciences.

Objection 3: Further, happiness is man’s final perfection. Now everything is perfected, according as it is reduced from potentiality to act. But the human intellect is reduced to act by the consideration of speculative sciences. Therefore it seems that in the consideration of these sciences, man’s final happiness consists.

On the contrary, it is written (Jer. 9:23): “Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom”: and this is said in reference to speculative sciences. Therefore man’s final happiness does not consist in the consideration of these.

I answer that, as stated above, man’s happiness is twofold, one perfect, the other imperfect. And by perfect happiness we are to understand that which attains to the true notion of happiness; and by imperfect happiness that which does not attain thereto, but partakes of some particular likeness of happiness. Thus perfect prudence is in man, with whom is the idea of things to be done; while imperfect prudence is in certain irrational animals, who are possessed of certain particular instincts in respect of works similar to works of prudence.

Accordingly perfect happiness cannot consist essentially in the consideration of speculative sciences. To prove this, we must observe that the consideration of a speculative science does not extend beyond the scope of the principles of that science: since the entire science is virtually contained in its principles. Now the first principles of speculative sciences are received through the senses, as the Philosopher clearly states at the beginning of the *Metaphysics* (i, 1), and at the end of the *Posterior Analytics* (ii, 15). Wherefore the entire consideration of speculative sciences cannot extend farther than knowledge of sensibles can lead. Now man’s final happiness, which is his final perfection cannot consist in the knowledge of sensibles. For a thing is not perfected by something lower, except in so far as the lower partakes of something higher. Now it is evident that the form of a stone or of any sensible, is lower than man. Consequently the intellect is not perfected by the form of a stone, as such, but inasmuch as it partakes of a certain likeness to that which is above the human intellect, viz. the intelligible light, or something of the kind. Now whatever is by something else is reduced to that which is of itself. Therefore man’s final perfection must needs be through knowledge of something above the human intellect. But it has been shown that man cannot acquire through sensibles, the knowledge of separate substances, which are above the human intellect. Consequently it follows that man’s happiness cannot consist in the consideration of speculative sciences. However, just as in sensible forms there is a participation of the higher substances, so the consideration of speculative sciences is a certain participation of true and perfect happiness.

Reply to Objection 1: In his book on *Ethics* the Philosopher treats of imperfect happiness, such as can be had in this life, as stated above.

Reply to Objection 2: Not only is perfect happiness naturally desired, but also any likeness or participation thereof.

Reply to Objection 3: Our intellect is reduced to act, in a fashion, by the consideration of speculative sciences, but not to its final and perfect act.

Whether happiness consists in the knowledge of separate substances, namely, angels?

Objection 1: It would seem that man's happiness consists in the knowledge of separate substances, namely, angels. For Gregory says in a homily (xxvi in Evang.): "It avails nothing to take part in the feasts of men, if we fail to take part in the feasts of angels"; by which he means final happiness. But we can take part in the feasts of the angels by contemplating them. Therefore it seems that man's final happiness consists in contemplating the angels.

Objection 2: Further, the final perfection of each thing is for it to be united to its principle: wherefore a circle is said to be a perfect figure, because its beginning and end coincide. But the beginning of human knowledge is from the angels, by whom men are enlightened, as Dionysius says (Coel. Hier. iv). Therefore the perfection of the human intellect consists in contemplating the angels.

Objection 3: Further, each nature is perfect, when united to a higher nature; just as the final perfection of a body is to be united to the spiritual nature. But above the human intellect, in the natural order, are the angels. Therefore the final perfection of the human intellect is to be united to the angels by contemplation.

On the contrary, it is written (Jer. 9:24): "Let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me." Therefore man's final glory or happiness consists only in the knowledge of God.

I answer that, as stated above, man's perfect happiness consists not in that which perfects the intellect by some participation, but in that which is so by its essence. Now it is evident that whatever is the perfection of a power is so in so far as the proper formal object of that power belongs to it. Now the proper object of the intellect is the true. Therefore the contemplation of whatever has participated truth, does not perfect the intellect with its final perfection. Since, therefore, the order of things is the same in being and in truth (Metaph ii, 1); whatever are beings by participation, are true by participation. Now angels have being by participation: because in God alone is His Being His Essence. It follows that contemplation of Him makes man perfectly happy. However, there is no reason why we should not admit a certain

imperfect happiness in the contemplation of the angels; and higher indeed than in the consideration of speculative science.

Reply to Objection 1: We shall take part in the feasts of the angels, by contemplating not only the angels, but, together with them, also God Himself.

Reply to Objection 2: According to those that hold human souls to be created by the angels, it seems fitting enough, that man's happiness should consist in the contemplation of the angels, in the union, as it were, of man with his beginning. But this is erroneous. Wherefore the final perfection of the human intellect is by union with God, Who is the first principle both of the creation of the soul and of its enlightenment. Whereas the angel enlightens as a minister. Consequently, by his ministration he helps man to attain to happiness; but he is not the object of man's happiness.

Reply to Objection 3: The lower nature may reach the higher in two ways. First, according to a degree of the participating power: and thus man's final perfection will consist in his attaining to a contemplation such as that of the angels. Secondly, as the object is attained by the power: and thus the final perfection of each power is to attain that in which is found the fulness of its formal object.

Whether man's happiness consists in the vision of the divine essence?

Objection 1: It would seem that man's happiness does not consist in the vision of the Divine Essence. For Dionysius says (Myst. Theol. i) that by that which is highest in his intellect, man is united to God as to something altogether unknown. But that which is seen in its essence is not altogether unknown. Therefore the final perfection of the intellect, namely, happiness, does not consist in God being seen in His Essence.

Objection 2: Further, the higher the perfection belongs to the higher nature. But to see His own Essence is the perfection proper to the Divine intellect. Therefore the final perfection of the human intellect does not reach to this, but consists in something less.

On the contrary, it is written (1 Jn. 3:2): "When He shall appear, we shall be like to Him; and [Vulg.: 'because'] we shall see Him as He is."

I answer that, final and perfect happiness can consist in nothing else than the vision of the Divine Essence. To make this clear, two points must be observed. First, that man is not perfectly happy, so long as something remains for him to desire and seek: secondly, that the perfection of any power is determined by the nature of its object. Now

the object of the intellect is “what a thing is,” i.e. the essence of a thing, according to *De Anima* iii, 6. Wherefore the intellect attains perfection, in so far as it knows the essence of a thing. If therefore an intellect knows the essence of some effect, whereby it is not possible to know the essence of the cause, i.e. to know of the cause “what it is”; that intellect cannot be said to reach that cause simply, although it may be able to gather from the effect the knowledge of that the cause is. Consequently, when man knows an effect, and knows that it has a cause, there naturally remains in the man the desire to know about the cause, “what it is.” And this desire is one of wonder, and causes inquiry, as is stated in the beginning of the *Metaphysics* (i, 2). For instance, if a man, knowing the eclipse of the sun, consider that it must be due to some cause, and know not what that cause is, he wonders about it, and from wondering proceeds to inquire. Nor does this inquiry cease until he arrive at a knowledge of the essence of the cause.

If therefore the human intellect, knowing the essence of some created effect, knows no more of God than “that He is”; the perfection of that intellect does not yet reach simply the First Cause, but there remains in it the natural desire to seek the cause. Wherefore it is not yet perfectly happy. Consequently, for perfect happiness the intellect needs to reach the very Essence of the First Cause. And thus it will have its perfection through union with God as with that object, in which alone man’s happiness consists, as stated above.

Reply to Objection 1: Dionysius speaks of the knowledge of wayfarers journeying towards happiness.

Reply to Objection 2: As stated above, the end has a twofold acceptation. First, as to the thing itself which is desired: and in this way, the same thing is the end of the higher and of the lower nature, and indeed of all things, as stated above. Secondly, as to the attainment of this thing; and thus the end of the higher nature is different from that of the lower, according to their respective habitudes to that thing. So then in the happiness of God, Who, in understanding his Essence, comprehends It, is higher than that of a man or angel who sees It indeed, but comprehends It not.

Of Those Things that are Required for Happiness

We have now to consider those things that are required for happiness: and concerning this there are eight points of inquiry:

- (1) Whether delight is required for happiness?
- (2) Which is of greater account in happiness, delight or vision?
- (3) Whether comprehension is required?
- (4) Whether rectitude of the will is required?
- (5) Whether the body is necessary for man's happiness?
- (6) Whether any perfection of the body is necessary?
- (7) Whether any external goods are necessary?
- (8) Whether the fellowship of friends is necessary?

Whether delight is required for happiness?

Objection 1: It would seem that delight is not required for happiness. For Augustine says (De Trin. i, 8) that "vision is the entire reward of faith." But the prize or reward of virtue is happiness, as the Philosopher clearly states (Ethic. i, 9). Therefore nothing besides vision is required for happiness.

Objection 2: Further, happiness is "the most self-sufficient of all goods," as the Philosopher declares (Ethic. i, 7). But that which needs something else is not self-sufficient. Since then the essence of happiness consists in seeing God, as stated above; it seems that delight is not necessary for happiness.

Objection 3: Further, the "operation of bliss or happiness should be unhindered" (Ethic. vii, 13). But delight hinders the operation of the intellect: since it destroys the estimate of prudence (Ethic. vi, 5). Therefore delight is not necessary for happiness.

On the contrary, Augustine says (Confess. x, 23) that happiness is "joy in truth."

I answer that, One thing may be necessary for another in four ways. First, as a preamble and preparation to it: thus instruction is necessary for science. Secondly, as perfecting it: thus the soul is necessary for the life of the body. Thirdly, as helping it from without: thus friends are necessary for some undertaking. Fourthly, as something attendant on it: thus we might say that heat is necessary for fire. And in this way delight is necessary for happiness. For it is caused by the appetite being at rest in the good attained. Wherefore, since happiness is nothing else but the attainment of the Sovereign Good, it cannot be without concomitant delight.

Reply to Objection 1: From the very fact that a reward is given to anyone, the will of him who deserves it is at rest, and in this consists delight. Consequently, delight is included in the very notion of reward.

Reply to Objection 2: The very sight of God causes delight. Consequently, he who sees God cannot need delight.

Reply to Objection 3: Delight that is attendant upon the operation of the intellect does not hinder it, rather does it perfect it, as stated in *Ethic. x, 4*: since what we do with delight, we do with greater care and perseverance. On the other hand, delight which is extraneous to the operation is a hindrance thereto: sometimes by distracting the attention because, as already observed, we are more attentive to those things that delight us; and when we are very attentive to one thing, we must needs be less attentive to another: sometimes on account of opposition; thus a sensual delight that is contrary to reason, hinders the estimate of prudence more than it hinders the estimate of the speculative intellect.

Whether in happiness vision ranks before delight?

Objection 1: It would seem that in happiness, delight ranks before vision. For “delight is the perfection of operation” (*Ethic. x, 4*). But perfection ranks before the thing perfected. Therefore delight ranks before the operation of the intellect, i.e. vision.

Objection 2: Further, that by reason of which a thing is desirable, is yet more desirable. But operations are desired on account of the delight they afford: hence, too, nature has adjusted delight to those operations which are necessary for the preservation of the individual and of the species, lest animals should disregard such operations. Therefore, in happiness, delight ranks before the operation of the intellect, which is vision.

Objection 3: Further, vision corresponds to faith; while delight or enjoyment corresponds to charity. But charity ranks before faith, as the Apostle says (1 Cor. 13:13). Therefore delight or enjoyment ranks before vision.

On the contrary, The cause is greater than its effect. But vision is the cause of delight. Therefore vision ranks before delight.

I answer that, The Philosopher discusses this question (*Ethic. x, 4*), and leaves it unsolved. But if one consider the matter carefully, the operation of the intellect which is vision, must needs rank before delight. For delight consists in a certain repose of the will. Now that the will finds rest in anything, can only be on account of the goodness

of that thing in which it reposes. If therefore the will reposes in an operation, the will's repose is caused by the goodness of the operation. Nor does the will seek good for the sake of repose; for thus the very act of the will would be the end, which has been disproved above: but it seeks to be at rest in the operation, because that operation is its good. Consequently it is evident that the operation in which the will reposes ranks before the resting of the will therein.

Reply to Objection 1: As the Philosopher says (*Ethic.* x, 4) "delight perfects operation as vigor perfects youth," because it is a result of youth. Consequently delight is a perfection attendant upon vision; but not a perfection whereby vision is made perfect in its own species.

Reply to Objection 2: The apprehension of the senses does not attain to the universal good, but to some particular good which is delightful. And consequently, according to the sensitive appetite which is in animals, operations are sought for the sake of delight. But the intellect apprehends the universal good, the attainment of which results in delight: wherefore its purpose is directed to good rather than to delight. Hence it is that the Divine intellect, which is the Author of nature, adjusted delights to operations on account of the operations. And we should form our estimate of things not simply according to the order of the sensitive appetite, but rather according to the order of the intellectual appetite.

Reply to Objection 3: Charity does not seem the beloved good for the sake of delight: it is for charity a consequence that it delights in the good gained which it loves. Thus delight does not answer to charity as its end, but vision does, whereby the end is first made present to charity.

Whether comprehension is necessary for happiness?

Objection 1: It would seem that comprehension is not necessary for happiness. For Augustine says (*Ad Paulinam de Videndo Deum*; [*Cf. *Serm.* xxxciii *De Verb. Dom.*]): "To reach God with the mind is happiness, to comprehend Him is impossible." Therefore happiness is without comprehension.

Objection 2: Further, happiness is the perfection of man as to his intellectual part, wherein there are no other powers than the intellect and will, as stated in the FP, Questions [79] and following. But the intellect is sufficiently perfected by seeing God, and the will by enjoying Him. Therefore there is no need for comprehension as a third.

Objection 3: Further, happiness consists in an operation. But operations are determined by their objects: and there are two universal

objects, the true and the good: of which the true corresponds to vision, and good to delight. Therefore there is no need for comprehension as a third.

On the contrary, The Apostle says (1 Cor. 9:24): “So run that you may comprehend [Douay: ‘obtain’].” But happiness is the goal of the spiritual race: hence he says (2 Tim. 4:7,8): “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; as to the rest there is laid up for me a crown of justice.” Therefore comprehension is necessary for Happiness.

I answer that, since happiness consists in gaining the last end, those things that are required for Happiness must be gathered from the way in which man is ordered to an end. Now man is ordered to an intelligible end partly through his intellect, and partly through his will: through his intellect, in so far as a certain imperfect knowledge of the end pre-exists in the intellect: through the will, first by love which is the will’s first movement towards anything; secondly, by a real relation of the lover to the thing beloved, which relation may be threefold. For sometimes the thing beloved is present to the lover: and then it is no longer sought for. Sometimes it is not present, and it is impossible to attain it: and then, too, it is not sought for. But sometimes it is possible to attain it, yet it is raised above the capability of the attainer, so that he cannot have it forthwith; and this is the relation of one that hopes, to that which he hopes for, and this relation alone causes a search for the end. To these three, there are a corresponding three in Happiness itself. For perfect knowledge of the end corresponds to imperfect knowledge; presence of the end corresponds to the relation of hope; but delight in the end now present results from love, as already stated. And therefore these three must concur with Happiness; to wit, vision, which is perfect knowledge of the intelligible end; comprehension, which implies presence of the end; and delight or enjoyment, which implies repose of the lover in the object beloved.

Reply to Objection 1: Comprehension is twofold. First, inclusion of the comprehended in the comprehensor; and thus whatever is comprehended by the finite, is itself finite. Wherefore God cannot be thus comprehended by a created intellect. Secondly, comprehension means nothing but the holding of something already present and possessed: thus one who runs after another is said to comprehend [*In English we should say ‘catch.’] him when he lays hold on him. And in this sense comprehension is necessary for Happiness.

Reply to Objection 2: Just as hope and love pertain to the will, because it is the same one that loves a thing, and that tends towards it while

not possessed, so, too, comprehension and delight belong to the will, since it is the same that possesses a thing and reposes therein.

Reply to Objection 3: Comprehension is not a distinct operation from vision; but a certain relation to the end already gained. Wherefore even vision itself, or the thing seen, inasmuch as it is present, is the object of comprehension.

Whether rectitude of the will is necessary for happiness?

Objection 1: It would seem that rectitude of the will is not necessary for Happiness. For Happiness consists essentially in an operation of the intellect, as stated above. But rectitude of the will, by reason of which men are said to be clean of heart, is not necessary for the perfect operation of the intellect: for Augustine says (*Retract. i, 4*) “I do not approve of what I said in a prayer: O God, Who didst will none but the clean of heart to know the truth. For it can be answered that many who are not clean of heart, know many truths.” Therefore rectitude of the will is not necessary for Happiness.

Objection 2: Further, what precedes does not depend on what follows. But the operation of the intellect precedes the operation of the will. Therefore Happiness, which is the perfect operation of the intellect, does not depend on rectitude of the will.

Objection 3: Further, that which is ordained to another as its end, is not necessary, when the end is already gained; as a ship, for instance, after arrival in port. But rectitude of will, which is by reason of virtue, is ordained to Happiness as to its end. Therefore, Happiness once obtained, rectitude of the will is no longer necessary.

On the contrary, it is written (*Mt. 5:8*): “Blessed are the clean of heart; for they shall see God”: and (*Heb. 12:14*): “Follow peace with all men, and holiness; without which no man shall see God.”

I answer that, Rectitude of will is necessary for Happiness both antecedently and concomitantly. Antecedently, because rectitude of the will consists in being duly ordered to the last end. Now the end in comparison to what is ordained to the end is as form compared to matter. Wherefore, just as matter cannot receive a form, unless it be duly disposed thereto, so nothing gains an end, except it be duly ordained thereto. And therefore none can obtain Happiness, without rectitude of the will. Concomitantly, because as stated above, final Happiness consists in the vision of the Divine Essence, Which is the very essence of goodness. So that the will of him who sees the Essence of God, of necessity, loves, whatever he loves, in subordination to God; just as the will of him who sees not God’s Essence, of necessity, loves

whatever he loves, under the common notion of good which he knows. And this is precisely what makes the will right. Wherefore it is evident that Happiness cannot be without a right will.

Reply to Objection 2: Every act of the will is preceded by an act of the intellect: but a certain act of the will precedes a certain act of the intellect. For the will tends to the final act of the intellect which is happiness. And consequently right inclination of the will is required antecedently for happiness, just as the arrow must take a right course in order to strike the target.

Reply to Objection 3: Not everything that is ordained to the end, ceases with the getting of the end: but only that which involves imperfection, such as movement. Hence the instruments of movement are no longer necessary when the end has been gained: but the due order to the end is necessary.

Whether the body is necessary for man's happiness?

Objection 1: It would seem that the body is necessary for Happiness. For the perfection of virtue and grace presupposes the perfection of nature. But Happiness is the perfection of virtue and grace. Now the soul, without the body, has not the perfection of nature; since it is naturally a part of human nature, and every part is imperfect while separated from its whole. Therefore the soul cannot be happy without the body.

Objection 2: Further, Happiness is a perfect operation, as stated above. But perfect operation follows perfect being; since nothing operates except in so far as it is an actual being. Since, therefore, the soul has not perfect being, while it is separated from the body, just as neither has a part, while separate from its whole; it seems that the soul cannot be happy without the body.

Objection 3: Further, Happiness is the perfection of man. But the soul, without the body, is not man. Therefore Happiness cannot be in the soul separated from the body.

Objection 4: Further, according to the Philosopher (*Ethic.* vii, 13) "the operation of bliss," in which operation happiness consists, is "not hindered." But the operation of the separate soul is hindered; because, as Augustine says (*Gen. ad lit.* xii, 35), the soul "has a natural desire to rule the body, the result of which is that it is held back, so to speak, from tending with all its might to the heavenward journey," i.e. to the vision of the Divine Essence. Therefore the soul cannot be happy without the body.

Objection 5: Further, Happiness is the sufficient good and lulls desire. But this cannot be said of the separated soul; for it yet desires to be united to the body, as Augustine says (Gen. ad lit. xii, 35). Therefore the soul is not happy while separated from the body.

Objection 6: Further, in Happiness man is equal to the angels. But the soul without the body is not equal to the angels, as Augustine says (Gen. ad lit. xii, 35). Therefore it is not happy.

On the contrary, it is written (Apoc. 14:13): “Happy [Douay: ‘blessed’] are the dead who die in the Lord.”

I answer that, Happiness is twofold; the one is imperfect and is had in this life; the other is perfect, consisting in the vision of God. Now it is evident that the body is necessary for the happiness of this life. For the happiness of this life consists in an operation of the intellect, either speculative or practical. And the operation of the intellect in this life cannot be without a phantasm, which is only in a bodily organ, as was shown in the FP, Question [84], Articles [6],7. Consequently that happiness which can be had in this life, depends, in a way, on the body. But as to perfect Happiness, which consists in the vision of God, some have maintained that it is not possible to the soul separated from the body; and have said that the souls of saints, when separated from their bodies, do not attain to that Happiness until the Day of Judgment, when they will receive their bodies back again. And this is shown to be false, both by authority and by reason. By authority, since the Apostle says (2 Cor. 5:6): “While we are in the body, we are absent from the Lord”; and he points out the reason of this absence, saying: “For we walk by faith and not by sight.” Now from this it is clear that so long as we walk by faith and not by sight, bereft of the vision of the Divine Essence, we are not present to the Lord. But the souls of the saints, separated from their bodies, are in God’s presence; wherefore the text continues: “But we are confident and have a good will to be absent . . . from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” Whence it is evident that the souls of the saints, separated from their bodies, “walk by sight,” seeing the Essence of God, wherein is true Happiness. Again this is made clear by reason. For the intellect needs not the body, for its operation, save on account of the phantasms, wherein it looks on the intelligible truth, as stated in the FP, Question [84], Article [7]. Now it is evident that the Divine Essence cannot be seen by means of phantasms, as stated in the FP, Question [12], Article [3]. Wherefore, since man’s perfect Happiness consists in the vision of the Divine Essence, it does not depend on the body. Consequently, without the body the soul can be happy.

We must, however, notice that something may belong to a thing's perfection in two ways. First, as constituting the essence thereof; thus the soul is necessary for man's perfection. Secondly, as necessary for its well-being: thus, beauty of body and keenness of perfection belong to man's perfection. Wherefore though the body does not belong in the first way to the perfection of human Happiness, yet it does in the second way. For since operation depends on a thing's nature, the more perfect is the soul in its nature, the more perfectly it has its proper operation, wherein its happiness consists. Hence, Augustine, after inquiring (Gen. ad lit. xii, 35) "whether that perfect Happiness can be ascribed to the souls of the dead separated from their bodies," answers "that they cannot see the Unchangeable Substance, as the blessed angels see It; either for some other more hidden reason, or because they have a natural desire to rule the body."

Reply to Objection 1: Happiness is the perfection of the soul on the part of the intellect, in respect of which the soul transcends the organs of the body; but not according as the soul is the natural form of the body. Wherefore the soul retains that natural perfection in respect of which happiness is due to it, though it does not retain that natural perfection in respect of which it is the form of the body.

Reply to Objection 2: The relation of the soul to being is not the same as that of other parts: for the being of the whole is not that of any individual part: wherefore, either the part ceases altogether to be, when the whole is destroyed, just as the parts of an animal, when the animal is destroyed; or, if they remain, they have another actual being, just as a part of a line has another being from that of the whole line. But the human soul retains the being of the composite after the destruction of the body: and this because the being of the form is the same as that of its matter, and this is the being of the composite. Now the soul subsists in its own being, as stated in the FP, Question [75], Article [2]. It follows, therefore, that after being separated from the body it has perfect being and that consequently it can have a perfect operation; although it has not the perfect specific nature.

Reply to Objection 3: Happiness belongs to man in respect of his intellect: and, therefore, since the intellect remains, it can have Happiness. Thus the teeth of an Ethiopian, in respect of which he is said to be white, can retain their whiteness, even after extraction.

Reply to Objection 4: One thing is hindered by another in two ways. First, by way of opposition; thus cold hinders the action of heat: and such a hindrance to operation is repugnant to Happiness. Secondly, by way of some kind of defect, because, to wit, that which is hindered

has not all that is necessary to make it perfect in every way: and such a hindrance to operation is not incompatible with Happiness, but prevents it from being perfect in every way. And thus it is that separation from the body is said to hold the soul back from tending with all its might to the vision of the Divine Essence. For the soul desires to enjoy God in such a way that the enjoyment also may overflow into the body, as far as possible. And therefore, as long as it enjoys God, without the fellowship of the body, its appetite is at rest in that which it has, in such a way, that it would still wish the body to attain to its share.

Reply to Objection 5: The desire of the separated soul is entirely at rest, as regards the thing desired; since, to wit, it has that which suffices its appetite. But it is not wholly at rest, as regards the desirer, since it does not possess that good in every way that it would wish to possess it. Consequently, after the body has been resumed, Happiness increases not in intensity, but in extent.

Reply to Objection 6: The statement made (Gen. ad lit. xii, 35) to the effect that “the souls of the departed see not God as the angels do,” is not to be understood as referring to inequality of quantity; because even now some souls of the Blessed are raised to the higher orders of the angels, thus seeing God more clearly than the lower angels. But it refers to inequality of proportion: because the angels, even the lowest, have every perfection of Happiness that they ever will have, whereas the separated souls of the saints have not.

Whether perfection of the body is necessary for happiness?

Objection 1: It would seem that perfection of the body is not necessary for man’s perfect Happiness. For perfection of the body is a bodily good. But it has been shown above that Happiness does not consist in bodily goods. Therefore no perfect disposition of the body is necessary for man’s Happiness.

Objection 2: Further, man’s Happiness consists in the vision of the Divine Essence, as shown above. But the body has not part in this operation, as shown above. Therefore no disposition of the body is necessary for Happiness.

Objection 3: Further, the more the intellect is abstracted from the body, the more perfectly it understands. But Happiness consists in the most perfect operation of the intellect. Therefore the soul should be abstracted from the body in every way. Therefore, in no way is a disposition of the body necessary for Happiness.

On the contrary, Happiness is the reward of virtue; wherefore it is written (Jn. 13:17): “You shall be blessed, if you do them.” But the

reward promised to the saints is not only that they shall see and enjoy God, but also that their bodies shall be well-disposed; for it is written (Is. 66:14): “You shall see and your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like a herb.” Therefore good disposition of the body is necessary for Happiness.

I answer that, if we speak of that happiness which man can acquire in this life, it is evident that a well-disposed body is of necessity required for it. For this happiness consists, according to the Philosopher (*Ethic.* i, 13) in “an operation according to perfect virtue”; and it is clear that man can be hindered, by indisposition of the body, from every operation of virtue.

But speaking of perfect Happiness, some have maintained that no disposition of body is necessary for Happiness; indeed, that it is necessary for the soul to be entirely separated from the body. Hence Augustine (*De Civ. Dei* xxii, 26) quotes the words of Porphyry who said that “for the soul to be happy, it must be severed from everything corporeal.” But this is unreasonable. For since it is natural to the soul to be united to the body; it is not possible for the perfection of the soul to exclude its natural perfection.

Consequently, we must say that perfect disposition of the body is necessary, both antecedently and consequently, for that Happiness which is in all ways perfect. Antecedently, because, as Augustine says (*Gen. ad lit.* xii, 35), “if body be such, that the governance thereof is difficult and burdensome, like unto flesh which is corruptible and weighs upon the soul, the mind is turned away from that vision of the highest heaven.” Whence he concludes that, “when this body will no longer be ‘natural,’ but ‘spiritual,’ then will it be equalled to the angels, and that will be its glory, which erstwhile was its burden.” Consequently, because from the Happiness of the soul there will be an overflow on to the body, so that this too will obtain its perfection. Hence Augustine says (*Ep. ad Dioscor.*) that “God gave the soul such a powerful nature that from its exceeding fullness of happiness the vigor of incorruption overflows into the lower nature.”

Reply to Objection 1: Happiness does not consist in bodily good as its object: but bodily good can add a certain charm and perfection to Happiness.

Reply to Objection 2: Although the body has not part in that operation of the intellect whereby the Essence of God is seen, yet it might prove a hindrance thereto. Consequently, perfection of the body is necessary, lest it hinder the mind from being lifted up.

Reply to Objection 3: The perfect operation of the intellect requires indeed that the intellect be abstracted from this corruptible body which weighs upon the soul; but not from the spiritual body, which will be wholly subject to the spirit. On this point we shall treat in the Third Part of this work.

Whether any external goods are necessary for happiness?

Objection 1: It would seem that external goods also are necessary for Happiness. For that which is promised the saints for reward, belongs to Happiness. But external goods are promised the saints; for instance, food and drink, wealth and a kingdom: for it is said (Lk. 22:30): "That you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom": and (Mt. 6:20): "Lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven": and (Mt. 25:34): "Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom." Therefore external goods are necessary for Happiness.

Objection 2: Further, according to Boethius (De Consol. iii): happiness is "a state made perfect by the aggregate of all good things." But some of man's goods are external, although they be of least account, as Augustine says (De Lib. Arb. ii, 19). Therefore they too are necessary for Happiness.

Objection 3: Further, Our Lord said (Mt. 5:12): "Your reward is very great in heaven." But to be in heaven implies being in a place. Therefore at least external place is necessary for Happiness.

On the contrary, it is written (Ps. 72:25): "For what have I in heaven? and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth?" As though to say: "I desire nothing but this," — "It is good for me to adhere to my God." Therefore nothing further external is necessary for Happiness.

I answer that, for imperfect happiness, such as can be had in this life, external goods are necessary, not as belonging to the essence of happiness, but by serving as instruments to happiness, which consists in an operation of virtue, as stated in Ethic. i, 13. For man needs in this life, the necessaries of the body, both for the operation of contemplative virtue, and for the operation of active virtue, for which latter he needs also many other things by means of which to perform its operations.

On the other hand, such goods as these are nowise necessary for perfect Happiness, which consists in seeing God. The reason of this is that all suchlike external goods are requisite either for the support of the animal body; or for certain operations which belong to human life, which we perform by means of the animal body: whereas that perfect Happiness which consists in seeing God, will be either in the soul separated from the body, or in the soul united to the body then no longer

animal but spiritual. Consequently these external goods are nowise necessary for that Happiness, since they are ordained to the animal life. And since, in this life, the felicity of contemplation, as being more Godlike, approaches nearer than that of action to the likeness of that perfect Happiness, therefore it stands in less need of these goods of the body as stated in *Ethic.* x, 8.

Reply to Objection 1: All those material promises contained in Holy Scripture, are to be understood metaphorically, inasmuch as Scripture is wont to express spiritual things under the form of things corporeal, in order “that from things we know, we may rise to the desire of things unknown,” as Gregory says (*Hom. xi in Evang.*). Thus food and drink signify the delight of Happiness; wealth, the sufficiency of God for man; the kingdom, the lifting up of man to union of God.

Reply to Objection 2: These goods that serve for the animal life, are incompatible with that spiritual life wherein perfect Happiness consists. Nevertheless in that Happiness there will be the aggregate of all good things, because whatever good there be in these things, we shall possess it all in the Supreme Fount of goodness.

Reply to Objection 3: According to Augustine (*De Serm. Dom. in Monte i, 5*), it is not material heaven that is described as the reward of the saints, but a heaven raised on the height of spiritual goods. Nevertheless a bodily place, viz. the empyrean heaven, will be appointed to the Blessed, not as a need of Happiness, but by reason of a certain fitness and adornment.

Whether the fellowship of friend is necessary for happiness?

Objection 1: It would seem that friends are necessary for Happiness. For future Happiness is frequently designated by Scripture under the name of “glory.” But glory consists in man’s good being brought to the notice of many. Therefore the fellowship of friends is necessary for Happiness.

Objection 2: Further, Boethius [**Seneca, Ep. 6*] says that “there is no delight in possessing any good whatever, without someone to share it with us.” But delight is necessary for Happiness. Therefore fellowship of friends is also necessary.

Objection 3: Further, charity is perfected in Happiness. But charity includes the love of God and of our neighbor. Therefore it seems that fellowship of friends is necessary for Happiness.

On the contrary, it is written (*Wis. 7:11*): “All good things came to me together with her,” i.e. with divine wisdom, which consists in

contemplating God. Consequently nothing else is necessary for Happiness.

I answer that, if we speak of the happiness of this life, the happy man needs friends, as the Philosopher says (*Ethic. ix, 9*), not, indeed, to make use of them, since he suffices himself; nor to delight in them, since he possesses perfect delight in the operation of virtue; but for the purpose of a good operation, viz. that he may do good to them; that he may delight in seeing them do good; and again that he may be helped by them in his good work. For in order that man may do well, whether in the works of the active life, or in those of the contemplative life, he needs the fellowship of friends.

But if we speak of perfect Happiness which will be in our heavenly Fatherland, the fellowship of friends is not essential to Happiness; since man has the entire fulness of his perfection in God. But the fellowship of friends conduces to the well-being of Happiness. Hence Augustine says (*Gen. ad lit. viii, 25*) that “the spiritual creatures receive no other interior aid to happiness than the eternity, truth, and charity of the Creator. But if they can be said to be helped from without, perhaps it is only by this that they see one another and rejoice in God, at their fellowship.”

Reply to Objection 1: That glory which is essential to Happiness, is that which man has, not with man but with God.

Reply to Objection 2: This saying is to be understood of the possession of good that does not fully satisfy. This does not apply to the question under consideration; because man possesses in God a sufficiency of every good.

Reply to Objection 3: Perfection of charity is essential to Happiness, as to the love of God, but not as to the love of our neighbor. Wherefore if there were but one soul enjoying God, it would be happy, though having no neighbor to love. But supposing one neighbor to be there, love of him results from perfect love of God. Consequently, friendship is, as it were, concomitant with perfect Happiness.

Dante Alighieri,
Divine Comedy

It was all falling apart as Dante was completing his *Divine Comedy*: the crisis of the fourteenth century was underway: population had exceeded European agricultural capacity and famine spread its agony, the popes had taken up residence in Avignon, etc. The High Middle Ages reached their acme in Dante, in whom one might also recognize the pivot to renaissance and modernity. Even during the intellectually remarkable thirteenth century, one of the great ages of the human spirit, the moral bankruptcy of Christendom was becoming impossible to overlook, especially in the unedifying contest between the great temporal and spiritual powers, the emperors and the popes. The contest poisoned the newly vigorous cities of northern Italy, as clan-based factions waved one banner or the other in their civil wars. Dante (c.1265-1321) was born into one of these great, tormented cities: Florence, possessed of great wealth from wool manufacture and trade, as well as from banking—its coin (the florin) an international monetary standard. The Florentine commune was an oligarchic republic, trying to maintain independence from the Holy Roman Empire. The Guelphs were the generally dominant faction, declared for papal power and aligned with the “popular” party over against the nobles. When the Guelphs won the struggle for control of Florence (at the 1289 Battle of Campaldino), its own fragmentation came to the fore. Dante’s family belonged to the White Guelphs, who perhaps were more republican and came to want less interference from the pope. He married into a minor branch of the leading family of the Black Guelphs, the Donatis. Dante attained the highest office of the republic as one of the sets of priors serving a two-month term in 1300. Pope Boniface VIII intrigued with Charles, count of Valois, of France, to place the Blacks in power. Dante was exiled in 1302, never to return.

A cosmic-Christian romance, the *Divine Comedy* is perhaps the greatest poem ever written. Troubadour poetry was a formative influence, as was the courtly love poetry advanced by the Sicilian School of Emperor Frederick II’s court. It is possible Dante produced a series of sonnets based on *The Romance of the Rose*. His own transformation of romance is bold, making his Lady the personalized mediation of divine care. His oeuvre has a strong autobiographical thrust. He immersed himself in the disputations between the Dominicans and Franciscans, and was marked by Thomistic theology. He wrote his *Comedy*, in the vernacular, after he was exiled.

Composed between c.1307 and 1321, it recounts a strange journey through hell, purgatory, and heaven, from the evening before Good Friday to the evening of Easter Thursday in 1300. It synthesizes pagan Latin antiquity with the medieval Christianity then drawing to its close, and is a summa of the learned discourses of the day.

The poem begins with Dante's dark night. He is middle-aged, and desperately lost. A lion, a leopard, and a wolf (perhaps pride, lust, and avarice) keep him from the mountain height that promises light.

The remedy is an epic pilgrimage through the afterlife; Virgil is dispatched as guide. They eventually reach the center of the earth, where "the banners of the king of hell advance," but what we see is Satan (Dis) encased in ice, frozen by the flapping of his own wings.

We climb from the depths of hell onto the shores of Mount Purgatory, where the seven deadly sins are remedied. At the center of the entire *Comedy* are Cantos XVI and XVII. The former takes place on the terrace of the wrathful, where we learn of the proper relation between temporal and spiritual power. The next two cantos take place on the terrace of the slothful and present Virgil's discourse on love and free will. Surprisingly, the Roman poet Statius joins them on the ascent. No segment of the pilgrimage takes as much time as climbing this mountain. The long training in virtue renders Dante sovereign over himself: church and state should serve this blossoming of human liberty. Purgatory is crowned by the garden of Eden, the fruition of natural human freedom under grace. Here Dante finally comes face to face with his great beloved, Beatrice. She appears on a chariot pulled by a griffin who is Christ, as the culmination of a procession which includes the personified books of the Bible. She completes Dante's purification, and then draws him through the nine spheres of the celestial paradise, beyond which is the Empyrean—at which point the mystic Saint Bernard of Clairvaux takes over as guide, leading the pilgrim to the end of all journeying: the vision of the Trinity within which is the sacred humanity of Jesus. The love thus seen has moved everything that has gone before.

INFERNO

CANTO I

Midway through the journey of our life
I found myself within a dark wood,
for the straight way had now been lost.

Ah, how hard it is to describe that wood,
a wilderness so gnarled and rough
the very thought of it brings back my fear.

Death itself is hardly more bitter;
but to tell of the good that I found there
I will speak of the other things I saw.

I cannot say just how I entered that wood,
so full of sleep was I at the point
when I abandoned the road that runs true.

But when I reached the foot of a hill
that rose up at the end of the valley
where fear had pierced me through to the heart,

I lifted my eyes and saw its shoulders
already bathed in the light of that planet
that leads us straight along every path.

This calmed a little the lake of my heart
that had surged with terror all through the night
that I had just spent so piteously.

And as a man who, gasping for breath,
has escaped the sea and wades to shore,
then turns back and stares at the perilous waves,

So too my mind, still racing in flight,
turned back to wonder at the narrow gorge
that had never left any traveler alive.

I rested a little and then resumed
my journey across that deserted slope,
so that my firmer foot was always below.

But look there—near the start of the climb
a leopard prowls, all swift and
light and covered with a rippling, spotted hide.

It was everywhere that I turned my eyes,
blocking my way at every turn, so that

again and again I was forced to go back.

The time was early morning, and the sun
was ascending the sky with those very stars
that rose along with it when Divine Love

First set those beautiful things in motion.
So the hour of day and the sweet season
were reasons for me to hope for the best

From that fierce beast with the gaudy pelt;
but not so much that I did not feel fear
at the sight of a lion that then appeared.

This one looked to be coming toward me,
his head held high and roaring with hunger
so that the very air seemed to be trembling—

And then a she-wolf, so emaciated
she seemed stricken with every kind of craving
and had already caused many to live in grief.

The very sight of this creature burdened
me with such a weight of desperate fear
that I lost all hope of attaining the height;

And as a man who eagerly racks up gains
weeps and is wretched in all of his thoughts
when the time finally comes for him to lose,

So did that restless beast make me feel.
Advancing always, she kept pushing me back,
little by little, to where the sun is mute.

While I was scrambling down to those depths
a figure presented itself to my eyes,
one who appeared to be faint through long silence.

When I saw him in that vast and trackless waste,
I cried out to him: "Miserere mei,
whatever you are, living man or shade!"

And he answered me: "Not a living man,
though once I was. My parents were Lombards,
both of them natives of Mantua.

I was born sub Julio, though late,
and lived in Rome under noble Augustus
in the time of the false and lying gods.

I was a poet, and sang of that just
son of Anchises, who came out of Troy
after proud Ilion fell in fire and ash.

But you, why do you return to woe so great?
Why not ascend this blissful mountain,
the source and cause of every kind of joy?"

"Can you be Virgil, then, that great wellspring,
that wide, spreading stream of eloquence?"
I blushed with shame as I said this to him.

"O glory and light of all other poets,
may my long study of your works repay me,
and the love that made me pore over your verse.

You are my master, you are my author.
It is from you alone that I have acquired
the beautiful style that has won me honor.

Look at the beast that makes me turn back.
Save me from her, glorious sage,
for she fills me with fear and makes my blood pound!"

"You will have to go by another road,"
he answered me when he saw my tears flow,
"if you want to escape this wilderness.

This savage beast that makes you wail
does not allow any to pass that way.
She will harry you until she takes your life.

Her nature is so depraved and vicious
that her craving can never be satisfied.
Fed, she is hungrier than before.

Many are the beasts with whom she mates,
and there will be more, until the Veltro comes,
the Hound that will put her to a painful death.

He will not feed on property or wealth,
but on wisdom, on love, and on virtue.
His birthplace will be between Feltro and Feltro,

And he will be lowly Italy's salvation,
the land for which the virgin Camilla died
along with Euryalus, Turnus, and Nisus.

He will hunt her down through every village
until he sends her back to Hell below
from where Envy first sent her into this world.

Therefore I think that it is best for you
to follow me. I will be your guide
and lead you from here to an eternal place,

Where you will listen to cries of despair
and see the ancient tormented spirits
who lament forever their second death.

And you will see the souls who are content
to stay in the fire, because they hope to arrive,
whenever it may be, among the blessed.

And then, if you wish to ascend to their side,
there will be a soul more worthy than I,
and with her I will leave you when I depart.

For the Emperor who reigns on high
wills that I, who did not obey his law,
never gain admittance into His city.

His rule is everywhere, but there is His reign,
there is His city and exalted throne.
Happy are those chosen to share His domain!"

And I to him: "Poet, I implore you
by that very God whom you did not know:
help me escape this and worse ills too.

Lead me to the place you speak of, so I may go
and look upon Saint Peter's gate, and see
those whom you say are full of sorrow."

Then he set out, and I kept him before me.

CANTO II

Day was departing, and the darkening air
was relieving the creatures who live on Earth
of all their labors. I alone was left

To gird myself for the struggle ahead,
the journey's toil and the toil of pity,
which unerring memory shall now retrace.

O Muses, O high Genius, come to my aid.
O Memory, who wrote down all that I saw,
here your nobility shall clearly be seen.

“Poet,” I began, “you are my guide.
Consider whether I am strong enough
before you trust me to the deeps below.

You tell how Silvius’ father, Aeneas, went,
while still in his body, to the eternal world
and was there with all his senses intact.

But that evil’s constant Adversary
should show him such favor, considering both
his high legacy and who he himself was,

Makes perfect sense to a man of reason.
For he was chosen in the Empyrean
to be the father of Mother Rome and her realm;

And both Rome and her empire, the truth to tell,
were founded to serve as the holy place,
where Saint Peter’s successor now has his seat.

Aeneas, in the journey you affirm he made,
came to know things that helped him prevail
and that led as well to the mantles of popes.

Then Paul, the Chosen Vessel, went there
to bring confirmation from the other world
of the faith that leads us to salvation.

But I, why should I go there? Who permits me?
I am not Aeneas, I am not Paul.
Neither I nor anyone thinks me worthy.

And so, if I do abandon myself to this journey,
I fear it may be madness. You are wise,
you understand better than I can explain.”

Like a man who unwill what he has willed
and upon second thought changes his mind
and finally gives up on the course he began,

So was I in the shadow of that slope,
for my thinking undid the enterprise
whose first steps had been so precipitous.

“If I’ve understood well what you have said,”
replied the shade of the great-souled Poet,
“your spirit is stricken with cowardice,

Which often so shrouds a man in doubt
that he abandons his first noble resolve,
like a beast that shies when shadows are falling.

To free you from this fear I will tell you now
why I have come and what I was told
when first I felt pangs of sorrow for you.

I was in Limbo when a Lady called me,
so blessed and so beautiful that I prayed
she allow me to be of service to her.

Her eyes outshone the stars in the sky,
and when she spoke her voice was as sweet
and soft as an angel’s, as she said to me:

‘O courteous spirit of Mantua, whose fame
still endures in the world, and will endure
as long as the world itself shall last—

A friend of mine, who is not Fortune’s friend,
is so entangled on the barren slope
that he has turned back from the road in fear.

From what I have heard of him in Heaven
I am afraid he may already be so lost
that I have arisen too late to help him.

Go now, and use your beautiful words
and anything needed for his deliverance.
Rescue him, so that I might be consoled.

I who send you forth am Beatrice,
come from a place where I long to return.
Love moved me to do this, love makes me speak.

When I am again before my Lord
I will praise you often in His presence.’
She fell silent then, and I responded:

‘Lady of virtue, through whom alone
humankind transcends what is contained
by the heaven of least circumference,

Your command is so pleasing to me
that instant obedience would still be too late.
You have only to reveal to me your will.

But tell me the reason you have no fear
of descending into this central core
from the spacious region where you long to be?’

‘Since you have such a deep desire to know,’
the Lady replied, ‘I will tell you briefly
why I am not afraid to come to this place.

One should fear those things alone
that can cause one harm. Other things, no:
what causes no harm is not to be feared.

I am so made by the grace of God
that I am untouched by your sorrow and pain,
nor can I be hurt by these scorching flames.

There is in Heaven a gracious Lady
with such pity for the plight to which I send you
that the strict decree above has been broken.

This Lady summoned Lucy and said to her:
“Your faithful one now stands in need of you,
and I deliver him into your care.”

And Lucy, an enemy of everything cruel,
arose and came to me where I sat
with venerable Rachel, and said to me:

“Beatrice, true glory of God,
why do you not go to that man’s aid
who left the common crowd for love of you?

Do you not hear his pitiful lament
or see how he is threatened by death
in the flood that outswells even the sea?”

No one on Earth was ever so quick
to gain an advantage or escape from harm
as I was then upon hearing these words,

And down I came from my blessed throne,
placing my trust in your noble speech,
which honors you and all who have heard it.’

When Beatrice had finished speaking to me
she averted her eyes that shone with tears,
which made me all the more eager to come.

And just as she wished, I came to you
and rescued you from the beast that hindered
the short path up the beautiful mountain.

What is this, then? Why do you hang back?
Why do you nurse such cowardice?
Why are you not bold, daring, and free,

When three such blessed Ladies in Heaven
are concerned for you, and when my words
are a pledge to you of so great a good?"

As little flowers, drooping and closed
in the chill of night, straighten their stems
and open up when the sun shines on them,

So too my courage, which had ebbed away;
and so much good spirit rushed into my heart
that I said to him, like a man set free:

"How compassionate she who came to my aid,
and how courteous you, who when you heard
the true words she spoke, so quickly obeyed!

And now your words have restored my soul
and made me so eager to come with you
that my first intent is once again my goal.

Let us go now, for though we are two,
we have one will. You are my master and guide."
Those were my words, and when he withdrew

I followed him into the desolate divide.

CANTO XXXIV

"*Vexilla regis prodeunt inferni*
toward us," my master said. "Look straight ahead
and see if you can make him out."

Like a windmill turning on the horizon
when a thick fog drifts and settles in
or when our hemisphere turns toward night,

Such a structure I now seemed to see;
then I took shelter behind my leader's back,
for there was no other way to block the wind.

I was now (and I shudder to put this into verse)
where the shades hung completely engulfed,
showing through the ice like straw through glass.

Some are lying sideways, some stand upright,
one with his head, another with feet on top,
and another bent over double like a bow.

And when we had made our way forward far enough
that it pleased my master to reveal to me
the creature who had been so beautiful once,

He stepped to one side and had me stop,
saying, "Behold Dis. And there is the place
where you must steel your soul to the utmost."

Do not ask, Reader, how frozen and faint
I became then, for I cannot write it down;
every word known to man would not be enough.

I did not die, and yet I was no longer alive.
Imagine, if you can, what I became,
deprived of death and bereft of life.

The emperor of the world of pain
stood out of the ice up to his chest,
and I am bigger standing beside a Giant

Than a Giant would be beside one of his arms.
You can see how huge the whole must be
for a part such as this to fit into place.

If he was as beautiful once as now he is
hideous, and arched his brow against his Maker,
well may he be the source of all woe.

How great a sense of wonder overcame me
when I saw three faces arranged on his head.
One was in the front, as red as cinnabar,

And the other two were aligned with this one
just over the middle of each shoulder,
and all of them fused at the crown of his head.

The one on the right was a pale yellow,
while the left one was as dark a color
as those who live beyond the Nile's cataracts.

Under each face grew a pair of wings
of a size that matched this portentous bird.
I never saw sails so large catch the wind at sea.

They had no feathers, but were bald like the wings
of the darkling bat, and he beat them slowly,
so that three winds blew away from him,

And this was why all Cocytus was frozen.
He wept from six eyes, and over three chins
the tears dripped down with bloody slaver.

In each mouth he chewed upon a sinner
with teeth like a harrow that scutches flax,
and so he kept three in constant agony.

For the sinner in front to be chewed alive
was nothing compared to the claws that flayed him,
so at times his back was utterly stripped of skin.

"The soul up there who is punished the most,"
my master said, "is Judas Iscariot,
who has his head within and flails his legs outside.

Of the other two, with their heads below,
the one who hangs from the black snout is Brutus.
See how he writhes and never says a word.

The other is Cassius, so powerful in stature.
But night is coming on again, and it is time
for us to depart, for we have seen all there is."

Then, as he wanted, I clasped him around the neck,
and he, gauging the timing and distance,
made his move when the wings opened wide,

And caught hold of the great shaggy flanks.
From one clump of matted hair to another
and down through frozen crusts he descended,

And when we had come to where the thigh
turns within the socket of the hip, my leader,
straining with the weight and near exhaustion,

Brought his head around to where his legs had been,
and struggled with the hair like someone climbing,
so that I thought we were going back to Hell.

“Hold tight, for it is by such stairs as these,”
my master said to me, gasping for breath,
“that we must depart from evil so great.”

At last he climbed through a vent in the rock,
perched me on its edge, and then with a careful stride
brought himself over to where I sat on the rim.

I raised my eyes, expecting I would see
Lucifer as I had left him below, but instead
I saw him with legs stretched out above,

And if I became confused, well then,
let the dull minds out there that fail to see
the point I had passed be the judge of that.

“Up on your feet,” the master said to me.
“The way is long and the road not easy,
and the sun is climbing past the third hour.”

It was no great palatial hall where we were,
but more of a kind of natural dungeon
with a rough floor and a lack of light.

“Before I tear myself away from the abyss,
O my master,” I said when I had risen,
“talk to me and clear up my confusion.

Where is the ice? And how did Lucifer there
get stuck upside down? And how did the sun
transit so quickly from evening to dawn?”

And he said, “You imagine that you are still
on the other side of the center, where I
caught hold of the hair of the Evil Worm

Who pierces the world. You remained on that side
as long as I was descending. But when I pivoted
you passed the point to which all weights are drawn.

And now you are beneath the hemisphere
opposite the one that arches over
the great land mass, under whose zenith

The Man was slain who was born and lived without sin;
and your feet are resting upon a little round
that forms the other face of Judecca.

Here it is morning when it is evening there,
and Lucifer, whose pelt formed a ladder for us,
is in the same position as he was before.

He fell down from Heaven on this side of Earth,
and the land withdrew behind a veil of ocean
and fled to the north, toward our hemisphere;

And the Earth that once filled the empty space
where we are standing, perhaps to escape him,
rushed upward to form what now looms above us.”

There is a region below, stretching underground
as far from Beelzebub as his tomb is deep,
not known by sight, but only by the sound

Of a rivulet winding down through a tunnel
that it has eroded from the solid rock
as it flows in its gently sloping channel.

Up this hidden way my guide and I now went
to return again to the world of light,
and without thought of rest we made the ascent,

He leading the way and I following,
until the beautiful things that Heaven bears
appeared above through a round opening,

And we came out again and saw the stars.

PURGATORIO

CANTO I

Now the little boat of my native wit
hoists its sail to run through milder waters,
leaving behind that sea so merciless.

I will sing now of the second kingdom,
the realm where the human soul is cleansed
and becomes worthy to leap up to the sky.

Here let poetry rise from the dead,
O sacred Muses, for I am yours,
and here let Calliope ascend somewhat higher,

Accompanying my song with the same strains
that made the wretched daughters of Pierus
so feel their guilt that they despaired of pardon.

The sweet color of oriental sapphire
that suffused the clear sky at the meridian
and stayed pure down to the horizon's rim

Once more filled my eyes with delight
as soon as I had escaped the dead air
that had afflicted both my eyes and my heart.

The beautiful planet that urges us to love
made the whole eastern sky smile, her light
veiling the Fishes that escorted her.

I turned to the right, and setting my mind
on the other pole, I saw those four stars
no one since earth's first people had seen.

The sky seemed to revel in the brilliance
of those points of light. O widowed North,
deprived forever of that glorious sight!

Once I had withdrawn my gaze from there
and turned a little toward the opposite pole,
where the Wagon's stars had already set,

I saw beside me an old man, alone,
whose looks were so deserving of reverence
that no son could owe his father more.

He had a long beard that was flecked with white,
and his hair, colored in much the same way,

fell onto his chest in two flowing strands.

The rays of light from those four most holy stars
shone on his face so beautifully
that it looked to me as if it basked in the sun.

“Who are you to have made your escape
from the eternal prison and up the dark stream?”
he said, as he shook his venerable locks.

“Who was your guide, or what was the lantern
that brought you out of the deep midnight
that shrouds Hell’s valley in eternal darkness?”

Have the laws that govern the Abyss been broken,
or has a new decree been passed in Heaven,
that you, the damned, come to my rocky shore?”

At this my Master reached out for me
and by words and gestures and with his hands
made me bow my head and genuflect.

Then he answered him, “I came not on my own.
A Lady descended from Heaven; at her entreaty
I offered this man my company and aid.

But if you want a further explanation
of the true nature of our presence here,
I cannot very well deny your wish.

This man has not seen his final sunset,
although his own madness brought it so close
that little time remained for him to turn back.

As I said, I was sent to his aid,
and there was no other way to rescue him
than by the very road that I have taken.

I have shown him all of the damned below
and now intend to show him those spirits
who cleanse themselves under your jurisdiction.

It would take long to tell how I have led him.
A power from above has assisted me
in bringing him to see and listen to you.

May it please you now to welcome his coming:
he goes in search of liberty, and how dear that is
one who has given his life for it knows.

You know it, since you did not find death
bitter in Utica, where you left behind
the garment that will shine on that glorious day.

We have not broken the eternal decrees,
for he is alive, and Minos does not bind me.
I am from that circle where your Marcia

Prays with chaste eyes that you, saintly heart,
still hold her as yours. By her love for you,
and yours for her, I implore you,

Grant us passage through your seven realms.
I will bring word of your kindness to her,
if you consent to be mentioned there below.”

“Marcia was so pleasing to my eyes,”
he said, “when I was alive in the world,
that whatever she asked of me I did.

Now that she dwells beyond the evil river
she no longer has any power to move me,
as was ordained at my deliverance.

But if, as you say, a Lady from Heaven
directs your actions, there is no need of flattery.
It is enough that you ask me in her name.

Go then, and see that you gird this man
with a smooth reed, and that you wash his face
so that it is cleansed of all defilement;

For it would not be fitting for him to go
with his eyes tainted by any shred of mist
before the first minister from Paradise.

At the lowest point of this little island,
down there where the waves beat on the shore,
some reeds grow in a patch of soft mud.

No other plant can take root there
or become hardy enough to hold on long
against the battering of those breakers.

When you have done that, do not return here.
The sun, which is now beginning to rise,
will show you an easier ascent up the mountain.”

And with that he vanished. I rose to my feet
without speaking a word, and drawing myself
close to my leader, turned my eyes toward him.

“My son,” he began, “follow my steps.
Let’s turn back now. You can see that the plain
slopes down from here to its lowest edge.”

Dawn was overcoming the twilight hour,
which fled before it, so that I could make out,
off in the distance, the trembling sea.

We picked our way along the lonely plain
like travelers who have left the road
and wander lost until they find it again.

When we came to a place that was shaded
and fanned by a breeze, and where the morning dew
still fought the sun and had not evaporated,

My master gently ran his hands through
the long grass that grew there, and I,
understanding what he intended to do,

Offered my tear-stained cheeks to him;
and he uncovered all the color in my face
that the grime of Hell had obliterated.

Now we came to the deserted shore.
No man has ever sailed upon that sea
and then sailed back to where he was before.

There, as pleased Another, he girded me.
And then, how marvelous! The humble sprout
that he selected grew back instantly

In the very spot where he had plucked it out.

CANTO XVI

Darkness of hell, or of a night bereft
of every star, beneath a barren sky
utterly obscured with shadowy clouds,

Had never so thickly veiled my sight
as that smoke that enveloped us there—
or had been so harsh and palpable

That it wouldn't let us keep our eyes open;
and therefore my wise and trusted escort
came to my side and offered me his shoulder.

Just as a blind man walks behind his guide
so he won't get lost or knock against
something that might harm or even kill him,

So did I go through that foul, bitter air
listening to my leader, who was saying,
"Make sure you do not get cut off from me."

I heard voices, and each of them seemed
to be praying for peace and for mercy
from the Lamb of God who takes away our sins.

Indeed, they all began with "Agnus Dei"
and sang the words with one voice on pitch
so that they seemed to be in perfect accord.

I asked, "Master, are these spirits I hear?"
And he answered, "You sense the truth,
and here they untie the knot of wrathfulness."

"And who are you who cut through our smoke
and speak of us as though, even here,
you measured time by a calendar's days?"

This had been said by one of the voices,
and then my master told me, "Answer him,
and ask if the road goes up from here."

And so I said, "O creature cleansing yourself
to return in beauty to the One who made you,
you will hear a wonder if you follow me."

"I will follow as far as permitted,"
he replied, "and if the smoke blocks our sight,
hearing will keep us together instead."

And so I began, "Wearing the swaddling clothes
that death unwinds I make my way upward,
and I have come here through the anguish of Hell.

And since God has enclosed me in such grace
that he wills that I see His court, in a way
wholly beyond all modern custom,

Do not hide from me what you were before death,
but tell it to me, and tell me if I am headed
toward the passage up. Your words will guide us.”

“I was a Lombard called Marco by name,
a man of the world who loved that valor
at which today all aim with unstrung bows.

You are on the right path to make the ascent.”
So he answered, and then added, “I pray you,
please pray for me when you are above.”

I said to him, “You have my promise
to do as you ask. But I will burst with the doubt
I have inside unless I free myself of it,

A single doubt at first, but it has been doubled
by what you just said, which confirms for me
sentiments I have also elsewhere heard.

The world is very much a desert
barren of every virtue, as you tell me,
and overgrown with the malice it bears.

But I pray you, point out to me the reason,
so I may see it and show it to others,
for some blame the heavens, and some the earth.”

At first he sighed deeply, a sigh that grief
wrung into “O me.” Then he began, “Brother,
the world is blind, and, yes, you come from it.

You who are still alive assign each cause
only to the heavens, as if they drew
everything with them by necessity.

If that were so, your free will would be destroyed,
and it would not be just to have joy
for goodness, or feel grief for evil.

Yes, the heavens initiate your actions—
I don’t say all of them, but even if I did,
you’ve still received light to see good and evil,

And you still have free will, which, though it may tire
when it first battles the heavens, will later
overcome all if it is properly nourished.

You, free, are subject to a greater power
and a better nature, which creates within you
the mind that is not in the heavens' charge.

And so, if the world around you goes astray
the cause is in you, in you let it be sought.
I will now be your true informant in this.

From the hands of the Creator, who loves it
before it exists, the soul comes forth
like a child at play, now weeping now laughing.

The simple little soul, which knows nothing
except that, coming from a joyous Maker,
it turns eagerly to whatever delights it.

When it tastes the savor of some trivial good
it turns with eagerness to what delights it
if it is not guided or its love reined in.

And so laws had to be imposed as a curb,
and a ruler was needed who could discern
at least the tower of the one true city.

And laws there are, but who takes them in hand?
No one, because the shepherd in charge
may ruminate, but does not have cleft hooves.

The people, therefore, who see their leader lunge
only at the goods for which they themselves lust,
graze only on that and seek no further.

So you can plainly see that poor guidance
has made the world wicked, and it is not
your own nature that has become corrupt.

Rome, which made the world good, once had two suns,
each illuminating a different road,
the road of the world and the road of God.

One has extinguished the other, and the sword
is now joined to the crook, and these two,
forced to go together, can only go badly,

For, being joined, they do not fear each other.
If you don't believe me, look at an ear of grain,
for every plant is known by its seed.

In the land watered by the Adige and Po
valor and courtesy were once to be found,
before Frederick met with opposition.

Now it could safely be crossed by a person
who wanted out of shame to avoid
speaking with or meeting any good man.

Well, there are three good men still in whom
the ancient age rebukes the new, waiting
for God to take them to a better world:

Currado del Palazzo and the good Gherardo
and Guido da Castel, who is better named,
as he is by the French, the honest Lombard.

From now on say that the Church of Rome,
by confounding in herself two governments,
falls in the mire, fouling her burden and herself.”

“O Marco mine,” I said, “you reason well;
and now I see why the sons of Levi
were excluded from the inheritance.

But who is this Gherardo, whom you say
remains as one of the vanished people
in reproach of the present barbarous age?”

“Either your words deceive me,” responded Marco,
“or you are testing me, for you, speaking Tuscan,
seem not to have heard of the good Gherardo.

I know him by no other added name,
unless I would take it from his daughter, Gaia.
May God be with you, for I can come

No farther with you. You can already see
gleaming through the smoke a brightening pallor.
The angel is there, and must not spy me.”

So he turned back and would hear me no more.

CANTO XVII

Recall, Reader, if ever in the mountains
a fog has shrouded you and you could not see
except as moles do, through the pores of your skin,

How when the thick, moist mist begins at last
to evaporate, the disk of the sun
feebly penetrates the curtain of haze,

And you will be able to imagine at once
how I saw the reappearance of the sun,
which by now was very close to setting.

So, matching mine to my master's trusted steps,
I came forth from such a fog to the rays
that were already dead on the shores below.

O Imagination, that sweeps us away
so completely from the outside world
that we would not hear a thousand trumpets,

Who moves you when our senses are idle?
A light moves you, either formed in Heaven,
of itself, or by desire that discerns it from below.

I imagined I saw the impious deed
of that woman who was transformed
into the bird that most delights in song;

And my mind was so restrained by this image,
so self-contained, that it received nothing
that came to it from the outside world.

Then rained down into my high fantasy
the image of one crucified, scornful
and fierce in his mien, and so when dying.

About him stood the grand Ahasuerus
and his wife, Esther, and the just Mordecai,
who was in word and deed beyond reproach.

When this image burst, spontaneously,
as a bubble does when the water
of which it is made suddenly gives way,

There rose up in my vision a young maiden
weeping and wailing aloud, "O Queen,
why through anger have you annulled yourself?"

You have killed yourself so that you would not lose
Lavinia, now you have lost me, and I mourn
your ruin, Mother, before another's has happened."

As sleep is shattered when light abruptly
strikes our closed eyes, and although shattered
still shimmers a little before it all dies away,

So too my imagination dropped away
as soon as a light struck my face, far brighter
than any light we are used to seeing.

I was turning around to see where I was
when a voice said, "Here is the way up,"
removing from me every other intent

And giving my desire to see
who the speaker was the sort of eagerness
that never rests until it sees face to face.

But just as the sun overwhelms our sight
and veils its form by its very excess,
so too was my strength now failing me.

"This is a divine spirit directing us
toward the ascent without our asking.
He conceals his form within his own light.

He treats us as we would treat ourselves;
for whoever sees the need but waits to be asked
already tends toward unkind denial.

Now let's match our steps to this invitation
and try to ascend before it grows dark,
or we will have to wait until daylight returns."

So said my leader, and then he and I
turned our footsteps to mount a stairway;
no sooner was I on the first step

Than I felt a moving wing fan the air
and brush my face, and I heard
"Beati pacifici, who are without wrath."

Twilight's last rays were already so high
on the mountainside above, that the stars
were coming out in many parts of the sky.

"O my strength, why are you melting away?"
I said to myself, for I felt that my legs
had no strength left and had given up the fight.

We were now where the stairway climbed no more
and there we came to a halt, like a ship
that stands at rest when it has reached the shore.

I listened a while to see if I could hear
any sound coming from the new circle,
and then I turned to my master and said,

“Tell me, sweet father, what sin is purged
here in the circle where we are standing?
Our feet may be stayed, but do not stay your speech.”

And he said to me, “In this circle is restored
the love of good that was less than it should be;
here the idled oar is plied once again.

But so that you may understand more clearly,
turn your mind toward me, and you will gather
some good fruit or other from our delay.”

And he went on, “Neither Creator nor creature
was ever without love, either natural
or of the mind, and this you already know.

Natural love is always inerrant,
but the other may err through an evil object
or through having too much or too little vigor.

While it is directed toward the Primal Good
and observes due measure with secondary goods,
it cannot be the cause of sinful pleasure.

But when it is twisted toward evil, or runs
with too much zeal, or too little, toward good,
the creature works against its own Creator.

And so you can see that love must be
the seed of every virtue within you
and of every act that deserves punishment.

Now, since love can never turn its sight
from its subject’s well-being, all things
are secure from ever hating themselves;

And since no being can be thought of as severed
from the First, and as standing on its own,
no being can possibly ever hate Him.

Therefore, if I distinguish correctly,
the evil we love must be our neighbor's,
and it is born in three ways in your mortal clay.

There is he who hopes to excel
by his neighbor's fall from greatness
and desires his fall for just this reason.

There is he who fears to lose power, favor,
honor, and fame by another's exaltation
and is so grieved by it that he loves the contrary.

And there is he who seems so outraged
by injury that he lusts for vengeance
and so needs to contrive another's hurt.

This threefold love is lamented down below.
Now I would have you hear of the other,
which strives for the good in undue measure.

Everyone dimly apprehends a good
where the mind may find rest. Desiring it,
everyone tries to attain that good.

If it is a sluggish love that draws you
to see and attain it, this terrace here
torments you for it, after due repentance.

And there is another good, one that does not
make man happy, for it is not the essence
of every good, its source and its fruit.

Love that gives itself to this with abandon
is wept for in the three circles above,
but the nature of its threefold division,

So you may seek it yourself, I will not speak of."

CANTO XVIII

After the exalted teacher had finished
his lecture to me, he gazed intently
at my face to see if I was satisfied.

I was thirsty for more, and though outwardly
I said not a word, inside I was saying,
"Maybe I'm annoying him with my questions."

But, dear father that he was, he was aware
of my undeclared and timid desire
and spoke to give me courage to speak.

And so I said, "Master, my vision becomes
so keen in your light that I clearly see
each distinction you make, and all you describe.

Therefore, sweet father dear, I beg you,
explain to me love, to which you reduce
every good action and its opposite."

"Direct upon me," he said, "the sharp eyes
of your intellect, and you will soon see
the folly of the blind leading the blind.

The mind, which is created ready to love,
moves toward anything that pleases it
as soon as that pleasure wakes it to act.

Your perception draws from real objects an image
and unfolds it within you in such a way
that your mind turns its attention there,

And if the mind, so turned, inclines toward it,
that inclination is love, and it is nature,
bound up anew in you through pleasure.

Then, as fire, which is born to ascend,
moves upward in its very essence
to survive in its natural element,

Just so the captive mind attains its desire,
a movement of the spirit that never rests
until it enjoys the thing that it loves.

Now you can see how hidden is the truth
from people who insist that every love
is worthy of praise in and of itself,

Perhaps because in its substance love
always seems good. But not every seal
is as good as the wax used for the imprint."

"Your words and my wit in following them,"
I said, "have revealed the nature of love to me,
but that has filled me with even more doubt.

For if love is offered from outside of us,
and if the soul moves on no other foot,
it has no merit in going straight or crooked.”

Then he said, “As far as reason can see here,
I can tell you. Beyond that you must look
to Beatrice, for it has to do with faith.

Every substantial form that is distinct
from matter and yet united with it
contains its own distinctive power,

One not perceived except in action
nor ever shown except by its effect,
as green leaves show the life of a plant.

Therefore, no one knows where the intellect
gets its first principles, or its affection
for primordial objects of desire.

They are in you as zeal for making honey
is present in bees, and this primal will
does not admit of either praise or blame.

Now so that every other will conforms to this,
there is innate in you a sense of judgment
that must hold the threshold of assent.

This is the principle that justifies merit
for what you do, according to how
it garners and winnows good and evil loves.

Those who reasoned this through to the root observed
this inborn free will, and they were the ones
who left to the world a system of ethics.

So even supposing that every love
is kindled in you through necessity,
the power to restrain it is still within you.

Beatrice understands this noble virtue
as free will; therefore you should have it in mind
if ever she should speak of it to you.”

The moon, rising just before midnight
like a glowing copper pitcher, made the stars
seem fewer to us than they had earlier,

And it moved through the sky along the course
that the sun inflames when the Romans see it
setting between Sardinia and Corsica.

That noble shade through whom Pietola
is more renowned than any Mantuan town
had laid down the load I had placed on him,

So that I, having reaped his lucid answers
to the questions I had posed, was left
to vague, drifting thoughts in my drowsiness.

But that drowsiness was lifted from me
all of a sudden by a crowd of people
who had come round to us from behind our backs.

And just as the Ismenus and Asopus saw
a furious crowd along their banks at night
whenever the Thebans would summon Bacchus,

So too these souls, from what I saw of them,
rounding the circle's bend and coming on
with Right Will and Just Love riding them.

They were upon us in no time, the whole throng
all moving together in one mass sprint,
and two in the front shouting through their tears,

“Mary ran in great haste to the mountains”
and “Caesar, to subdue Lerida,
fainted at Marseilles and then ran on to Spain.”

“Faster, faster, so that no time be lost
through little love,” cried the others behind them,
“and so that zeal to act may renew God's grace!”

“O souls in whom keen fervor now perhaps
makes up for the negligence and delay
in doing good that your lukewarmness caused,

This man here, who is alive—and I do not lie—
would like to ascend as soon as it is light,
so tell us where the opening is at hand.”

These were the words of my leader,
and one of the spirits responded, “Come
behind us and you will find the gap.

We are so filled with desire to move
that we cannot stay, so pardon us
if our penance seems to be rudeness to you.

I was abbot of San Zeno in Verona
under the rule of the good Barbarossa,
of whom Milan still speaks with sorrow.

And there is one with one foot in the grave
who will soon lament that monastery
and grieve that he ever had power there,

Because his son, crippled in his body,
worse in his mind, and born to woe,
he has put there in place of its lawful pastor.”

I do not know whether he said more
or if he was silent, he'd run so far ahead,
but this much I heard and was pleased to retain.

Then he who was my constant salvation
said to me, “Turn around so you can see
two of them coming and giving a bite to sloth.”

At the rear of the pack these two were saying,
“The people for whom the Red Sea opened
were dead before Jordan saw its heirs;

And those who did not maintain their effort
all the way to the end with Anchises' son
made for themselves a life without glory.”

When those shades had left us so far behind
that they could no longer be kept in sight
a new thought took form within my mind,

And this to a number of others gave rise,
so that, roaming from one to another theme
in my mental wandering, I closed my eyes

And transmuted my musing into a dream.

CANTO XXVII

As when it strikes with its dawning rays
the place where its Maker shed His blood
while the Ebro falls beneath the zenith Scales,

And the Ganges' waters are scorched by noon,
so stood the sun. And so day was departing
when the blissful angel of God appeared.

He stood on the bank outside the flames
and was singing, "Beati mundo corde"
in a voice that was more alive than ours.

Then, "There is no going farther, holy souls,
if the fire does not bite you. Enter it,
and do not be deaf to the chanting beyond,"

He said to us when we were near to him,
and when I heard it I became like someone
who is about to be put into the pit.

I bent forward over my clasped hands, staring
into the fire and vividly imagining
human bodies I had once seen burned.

My noble escorts both turned to me,
and Virgil explained, "My son, there may be
torment here, but there is not death.

Remember, remember! And if I
guided you safely on Geryon's back,
what shall I do now, closer to God?

You can be sure that even if you stayed
a thousand years in the belly of this flame
you would not lose a single hair on your head.

And if you think that I am deceiving you,
go up to it and test it for yourself
holding out the hem of your robe in your hands.

Now put aside all your fear, turn this way
and walk right in there with confidence."
And I, against my conscience, would not budge.

When he saw me stand there obstinately
he said, a little annoyed, "Now look here, son,
between Beatrice and you there is this wall."

As Pyramus, dying, opened his eyes
when he heard Thisbe's name and looked at her,
that time when the mulberry first became red,

So too, my stubbornness melting away,
I turned to my wise leader when I heard the name
that wells up continuously in my mind.

He shook his head at this and said, "Well?
Do want to stay on this side?" And he smiled,
as if at a child won over with an apple.

Then he went into the fire ahead of me,
asking Statius, who had been between us
for a long way now, to bring up the rear.

As soon as I was in I would have thrown myself
into molten glass to cool myself down,
so beyond all measure was the burning there.

My sweet father, to comfort and encourage me,
went on talking about Beatrice, saying,
"I think I can see her eyes already."

Guiding us was a voice that chanted
from the other side; and, concentrating
on it, we came out where the ascent began.

"Venite, benedicti Patris mei,"
sounded from within a light that was there,
so overwhelming I could not bear to observe it.

"The sun is setting," it added, "and evening comes;
do not stop, but quicken your pace
before the western horizon blackens."

The way led straight up into the rock
at such an angle that my back intercepted
the rays of the sun, which was now quite low,

And we had managed only a few of the steps
when I and my sages saw my shadow fade out,
whereby we knew that the sun had set behind us.

Then, before the immense and varied expanse
of the horizon had all turned the same shade,
and night held sway in all her dominions,

Each of us took a stair as his bed,
for the mountain's nature dispossessed us
of the power and the will to climb anymore.

As goats become quiet when they ruminare
after being frisky and headlong
up in the mountains before they feed,

Standing silent in the shade on a summer day
and guarded by a herdsman, who leans
on his staff as he tends to their rest;

And as a shepherd, who lives in the open,
passes the night beside his quiet flock
and watches so a beast will not scatter it—

Such were the three of us during that night,
I as a goat and they as shepherds,
hemmed in on both sides by high walls of rock.

Little could be seen outside those walls,
but through that little I saw the stars,
larger and brighter than they usually are.

As I was ruminating and gazing at them
sleep overtook me, sleep that often
knows the news before the event.

At the hour, I think, when Cytherea,
who always seems glowing with the fire of love,
first shone on the eastern flank of the mountain,

I seemed to see in a dream a lady
young and beautiful, going through a meadow
gathering flowers and singing these words:

“If anyone asks my name, let him know
that I am Leah and I go about weaving
my fair hands around to make me a garland.

I adorn myself here so that my reflection
will please me, but my sister Rachel never leaves
her mirror, sitting before it all day long.

She is as eager to gaze at her own fair eyes
as I am to adorn myself with my hands.
She sees, and I do, and we are both satisfied.”

And now the splendors of the early dawn
that become more welcome to the pilgrim soul
the nearer he lodges to his home

Were putting to flight the shadows all around
and my sleep along with them. Up I rose,
seeing the great masters already risen.

“The sweet fruit that mortals desire
and search for through so many branches
day will lay your cravings to rest.”

Virgil addressed me with words of this sort,
and never have there been any gifts
that could give pleasure equal to these.

Desire upon desire to ascend
so overwhelmed me that with every stride
I felt that I was growing wings for flight.

When the stairs had all run out beneath us
and we were standing on the topmost step,
Virgil fixed his eyes on me and said,

“The temporal fire and the eternal
you have seen, my son, and now you have come
where on my own I can see no farther.

I have brought you here by my wits and skill.
Take your own pleasure as your guide now.
You are free of the steep way, free of the narrow.

Look at the sun shining on your brow,
look at the new grass, the flowers and trees
that the earth produces here on its own.

You may wander among them or sit in their shade
until the beautiful eyes come rejoicing,
the eyes that weeping made me come to your aid.

Expect no further word or sign from me.
Your will is free now, whole, and true;
not to follow its lead would now be folly.

Sovereign of yourself I crown and miter you.”

CANTO XXX

When the Seven Stars of the first Heaven,
that never knew either setting or rising
nor veil of any cloud than that of sin

And that made each one there aware of his duty,
just as the stars of the Bear lower down
enable the helmsman to come into port—

When those stars had stopped still, the truthful people
who had first come between them and the griffin
turned to the chariot as to their peace.

And one of them, as if sent from Heaven,
sang out thrice, “Veni, sponsa de Libano,”
and then all the others joined in as well.

As the blessed at the last trumpet blast
will rise at once, each from his tomb,
singing Alleluia with re clothed voices,

So upon the divine chariot there rose,
ad vocem tanti senis, a hundred
ministers and messengers of life eternal.

All of them cried, “Benedictus qui venis!”
and, scattering flowers up and around,
“Manibus, oh, date lilia plenis!”

I have sometimes seen at the break of day
the eastern horizon suffused with rose
while the rest of the sky was bright and clear,

And the face of the sun rising through mist
that tempered its brightness in such a way
that the eye could sustain it for a long while.

So too within a cloud of flowers
that rose from the hands of the angels and then
fell down within and without the chariot,

There appeared to me, crowned in olive
above a white veil, a lady mantled in green
whose dress was the color of living flame;

And my spirit, which for so long a time
had been trembling in awe of her presence
but had not yet been completely overcome,

Now, not through further visual knowledge
but an unseen virtue emanating from her,
felt the great power of our early love.

And as soon as my eyes did feel the force
of that transcendent virtue that had already
pierced me before I was out of my boyhood,

I turned to my left with all of the trust
of a little child who runs to his mama
when he is scared or in some kind of distress,

To say to Virgil, "Not a drop of blood
is left in my body that is not trembling:
I recognize the signs of the ancient flame."

But Virgil had left us bereft of himself,
Virgil, sweetest father, Virgil to whom
I entrusted myself for my salvation;

Nor was all that our ancient mother lost
enough to keep my dew-washed cheeks
from turning dark again with tears.

"Dante, do not weep yet because Virgil
has gone away; do not weep yet!
There is another sword that will make you weep!"

Like an admiral who goes from stern to prow
to see the men serving on the other ships
and encourages them to do their best,

So too on the left side of the chariot,
when I turned there at the sound of my name,
which of necessity is recorded here,

I saw the lady, who had first appeared to me
shrouded by the angelic festival,
direct her eyes to me across the stream.

Although the veil that fell from her head,
encircled with Minerva's olive leaves,
did not allow her to be seen distinctly,

She was royal in her mien and ever severe
as she continued to speak, like someone
who saves the hottest words till the end.

"Look at me well. I am indeed, I am indeed
Beatrice! How did you dare to climb the mountain?
Did you not know that man is happy here?"

My eyes fell down to the clear water, but,
seeing myself there, I drew them back to the grass,
so great was the shame that weighed on my brow.

She seemed as harsh to me as a mother
might seem to her son, for stern pity
has a savor that is bitter to taste.

Now she was silent, and the angels
suddenly sang, “In te, Domine, speravi,”
but did not continue beyond “pedes meos.”

Just as snow in the living timber
along Italy’s spine is blown, frozen,
and compacted by Slavonic winds,

And then, liquefied, trickles through itself,
provided Africa blows in some warm air,
so that it seems like a candle melted by flame—

So was I without tears or sighs
before the chants of those who sing forever
in harmony with the eternal spheres.

But when I heard how in their sweet, tempered modes
they took my side, just as if they had said,
“Lady, why are you so sharp with him?”—

Then the ice that had cramped my heart
became breath and water, and poured with anguish
from my breast and through my mouth and eyes.

She remained motionless on the aforesaid side
of the chariot, then addressed these words
to those merciful, angelic beings:

“You keep watch in the everlasting day,
so that neither night nor slumber steals from you
a single step the world makes on its way;

And so my answer is more concerned
that he who weeps there may understand me,
so that fault and grief may be of equal measure.

Not only by the work of the celestial wheels,
which direct every seed to some purposed end
in accordance with its accompanying stars,

But by the largesse of divine acts of grace,
which have as their rain vapors so exalted
that our vision does not begin to approach them,

Was this man so blessed in his youth, virtually
so well endowed, that every sound disposition
would have been marvelously borne out in him.

But the more the land has good and strong soil,
the more it becomes wild and rank with weeds
when uncultivated and poorly sown.

For a while I sustained him with the expression
on my face, and my youthful eyes turned him
toward the right goal and led him with me.

But when on the threshold of my second age
I exchanged my life, this man deserted me
and gave himself over to other causes.

When I had ascended from flesh to spirit,
and beauty and virtue were enhanced in me,
I was less dear and less welcome to him,

And he turned his steps along a path not true,
pursuing false images of the good
that never fulfill the promises they make.

Nor did it avail me to obtain inspirations
with which I called him back, both in dreams
and otherwise, so little did they matter.

He fell so low that every device
for his salvation was now deficient,
except to show him the souls that were lost.

To this end I visited the mouth of Hell
and went to him who has led him up here,
offering my prayers, and weeping as well.

The high decree of God would be broken
if Lethe were crossed and such a feast as appears
were tasted without some kind of token

Of contrition that flows in a flood of tears.”

CANTO XXXI

“You on the other side of the sacred stream,”
she said, turning on me the point of her words
that had seemed sharp enough with just their edge,

And then went on to say without a pause,
“Say it, say if this is true. Your confession
must be joined to an accusation like this.”

My faculties were so confounded
that my voice started up but spent itself
before it issued from my organs of speech.

She waited, and then said, “What are you thinking?
Answer me. Your sinful memories
have not yet been washed away by the water.”

Confusion and fear mingled together
forced from my mouth a kind of “yes,”
but you had to read my lips to hear it.

As a crossbow will crack when it is cocked
with too much tension on the cord and bow,
so that the arrow strikes home with much less force,

So did I collapse beneath that heavy load,
disgorging a flood of tears and sighs
as my voice struggled to come from my throat.

At that she said, “Within your desire for me
that was leading you to love the good
beyond which there is nothing to aspire to,

What pitfalls did you find in your path,
or what chains did you find that caused you
to cast aside all hope of going on?

And what enticements or advantages
did you find displayed on others’ faces
that you felt obliged to strut before them?”

After I had heaved a bitter sigh,
I barely had the voice to make an answer
and my lips labored to form the words.

In tears I said, “Whatever was before me,
with its false pleasures, turned my steps aside
the moment your face was hidden from me.”

And she, "If you had been silent, or had denied
what you have just confessed, your fault would be
no less observed—so great is the Judge.

But when the accusation of the sin
bursts from one's own mouth, in our court
the grindstone turns back to blunt the sword's edge.

Still, that you may now bear shame for your error,
and so that if on a future occasion
you hear the sirens you may be stronger,

Set aside the seeds of tears and listen
so you will hear how my buried flesh
ought to have put you on an opposite path.

Never did nature or art present to you
such pleasing beauty as the fair limbs
that enclosed me then and are now scattered dust.

And if beauty so surpassing failed you
at my death, what mortal thing on earth
should then have captured your desire?

Indeed, at the very first arrow shot
by deceitful things, you should have risen up
and followed me, who was no longer of them.

You should never have allowed some young thing
or passing novelty to cause your wings to droop
as you waited for another blow to land.

A fledgling might allow two or three attempts,
but before the eyes of a full-fledged bird
in vain is any net or arrow deployed."

As children who are ashamed stand mute
with their eyes on the ground, listening,
seeing what they have done and repenting,

Just so stood I. And then she said, "Grieved
as you are now by what you hear, lift your beard,
and what you see will bring you more grief."

Whether uprooted by our northern wind
or a warm wind blowing from Iarbas' land,
a sturdy oak puts up less resistance

Than I did when ordered to lift my chin.
And when she said “beard” to ask for my face,
I recognized the venom in her words.

When I finally did lift up my head,
I saw that those primordial creatures
had paused from scattering flowers about,

And my eyes, that were still a little blurry,
made out Beatrice turning toward the beast
that has two natures but is only one person.

Even beneath her veil and beyond the stream
she surpassed her former self in beauty
more than she had surpassed all others on earth.

The nettle of remorse stung me so much then
that the more anything had ever lured me
to its love, the more I hated that thing now.

My conscience gnawed so much at my heart
that I fainted and fell. What happened to me then
she who was the reason for it knows.

When my heart had restored my sense of the world,
I saw above me the lady I had found alone,
and she was saying, “Hold on to me, hold on!”

She had already brought me into the river
up to my neck, and, pulling me behind her,
was skimming the water as light as a shuttle.

When I was getting close to the blessed shore
I heard “Asperges me” sung so sweetly
I can’t remember it, much less describe it.

The beautiful lady opened her arms
and embracing my head dipped me under,
where I could not help but swallow some water.

Then she drew me out and led me bathed
into the dance of the four lovely ones,
and each of them covered me with an arm.

“Here we are nymphs, and in Heaven stars.
Before Beatrice descended to the world
we were ordained to be her handmaids.

We will bring you to her eyes; but the three
on the other side, who see more deeply,
will sharpen your eyes with their joyous inner light.”

Thus these four began singing, and then
brought me up to the breast of the griffin
where Beatrice stood turned toward us

And went on to say, “Do not withhold your gaze.
We have placed before you the very emeralds
from which Love once shot his arrows at you.”

A thousand desires hotter than flame
bound my eyes to those eyes that flashed light
and still were fixed on the griffin alone.

Just as the sun shines forth from a mirror
that twofold beast radiated from her eyes
now one, and now another of its natures.

Consider, Reader, if I was astonished
when I saw the thing stand still in itself
while its image continually changed its form.

While my soul, full of amazement and joy,
was tasting that food that both satisfies
and stimulates hunger for itself,

The other three, whose bearing showed
their higher order, now came forward
dancing to the tune of angelic music.

“Turn, Beatrice,” they sang, “turn your holy eyes
upon your faithful one, for he has come far
and traveled so many paces to see you.

For grace’s sake do us the grace to unveil
your mouth to him, that he may discern
the deeper beauty that you conceal.”

O splendor of living light eternal!
Who has ever grown so pale in the shade
of Parnassus, or drunk so deep from its well

That he would not be a study in frustration
when trying to render you as you were then
in your free and open self-revelation

Under the canopy of that harmonious Heaven?

PARADISO

CANTO I

The glory of Him who moves all things
penetrates the universe, and its splendor
reflects more in one part and in another less.

I was in the heaven that most receives
His light, and I saw things that no one who
comes down from there can know how to tell;

For our intellect, as it draws itself close
to its desire, goes so deep that memory
is not able to follow it there.

As much, however, of the holy kingdom
as I could store as treasure in my mind,
I will now make the matter of my song.

O good Apollo, for this final labor
make me as much a vessel of your power
as you require to bestow your beloved laurel.

Up until now one peak of Parnassus
has been enough, but now I need both
as I enter into the last arena.

Come into my breast, and breathe there
as you did when you drew Marsyas
out of the scabbard of his body.

If you inspire me, O power divine,
to show even as much as the shadow
of the blessed realm that is stamped on my brain,

You will see me come to your cherished tree
and crown myself with those leaves, of which
my theme and your godhead will make me worthy.

So seldom, Father, does Caesar or poet
gather those leaves for triumph—and this
is the fault and shame of human wills—

That the Peneian bough ought to beget
gladness in the glad Delphic deity
whenever it makes anyone long for it.

A great flame follows a little spark.
Perhaps after me some more eloquent prayer

will be answered by Cyrrha, your sacred peak.

The lamp of the world rises on mortals
from different points; but from the point that joins
four celestial circles, making three crosses,

The sun takes a better course and in conjunction
with better stars, tempering and stamping
the wax of the world more in its own fashion.

Its rising near that point had made morning there
and evening here, and that hemisphere
was almost all white, while the other was black,

When I saw Beatrice, who had turned
around to her left, staring at the sun.
No eagle has ever fixed his eyes on it so.

And as a second ray of light, reflected
from the first, will shoot back up again
like a pilgrim longing to return to his home,

So Beatrice's action, infused through my eyes
into my mind, made me do the same, and I
stared at the sun more than men ever can.

Much is granted to our faculties there
that we do not have here, for that was the place
created for the human race to possess.

I had not endured the sun long, but not so briefly
that I did not see it scintillating
like molten iron pouring out from a forge,

When suddenly it seemed that another day
was added to the day, as if He who is able
had adorned the sky with a second sun.

Beatrice stood with her eyes fixed solely
on the eternal spheres and, withdrawing mine
from above, I now fixed them on her.

What I saw in her changed me within,
As Glaucus was when he tasted the herb
that made him one of the gods of the sea.

Becoming transhuman cannot be
put into words; let this example suffice
for those granted the experience by grace.

Whether I was then only that part of me
You created last, You alone know, O Love
who rule the heavens and drew me up with your light.

When the wheeling that You make sempiternal
by being desired, held my attention
with the harmony that You arrange and temper,

So much of the sky then seemed on fire
with the sun's flame that neither rain nor river
ever made a lake spread out so broad.

The newness of the sound and of the great light
kindled a desire in me to know their cause.
I had never felt desire so keen,

And she who saw me as I saw myself,
opened her lips to calm my troubled mind
before I could open my own to ask.

She said, "You are making yourself dull
with false imaginings, and so cannot see
as you would if you had just cast them aside;

You are not on earth, as you believe you are.
Lightning flying from its own place in the sky
does not run as fast as you return to yours."

If I was freed from my first perplexity
by the few smiling words she spoke to me,
I was more entangled in a new one now

And said, "I was already content, resting
from a great wonder, but now I wonder
how I can be rising above these light bodies."

Then Beatrice, with a sigh of pity,
turned her eyes on me with the sort of look
a mother gives her delirious child,

And began, "All things whatsoever possess
order among themselves, and this is the form
that makes the universe an image of God.

Here the higher creatures see the impress
of eternal excellence, the end and goal
of the order that we have touched upon,

And in this order all beings have
their own natural bent, according with their lots,
some nearer and some farther to their Source.

They move, therefore, to different ports
over the great sea of being, each of them
endowed with an instinct that bears it along.

This instinct bears fire up to the moon;
this is the moving force in mortal hearts;
this holds the earth together and makes it one.

And this bow shoots not only creatures
without intelligence, but also those
who are endowed with intellect and love.

The Providence that keeps all this in place
quiets with its light the sphere of Heaven
within which turns the one with greatest speed,

And that is where, as to an appointed place,
we are being borne by the power of that bow
that takes aim straight at a joyous mark.

It is true that, just as a shape often
fails to match the artist's intention
because the material is not responsive,

So too a creature will sometimes diverge
from its natural course, if it has the power
and is impelled to turn in another direction;

And as fire can be seen to fall from a cloud,
so too the primal impulse, diverted
by false pleasure, may turn down to the earth.

So you should no more wonder, if I am right,
at your ascent than at a stream descending
down to the plain from a mountain height.

If, once your hindrances had come to an end,
you stayed below, it would cause as much surprise
as a living flame that failed to ascend."

And then back to the heavens she turned her eyes.

CANTO III

The sun that first warmed my heart with love
had uncovered for me, by proof and rebuttal,
the sweet beauty of the face of truth;

And I raised my head, although no higher
than was necessary for me to confess
that I stood corrected and was assured;

But as I did so a sight appeared to me
that so strongly compelled my attention then
that I do not remember if I said anything.

Just as through smooth, transparent glass,
or through a pool of still, limpid water
not so deep that the bottom is lost,

The outlines of our faces return to us
so faint that a pearl on a white brow
does not come less quickly to our eyes.

I saw many such faces, eager to speak,
and I ran into the opposite error
than the one Narcissus made with the spring.

As soon as I saw them, taking them to be
reflected semblances, I turned my eyes
to see whose images they were.

Seeing nothing there, I turned my eyes back
straight into the light of my sweet guide,
whose holy eyes glowed as she smiled.

“Do not wonder,” she said to me, “that I smile
at your childish mind, for it does not yet
trust its footing on the truth, but instead

Turns you back, as usual, into a void.
These are real beings that you see,
relegated here for a broken vow.

Speak with them therefore, and hear and believe,
for the true light that gives them peace
does not let them turn their feet away from itself.”

So I addressed myself to the shade that seemed
most eager to talk, and, like a man confused
by excessive desire, I began,

“O spirit created for happiness, who
in the beams of eternal life feel the sweetness
that if not tasted is never understood,

It would be a kindness if you satisfied me
by telling me both your name and your lot.”
Then she, ready and with smiling eyes, said,

“Our charity does not shut doors in the face
of just desire, any more than does His
who wants all His court to be like Himself.

In the world I was a virgin sister,
and if you search your memory well
my being more beautiful will not conceal me,

But you will recognize that I am Piccarda,
put here with these other blessed ones,
and blessed am I in the slowest of the spheres.

Our affections, which are set alight only
in the pleasure of the Holy Spirit,
rejoice in being conformed to His order,

And this lot of ours, which seems so low,
has been given to us because our vows
were neglected and in some manner void.”

Then I said to her, “There shines forth from you
in your marvelous appearance something divine
that is different from my memory of you,

And that is why I was slow to remember.
But what you are saying now assists me
to recall more clearly the lines of your face.

But tell me, do you who are happy here
desire a higher place, in order that
you may see more and be more beloved?”

Along with the other shades she first smiled a little,
and then she responded to me so gladly
she seemed to be in the first fire of love.

“Brother,” she said, “the virtue of charity
quiets our will and causes us to wish for
only what we have and thirst for nothing more.

If we desired to be more exalted,
our desire would be discordant with the will
of the One who assigns us to this place,

And you will see that this cannot hold
in these circles, since love here is guaranteed,
if you consider well the nature of these spheres.

It is the essence of the blessed state
that we keep ourselves within the divine desire
so that our desires themselves may be unified.

Therefore our rank from tier to tier
within this kingdom pleases the whole,
as it does the King who wills our desires to His.

And in His will is our peace. It is the sea
to which all things move, both those things
that it creates and what nature makes.”

It became clear to me then that every where
in Heaven is Paradise, though the Supreme Good
does not rain grace everywhere equally.

But just as when we have enough of one food
but still crave another, and so we give thanks
for one thing as we ask for something else,

So too was I, trying with speech and gesture
to learn from her what was the web through which
she had not drawn the shuttle to the end.

“Perfect life and high desert,” she said to me.
“enheaven higher a lady by whose rule
they take the robe and veil in your world below,

So that until death they wake and sleep
with that Bridegroom who accepts every vow
that love conforms to what pleases Him.

As a young girl I fled from the world
to follow her, wrapped myself in her habit,
and avowed the way of her sisterhood.

Then men more used to evil than to good
snatched me away from that sweet cloister.
Only God knows what my life was then.

This other splendor that shows itself to you
here on my right and that kindles itself
with all of the light that our sphere contains

Applies to herself the same story as mine.
She was a sister, and in much the same way
the wimple's holy shade was taken from her head.

But even after she was returned to the world
against her will and against proper custom,
the veil was never stripped from her heart.

It is the light of the great Constance,
who bore to Swabia's second storm
the third and the last true emperor."

She said this to me and then began to sing
Ave Maria, and as she sang she vanished
like a weight through deep water plummeting.

My eyes followed her until she was lost
to my sight, and then they reverted
to the vision that they desired most,

Turning themselves upon Beatrice alone;
but she flashed on my gaze in such a manner
that my eyes at first could not bear how she shone,

And this made me slower to question her.

CANTO XXXIII

"Virgin Mother, your own Son's daughter,
humblest and most exalted of creatures,
fixed point of heaven's eternal plan,

You are she who did so ennoble
our human nature that its Creator
did not disdain to be His creature's creation.

In your womb was rekindled the Love
by whose warmth this celestial flower
has blossomed in the eternal peace.

You are for us here the noonday light
of charity, and among mortals below
you are the living fountain of hope.

Lady so powerful and so great,
whoever seeks grace without turning to you
wishes to fly without having wings.

Your compassionate aid is not only given
to those who ask, but oftentimes also
is freely given before being sought.

In you is mercy, in you tender pity,
in you munificence. In you is joined
all the goodness found in any creature.

This man, who from the deepest abyss
of the universe up to this height
has seen one by one the lives of the spirits,

Now begs you, through grace, to give him the power
to rise higher still and with his own eyes
ascend to the vision of final salvation.

And I, who never burned for my own vision
more than I do for his, offer to you
all my prayers, and pray they not fall short,

Pray that you will dispense by your prayers
all of the mist of his mortality
so that supreme beauty may be revealed to him.

And this too I pray, Queen, for you are able
to accomplish your will: keep his heart pure
after he has had so great a vision;

Watch and vanquish his human impulses.
See Beatrice and how many of the blest
fold their hands to you for the sake of my prayer.”

The eyes beloved and revered by God,
trained on the suppliant, showed us clearly
how dear to her are the prayers of the devout.

Then she turned her gaze towards the Eternal Light,
into which it cannot be believed
another could penetrate with so clear an eye.

And I, who was approaching now at last
the end of all longing, now intensified
as well I ought, my burning desire.

Bernard smiled at me and gave me a sign
that I should look up, but of myself
I was already doing what the saint wished.

For my sight, becoming pure and clear,
was evermore deeply entering the beam
of the exalted light that is in itself true.

From that moment on, my vision became
vaster than our speech, which fails at such sight,
as memory, too, fails at such high excess.

Like someone who sees a thing in a dream
and after he wakes an impression remains
but nothing more returns to his mind,

So too am I, for the vision has almost
wholly faded away, yet still there drops
deep within my heart the sweetness it bore.

So snow loses its imprint under the sun,
and so when its leaves were blown by the wind
the oracle of the Sybil was lost.

O Supreme Light, so far above
all mortal conception, restore to my mind
a little of how you appeared to it then,

And allow my tongue to have power enough
to leave to people yet to be born
at least a spark of your luminous glory;

for by returning somewhat to my memory
and being voiced a little in these lines,
the better your triumph will be conceived.

I think that the keenness of the living ray
that I endured would have left me lost
if I had turned my eyes away from it,

And I remember that for this reason
I was more fervent to sustain it, until
my gaze reached the Infinite Goodness.

O abundant grace, which made me dare
to fix my eyes upon the Eternal Light
so long that I spent all my vision on it!

I saw that it contained within its depths,
bound by love into one volume, all that is
scattered in pages through the universe,

Substances, accidents, and their relations
fused together, as it were, in such a way
that what I speak of is a simple light.

I believe I saw the universal form
of this knot of things, because as I speak of it,
I feel the joy within me expand.

One moment created greater oblivion for me
than twenty-five centuries did for the quest
that made Neptune marvel at the Argo's shadow.

So my mind gazed, completely entranced,
still, focused, unmoving, intent,
and constantly rekindled by the gazing itself.

Whoever is in that light becomes such
that it is impossible ever to consent
to turn from it to any other sight.

For the good that is the object of the will
is all gathered into it, and apart from that light
all is defective that is perfect there.

Now my speech will convey even less
of what I remember than that of an infant
who still nurses at his mother's breast.

Not that there was more than a single aspect
to the living light upon which I gazed,
for it is ever the same as it was before,

But my sense of sight was gaining strength
as I continued to look, and as I changed
the simple appearance was transformed for me,

And in the profound and clear substance
of that high radiance three rings now appeared,
of three colors and equal circumference.

Two reflected each other, as rainbow
by rainbow, and the third seemed like fire
breathed forth equally from the other two.

Ah, how weak is language in comparison
to my conception, itself less than little
when compared to my actual vision.

O Light Eternal, that in Yourself alone abide,
that alone know Yourself and, known and knowing,
love and smile upon Yourself alone!

The circling generated in this style
appeared in You as a brilliant reflection,
and when my eyes had dwelled on it a while

It seemed that there was painted deep within
an image of ourselves, in its own color,
so that it held my complete attention.

Like the geometer who bends his will
to discover how the circle might be squared,
but cannot find the required principle,

So too I with this new sight at which I stared,
yearning to understand how our image fit
onto the circle and was itself there in-where.

This would have exceeded my own wings' ambit,
had not a sudden brilliance burst through my mind,
bringing all that I wished for along with it.

Here my high phantasy's power declined;
but, like a wheel whose motion never jars,
my will and desire now were turned in kind

By the Love that moves the sun and other stars.

Catherine of Siena,
The Dialogue

Demographic factors condition the rise and fall of civilizations. As depopulation led into the Middle Ages, so it led out of the Middle Ages. The reemergence of bubonic plague in Europe between 1347 and 1351, the Black Death, killed more humans than any other pandemic: an unimaginable empire of death, taking perhaps half of Europe, returning it to the population level of the Early Middle Ages. But Europe did not choose despair. The Renaissance was coming, even though this was a century of disasters. The crisis of the fourteenth century meant a new period had to begin. Plague, wars and civil wars, economic depression, and the astonishing collapse of the papacy's prestige: the medieval order was disintegrating. The importance of the papal crises should not be underestimated. The leadership of Christendom was passing from the papacy to the new nations of Western Europe. The mutually destructive conflict between the pope and the Holy Roman Emperor moved this process along. As monarchies grew more confident and papal power waned, the papacy entered a period of prolonged disaster at the beginning of the fourteenth century. In his ambition to consolidate royal control over the church in France, King Philip IV maneuvered against Pope Boniface VIII (the pope responsible for Dante's exile). In response, Boniface asserted the primacy of papal authority over royal authority in *Unam sanctam*. Philip had Boniface captured and beaten. The pope died from this attack in 1303. In 1305, Philip compelled the College of Cardinals to elect a Frenchman as pope. This Clement V did not want to live in Rome, so he moved the papal court in 1309 to the ecclesiastical enclave of Avignon in territory that falls within modern-day France. Six more French popes would refuse to occupy the see of the bishop of Rome. This is referred to as the "Babylonian Captivity," which ended only in 1377. The scandal involved for the soul of Europe is hard to comprehend. "Rome" had always been the heart of Christendom. The papacy had kept the dream of Rome alive—but then it abandoned the eternal city. There was also great scandal in the French cooptation of the papacy: the pope had long been his own partisan in great-power games, especially as monarch of the Papal States, but how could England, for example, not help but think that the pope was now merely a French pawn?

In a time of Roman Catholic decline, Saint Catherine of Siena (1347-1380) arose as a supreme spiritual force of renewal. Catherine was decisive in restoring the papacy to Rome, influencing Pope Gregory XI to make the return. She then carried out a peace mission to Florence on his behalf, and was there when the Ciompi Revolt broke out in 1378. Catherine was born in the city-state of Siena (Florence's neighbor and great rival), the twenty-fourth of twenty-five children. Like Aquinas, she joined the Dominicans (as a tertiary), and like Saint Francis, she received the stigmata (albeit visible only to her). The core of *The Dialogue of Divine Providence* was dictated (in the vernacular) during ecstatic experiences that probably occurred between October 1377 and November 1378. Afterwards, she would edit by contextualizing the words she had received. The mystical experience was a dialogue between a questioning-petitioning soul and God, burning with the solidary love that made Catherine such a consequential mystic activist. Saint Teresa of Ávila and Catherine were the first two women declared Doctors of the Church.

The woes of the Roman Catholic Church did not end with the pope's return to Rome. Indeed, something even more devastating soon occurred. The Church entered into the Western, or Papal, Schism (1378-1417), in which two, and later three, men claimed the papacy simultaneously, originally due to the scheming of the French faction of the College of Cardinals. Catherine encouraged support for the pope actually elected by the College of Cardinals at the beginning of the split, Urban VI. The Schism was only resolved through the work of the Council of Constance. This was catastrophic for the religious sensibility of Europe, for it divided the religious infrastructure all the way down to the parish level. If the Church's temporal interests had already compromised the papacy's capacity to serve as a locus of unity, it was absolutely necessary that the papacy be at least this one thing: a singular voice addressing itself to each conscience. And that disappeared. Lay people would increasingly take up the mantle of religious reform as seen, for example, in the *Devotio Moderna* and the Brethren of the Common Life—exemplified in Thomas à Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ*.

The Way of Perfection

Then eternal Truth seized her desire and drew it more strongly to himself. Just as in the Old Testament when sacrifice was offered to God a fire came and drew to himself the sacrifice that was acceptable to him, so gentle Truth did to that soul. He sent the fiery mercy of the Holy Spirit and seized the sacrifice of desire she had made of herself to him, saying:

Do you not know, my daughter, that all the sufferings the soul bears or can bear in this life are not enough to punish one smallest sin? For an offense against me, infinite Good, demands infinite satisfaction. So I want you to know that not all sufferings given in this life are given for punishment, but rather for correction, to chastise the child who offends. However, it is true that a soul's desire, that is, true contrition and sorrow for sin, can make satisfaction. True contrition satisfies for sin and its penalty not by virtue of any finite suffering you may bear, but by virtue of your infinite desire. For God, who is infinite, would have infinite love and infinite sorrow.

The infinite sorrow God wills is twofold: for the offense you yourself have committed against your Creator, and for the offense you see on your neighbors' part. Because those who have such sorrow have infinite desire and are one with me in loving affection (which is why they grieve when they sin or see others sinning), every suffering they bear from any source at all, in spirit or in body, is of infinite worth, and so satisfies for the offense that deserved an infinite penalty. True, these are finite deeds in finite time. But because their virtue is practiced and their suffering borne with infinite desire and contrition and sorrow for sin, it has value.

So the glorious apostle Paul taught: "If I had an angelic tongue, knew the future, gave what is mine to the poor, and gave my body to be burned, but did not have charity, it would be worth nothing to me." Finite works are not enough either to punish or to atone unless they are seasoned with loving charity.

I have shown you, dearest daughter, that in this life guilt is not atoned for by any suffering simply as suffering, but rather by suffering borne with desire, love, and contrition of heart. The value is not in the suffering but in the soul's desire. Likewise, neither desire nor any other virtue has value or life except through my only-begotten Son, Christ crucified, since the soul has drawn love from him and in virtue follows his footsteps. In this way and in no other is suffering of value. It satisfies for sin, then, with gentle unitive love born from the sweet knowledge of my goodness and from the bitterness and contrition the

heart finds in the knowledge of itself and its own sins. Such knowledge gives birth to hatred and contempt for sin and for the soul's selfish sensuality, whence she considers herself worthy of punishment and unworthy of reward. So you see, said gentle Truth, those who have heartfelt contrition, love for true patience, and that true humility which considers oneself worthy of punishment and unworthy of reward suffer with patience and so make atonement.

You ask me for suffering to atone for the offenses my creatures commit against me. And you ask for the will to know and love me, supreme Truth. Here is the way, if you would come to perfect knowledge and enjoyment of me, eternal Life: Never leave the knowledge of yourself. Then, put down as you are in the valley of humility you will know me in yourself, and from this knowledge you will draw all that you need.

No virtue can have life in it except from charity, and charity is nursed and mothered by humility. You will find humility in the knowledge of yourself when you see that even your own existence comes not from yourself but from me, for I loved you before you came into being. And in my unspeakable love for you I willed to create you anew in grace. So I washed you and made you a new creation in the blood that my only-begotten Son poured out with such burning love.

This blood gives you knowledge of the truth when knowledge of yourself leads you to shed the cloud of selfish love. There is no other way to know the truth. In so knowing me the soul catches fire with unspeakable love, which in turn brings continual pain. Indeed, because she has known my truth as well as her own sin and her neighbors' ingratitude and blindness, the soul suffers intolerably. Still, this is not a pain that troubles or shrivels up the soul. On the contrary, it makes her grow fat. For she suffers because she loves me, nor would she suffer if she did not love me.

Thus, as soon as you and my other servants come in this way to know my truth you will, for the glory and praise of my name, have to endure great trials, insults, and reproaches in word and in deed, even to the point of death. Behave, then, you and my other servants, with true patience, with sorrow for sin and love of virtue, for the glory and praise of my name. If you do, I shall be appeased for your sins and those of my other servants. The sufferings you endure will, through the power of charity, suffice to win both atonement and reward for you and for others. For you they will win the fruit of life: The stains of your foolishness will be blotted out, and I will no longer remember that you had ever offended me. As for others, because of your loving charity I will pardon them in proportion to their receptiveness.

More particularly, I will pardon both sin and punishment in those who humbly and reverently accept the teaching of my servants. How? They will come in this way to truly know and regret their sins, and so, because of my servants' prayer and desire they will receive (humbly, as I have said) the fruit of grace. And the more willing they are to exercise this grace with virtue, the more they will receive, but if they are less willing, they will receive less. So in general I am saying that through your desires they will receive both forgiveness and its gifts, unless their stubbornness is such that they despair. (Then I would reject them for scorning the blood by which they have so tenderly been bought.)

What fruit do they receive? Pressed by my servants' prayers, I look on them and give them light. I rouse the dog of conscience within them. I make them sensitive to the perfume of virtue and give them delight in the fellowship of my servants. Sometimes I allow the world to show them its true colors, letting them feel all sorts of emotions, so that they may know how inconstant it is and be more eager to seek their homeland in eternal life. The eye cannot see, nor the tongue tell, nor can the heart imagine how many paths and methods I have, solely for love and to lead them back to grace so that my truth may be realized in them!

I am constrained to this by the same immeasurable love with which I created them, as well as by prayers and desires and sufferings of my servants. I do not spurn their tears and sweat and humble prayers; no, I accept them, since it is I who make them love and fill them with grief over the damnation of souls.

But ordinarily I grant these others pardon of their sin only, not of its penalty. For they on their part are not disposed to receive my love and that of my servants with perfect love. Nor do they receive my servants' grief with bitterness or perfect contrition for the sin they have committed, but receive it with imperfect love and contrition. For this reason, such as these receive no pardon of the penalty but only of the sin itself. For not only the giver but also the receiver must be rightly disposed. And if these others are imperfect, they receive only imperfectly the perfect desires of those who offer them with pain to me on their behalf.

Why, then, did I tell you that they receive both pardon and its gifts? Such is the truth. Their sin is atoned for in the way I have told you, through the light of conscience and other means of which we have spoken. In other words, in this beginning of awareness they vomit out the filth of their sins, and so they receive the gift of grace. So it is

with those who live in ordinary charity. If they accept what comes their way as correction without resisting the Holy Spirit's mercy, they receive the life of grace from him, leaving their sin behind.

But if, like fools, they are ungrateful and heedless of me and of my servants' labors, then what was given in mercy will at once turn to their judgment and ruin — not through any defect in mercy or in those who begged mercy for the ingrates, but only through their own wretchedness and hardness. They have, with the hand of free choice, encrusted their heart in a diamond rock that can never be shattered except by blood. Still, I tell you, in spite of their hardness, let them while they still have time and freedom to choose seek the blood of my Son and with that same hand let them pour it over the hardness of their heart: It will shatter the diamond and they will know the fruit of that blood which was paid out for them. But if they dawdle, time will run out and there will be no remedy at all, because they will have no return to show for the endowment they had from me. For I gave them memory to hold on to my blessings, and understanding to see and know the truth, and will to love me, eternal Truth, once understanding has known me.

This is the endowment I gave to all of you, and I your Father expect a return from it. But if you sell it in barter to the devil, the devil goes off with it and carries away everything you had acquired in this life. Then he fills your memory with delightful recollections of indecency, pride, avarice, selfish love for yourself, and hatred and contempt for your neighbors. (For the devil is a persecutor of my servants.) Your mind is darkened in these wretched things by your disordered will, and so in stench you reap eternal punishment, infinite punishment, for you would not atone for your guilt with contrition and contempt for sin.

So you see, suffering atones for sin not by reason of the finite pain but by reason of perfect contrition of the heart. And in those who have this perfect contrition it atones not only for the sin itself but for the penalty due that sin. But for most, as I have said, their suffering satisfies only for sin itself; for though they are freed from deadly sin and receive grace, if their contrition and love are not strong enough to satisfy for the penalty, they go to the pains of purgatory once they have passed beyond the second and final means.

Atonement is made, then, through the desire of the soul who is united to me, infinite Good, in proportion as love is perfect both in the one who prays with desire and in the one who receives. And my goodness will measure out to you with the very same measure that you give to me and that the other receives. So feed the flame of your desire

and let not a moment pass without crying out for these others in my presence with humble voice and constant prayer. Thus I tell you and the spiritual father I have given you on earth: Behave courageously, and die to all your selfish sensuality!

The willing desire to suffer every pain and hardship even to the point of death for the salvation of souls is very pleasing to me. The more you bear, the more you show your love for me. In loving me you come to know more of my truth, and the more you know, the more intolerable pain and sorrow you will feel when I am offended.

You asked for suffering, and you asked me to punish you for the sins of others. What you were not aware of was that you were, in effect, asking for love and light and knowledge of the truth. For I have already told you that suffering and sorrow increase in proportion to love: When love grows, so does sorrow. So I say to you: Ask and it shall be given to you; I will not say no to anyone who asks in truth. Consider that the soul's love in divine charity is so joined with perfect patience that the one cannot leave without the other. The soul, therefore, who chooses to love me must also choose to suffer for me anything at all that I give her. Patience is not proved except in suffering, and patience is one with charity, as has been said. Endure courageously, then. Otherwise you will not show yourselves to be — nor will you be faithful spouses and children of my Truth, nor will you show that your delight is in my honor and in the salvation of souls.

I would have you know that every virtue of yours and every vice is put into action by means of your neighbors. If you hate me, you harm your neighbors and yourself as well (for you are your chief neighbor), and the harm is both general and particular.

I say general because it is your duty to love your neighbors as your own self. In love you ought to help them spiritually with prayer and counsel, and assist them spiritually and materially in their need — at least with your good will if you have nothing else. If you do not love me you do not love your neighbors, nor will you help those you do not love. But it is yourself you harm most, because you deprive yourself of grace. And you harm your neighbors by depriving them of the prayer and loving desires you should be offering to me on their behalf. Every help you give them ought to come from the affection you bear them for love of me.

In the same way, every evil is done by means of your neighbors, for you cannot love them if you do not love me. This lack of charity for me and for your neighbors is the source of all evils, for if you are not doing good you are necessarily doing evil. And to whom is this evil

shown and done? First of all to yourself and then to your neighbors not to me, for you cannot harm me except insofar as I count whatever you do to them as done to me. You do yourself the harm of sin itself, depriving yourself of grace, and there is nothing worse you can do. You harm your neighbors by not giving them the pleasure of the love and charity you owe them, the love with which you ought to be helping them by offering me your prayer and holy desire on their behalf. Such is the general help that you ought to give to every reasoning creature.

More particular are the services done to those nearest you, under your very eyes. Here you owe each other help in word and teaching and good example, indeed in every need of which you are aware, giving counsel as sincerely as you would to yourself, without selfishness. If you do not do this because you have no love for your neighbors, you do them special harm, and this as persistently as you refuse them the good you could do. How? In this Way:

Sin is both in the mind and in the act. You have already sinned in your mind when you have conceived a liking for sin and hatred for virtue. (This is the fruit of that sensual selfishness which has driven out the loving charity you ought to have for me and your neighbors.) And once you have conceived you give birth to one sin after another against your neighbors, however it pleases your perverse sensual will. Sometimes we see cruelty, general or particular, born. It is a general sort of cruelty to see yourself and others damned and in danger of death for having lost grace. What cruelty, to refuse to help either oneself or others by loving virtue and hating vice! But some actually extend their cruelty even further, not only refusing the good example of virtue but in their wickedness assuming the role of the devil by dragging others as much as they can from virtue and leading them to vice. This is spiritual cruelty: to make oneself the instrument for depriving others of life and dealing out death.

Bodily cruelty springs from greed, which not only refuses to share what is one's own but takes what belongs to others, robbing the poor, playing the overlord, cheating, defrauding, putting up one's neighbors' goods — and often their very persons — for ransom.

O wretched cruelty! You will find yourself deprived of my mercy unless you turn to compassion and kindness! At times you give birth to hurtful words, followed often enough by murder. At other times you give birth to indecency toward others, and the sinner becomes a stinking beast, poisoning not only one or two but anyone who might approach in love or fellowship.

And who is hurt by the offspring of pride? Only your neighbors. For you harm them when your exalted opinion of yourself leads you to consider yourself superior and therefore to despise them. And if pride is in a position of authority, it gives birth to injustice and cruelty, and becomes a dealer in human flesh.

O dearest daughter, grieve that I am so offended, and weep over these dead so that your prayer may destroy their death! For you see that everywhere, on every level of society, all are giving birth to sin on their neighbors' heads. For there is no sin that does not touch others, whether secretly by refusing them what is due them, or openly by giving birth to the vices of which I have told you.

It is indeed true, then, that every sin committed against me is done by means of your neighbors.

I have told you how every sin is done by means of your neighbors, because it deprives them of your loving charity, and it is charity that gives life to all virtue. So that selfish love which deprives your neighbors of your charity and affection is the principle and foundation of all evil.

Every scandal, hatred, cruelty, and everything unbecoming springs from this root of selfish love. It has poisoned the whole world and sickened the mystic body of holy Church and the universal body of Christianity. For all virtues are built on charity for your neighbors. So I have told you, and such is the truth: Charity gives life to all the virtues, nor can any virtue exist without charity. In other words, virtue is attained only through love of me.

After the soul has come to know herself she finds humility and hatred for her selfish sensual passion, recognizing the perverse law that is bound up in her members and is always fighting against the spirit. So she rises up with hatred and contempt for that sensuality and crushes it firmly under the foot of reason. And through all the blessings she has received from me she discovers within her very self the breadth of my goodness. She humbly attributes to me her discovery of this selfknowledge, because she knows that my grace has drawn her from darkness and carried her into the light of true knowledge. Having come to know my goodness, the soul loves it both with and without intermediary. I mean she loves it without the intermediary of herself or her own advantage. But she does have as intermediary that virtue which is conceived through love of me, for she sees that she cannot be pleasing or acceptable to me except by conceiving hatred of sin and love of virtue.

Virtue, once conceived, must come to birth. Therefore, as soon as the soul has conceived through loving affection, she gives birth for her neighbors' sake. And just as she loves me in truth, so also she serves her neighbors in truth. Nor could she do otherwise, for love of me and love of neighbor are one and the same thing: Since love of neighbor has its source in me, the more the soul loves me, the more she loves her neighbors.

Such is the means I have given you to practice and prove your virtue. The service you cannot render me you must do for your neighbors. Thus it will be evident that you have me within your soul by grace, when with tender loving desire you are looking out for my honor and the salvation of your neighbors by bearing fruit for them in many holy prayers.

I showed you earlier how suffering alone, without desire, cannot atone for sin. Just so, the soul in love with my truth never ceases doing service for all the world, universally and in particular, in proportion to her own burning desire and to the disposition of those who receive. Her loving charity benefits herself first of all, as I have told you, when she conceives that virtue from which she draws the life of grace. Blessed with this unitive love she reaches out in loving charity to the whole world's need for salvation. But beyond a general love for all people she sets her eye on the specific needs of her neighbors and comes to the aid of those nearest her according to the graces I have given her for ministry: Some she teaches by word, giving sincere and impartial counsel; others she teaches by her example — as everyone ought to edifying her neighbors by her good, holy, honorable life.

These are the virtues, with innumerable others, that are brought to birth in love of neighbor. But why have I established such differences? Why do I give this person one virtue and that person another, rather than giving them all to one person? It is true that all the virtues are bound together, and it is impossible to have one without having them all. But I give them in different ways so that one virtue might be, as it were, the source of all the others. So to one person I give charity as the primary virtue, to another justice, to another humility, to another a lively faith or prudence or temperance or patience, and to still another courage.

These and many other virtues I give differently to different souls, and the soul is most at ease with that virtue which has been made primary for her. But through her love of that virtue she attracts all the other virtues to herself, since they are all bound together in loving charity.

The same is true of many of my gifts and graces, virtue and other spiritual gifts, and those things necessary for the body and human life. I have distributed them all in such a way that no one has all of them. Thus have I given you reason — necessity, in fact — to practice mutual charity. For I could well have supplied each of you with all your needs, both spiritual and material. But I wanted to make you dependent on one another so that each of you would be my minister, dispensing the graces and gifts you have received from me. So whether you will it or not, you cannot escape the exercise of charity! Yet, unless you do it for love of me, it is worth nothing to you in the realm of grace.

So you see, I have made you my ministers, setting you in different positions and in different ranks to exercise the virtue of charity. For there are many rooms in my house. All I want is love. In loving me you will realize love for your neighbors, and if you love your neighbors you have kept the law. If you are bound by this love you will do everything you can to be of service wherever you are.

I have told you how to serve your neighbors, and how that service proves your love for me. Now I will go further:

You test the virtue of patience in yourself when your neighbors insult you. Your humility is tested by the proud, your faith by the unfaithful, your hope by the person who has no hope. Your justice is tried by the unjust, your compassion by the cruel, and your gentleness and kindness by the wrathful. Your neighbors are the channel through which all your virtues are tested and come to birth, just as the evil give birth to all their vices through their neighbors.

Attend well. When I say that humility is tested by pride, I mean that a proud person cannot harm one who is humble, for the humble person smother's pride. If you are faithful to me your faith cannot be lessened by the infidelity of the wicked who neither love nor trust me. Nor can these lessen your hope once you have conceived it through love of me; rather it will be strengthened and proved in your affectionate love for your neighbors.

Those who do not love me cannot believe or trust me; rather they believe and trust in their selfish sensuality, which they do love. They have no faith or trust in my servants either. But though they do not love me faithfully or with constant hope seek their salvation in me, my faithful servant will not abandon them. You see, in the face of their unfaithfulness and lack of hope you prove your own faith. And whenever it may be necessary to prove your virtue, you prove it both in yourself and through your neighbors.

So your justice is not lessened but proved by the injustices of others. That is, you show you are just through the virtue of patience. Likewise, your kindness and mildness are revealed through gentle patience in the presence of wrath. And in the face of envy, spite, and hatred your loving charity is revealed in hungry desire for the salvation of souls.

I tell you, moreover, when you return good for evil you not only prove your own virtue, but often you send out coals ablaze with charity that will melt hatred and bitterness from the heart and mind of the wrathful, even turning their hatred to benevolence. Such is the power of charity and perfect patience in one who takes up the burden of the sins of the wicked and bears with their anger.

Then consider the virtue of steadfast courage. It is tested when you have to suffer much from people's insults and slanders, which would like to drag you away from the way and teaching of the truth either by abuse or flattery. But if you have conceived the virtue of courage within you, you will always be strong and constant, and you will prove your courage externally through your neighbors. If, on the other hand, your virtue could not give solid proof of itself when tried by all these contrary things, then it could not be grounded in truth.

These interior virtues, proved in the way I have explained, are the holy gracious works I ask of my servants. They go far beyond external actions or various bodily penances. These may be instruments of virtue, but they are not virtuous in themselves, and without the interior virtue I have described they would hardly be pleasing to me.

If a soul were to do penance without discernment, that is, if her love were centered mainly on the penance she had undertaken, it would be a hindrance to her perfection. But let her center be in affectionate love, with a holy hatred of herself, with true humility and perfect patience. In hungry desire for my honor and the salvation of souls let her attend to those interior virtues which give proof that her will is dead and her sensuality is continually being slain by the affection of love for virtue. She should be discerning in her penance, with her love fixed more on virtue than on the penance. For penance ought to be undertaken as a means to growth in virtue, according to the measure of one's need as well as one's capability.

Otherwise, if penance becomes the foundation, it becomes a hindrance to perfection. Being done without the discerning light of the knowledge of oneself and of my goodness, it would fall short of my truth. It would be undiscerning, not loving what I most love and not hating what I most hate. For discernment is nothing else but the true knowledge a soul ought to have of herself and of me, and through this knowledge

she finds her roots. It is joined to charity like an engrafted shoot.

Charity, it is true, has many offshoots, like a tree with many branches. But what gives life to both the tree and its branches is its root, so long as that root is planted in the soil of humility. For humility is the governess and wet nurse of the charity into which this branch of discernment is engrafted. Now the source of humility, as I have already told you, is the soul's true knowledge of herself and of my goodness. So only when discernment is rooted in humility is it virtuous, producing life-giving fruit and willingly yielding what is due to everyone.

In the first place, the soul gives glory and praise to my name for the graces and gifts she knows she has received from me. And to herself she gives what she sees herself deserving of. She knows that all that she is and every gift she has is from me, not from herself, and to me she attributes all. In fact, she considers herself worthy of punishment for her ingratitude in the face of so many favors, and negligent in her use of the time and graces I have given her. So she repays herself with contempt and regret for her sins. Such is the work of the virtue of discernment, rooted in self-knowledge and true humility.

Without this humility, as I have said, the soul would be without discernment. For lack of discernment is set in pride, just as discernment is set in humility. A soul without discernment would, like a thief, rob me of my honor and bestow it on herself for her own glory. And what was her own doing she would blame on me, grumbling and complaining about my mysterious ways with her and with the rest of my creatures, constantly finding cause for scandal in me and in her neighbors.

Not so those who have the virtue of discernment. These give what is due to me and to themselves. And then they give their neighbors what is due them: first of all, loving charity and constant humble prayer — your mutual debt — and the debt of teaching, and the example of a holy and honorable life, and the counsel and help they need for their salvation.

If you have this virtue, then whatever your state in life may be whether noble or superior or subject — all that you do for your neighbors will be done with discernment and loving charity. For discernment and charity are engrafted together and planted in the soil of that true humility which is born of self-knowledge.

Do you know how these three virtues exist?

Imagine a circle traced on the ground, and in its center a tree sprouting with a shoot grafted into its side. The tree finds its nourishment in the soil within the expanse of the circle, but uprooted from the soil it

would die fruitless. So think of the soul as a tree made for love and living only by love. Indeed, without this divine love, which is true and perfect charity, death would be her fruit instead of life. The circle in which this tree's root, the soul's love, must grow is true knowledge of herself, knowledge that is joined to me, who like the circle have neither beginning nor end. You can go round and round within this circle, finding neither end nor beginning, yet never leaving the circle. This knowledge of yourself, and of me within yourself, is grounded in the soil of true humility, which is as great as the expanse of the circle (which is the knowledge of yourself united with me, as I have said). But if your knowledge of yourself were isolated from me there would be no full circle at all. Instead, there would be a beginning in self-knowledge, but apart from me it would end in confusion.

So the tree of charity is nurtured in humility and branches out in true discernment. The marrow of the tree (that is, loving charity within the soul) is patience, a sure sign that I am in her and that she is united with me.

This tree, so delightfully planted, bears many-fragranced blossoms of virtue. Its fruit is grace for the soul herself and blessing for her neighbors in proportion to the conscientiousness of those who would share my servants' fruits. To me this tree yields the fragrance of glory and praise to my name, and so it does what I created it for and comes at last to its goal, to me, everlasting Life, life that cannot be taken from you against your will.

And every fruit produced by this tree is seasoned with discernment, and this unites them all, as I have told you.

Such are the fruits of action that I ask of the soul: that virtue should prove itself in response to need. This is what I told you long ago, if you remember, when you wanted to do great penance for me. You said, "What can I do to suffer for you?" And in your mind I answered, "I am one who is pleased by few words and many works." I wanted to show you that I am not much pleased with one who simply shouts, "Lord, Lord, I would like to do something for you!" nor with one who wishes to kill the body with great penances without slaying the selfish will. What I want is many works of patient and courageous endurance and of the other virtues I have described to you — interior virtues that are all active in bearing the fruit of grace.

Actions based on any other principle I would consider a mere "shouting of words." For these are finite works, and I who am infinite insist upon infinite works, that is, infinitely desirous love. I want works of penance and other bodily practices to be undertaken as means, not as your chief

goal. By making them your chief goal you would be giving me a finite thing — like a word that comes out of the mouth and then ceases to exist — unless indeed that word comes out of the soul's love, which conceives virtue and brings it to birth in truth. I mean that finite works — which I have likened to words — must be joined with loving charity. Such works, undertaken not as your chief goal but as means, and not by themselves but in the company of true discernment, would please me.

It would not be right to make penance or other bodily works either your motivation or your goal, for, as I have already said, they are only finite. They are done in time that comes to an end, and sometimes one has to abandon them or have them taken away. In fact, it would not only not be meritorious but would offend me if you continued in these works when circumstances or obedience to authority made it impossible to do what you had undertaken. So you see how finite they are. Take them up, then, not as your goal but only as they are useful. For if you take them as a goal and then have to abandon them at some point, your soul will be left empty.

This is what the glorious Paul taught when he said in his letter that you should mortify your body and put to death your selfish will. In other words, learn to keep your body in check by disciplining your flesh when it would war against the spirit. Your selfish will must in everything be slain, drowned, subjected to my will. And the knife that kills and cuts off all selfish love to its foundation in self-will is the virtue of discernment, for when the soul comes to know herself she takes for herself what is her due, hatred and contempt for sin and for her selfish sensuality.

If you act so, you will be my delight, offering me not only words but many works; for, as I have told you, I want few words but many works. I say “many” rather than giving you any number, because when the soul is grounded in charity (which gives life to all the virtues) her desire must reach to the infinite. As for words, I said I want few not because I have no use for them, but to emphasize that any act in itself is finite and can please me only if it is taken as an instrument of virtue and not as virtuous in itself.

Let no one, therefore, make the judgment of considering those great penitents who put much effort into killing their bodies more perfect than those who do less. I have told you that penance is neither virtuous nor meritorious in itself. Were that the case, how unfortunate would be those who for legitimate reasons cannot perform actual works of penance! But the merit of penance rests completely in the power of

charity enlightened by true discernment.

I am supreme eternal Truth. So discernment sets neither law nor limit nor condition to the love it gives me. But it rightly sets conditions and priorities of love where other people are concerned. The light of discernment, which is born of charity, gives order to your love for your neighbors. It would not permit you to bring the guilt of sin on yourself to benefit your neighbor. For that love would indeed be disordered and lacking in discernment which would commit even a single sin to redeem the whole world from hell or to achieve one great virtue. No, neither the greatest of virtues nor any service to your neighbor may be bought at the price of sin. The priorities set by holy discernment direct all the soul's powers to serving me courageously and conscientiously. Then she must love her neighbors with such affection that she would bear any pain or torment to win them the life of grace, ready to die a thousand deaths, if that were possible, for their salvation. And all her material possessions are at the service of her neighbors' physical needs. Such is the work of the light of discernment born of charity.

So you see, every soul desirous of grace loves me — as she ought without limit or condition. And with my own infinite love she loves her neighbors with the measured and ordered charity I have described, never bringing on herself the evil of sin in doing good for others. Saint Paul taught you this when he said that charity cannot fully profit others unless it begins with oneself. For when perfection is not in the soul, whatever she does, whether for herself or for others, is imperfect.

It could never be right to offend me, infinite Good, under the pretext of saving my finite creation. The evil would far outweigh any fruit that might come of it, so never, for any reason, must you sin. True charity knows this, for it always carries the lamp of holy discernment.

Discernment is that light which dissolves all darkness, dissipates ignorance, and seasons every virtue and virtuous deed. It has a prudence that cannot be deceived, a strength that is invincible, a constancy right up to the end, reaching as it does from heaven to earth, that is, from the knowledge of me to the knowledge of oneself, from love of me to love of one's neighbors. Discernment's truly humble prudence evades every devilish and creaturely snare, and with unarmed hand that is, through suffering — it overcomes the devil and the flesh. By this gentle glorious light the soul sees and rightly despises her own weakness; and by so making a fool of herself she gains mastery of the world, treading it underfoot with her love, scorning it as worthless.

When the soul has thus conceived virtue in the stirring of her love, and through her neighbors proved it and for their sakes brought it to birth,

not all the world can rob her of that virtue. Indeed, persecution only serves to prove it and make it grow. But for that very reason, were the soul's virtue not evident and luminous to others in time of trial, it could not have been conceived in truth; for I have already told you clearly that virtue cannot be perfect or bear fruit except by means of your neighbors. If a woman has conceived a child but never brings it to birth for people to see, her husband will consider himself childless. Just so, I am the spouse of the soul, and unless she gives birth to the virtue she has conceived [by showing it] in her charity to her neighbors in their general and individual needs in the ways I have described, then I insist that she has never in truth even conceived virtue within her. and I say the same of vice: Every one of them is committed by means of your neighbors.

I who am Truth have taught you now what you need to know to achieve and maintain the highest perfection. I have told you as well how sin and its penalty are atoned for in yourself and in your neighbors, reminding you that the pains you endure while in the mortal body are worth nothing in terms of atonement unless they are joined with loving charity, true contrition, and contempt for sin. But suffering so joined with charity atones not by virtue of any actual pain you may endure but by virtue of charity and sorrow for the sin you have committed. This charity is attained with the light of understanding, with a heart sincere and free gazing into me as its object — for I myself am this charity.

You asked me for a willingness to suffer. So I have shown you all this to teach you and my other servants how you should make this sacrifice of yourselves to me. I am speaking of sacrifice both in act and in spirit joined together as the vessel is joined with the water offered to one's lord. For the water cannot be presented without the vessel, and the lord would not be pleased to be offered the vessel without the water. So I tell you, you must offer me the vessel of all your actual sufferings, however I may send them to you — for the place and the time and the sort of suffering are not yours to choose, but mine. But this vessel of yours must be filled with the loving affection and true patience with which you carry all the burden of your neighbors' guilt even while you hate and reject the sin.

Thus these sufferings (which I set before you as a vessel) are found to be filled with the water of my grace, which gives life to your soul. And I accept this present from my dear spouses, from all who serve me. I accept from you your restless desires, your tears and sighs, your constant humble prayers — all of which, because of my love for you, are a means to placate my anger against my wicked enemies, the wicked

ones of the world, who so offend me.

So suffer courageously even to the point of death, and this will be a sign to me that you love me in truth. Nor must you let human respect or troubles make you look back at what you have already plowed. Rather, rejoice in your troubles. The world makes sport of heaping insults upon me, and you will be saddened in the world when you see them insult me. For when they offend me they offend you, and when they offend you they offend me, since I have become one thing with you. JS

Think of it! I gifted you with my image and likeness. And when you lost the life of grace through sin, to restore it to you I united my nature with you, hiding it in your humanity. I had made you in my image; now I took your image by assuming a human form. So I am one thing with you — except if a soul leaves me through deadly sin. But those who love me live in me and I live in them. This is why the world persecutes them. The world has no likeness to me, so it persecuted my only — begotten Son even to the shameful death of the cross, and so it persecutes you. Because it has no love for me, the world persecutes you and will persecute you even to the point of death; for if the world had loved me, it would love you as well. Yet be glad, because in heaven your joy will be complete.

I tell you further: the more the mystic body of holy Church is filled with troubles now, the more it will abound in delight and consolation. And this shall be its delight: the reform of good holy shepherds who are flowers of glory, who praise and glorify my name, offering me the fragrance of virtue rooted in truth. This is the reform of the fragrant blossoming of my ministers and shepherds — not that the fruit of this bride needs to be reformed, because it never spoils or is diminished by the sins of its ministers. So be glad, you and your spiritual father and my other servants, in your bitterness. For I, eternal Truth, promise to refresh you, and after your bitterness I will give you consolation, along with great suffering, in the reform of holy Church.

Dialogue

Then the soul was restless and aflame with tremendous desire because of the unspeakable love she had conceived in God's great goodness when she had come to see and know the expanse of his charity. How tenderly he had deigned to answer her petition and give her hope in her bitterness-bitterness over God's being offended and holy Church's being ravaged, and bitterness over her own wretchedness, which she saw through knowledge of herself! Her bitterness was softened and at the

same time grew, for the supreme eternal Father, now that he had shown her the way of perfection, was showing her in a new light how he was being offended and souls were being harmed.

As the soul comes to know herself she also knows God better, for she sees how good he has been to her. In the gentle mirror of God she sees her own dignity: that through no merit of hers but by his creation she is the image of God. and in the mirror of God's goodness she sees as well her own unworthiness, the work of her own sin. For just as you can better see the blemish on your face when you look at yourself in a mirror, so the soul who in true self — knowledge rises up with desire to look at herself in the gentle mirror of God with the eye of understanding sees all the more clearly her own defects because of the purity she sees in him.

Now as light and knowledge grew more intense in this soul, a sweet bitterness was both heightened and mellowed. The hope that first Truth had given her mellowed it. But as a flame burns higher the more fuel is fed it, the fire in this soul grew so great that her body could not have contained it. She could not, in fact, have survived had she not been encircled by the strength of him who is strength itself.

Thus cleansed by the fire of divine charity, which she had found in coming to know herself and God, and more hungry than ever in her hope for the salvation of the whole world and the reform of holy Church, she stood up with confidence in the presence of the supreme Father. She showed him the leprosy of holy Church and the wretchedness of the world, speaking to him as with the words of Moses:

My Lord, turn the eye of your mercy on your people and on your mystic body, holy Church. How much greater would be your glory if you would pardon so many and give them the light of knowledge! For then they would surely all praise you, when they see that your infinite goodness has saved them from deadly sin and eternal damnation. How much greater this than to have praise only from my wretched self, who have sinned so much and am the cause and instrument of every evil! So I beg you, divine eternal Love, to take your revenge on me, and be merciful to your people. I will not leave your presence till I see that you have been merciful to them.

For what would it mean to me to have eternal life if death were the lot of your people, or if my faults especially and those of your other creatures should bring darkness upon your bride, who is light itself? It is my will, then, and I beg it as a favor, that you have mercy on your people with the, same eternal love that led you to create us in your image and likeness. You said, "Let us make humankind in our

image and likeness.” And this you did, eternal Trinity, willing that we should share all that you are, high eternal Trinity! You, eternal Father, gave us memory to hold your gifts and share your power. You gave us understanding so that, seeing your goodness, we might share the wisdom of your only-begotten Son. And you gave us free will to love what our understanding sees and knows of your truth, and so share the mercy of your Holy Spirit.

Why did you so dignify us? With unimaginable love you looked upon your creatures within your very self, and you fell in love with us. So it was love that made you create us and give us being just so that we might taste your supreme eternal good.

Then I see how by our sin we lost the dignity you had given us. Rebels that we were, we declared war on your mercy and became your enemies. But stirred by the same fire that made you create us, you decided to give this warring human race a way to reconciliation, bringing great peace out of our war. So you gave us your only-begotten Son, your Word, to be mediator between us and you. He became our justice taking on himself the punishment for our injustices. He offered you the obedience you required of him in clothing him with our humanity, eternal Father, taking on our likeness and our human nature!

O depth of love! What heart could keep from breaking at the sight of your greatness descending to the lowliness of our humanity? We are your image, and now by making yourself one with us you have become our image, veiling your eternal divinity in the wretched cloud and dung heap of Adam. And why? For love! You, God, became human and we have been made divine! In the name of this unspeakable love, then, I beg you — would force you even! — to have mercy on your creatures.

God let himself be forced by her tears and chained by her holy desire. And turning to her with a glance at once full of mercy and of sadness he said:

Dearest daughter, because your tears are joined to my charity and are shed for love of me, your weeping has power over me and the pain in your desire binds me like a chain. But look how my bride has disfigured her face! She is leprous with impurity and selfishness. Her breasts are swollen because of the pride and avarice of those who feed there: the universal body of Christianity and the mystic body of holy Church. I am speaking of my ministers who feed at her breasts. They ought not only to feed themselves, but hold to those breasts the whole body of Christianity as well as whoever would rise from the darkness of unbelief and be bound into the body of my Church.

Do you see how ignorantly and blindly they serve out the marvelous milk and blood of this bride — how thanklessly and with what filthy hands? And do you see with what presumption and lack of reverence it is received? And so the precious life-giving blood of my only-begotten Son, which dispelled death and darkness, confounded falsehood, and brought the gift of light and truth, all too often, because of their sinfulness, brings them death instead.

For those who are receptive this blood bestowed and accomplished all that they need to be saved and made perfect. But since its gift of life and grace is in proportion to the soul's readiness and desire, it deals death to the wicked. So it gives death rather than life to those who receive it unworthily, in the darkness of deadly sin. The fault for this is not in the blood. Nor does it lie in the ministers. The latter may be just as evil or worse, but their sin cannot spoil or contaminate the blood or lessen its grace and power, nor can it harm those they serve. They are, however, bringing on themselves the evil of sin, which will certainly be punished unless they set themselves right through true contrition and contempt for sin.

Those who receive the blood unworthily then, I repeat, are harmed not through any fault in the blood nor because of any fault on the ministers' part, but because of their own evil disposition and their own sin. For they have defiled their minds and bodies with such wretched filth, and have been so cruel to themselves and to their neighbors. They have cruelly deprived themselves of grace, willfully trampling underfoot the fruit of the blood, since it was by virtue of the blood that they were freed in holy baptism from the taint of original sin, which they had contracted when they were conceived by their father and mother.

This is why I gave the Word, my only-begotten Son. The clay of humankind was spoiled by the sin of the first man, Adam, and so all of you, as vessels made from that clay, were spoiled and unfit to hold eternal life. So to undo the corruption and death of humankind and to bring you back to the grace you had lost through sin, I, exaltedness, united myself with the baseness of your humanity. For my divine justice demanded suffering in atonement for sin. But I cannot suffer. And you, being only human, cannot make adequate atonement. Even if you did atone for some particular thing, you still could make atonement only for yourself and not for others. But for this sin you could not make full atonement either for yourself or for others since it was committed against me, and I am infinite Goodness.

Yet I really wanted to restore you, incapable as you were of making atonement for yourself. And because you were so utterly handicapped, I sent the Word, my Son; I clothed him with the same nature as yours — the spoiled clay of Atlam — so that he could suffer in that same nature which had sinned, and by suffering in his body even to the extent of the shameful death of the cross he would placate my anger.

And so I satisfied both my justice and my divine mercy. For my mercy wanted to atone for your sin and make you fit to receive the good for which I had created you. Humanity, when united with divinity, was able to make atonement for the whole human race — not simply through suffering in its finite nature, that is, in the clay of Adam, but by virtue of the eternal divinity, the infinite divine nature. In the union of those two natures I received and accepted the sacrifice of my only-begotten Son's blood, steeped and kneaded with his divinity into the one bread, which the heat of my divine love held nailed to the cross. Thus was human nature enabled to atone for its sin only by virtue of the divine nature.

So the pus was drained out of Adam's sin, leaving only its scar, that is, the inclination to sin and every sort of physical weakness — like the scar that remains after a wound has healed. Now Adam's sin oozed with a deadly pus, but you were too weakened to drain it yourself. But when the great doctor came (my only-begotten Son) he tended that wound, drinking himself the bitter medicine you could not swallow. And he did as the wet nurse who herself drinks the medicine the baby needs, because she is big and strong and the baby is too weak to stand the bitterness. My son was your wet nurse, and he joined the bigness and strength of his divinity with your nature to drink the bitter medicine of his painful death on the cross so that he might heal and give life to you who were babies weakened by sin.

Only the scar remains of that original sin as you contract it from your father and mother when you are conceived by them. And even this scar is lifted from the soul — though not completely — in holy baptism, for baptism has power to communicate the life of grace in virtue of this glorious and precious blood. As soon as the soul has received holy baptism, original sin is taken from her and grace is poured in. The inclination to sin, which is the trace that remains from original sin, is a weakness as I have said, but the soul can keep it in check if she will.

Then the soul is as a vessel ready to receive grace and to make it grow within her as much as she chooses to fit herself, through affection and desire, to love and serve me. Or she can fit herself for evil instead, even though she has received grace in holy baptism. And when she is

old enough to discern the one from the other, in her freedom she can choose good or evil as it pleases her.

But such is the freedom of your humanity, and so strong have you been made by the power of this glorious blood, that neither the devil nor any other creature can force you to the least sin unless you want it. You were freed from slavery so that you might be in control of your own powers and reach the end you were created for. How wretched you would be, then, to wallow in the mud like an animal, ignoring the great gift I had given you! A miserable creature full of such foolishness could not receive more.

I want you to understand this, my daughter: I created humankind anew in the blood of my only-begotten Son and reestablished them in grace, but they have so scorned the graces I gave them and still give them! They go from bad to worse, from sin to sin, constantly repaying me with insults. And they not only fail to recognize my graces for what they are, but sometimes even think I am abusing them — I who want nothing but their sanctification! I tell you it will go harder for them in view of the grace they have received, and they will be deserving of greater punishment. They will be more severely punished now that they have been redeemed by my Son's blood than they would have been before that redemption, before the scar of Adam's sin was removed.

It is only reasonable that those who receive more should give more in return, and the greater the gift, the greater the bond of indebtedness. How greatly were they indebted to me, then, since I had given them their very existence, creating them in my image and likeness! They owed me glory, but they stole it from me and took it to themselves instead. They violated the obedience I had laid on them and so became my enemies. But with humility I destroyed their pride: I stooped to take on their humanity, rescued them from their slavery to the devil, and made them free. And more than this—can you see? through this union of the divine nature with the human, God was made human and humanity was made God.

What indebtedness — to have received the treasure of the blood by which they are created anew in grace! So you see how much more they owe me after their redemption than before. For now they are bound by the example of the incarnate Word, my only-begotten Son, to give me glory and praise. And then they will pay their debt of love for me and for their neighbors, as well as true and solid virtue as I described for you earlier.

Because they owe me so much love, if they refuse it their sin is all the greater, and my divine justice punishes them so much more severely

in eternal damnation. False Christians fare much worse there than do pagans. The fire of divine justice torments them the more, burning without consuming; and in their torment they feel themselves being eaten by the worm of conscience, which eats away without eating up — for the damned for all their torment cannot cease to exist. Indeed, they beg for death but cannot have it: They cannot cease to exist. By their sin they can lose the life of grace, but not their very being.

So sin is punished far more severely after people have been redeemed by the blood than before. For they have received more, but they seem to ignore it and to take no notice of their evil deeds. Though I once reconciled them to myself through the blood of my Son, they have become my enemies.

But I have one remedy to calm my wrath: my servants who care enough to press me with their tears and bind me with the chain of their desire. You see, you have bound me with that chain — and I myself gave you that chain because I wanted to be merciful to the world. I put into my servants a hunger and longing for my honor and the salvation of souls so that I might be forced by their tears to soften the fury of my divine justice.

Bring, then, your tears and your sweat, you and my other servants. Draw them from the fountain of my divine love and use them to wash the face of my bride. I promise you that thus her beauty will be restored. Not by the sword or by war or by violence will she regain her beauty, but through peace and through the constant and humble prayers and sweat and tears poured out by my servants with eager desire.

And so I will fulfill your desire by giving you much to suffer, and your patience will spread light into the darkness in all the world's evil. Do not be afraid: Though the world may persecute you, I am at your side and never will my providence fail you.

Then that soul stood before the divine majesty deeply joyful and strengthened in her new knowledge. What hope she had found in the divine mercy. 'What unspeakable Jove she had experienced.' For she had seen how God, in his Jove and his desire to be merciful to humankind in spite of their enmity toward him, had given his servants a way to force his goodness and calm his wrath. So she was glad and fearless in the face of the world's persecution, knowing that God was on her side. And the fire of her holy longing grew so strong that she would not rest there, but with holy confidence made her plea for the whole world.

In her second petition she had concerned herself with the good that both Christians and unbelievers would reap from the reform of holy Church. But as if that were not enough, she now stretched out her prayer, like one starved, to the whole world, and as if he himself were making her ask it, she cried out:

Have mercy, eternal God, on your little sheep, good shepherd that you are! Do not delay with your mercy for the world, for already it almost seems they can no longer survive! Everyone seems bereft of any oneness in charity with you, eternal Truth, or even with each other: I mean, whatever love they have for each other has no grounding in you.

Then God, like one drunk with love for our good, found a way to fire up an even greater love and sorrow in that soul. He showed her with what love he had created us as we have already begun to tell) and he said:

See how they all lash out at me! And I created them with such burning love and gave them grace and gifts without number — all freely, though I owed them nothing! But see, daughter, how they strike back at me with every sort of sin, but most of all with their wretched and hateful selfishness, that breeding ground of every evil, and with this selfish love they have poisoned the whole world. I have shown you how love of me bears every good that is brought to birth for others. By the same principle this sensual selfishness (which is born of pride just as my love is born of charity) is the bearer of every evil.

This evil they do by means of other people. For love of me and love of others are inseparable. And those who have not loved me have cut themselves off as well from any love of their neighbors. This is why I said — and I explained it to you — that every good and every evil is done by means of your neighbors.

How many charges I could bring against humankind! For they have received nothing but good from me, and they repay me with every sort of hateful evil. But I have told you that my wrath would be softened by the tears of my servants, and I say it again: You, my servants, come into my presence laden with your prayers, your eager longing, your sorrow over their offense against me as well as their own damnation, and so you will soften my divinely just wrath.

Know that no one can escape my hands, for I am who I am, whereas you have no being at all of yourselves. What being you have is my doing; I am the Creator of everything that has any share in being. But sin is not of my making, for sin is nonbeing. Sin is unworthy of

any love, then, because it has no part in me. Therefore, my creatures offend me when they love sin, which they should not love, and hate me, to whom they owe love because I am supremely good and gave them being with such burning love. But they cannot escape me: Either I will have them in justice because of their sin, or I will have them in mercy.

Open the eye of your understanding, then, and look at my hand, and you will see that what I have told you is true.

So in obedience to the most high Father, she raised her eyes, and she saw within his closed fist the entire world. And God said:

My daughter, see now and know that no one can be taken away from me. Everyone is here as I said, either in justice or in mercy. They are mine; I created them, and I love them ineffably. And so, in spite of their wickedness, I will be merciful to them because of my servants, and I will grant what you have asked of me with such love and sorrow.

The fire within that soul blazed higher and she was beside herself as if drunk, at once gloriously happy and grief-stricken. She was happy in her union with God, wholly submerged in his mercy and savoring his vast goodness; but to see such goodness offended brought her grief. She knew, though, that God had shown her his creatures' sinfulness to rouse her to intensify her concern and longing. And so she offered thanks to the divine majesty.

As she felt her emotions so renewed in the eternal Godhead, the force of her spirit made her body break into a sweat. (For her union with God was more intimate than was the union between her soul and her body.) The holy fire of Jove grew so fierce within her that its heat made her sweat water, but it was not enough. She longed to see her body sweat blood, so she said to herself:

Alas, my soul! You have frittered your whole life away, and for this have all these great and small evils come upon the world and holy Church! So I want you to heal them now with a sweat of blood.

Indeed, this soul remembered well what Truth had taught her: that she should always know herself and God's goodness at work in her, and that the medicine by which he willed to heal the whole world and to soothe his wrath and divine justice was humble, constant, holy prayer. So, spurred on by holy desire, she roused herself even more to open the eye of her understanding. She gazed into divine charity and there she saw and tasted how bound we are to Jove and seek the glory and praise of God's name through the salvation of souls. She saw that God's servants are called to this — and in particular eternal Truth

had called and chosen her spiritual father, whom she brought before the divine goodness, asking God to light within him a lamp of grace by which he might in truth pursue this Truth.

Then, in answer to her third petition, which came from her hunger for her father's good, God said:

Daughter, this is what I want: that he seek to please me, Truth, by his deep hunger and concern for the salvation of souls. But neither he nor anyone else can achieve this without accepting whatever sufferings I grant.

As much as you long to see me honored in holy Church, just so much must you conceive the love it takes to suffer willingly and with true patience. By this will I know that he and you and my other servants are seeking my honor in truth. Then will he be my very dear son, and he will rest, along with the others, on the breast of my only-begotten Son. And I will make of my Son a bridge by which you can all reach your goal and there receive the fruit of all the labors you have borne for my love. So carry on courageously!

I told you that I have made a bridge of the Word, my only-begotten Son, and such is the truth. I want you to realize, my children, that by Adam's sinful disobedience the road was so broken up that no one could reach everlasting life. Since they had no share in the good for which I had created them, they did not give me the return of glory they owed me, and so my truth was not fulfilled. What is this truth? That I had created them in my image and likeness so that they might have eternal life, sharing in my being and enjoying my supreme eternal tenderness and goodness. But because of their sin they never reached this goal and never fulfilled my truth, for sin closed heaven and the door of my mercy.

This sin sprouted thorns and troublesome vexations. My creatures found rebellion within themselves, for as soon as they rebelled against me, they became rebels against themselves. Their innocence lost, the flesh rebelled against the spirit and they became filthy beasts. All created things rebelled against them, whereas they would have been submissive if all had been kept as I had established it in the beginning. But they stepped outside my obedience and so deserved eternal death in both soul and body.

With sin there came at once the flood of a stormy river that beat against them constantly with its waves, bringing weariness and troubles from themselves as well as from the devil and the world. You were all drowning, because not one of you, for all your righteousness,

could reach eternal life.

But I wanted to undo these great troubles of yours. So I gave you a bridge, my Son, so that you could cross over the river, the stormy sea of this darksome life, without being drowned.

See how indebted to me my creatures are! And how foolish to choose to drown rather than accept the remedy I have given!

Open your mind's eye and you will see the blinded and the foolish, the imperfect, and the perfect ones who follow me in truth. Then weep for the damnation of the foolish and be glad for the perfection of my beloved children. Again, you will see the way of those who choose light and the way of those who choose darkness.

But first I want you to look at the bridge of my only-begotten Son, and notice its greatness. Look! It stretches from heaven to earth, joining the earth of your humanity with the greatness of the Godhead. This is what I mean when I say it stretches from heaven to earth through my union with humanity.

This was necessary if I wanted to remake the road that had been broken up, so that you might pass over the bitterness of the world and reach life. From earth alone I could not have made it great enough to cross the river and bring you to eternal life. The earth of human nature by itself, as I have told you, was incapable of atoning for sin and draining off the pus from Adam's sin, for that stinking pus had infected the whole human race. Your nature had to be joined with the height of mine, the eternal Godhead, before it could make atonement for all of humanity. Then human nature could endure the suffering, and the divine nature, joined with that humanity, would accept my Son's sacrifice on your behalf to release you from death and give you life.

So the height stooped to the earth of your humanity, bridging the chasm between us and rebuilding the road. And why should he have made of himself a roadway? So that you might in truth come to the same joy as the angels. But my Son's having made of himself a bridge for you could not bring you to life unless you make your way along that bridge.

Here the eternal Truth was showing that, although he had created us without our help, he will not save us without our help. He wants us to set our wills with full freedom to spending our time in true virtue. So he continued:

You must all keep to this bridge, seeking the glory and praise of my name through the salvation of souls, bearing up under pain and weariness, following in the footsteps of this gentle loving Word. There is no other way you can come to me.

You are the workers I have hired for the vineyard of holy Church. When I gave you the light of holy baptism I sent you by my grace to work in the universal body of Christianity. You received your baptism within the mystic body of holy Church by the hands of my ministers, and these ministers I have sent to work with you. You are to work in the universal body. They, however, have been placed within the mystic body to shepherd your souls by administering the blood to you through the sacraments you receive from them, and by rooting out from you the thorns of deadly sin and planting grace within you. They are my workers in the vineyard of your souls, ambassadors for the vineyard of holy Church.

Each of you has your own vineyard, your soul, in which your free will is the appointed worker during this life. Once the time of your life has passed, your will can work neither for good nor for evil; but while you live it can till the vineyard of your soul where I have placed it. This tiller of your soul has been given such power that neither the devil nor any other creature can steal it without the will's consent, for in holy baptism the will was armed with a knife that is love of virtue and hatred of sin. This love and hatred are to be found in the blood. For my only-begotten Son gave his blood for you in death out of love for you and hatred for sin, and through that blood you receive life in holy baptism.

So you have this knife for your free will to use, while you have time, to uproot the thorns of deadly sin and to plant the virtues. This is the only way you can receive the fruit of the blood from these workers I have placed in holy Church. For they are there, as I have told you, to uproot deadly sin from the vineyard of your soul and to give you grace by administering the blood to you through the sacraments established in holy Church.

So if you would receive the fruit of this blood, you must first rouse yourself to heartfelt contrition, contempt for sin, and love for virtue. Otherwise you will not have done your part to be fit to be joined as branches to the vine that is my only-begotten Son, who said, "I am the true vine and you are the branches. And my Father is the gardener."

Indeed I am the gardener, for all that exists comes from me. With power and strength beyond imagining I govern the whole world: Not a thing is made or kept in order without me. I am the gardener, then,

who planted the vine of my only-begotten Son in the earth of your humanity so that you, the branches, could be joined to the vine and bear fruit.

Therefore, if you do not produce the fruit of good and holy deeds you will be cut off from this vine and you will dry up. For those who are cut off from this vine lose the life of grace and are thrown into the eternal fire, just as a branch that fails to bear fruit is cut off the vine and thrown into the fire, since it is good for nothing else. So those who are cut off because of their offenses, if they die still guilty of deadly sin, will be thrown into the fire that lasts forever, for they are good for nothing else.

Such people have not tilled their vineyards. They have, in fact, destroyed them — yes, and other people's as well. Not only did they fail to set out any good plants of virtue, but they even dug out the seed of grace that they had received with the light of holy baptism, when they had drunk of the blood of my Son — that wine poured out for you by this true vine. They dug out this seed and fed it to beasts, that is, to their countless sins. And they trampled it underfoot with their disordered will, and so offended me and brought harm to their neighbors as well as to themselves.

But that is not how my servants act, and you should be like them, joined and engrafted to this vine. Then you will produce much fruit, because you will share the vital sap of the vine. And being in the Word, my Son, you will be in me, for I am one with him and he with me. If you are in him you will follow his teaching, and if you follow his teaching you will share in the very being of this Word — that is, you will share in the eternal Godhead made one with humanity, whence you will draw that divine love which inebriates the soul. All this I mean when I say that you will share in the very substance of the vine.

Do you know what course I follow, once my servants have completely given themselves to the teaching of the gentle loving Word? I prune them, so that they will bear much fruit — cultivated fruit, not wild. Just as the gardener prunes the branch that is joined to the vine so that it will yield more and better wine, but cuts off and throws into the fire the branch that is barren, so do I the true gardener act. When my servants remain united to me I prune them with great suffering so that they will bear more and better fruit, and virtue will be proved in them. But those who bear no fruit are cut off and thrown into the fire.

These are the true workers. They till their souls well, uprooting every selfish love, cultivating the soil of their love in me. They feed and tend

the growth of the seed of grace that they received in holy baptism. And as they till their own vineyards, so they till their neighbors' as well, for they cannot do the one without the other. You already know that every evil as well as every good is done by means of your neighbors.

You, then, are my workers. You have come from me, the supreme eternal gardener, and I have engrafted you onto the vine by making myself one with you.

Keep in mind that each of you has your own vineyard. But every one is joined to your neighbors' vineyards without any dividing lines. They are so joined together, in fact, that you cannot do good or evil for yourself without doing the same for your neighbors.

All of you together make up one common vineyard, the whole Christian assembly, and you are all united in the vineyard of the mystic body of holy Church from which you draw your life. In this vineyard is planted the vine, which is my only-begotten Son, into whom you must be engrafted. Unless you are engrafted into him you are rebels against holy Church, like members that are cut off from the body and rot.

It is true that while you have time you can get yourselves out of the stench of sin through true repentance and recourse to my ministers. They are the workers who have the keys to the wine cellar, that is, the blood poured forth from this vine. (And this blood is so perfect in itself that you cannot be deprived of its benefits through any fault in the minister.)

It is charity that binds you to true humility — the humility that is found in knowing yourself and me. See, then, that it is as workers that I have sent you all. And now I am calling you again, because the world is failing fast. The thorns have so multiplied and have choked the seed so badly that it will produce no fruit of grace at all.

I want you, therefore, to be true workers. With deep concern help to till the souls in the mystic body of holy Church. I am calling you to this because I want to be merciful to the world as you have so earnestly begged me.

And the soul, restless in her great Love, answered:

O immeasurably tender love! Who would not be set afire with such love? What heart could keep from breaking? You, deep well of charity, it seems you are so madly in love with your creatures that you could not live without us! Yet you are our God, and have no need of us. Your greatness is no greater for our well-being, nor are you harmed by any harm that comes to us, for you are supreme eternal Goodness.

What could move you to such mercy? Neither duty nor any need you have of us (we are sinful and wicked debtors!) — but only love!

If I see clearly at all, supreme eternal Truth, it is I who am the thief, and you have been executed in my place. For I see the Word, your Son, nailed to a cross. And you have made him a bridge for me, as you have shown me, wretched servant that I am! My heart is breaking and yet cannot break for the hungry longing it has conceived for you!

I remember that you wanted to show me who are those who cross over the bridge and those who do not. So, if it would please your goodness to show me, I would gladly see and hear this from you.

Geoffrey Chaucer,
The Canterbury Tales

The geopolitics of England and France involved a kind of intimate violence. When William the Conqueror crossed the Channel and invaded England in 1066, he was duke of Normandy. As such, he owed homage to his liege lord, the king of France. The Normans were originally Norsemen, “Frenchified ex-Vikings,” as one historian describes them, who had settled in northwestern France in the tenth century. The Norman Conquest made William king of England (and ironically turned the face of England decisively away from Scandinavia towards the continent below the North Sea). So there was a quite anomalous situation in which the kings of England, insofar as they held title to lands within French territory, owed homage to the kings of France for those territories. With the Anglo-Normans, the English monarchy became the strongest in Europe after the collapse of the Carolingian Empire. The French monarchy would take centuries to rise, but the Capetians slowly reversed the feudal fragmentation of West Francia. The two countries were on a collision course. After the Anarchy, Henry II ascended the English throne in 1154 as the first king of the House of Plantagenet. Besides being king, he was count of Anjou (hence Angevin), duke of Normandy—and, by his marriage to Eleanor of Aquitaine, he was duke of Aquitaine. Thus what we call the Angevin Empire came into existence, which heightened the oddity of the situation: the king of England owed homage to the king of France, while ruling more French territory than his liege. (This Henry II was indirectly responsible for the murder of his former friend, Thomas à Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury.) Henry’s son John lost almost all of these French possessions (except for Gascony) to Philip Augustus, king of France, in 1214. The barons of England were so incensed at King John’s failure to defend their continental holdings that they forced him to sign the Magna Carta in 1215.

The conflict between France and England continued, leading up to the Hundred Years’ War. The dynastic luck of the French Capetians finally gave out in 1328, when Charles IV died without a direct male heir. The king of England, Edward III, was the most closely related claimant. The French barons did not want the king of England to become the king of France, so they chose Philip of Valois. Edward initially submitted to this judgment, but then Philip invaded Gascony, so that Edward decided to press his claim to the French throne through war. He and his son Edward, the Black Prince, scored a great victory at Crécy (1346), and the Black Prince won the day at Poitiers (1356). Between these battles, the Black Death came

and went (for the first time), taking off perhaps half of France's population and a third of England's. The economy collapsed. Labor costs shot up, but oligarchs sought to freeze wages. Taxes were high because of the war. The third estate rose, including the Peasants' Revolt in England (1381), the Ciompi Revolt in Florence (1378-82), and the Jacquerie in France (1358), which was additionally motivated by the inability of the nobility to protect the peasantry from the pillaging employed by the English as a war tactic.

A poet during these disastrous times, Geoffrey Chaucer (c.1343-1400), the "Father of English Literature," played a key role in dignifying the Middle English vernacular as a worthy literary medium (as Dante had done with Italian), over against Latin and French. Chaucer was drawn into the service of the court from a young age; the John of Gaunt we read about in Shakespeare was his principal patron. During the siege of Rheims in 1359, a chapter of the Hundred Years' War, Chaucer was captured. It is thought that during this French imprisonment, he was exposed to the poetic tradition of courtly love. After his release, he translated *The Romance of the Rose*, which influenced him more decisively than did any other vernacular work. Chaucer was key in the reception of Dante into England. *The Canterbury Tales* includes poetry from throughout Chaucer's life, but was shaped as an organic whole perhaps between 1387 and 1400, years leading up to the deposition of King Richard II—who had treacherously quelled the Peasants' Revolt. The frame-story for the *Tales* has a motley group of thirty engaged in a storytelling contest while on a pilgrimage from London to visit the shrine of Saint Thomas à Becket at Canterbury Cathedral. Chaucer seems to maintain a tone that balances piety with a reasonable anti-clericalism, indicative of a rising lay confidence necessary to compensate for ecclesiastical scandal. In the *Tales*, English society in the midst of great turmoil is variously and magnificently reflected—with great humanity.

The Prologue

When in April the sweet showers fall
And pierce the drought of March to the root, and all
The veins are bathed in liquor of such power
As brings about the engendering of the flower,
When also Zephyrus with his sweet breath
Exhales an air in every grove and heath
Upon the tender shoots, and the young sun
His half-course in the sign of the Ram has run,
And the small fowl are making melody
That sleep away the night with open eye
(So nature pricks them and their heart engages)
Then people long to go on pilgrimages
And palmers long to seek the stranger strands
Of far-off saints, hallowed in sundry lands,
And specially, from every shire's end
Of England, down to Canterbury they wend
To seek the holy blissful martyr, quick
To give his help to them when they were sick.
It happened in that season that one day
In Southwark, at The Tabard, as I lay
Ready to go on pilgrimage and start
For Canterbury, most devout at heart,
At night there came into that hostelry
Some nine and twenty in a company
Of sundry folk happening then to fall
In fellowship, and they were pilgrims all
That towards Canterbury meant to ride.
The rooms and stables of the inn were wide;
They made us easy, all was of the best.
And, briefly, when the sun had gone to rest,
I'd spoken to them all upon the trip
And was soon one with them in fellowship,
Pledged to rise early and to take the way
To Canterbury, as you heard me say.
But none the less, while I have time and space,
Before my story takes a further pace,
It seems a reasonable thing to say
What their condition was, the full array
Of each of them, as it appeared to me,
According to profession and degree,
And what apparel they were riding in;
And at a Knight I therefore will begin.

There was a Knight, a most distinguished man,
Who from the day on which he first began
To ride abroad had followed chivalry,
Truth honour, generousness and courtesy.
He had done nobly in his sovereign's war
And ridden into battle, no man more,
As well in Christian as in heathen places,
And ever honoured for his noble graces.
When we took Alexandria, he was there.
He often sat at table in the chair
Of honour, above all nations, when in Prussia.
In Lithuania he had ridden, and Russia,
No Christian man so often, of his rank.
When, in Granada, Algeciras sank
Under assault, he had been there, and in
North Africa, raiding Benamarin;
In Anatolia he had been as well
And fought when Ayas and Attalia fell,
For all along the Mediterranean coast
He had embarked with many a noble host.
In fifteen mortal battles he had been
And jousted for our faith at Tramissene
Thrice in the lists, and always killed his man.
This same distinguished knight had led the van
Once with the Bey of Balat, doing work
For him against another heathen Turk;
He was of sovereign value in all eyes.
And though so much distinguished, he was wise
And in his bearing modest as a maid.
He never yet a boorish thing had said
In all his life to any, come what might;
He was a true, a perfect gentle-knight.
Speaking of his equipment, he possessed
Fine horses, but he was not gaily dressed.
He wore a fustian tunic stained and dark
With smudges where his armour had left mark;
Just home from service, he had joined our ranks
To do his pilgrimage and render thanks.
He had his son with him, a fine young Squire,
A lover and cadet, a lad of fire
With locks as curly as if they had been pressed.
He was some twenty years of age, I guessed.
In stature he was of a moderate length,

With wonderful agility and strength.
He'd seen some service with the cavalry
In Flanders and Artois and Picardy
And had done valiantly in little space
Of time, in hope to win his lady's grace.
He was embroidered like a meadow bright
And full of freshest flowers, red and white.
Singing he was, or fluting all the day;
He was as fresh as is the month of May.
Short was his gown, the sleeves were long and wide;
He knew the way to sit a horse and ride.
He could make songs and poems and recite,
Knew how to joust and dance, to draw and write.
He loved so hotly that till dawn grew pale
He slept as little as a nightingale.
Courteous he was, lowly and serviceable,
And carved to serve his father at the table.
There was a Yeoman with him at his side,
No other servant; so he chose to ride.
This Yeoman wore a coat and hood of green,
And peacock-feathered arrows, bright and keen
And neatly sheathed, hung at his belt the while
– For he could dress his gear in yeoman style,
His arrows never drooped their feathers low –
And in his hand he bore a mighty bow.
His head was like a nut, his face was brown.
He knew the whole of woodcraft up and down.
A saucy brace was on his arm to ward
It from the bow-string, and a shield and sword
Hung at one side, and at the other slipped
A jaunty dirk, spear-sharp and well-equipped.
A medal of St Christopher he wore
Of shining silver on his breast, and bore
A hunting-horn, well slung and burnished clean,
That dangled from a baldrick of bright green.
He was a proper forester, I guess.
There also was a Nun, a Prioress,
Her way of smiling very simple and coy.
Her greatest oath was only 'By St Loy!'
And she was known as Madam Eglantyne.
And well she sang a service, with a fine
Intoning through her nose, as was most seemly,
And she spoke daintily in French, extremely,

After the school of Stratford-atte-Bowe;
French in the Paris style she did not know.
At meat her manners were well taught withal;
No morsel from her lips did she let fall,
Nor dipped her fingers in the sauce too deep;
But she could carry a morsel up and keep
The smallest drop from falling on her breast.
For courtliness she had a special zest,
And she would wipe her upper lip so clean
That not a trace of grease was to be seen
Upon the cup when she had drunk; to eat,
She reached a hand sedately for the meat.
She certainly was very entertaining,
Pleasant and friendly in her ways, and straining
To counterfeit a courtly kind of grace,
A stately bearing fitting to her place,
And to seem dignified in all her dealings.
As for her sympathies and tender feelings,
She was so charitably solicitous
She used to weep if she but saw a mouse
Caught in a trap, if it were dead or bleeding.
And she had little dogs she would be feeding
With roasted flesh, or milk, or fine white bread.
And bitterly she wept if one were dead
Or someone took a stick and made it smart;
She was all sentiment and tender heart.
Her veil was gathered in a seemly way,
Her nose was elegant, her eyes glass-grey;
Her mouth was very small, but soft and red,
Her forehead, certainly, was fair of spread,
Almost a span across the brows, I own;
She was indeed by no means undergrown.
Her cloak, I noticed, had a graceful charm.
She wore a coral trinket on her arm,
A set of beads, the gaudies tricked in green,
Whence hung a golden brooch of brightest sheen
On which there first was graven a crowned A,
And lower, Amor vincit omnia.
Another Nun, the secretary at her cell,
Was riding with her, and three Priests as well.
A Monk there was, one of the finest sort
Who rode the country; hunting was his sport.
A manly man, to be an Abbot able;

Many a dainty horse he had in stable.
His bridle, when he rode, a man might hear
Jingling in a whistling wind as clear,
Aye, and as loud as does the chapel bell
Where my lord Monk was Prior of the cell.
The Rule of good St Benet or St Maur
As old and strict he tended to ignore;
He let go by the things of yesterday
And took the modern world's more spacious way.
He did not rate that text at a plucked hen
Which says that hunters are not holy men
And that a monk uncloistered is a mere
Fish out of water, flapping on the pier,
That is to say a monk out of his cloister.
That was a text he held not worth an oyster;
And I agreed and said his views were sound;
Was he to study till his head went round
Poring over books in cloisters? Must he toil
As Austin bade and till the very soil?
Was he to leave the world upon the shelf?
Let Austin have his labour to himself.
This Monk was therefore a good man to horse;
Greyhounds he had, as swift as birds, to course.
Hunting a hare or riding at a fence
Was all his fun, he spared for no expense.
I saw his sleeves were garnished at the hand
With fine grey fur, the finest in the land,
And on his hood, to fasten it at his chin
He had a wrought-gold cunningly fashioned pin;
Into a lover's knot it seemed to pass.
His head was bald and shone like looking-glass;
So did his face, as if it had been greased.
He was a fat and personable priest;
His prominent eyeballs never seemed to settle.
They glittered like the flames beneath a kettle;
Supple his boots, his horse in fine condition.
He was a prelate fit for exhibition,
He was not pale like a tormented soul.
He liked a fat swan best, and roasted whole.
His palfrey was as brown as is a berry.
There was a Friar, a wanton one and merry,
A Limiter, a very festive fellow.
In all Four Orders there was none so mellow,

So glib with gallant phrase and well-turned speech.
He'd fixed up many a marriage, giving each
Of his young women what he could afford her.
He was a noble pillar to his Order.
Highly beloved and intimate was he
With County folk within his boundary,
And city dames of honour and possessions;
For he was qualified to hear confessions,
Or so he said, with more than priestly scope;
He had a special licence from the Pope.
Sweetly he heard his penitents at shrift
With pleasant absolution, for a gift.
He was an easy man in penance-giving
Where he could hope to make a decent living;
It's a sure sign whenever gifts are given
To a poor Order that a man's well shriven,
And should he give enough he knew in verity
The penitent repented in sincerity.
For many a fellow is so hard of heart
He cannot weep, for all his inward smart.
Therefore instead of weeping and of prayer
One should give silver for a poor Friar's care.
He kept his tippet stuffed with pins for curls,
And pocket-knives, to give to pretty girls.
And certainly his voice was gay and sturdy,
For he sang well and played the hurdy-gurdy.
At sing-songs he was champion of the hour.
His neck was whiter than a lily-flower
But strong enough to butt a bruiser down.
He knew the taverns well in every town
And every innkeeper and barmaid too
Better than lepers, beggars and that crew,
For in so eminent a man as he
It was not fitting with the dignity
Of his position, dealing with a scum
Of wretched lepers; nothing good can come
Of commerce with such slum-and-gutter dwellers,
But only with the rich and victual-sellers.
But anywhere a profit might accrue
Courteous he was and lowly of service too.
Natural gifts like his were hard to match.
He was the finest beggar of his batch,
And, for his begging-district, paid a rent;

His brethren did no poaching where he went.
For though a widow mightn't have a shoe,
So pleasant was his holy how-d'ye-do
He got his farthing from her just the same
Before he left, and so his income came
To more than he laid out. And how he romped,
Just like a puppy! He was ever prompt
To arbitrate disputes on settling days
(For a small fee) in many helpful ways,
Not then appearing as your cloistered scholar
With threadbare habit hardly worth a dollar,
But much more like a Doctor or a Pope.
Of double-worsted was the semi-cope
Upon his shoulders, and the swelling fold
About him, like a bell about its mould
When it is casting, rounded out his dress.
He lisped a little out of wantonness
To make his English sweet upon his tongue.
When he had played his harp, or having sung,
His eyes would twinkle in his head as bright
As any star upon a frosty night.
This worthy's name was Hubert, it appeared.
There was a Merchant with a forking beard
And motley dress; high on his horse he sat,
Upon his head a Flemish beaver hat
And on his feet daintily buckled boots.
He told of his opinions and pursuits
In solemn tones, he harped on his increase
Of capital; there should be sea-police
(He thought) upon the Harwich-Holland ranges;
He was expert at dabbling in exchanges.
This estimable Merchant so had set
His wits to work, none knew he was in debt,
He was so stately in administration,
In loans and bargains and negotiation.
He was an excellent fellow all the same;
To tell the truth I do not know his name.
An Oxford Cleric, still a student though,
One who had taken logic long ago,
Was there; his horse was thinner than a rake,
And he was not too fat, I undertake,
But had a hollow look, a sober stare;
The thread upon his overcoat was bare.

He had found no preferment in the church
And he was too unworldly to make search
For secular employment. By his bed
He preferred having twenty books in red
And black, of Aristotle's philosophy,
Than costly clothes, fiddle or psaltery.
Though a philosopher, as I have told,
He had not found the stone for making gold.
Whatever money from his friends he took
He spent on learning or another book
And prayed for them most earnestly, returning
Thanks to them thus for paying for his learning.
His only care was study, and indeed
He never spoke a word more than was need,
Formal at that, respectful in the extreme,
Short, to the point, and lofty in his theme.
A tone of moral virtue filled his speech
And gladly would he learn, and gladly teach.
A Serjeant at the Law who paid his calls,
Wary and wise, for clients at St Paul's
There also was, of noted excellence.
Discreet he was, a man to reverence,
Or so he seemed, his sayings were so wise.
He often had been Justice of Assize
By letters patent, and in full commission.
His fame and learning and his high position
Had won him many a robe and many a fee.
There was no such conveyancer as he;
All was fee-simple to his strong digestion,
Not one conveyance could be called in question.
Though there was nowhere one so busy as he,
He was less busy than he seemed to be.
He knew of every judgement, case and crime
Ever recorded since King William's time.
He could dictate defences or draft deeds;
No one could pinch a comma from his screeds
And he knew every statute off by rote.
He wore a homely parti-coloured coat,
Girt with a silken belt of pin-stripe stuff;
Of his appearance I have said enough.
There was a Franklin with him, it appeared;
White as a daisy-petal was his beard.
A sanguine man, high-coloured and benign,

He loved a morning sop of cake in wine.
He lived for pleasure and had always done,
For he was Epicurus' very son,
In whose opinion sensual delight
Was the one true felicity in sight.
As noted as St Julian was for bounty
He made his household free to all the County.
His bread, his ale were finest of the fine
And no one had a better stock of wine.
His house was never short of bake-meat pies,
Of fish and flesh, and these in such supplies
It positively snowed with meat and drink
And all the dainties that a man could think.
According to the seasons of the year
Changes of dish were ordered to appear.
He kept fat partridges in coops, beyond,
Many a bream and pike were in his pond.
Woe to the cook unless the sauce was hot
And sharp, or if he wasn't on the spot!
And in his hall a table stood arrayed
And ready all day long, with places laid.
As Justice at the Sessions none stood higher;
He often had been Member for the Shire.
A dagger and a little purse of silk
Hung at his girdle, white as morning milk.
As Sheriff he checked audit, every entry.
He was a model among landed gentry.
A Haberdasher, a Dyer, a Carpenter,
A Weaver and a Carpet-maker were
Among our ranks, all in the livery
Of one impressive guild-fraternity.
They were so trim and fresh their gear would pass
For new. Their knives were not tricked out with brass
But wrought with purest silver, which avouches
A like display on girdles and on pouches.
Each seemed a worthy burgess, fit to grace
A guild-hall with a seat upon the dais.
Their wisdom would have justified a plan
To make each one of them an alderman;
They had the capital and revenue,
Besides their wives declared it was their due.
And if they did not think so, then they ought;
To be called 'Madam' is a glorious thought,

And so is going to church and being seen
Having your mantle carried, like a queen.
They had a Cook with them who stood alone
For boiling chicken with a marrow-bone,
Sharp flavouring-powder and a spice for savour.
He could distinguish London ale by flavour,
And he could roast and seethe and broil and fry,
Make good thick soup and bake a tasty pie.
But what a pity – so it seemed to me,
That he should have an ulcer on his knee.
As for blancmange, he made it with the best.
There was a Skipper hailing from far west;
He came from Dartmouth, so I understood.
He rode a farmer's horse as best he could,
In a woollen gown that reached his knee.
A dagger on a lanyard falling free
Hung from his neck under his arm and down.
The summer heat had tanned his colour brown,
And certainly he was an excellent fellow.
Many a draught of vintage, red and yellow,
He'd drawn at Bordeaux, while the trader snored.
The nicer rules of conscience he ignored.
If, when he fought, the enemy vessel sank,
He sent his prisoners home; they walked the plank.
As for his skill in reckoning his tides,
Currents and many another risk besides,
Moons, harbours, pilots, he had such dispatch
That none from Hull to Carthage was his match.
Hardy he was, prudent in undertaking;
His beard in many a tempest had its shaking,
And he knew all the havens as they were
From Gottland to the Cape of Finisterre,
And every creek in Brittany and Spain;
The barge he owned was called The Maudelayne.
A Doctor too emerged as we proceeded;
No one alive could talk as well as he did
On points of medicine and of surgery,
For, being grounded in astronomy,
He watched his patient closely for the hours
When, by his horoscope, he knew the powers
Of favourable planets, then ascendent,
Worked on the images for his dependant.
The cause of every malady you'd got

He knew, and whether dry, cold, moist or hot;
He knew their seat, their humour and condition.
He was a perfect practising physician.
These causes being known for what they were,
He gave the man his medicine then and there.
All his apothecaries in a tribe
Were ready with the drugs he would prescribe
And each made money from the other's guile;
They had been friendly for a goodish while.
He was well-versed in Aesculapius too
And what Hippocrates and Rufus knew
And Dioscorides, now dead and gone,
Galen and Rhazes, Hali, Serapion,
Averroes, Avicenna, Constantine,
Scotch Bernard, John of Gaddesden, Gilbertine.
In his own diet he observed some measure;
There were no superfluities for pleasure,
Only digestives, nutritives and such.
He did not read the Bible very much.
In blood-red garments, slashed with bluish grey
And lined with taffeta, he rode his way;
Yet he was rather close as to expenses
And kept the gold he won in pestilences.
Gold stimulates the heart, or so we're told.
He therefore had a special love of gold.
A worthy woman from beside Bath city
Was with us, somewhat deaf, which was a pity.
In making cloth she showed so great a bent
She bettered those of Ypres and of Ghent.
In all the parish not a dame dared stir
Towards the altar steps in front of her,
And if indeed they did, so wrath was she
As to be quite put out of charity.
Her kerchiefs were of finely woven ground;
I dared have sworn they weighed a good ten pound,
The ones she wore on Sunday, on her head.
Her hose were of the finest scarlet red
And gartered tight; her shoes were soft and new.
Bold was her face, handsome, and red in hue.
A worthy woman all her life, what's more
She'd had five husbands, all at the church door,
Apart from other company in youth;
No need just now to speak of that, forsooth.

And she had thrice been to Jerusalem,
Seen many strange rivers and passed over them;
She'd been to Rome and also to Boulogne,
St James of Compostella and Cologne,
And she was skilled in wandering by the way.
She had gap-teeth, set widely, truth to say.
Easily on an ambling horse she sat
Well wimpled up, and on her head a hat
As broad as is a buckler or a shield;
She had a flowing mantle that concealed
Large hips, her heels spurred sharply under that.
In company she liked to laugh and chat
And knew the remedies for love's mischances,
An art in which she knew the oldest dances.
A holy-minded man of good renown
There was, and poor, the Parson to a town,
Yet he was rich in holy thought and work.
He also was a learned man, a clerk,
Who truly knew Christ's gospel and would preach it
Devoutly to parishioners, and teach it.
Benign and wonderfully diligent,
And patient when adversity was sent
(For so he proved in much adversity)
He hated cursing to extort a fee,
Nay rather he preferred beyond a doubt
Giving to poor parishioners round about
Both from church offerings and his property;
He could in little find sufficiency.
Wide was his parish, with houses far asunder,
Yet he neglected not in rain or thunder,
In sickness or in grief, to pay a call
On the remotest, whether great or small,
Upon his feet, and in his hand a stave.
This noble example to his sheep he gave
That first he wrought, and afterwards he taught;
And it was from the Gospel he had caught
Those words, and he would add this figure too,
That if gold rust, what then will iron do?
For if a priest be foul in whom we trust
No wonder that a common man should rust;
And shame it is to see – let priests take stock –
A shitten shepherd and a snowy flock.
The true example that a priest should give

Is one of cleanness, how the sheep should live.
He did not set his benefice to hire
And leave his sheep encumbered in the mire
Or run to London to earn easy bread
By singing masses for the wealthy dead,
Or find some Brotherhood and get enrolled.
He stayed at home and watched over his fold
So that no wolf should make the sheep miscarry.
He was a shepherd and no mercenary.
Holy and virtuous he was, but then
Never contemptuous of sinful men,
Never disdainful, never too proud or fine,
But was discreet in teaching and benign.
His business was to show a fair behaviour
And draw men thus to Heaven and their Saviour,
Unless indeed a man were obstinate;
And such, whether of high or low estate,
He put to sharp rebuke, to say the least.
I think there never was a better priest.
He sought no pomp or glory in his dealings,
No scrupulosity had spiced his feelings.
Christ and His Twelve Apostles and their lore
He taught, but followed it himself before.
There was a Plowman with him there, his brother;
Many a load of dung one time or other
He must have carted through the morning dew.
He was an honest worker, good and true,
Living in peace and perfect charity,
And, as the gospel bade him, so did he,
Loving God best with all his heart and mind
And then his neighbour as himself, repined
At no misfortune, slacked for no content,
For steadily about his work he went
To thrash his corn, to dig or to manure
Or make a ditch; and he would help the poor
For love of Christ and never take a penny
If he could help it, and, as prompt as any,
He paid his tithes in full when they were due
On what he owned, and on his earnings too.
He wore a tabard smock and rode a mare.
There was a Reeve, also a Miller, there,
A College Manciple from the Inns of Court,
A papal Pardoner and, in close consort,

A Church-Court Summoner, riding at a trot,
And finally myself – that was the lot.
The Miller was a chap of sixteen stone,
A great stout fellow big in brawn and bone.
He did well out of them, for he could go
And win the ram at any wrestling show.
Broad, knotty and short-shouldered, he would boast
He could heave any door off hinge and post,
Or take a run and break it with his head.
His beard, like any sow or fox, was red
And broad as well, as though it were a spade;
And, at its very tip, his nose displayed
A wart on which there stood a tuft of hair
Red as the bristles in an old sow's ear.
His nostrils were as black as they were wide.
He had a sword and buckler at his side,
His mighty mouth was like a furnace door.
A wrangler and buffoon, he had a store
Of tavern stories, filthy in the main.
His was a master-hand at stealing grain.
He felt it with his thumb and thus he knew
Its quality and took three times his due –
A thumb of gold, by God, to gauge an oat!
He wore a hood of blue and a white coat.
He liked to play his bagpipes up and down
And that was how he brought us out of town.
The Manciple came from the Inner Temple;
All caterers might follow his example
In buying victuals; he was never rash
Whether he bought on credit or paid cash.
He used to watch the market most precisely
And got in first, and so he did quite nicely.
Now isn't it a marvel of God's grace
That an illiterate fellow can outpace
The wisdom of a heap of learned men?
His masters – he had more than thirty then –
All versed in the abstrusest legal knowledge,
Could have produced a dozen from their College
Fit to be stewards in land and rents and game
To any Peer in England you could name,
And show him how to live on what he had
Debt-free (unless of course the Peer were mad)
Or be as frugal as he might desire,

And make them fit to help about the Shire
In any legal case there was to try;
And yet this Manciple could wipe their eye.
The Reeve was old and choleric and thin;
His beard was shaven closely to the skin,
His shorn hair came abruptly to a stop
Above his ears, and he was docked on top
Just like a priest in front; his legs were lean,
Like sticks they were, no calf was to be seen.
He kept his bins and garners very trim;
No auditor could gain a point on him.
And he could judge by watching drought and rain
The yield he might expect from seed and grain.
His master's sheep, his animals and hens,
Pigs, horses, dairies, stores and cattle-pens
Were wholly trusted to his government.
He had been under contract to present
The accounts, right from his master's earliest years.
No one had ever caught him in arrears.
No bailiff, serf or herdsman dared to kick,
He knew their dodges, knew their every trick;
Feared like the plague he was, by those beneath.
He had a lovely dwelling on a heath,
Shadowed in green by trees above the sward.
A better hand at bargains than his lord,
He had grown rich and had a store of treasure
Well tucked away, yet out it came to pleasure
His lord with subtle loans or gifts of goods,
To earn his thanks and even coats and hoods.
When young he'd learnt a useful trade and still
He was a carpenter of first-rate skill.
The stallion-cob he rode at a slow trot
Was dapple-grey and bore the name of Scot.
He wore an overcoat of bluish shade
And rather long; he had a rusty blade
Slung at his side. He came, as I heard tell,
From Norfolk, near a place called Baldeswell.
His coat was tucked under his belt and splayed.
He rode the hindmost of our cavalcade.
There was a Summoner with us at that Inn,
His face on fire, like a cherubin,
For he had carbuncles. His eyes were narrow,
He was as hot and lecherous as a sparrow.

Black scabby brows he had, and a thin beard.
Children were afraid when he appeared.
No quicksilver, lead ointment, tartar creams,
No brimstone, no boracic, so it seems,
Could make a salve that had the power to bite,
Clean up or cure his whelks of knobby white
Or purge the pimples sitting on his cheeks.
Garlic he loved, and onions too, and leeks,
And drinking strong red wine till all was hazy.
Then he would shout and jabber as if crazy,
And wouldn't speak a word except in Latin
When he was drunk, such tags as he was pat in;
He only had a few, say two or three,
That he had mugged up out of some decree;
No wonder, for he heard them every day.
And, as you know, a man can teach a jay
To call out 'Walter' better than the Pope.
But had you tried to test his wits and grope
For more, you'd have found nothing in the bag.
Then 'Questio quid juris' was his tag.
He was a noble varlet and a kind one,
You'd meet none better if you went to find one.
Why, he'd allow – just for a quart of wine –
Any good lad to keep a concubine
A twelvemonth and dispense him altogether!
And he had finches of his own to feather:
And if he found some rascal with a maid
He would instruct him not to be afraid
In such a case of the Archdeacon's curse
(Unless the rascal's soul were in his purse)
For in his purse the punishment should be.
'Purse is the good Archdeacon's Hell,' said he.
But well I know he lied in what he said;
A curse should put a guilty man in dread,
For curses kill, as shriving brings, salvation.
We should beware of excommunication.
Thus, as he pleased, the man could bring duress
On any young fellow in the diocese.
He knew their secrets, they did what he said.
He wore a garland set upon his head
Large as the holly-bush upon a stake
Outside an ale-house, and he had a cake,
A round one, which it was his joke to wield

As if it were intended for a shield.
He and a gentle Pardoner rode together,
A bird from Charing Cross of the same feather,
Just back from visiting the Court of Rome.
He loudly sang, 'Come hither, love, come home!'
The Summoner sang deep seconds to this song,
No trumpet ever sounded half so strong.
This Pardoner had hair as yellow as wax,
Hanging down smoothly like a hank of flax.
In driblets fell his locks behind his head
Down to his shoulders which they overspread;
Thinly they fell, like rat-tails, one by one.
He wore no hood upon his head, for fun;
The hood inside his wallet had been stowed,
He aimed at riding in the latest mode;
But for a little cap his head was bare
And he had bulging eye-balls, like a hare.
He'd sewed a holy relic on his cap;
His wallet lay before him on his lap,
Brimful of pardons come from Rome, all hot.
He had the same small voice a goat has got.
His chin no beard had harboured, nor would harbour,
Smoother than ever chin was left by barber.
I judge he was a gelding, or a mare.
As to his trade, from Berwick down to Ware
There was no pardoner of equal grace,
For in his trunk he had a pillow-case
Which he asserted was Our Lady's veil.
He said he had a gobbet of the sail
Saint Peter had the time when he made bold
To walk the waves, till Jesu Christ took hold.
He had a cross of metal set with stones
And, in a glass, a rubble of pigs' bones.
And with these relics, any time he found
Some poor up-country parson to astound,
In one short day, in money down, he drew
More than the parson in a month or two,
And by his flatteries and prevarication
Made monkeys of the priest and congregation.
But still to do him justice first and last
In church he was a noble ecclesiast.
How well he read a lesson or told a story!
But best of all he sang an Offertory,

For well he knew that when that song was sung
He'd have to preach and tune his honey-tongue
And (well he could) win silver from the crowd.
That's why he sang so merrily and loud.
Now I have told you shortly, in a clause,
The rank, the array, the number and the cause
Of our assembly in this company
In Southwark, at that high-class hostelry
Known as The Tabard, close beside The Bell.
And now the time has come for me to tell
How we behaved that evening; I'll begin
After we had alighted at the Inn,
Then I'll report our journey, stage by stage,
All the remainder of our pilgrimage.
But first I beg of you, in courtesy,
Not to condemn me as unmannerly
If I speak plainly and with no concealings
And give account of all their words and dealings,
Using their very phrases as they fell.
For certainly, as you all know so well,
He who repeats a tale after a man
Is bound to say, as nearly as he can,
Each single word, if he remembers it,
However rudely spoken or unfit,
Or else the tale he tells will be untrue,
The things pretended and the phrases new.
He may not flinch although it were his brother,
He may as well say one word as another.
And Christ Himself spoke broad in Holy Writ,
Yet there is no scurrility in it,
And Plato says, for those with power to read,
'The word should be as cousin to the deed.'
Further I beg you to forgive it me
If I neglect the order and degree
And what is due to rank in what I've planned.
I'm short of wit as you will understand.
Our Host gave us great welcome; everyone
Was given a place and supper was begun.
He served the finest victuals you could think,
The wine was strong and we were glad to drink.
A very striking man our Host withal,
And fit to be a marshal in a hall.
His eyes were bright, his girth a little wide;

There is no finer burgess in Cheapside.
Bold in his speech, yet wise and full of tact,
There was no manly attribute he lacked,
What's more he was a merry-hearted man.
After our meal he jokingly began
To talk of sport, and, among other things
After we'd settled up our reckonings,
He said as follows: 'Truly, gentlemen,
You're very welcome and I can't think when
– Upon my word I'm telling you no lie –
I've seen a gathering here that looked so spry,
No, not this year, as in this tavern now.
I'd think you up some fun if I knew how.
And, as it happens, a thought has just occurred
To please you, costing nothing, on my word.
You're off to Canterbury – well, God speed!
Blessed St Thomas answer to your need!
And I don't doubt, before the journey's done
You mean to while the time in tales and fun.
Indeed, there's little pleasure for your bones
Riding along and all as dumb as stones.
So let me then propose for your enjoyment,
Just as I said, a suitable employment.
And if my notion suits and you agree
And promise to submit yourselves to me
Playing your parts exactly as I say
Tomorrow as you ride along the way,
Then by my father's soul (and he is dead)
If you don't like it you can have my head!
Hold up your hands, and not another word.'
Well, our opinion was not long deferred,
It seemed not worth a serious debate;
We all agreed to it at any rate
And bade him issue what commands he would.
'My lords,' he said, 'now listen for your good,
And please don't treat my notion with disdain.
This is the point. I'll make it short and plain.
Each one of you shall help to make things slip
By telling two stories on the outward trip
To Canterbury, that's what I intend,
And, on the homeward way to journey's end
Another two, tales from the days of old;
And then the man whose story is best told,

That is to say who gives the fullest measure
Of good morality and general pleasure,
He shall be given a supper, paid by all,
Here in this tavern, in this very hall,
When we come back again from Canterbury.
And in the hope to keep you bright and merry
I'll go along with you myself and ride
All at my own expense and serve as guide.
I'll be the judge, and those who won't obey
Shall pay for what we spend upon the way.
Now if you all agree to what you've heard
Tell me at once without another word,
And I will make arrangements early for it.'
Of course we all agreed, in fact we swore it
Delightedly, and made entreaty too
That he should act as he proposed to do,
Become our Governor in short, and be
Judge of our tales and general referee,
And set the supper at a certain price.
We promised to be ruled by his advice
Come high, come low; unanimously thus
We set him up in judgement over us.
More wine was fetched, the business being done;
We drank it off and up went everyone
To bed without a moment of delay.
Early next morning at the spring of day
Up rose our Host and roused us like a cock,
Gathering us together in a flock,
And off we rode at slightly faster pace
Than walking to St Thomas' watering-place;
And there our Host drew up, began to ease
His horse, and said, 'Now, listen if you please,
My lords! Remember what you promised me.
If ensong and mattins will agree
Let's see who shall be first to tell a tale.
And as I hope to drink good wine and ale
I'll be your judge. The rebel who disobeys,
However much the journey costs, he pays.
Now draw for cut and then we can depart;
The man who draws the shortest cut shall start.
My Lord the Knight,' he said, 'step up to me
And draw your cut, for that is my decree.
And come you near, my Lady Prioress,

And you, Sir Cleric, drop your shamefastness,
No studying now! A hand from every man!
Immediately the draw for lots began
And to tell shortly how the matter went,
Whether by chance or fate or accident,
The truth is this, the cut fell to the Knight,
Which everybody greeted with delight.
And tell his tale he must, as reason was
Because of our agreement and because
He too had sworn. What more is there to say?
For when this good man saw how matters lay,
Being by wisdom and obedience driven
To keep a promise he had freely given,
He said, 'Since it's for me to start the game,
Why, welcome be the cut in God's good name!
Now let us ride, and listen to what I say.'
And at the word we started on our way
And in a cheerful style he then began
At once to tell his tale, and thus it ran.

The Franklin's Prologue

Of old the noble Bretons in their days
Delighted in adventures and made lays
In rhyme, according to their early tongue,
Which to the sound of instruments were sung,
Or read in silence for their own delight.
And I remember one, if I am right,
Which I will render you as best I can.
But, sirs, I'm not a cultivated man,
And so from the beginning I beseech
You to excuse me my untutored speech.
They never taught me rhetoric, I fear,
So what I have to say is bare and clear.
I haven't slept on Mount Parnassus, no.
Nor studied Marcus Tullius Cithero.
I can't give colouring to my words – indeed
Such colours as I know adorn the mead,
Or else are those they use in dyes or paint.
'Colours of rhetoric' to me seem quaint,
I have no feeling for such things; but still
Here is my story, listen if you will.

The Franklin's Tale

In Brittany, or as it then was called,
Armorica, there was a knight enthralled
To love, who served his lady with his best
In many a toilsome enterprise and quest,
Suffering much for her ere she was won.
She was among the loveliest under sun
And came from kindred of so high a kind
He scarce had the temerity of mind
To tell her of his longing and distress.
But in the end she saw his worthiness
And felt such pity for the pains he suffered,
Especially for the meek obedience offered,
That privately she fell into accord
And took him for her husband and her lord
– The lordship husbands have upon their wives.
And to enhance the bliss of both their lives
He freely gave his promise as a knight
That he would never darken her delight
By exercising his authority
Against her will or showing jealousy,
But would obey in all with simple trust
As any lover of a lady must;
Save that his sovereignty in name upon her
He should preserve, lest it should shame his honour.
She thanked him, and with geat humility
Replied, ‘Sir, since you show a courtesy
So fair in proffering me so free a rein,
God grant there never be betwixt us twain,
Through any fault of mine, dispute or strife.
Sir, I will be your true and humble wife,
Accept my truth of heart, or break, my breast!’
Thus were they both in quiet and at rest.
For there’s one thing, my lords, it’s safe to say;
Lovers must each be ready to obey
The other, if they would long keep company.
Love will not be constrained by mastery;
When mastery comes the god of love anon
Stretches his wings and farewell! he is gone.
Love is a thing as any spirit free;
Women by nature long for liberty
And not to be constrained or made a thrall,
And so do men, if I may speak for all.

Whoever's the most patient under love
Has the advantage and will rise above
The other; patience is a conquering virtue.
The learned say that, if it not desert you,
It vanquishes what force can never reach;
Why answer back at every angry speech?
No, learn forbearance or, I'll tell you what,
You will be taught it, whether you will or not.
No one alive – it needs no arguing
But sometimes says or does a wrongful thing;
Rage, sickness, influence of some malign
Star-constellation, temper, woe or wine
Spur us to wrongful words or make us trip.
One should not seek revenge for every slip,
And temperance from the times must take her schooling
In those that are to learn the art of ruling.
And so this wise and honourable knight
Promised forbearance to her that he might
Live the more easily, and she, as kind,
Promised there never would be fault to find
In her. Thus in this humble, wise accord
She took a servant when she took a lord,
A lord in marriage in a love renewed
By service, lordship set in servitude;
In servitude? Why no, but far above
Since he had both his lady and his love,
His lady certainly, his wife no less,
To which the law of love will answer 'yes'.
So in the happiness that they had planned
He took his wife home to his native land
With joyful ease and reached his castle there
By Penmarch Point, not far from Finisterre,
And there they lived in amity unharried.
Who can recount, unless he has been married,
The ease, the prosperous joys of man and wife?
A year or more they lived their blissful life
Until it chanced the knight that I have thus
Described and who was called Arvéragus
Of Caer-rhud, planned to spend a year or so
In Britain (no, not Brittany), to go
And seek high deeds of arms and reputation
In honour; that was all his inclination.
He stayed two years, at least the book says thus.

Now I will pause about Arvéragus
And turn to speak of Dorigen his wife
Who loved her husband as her own heart's life.
She wept his absence, sighed for him and pined
As noble wives will do when so inclined;
She mourned, lay wakeful, fasted and lamented,
Strained by a passion that could be contented
Only by him, and set the world at naught.
Her friends who knew the burden of her thought
Brought her such consolations as they might;
They preached to her, they told her day and night,
'You'll kill yourself for nothing.' Such relief
And comfort as is possible to grief
They fuss about to find, and finding, press
Upon her to relieve her heaviness.
Slow is the process, it is widely known,
By which a carver carves his thought in stone,
Yet cuts at last the figure he intended;
And slowly too, thus soothed and thus befriended,
Her soul received the print of consolation
Through hope and reason, and her long prostration
Turned to recovery, she ceased to languish;
She couldn't be always suffering such anguish.
Besides, Arvéragus as it befell
Sent letters to her saying all was well
And that he shortly would be home again;
Only for that her heart had died of pain.
Her friends, seeing her grief began to ease,
Begged her for heaven's sake and on their knees
To come and roam about with them and play
And drive her darker fantasies away,
And finally she granted their request
And clearly saw it would be for the best.
Her husband's castle fronted on the sea
And she would often walk in company
High on the ramparts, wandering at large.
Many a ship she saw and many a barge
Sailing such courses as they chose to go;
But these made part and parcel of her woe
And she would often say, 'Alas for me,
Is there no ship, so many as I see,
To bring me home my lord? For then my heart
Would find a cure to soothe its bitter smart.'

At other times she used to sit and think
With eyes cast downward to the water's brink
And then her heart endured a thousand shocks
To see such jagged, black and grisly rocks,
So that she scarce could stand upon her feet.
Then she would refuge in some green retreat,
Lie on a lawn, and looking out to sea
With long, cold sighs, would murmur piteously:
'Eternal God that by Thy providence
Guidest the world in wise omnipotence,
They say of Thee that Thou hast nothing made
In vain but, Lord, these fiendish rocks are laid
In what would rather seem a foul confusion
Of work than the creation and conclusion
Of One so perfect, God the wise and stable;
Why madest Thou thy work unreasonable?
These rocks can foster neither man nor beast
Nor bird, to north or south, to west or east
They are a menace, useless, to my mind.
Lord, seest Thou not how they destroy mankind?
A hundred thousand bodies dead and rotten
Have met their death on them, though now forgotten;
Thy fairest work, wrecked on a rocky shelf,
Mankind, made in the image of Thyself.
It seemed that then Thou hadst great charity
Towards mankind; how therefore may it be
That Thou hast fashioned means as these to harm them
That do no good, but injure and alarm them?
'I know it pleases scholars to protest
In argument that all is for the best,
Though what their reasons are I do not know.
'But O Thou God that madest wind to blow,
Preserve my husband, that is my petition!
I leave the learned to their disquisition.
But would to God these rocks so black, so grim,
Were sunk in Hell itself for sake of him!
They are enough to kill my heart with fear.'
Thus she would speak with many a piteous tear.
Her friends could see it gave her no relief
To roam the shore, but added to her grief,
And so they sought amusement somewhere else.
They led her by the water-ways and wells
And many another scene of loveliness;

They danced, they played backgammon, they played chess.
And so one sunny morning, as they'd planned,
They went into a garden near at hand
Where they had staged a picnic and supplied
Victuals enough and other things beside,
And there they lingered out the happy day.
It was the morning of the sixth of May
And May had painted with her softest showers
A gardenful of leafiness and flowers;
The hand of man with such a cunning craft
Had decked this garden out in pleach and graft.
There never was a garden of such price
Unless indeed it were in Paradise.
The scent of flowers and the freshening sight
Would surely have made any heart feel light
That ever was born, save under the duress
Of sickness or a very deep distress;
Pleasure and beauty met in every glance.
And after dinner they began to dance
And there was singing; Dorigen alone
Made her continual complaint and moan
For never among the dancers came to view
Her husband, he that was her lover too.
Nevertheless she had to pass the day
In hope and let her sorrows slide away.
Now in this dance, among the other men,
There danced a squire before Dorigen,
Fresher and jollier in his array,
In my opinion, than the month of May.
He sang and danced better than any man
There is or has been since the world began.
He was, what's more, if I could but contrive
To picture him, the handsomest man alive,
Young, strong and wealthy, mettlesome, discreet,
And popular as any you could meet;
And shortly, if I am to tell the truth,
All unbeknown to Dorigen, this youth
– A lusty squire and servant in the game
Of Venus, and Aurelius was his name –
Had loved her best of any for two years
And longer so it chanced, but still his fears
Had never let him bring the matter up;
He drank his penance down without a cup.

He had despaired of her and dared not say
More of his passion than he might convey
In general terms, by saying that he burned
With love but that his love was not returned;
On all such themes he fashioned many a phrase,
Wrote songs, complaints, roundels and virelays
Saying his griefs were more than he dared tell,
He languished as a fury did in Hell,
And he must die, he said, as Echo did
For young Narcissus and the love she hid.
But in no other way, as said above,
Had he the courage to confess his love,
Save that perhaps from time to time at dances,
Where youth pays love's observances, his glances
It well may be would linger on her face
Beseechingly, as is the common case;
But she was unaware of what he meant.
Nevertheless it happened, ere they went
Out of the garden, since he lived nearby
And was of good position, standing high
In honour and had known her from of old,
They fell in speech and he at last grew bold
And drew towards the purpose in his head.
Taking his opportunity he said:
'Madam, by God's green earth and all its treasure,
Had I imagined it could give you pleasure
That day, on which your lord Arvéragus
Went over sea, then I, Aurelius
Would have gone too, and never come again.
I know the service of my love is vain,
My recompense is but a bursting heart.
'Madam, have pity on the pain and smart
Of love; a word from you can slay or save.
Would God your little feet stood on my grave!
There is no time to say what I would say;
Have mercy, sweetheart, chase me not away.'
She looked at him with closer scrutiny
And answered, 'Are you saying this to me?
Can you intend it? Never,' she said, 'till now
Had I suspected that – what you avow.
But by the Lord that gave me soul and life
I never mean to prove a faithless wife
In word or deed if I can compass it.

I will be his to whom I have been knit.
Take that for final answer, as for me.’
But after that she added playfully,
‘And yet, Aurelius, by the Lord above
I might perhaps vouchsafe to be your love,
Since I perceive you groan so piteously.
Look; on the day the coasts of Brittany
Are stone by stone cleared of these hateful rocks
By you, so that no ship or vessel docks
In danger, when, I say, you clear the coast
So clean there’s not a single stone to boast,
I’ll love you more than any man on earth;
Accept my word in truth for all it’s worth.’
“Is there no other way than this?” said he.
‘No, by the Lord,’ she said, ‘that fashioned me.
For it will never happen; that I know.
So clear your heart of fancies, let them go.
How can a man find daintiness in life
Who goes about to love another’s wife,
That can enjoy her body when he pleases?’
Aurelius sighed again. The long uneases
Of lovers’ woe returned on hearing this
And he replied with sorrowing emphasis,
‘Madam, it is impossible to do,
So I must die a sudden death, for you.’
And on the word he turned and went away.
Her many other friends came up to play
And wander with her through the leafy walk
Of alleys pleached, but of her lover’s talk
They did not know. Revels began anew,
Until the dazzling sun had lost its hue
For the horizon reft it of its light;
This is as much to say that it was night.
So they went home delighted, all in joy
Except, alas, Aurelius, wretched boy.
He sought his house, a sigh at every breath,
And could see no way of avoiding death.
Within himself he felt his heart turn cold
And falling on his knees began to hold
His hands to heaven and the upper air
In raving madness, and he said a prayer.
Excessive suffering had turned his head,
He knew not what he spoke, but this he said,

With pleading heart and pitiful, to one
And all the gods, beginning with the sun:
‘Apollo, God and Governor, whose power
Tends over every plant and herb and flower
And tree, appointing unto each by reason
Of thy celestial course, his time and season,
According as thy arc is low or high,
Lord Phoebus, in thy mercy cast an eye
On sad Aurelius, wretched and forlorn.
Look on me, Lord! My lady-love has sworn
To prove my death, though for no fault in me,
Unless, O Lord, in thy benignity
Thou pity a dying heart; for well I know,
Shouldest thou please, Lord Phoebus, to bestow
Thy mercy, thou canst help me best of all
Except my lady; listen to my call,
Vouchsafe to hear me, Lord, if I expound
A means of help and how it may be found.
‘Thy blissful sister, Luna the Serene,
Chief goddess of the ocean and its queen,
Though Neptune have therein his deity,
Is over him and empress of the sea.
Thou knowest, Lord, that just as her desire
Is to be lit and quickened by thy fire,
For busily she follows after thee,
Just so the natural longing of the sea
Follows on her and so is bound to do;
She is its goddess and the rivers’ too.
‘And so, Lord Phoebus, this is my request,
Do me this miracle – or burst, my breast!
That even now at thy next opposition
Which is to be in Leo, thou petition
Thy sister to bring floods so much increased
That they shall rise five fathom at the least
Above the highest rock that now appears
In Brittany, and let this last two years.
Then to my lady I can safely say,
“Keep truth with me, the rocks are all away.”
‘Lord Phoebus, do this miracle for me now!
Beg her to go no faster, Lord, than thou;
I say, beseech thy sister that she go
No faster than thyself two years or so,
Then she will stay at full, and at their height

The spring floods will continue, day and night.
And should she not vouchsafe in such a way
The granting of my lady, then I pray
That she may sink the rocks, that they be drowned
Within her own dark region underground
Where Pluto dwells, for while they are above
I cannot hope to win my lady-love.
'Barefoot to Delphi will I go and seek
Thy temple! See the tears upon my cheek,
Lord Phoebus, have compassion, grant my boon!'
And on the word he fell into a swoon
And long he lay upon the ground in trance.
His brother who had heard of his mischance
Found him and caught him up, and off to bed
He carried him. With torment in his head,
I leave this woeful creature, if to die
In desperation, he must choose, not I.
Meanwhile Arvéragus in health and power
Came honourably home, the very flower
Of chivalry, with other noble men.
How art thou blissful now, my Dorigen!
Thou has a lusty husband for thy charms,
Thine own fresh knight, thy honoured man-at-arms
That loves thee as his life, in whom there springs
No inclination to imagine things
Or ask if anyone while he was out
Has talked to thee of love. But not a doubt
Entered his head; he had no thought in life
Except to dance and joust and cheer his wife
In blissful joy; and so I leave him thus
And turn again to sick Aurelius.
In furious torment, languishing away,
Two years and more wretched Aurelius lay
Scarce with the strength to put his foot to ground.
No comfort during all that time he found
Except his brother, who had been a scholar,
And who knew all about his woes and dolour,
For to no other could Aurelius dare
Ever to say a word of his affair.
More secretly he guarded his idea
Than Pamphilus his love for Galatea.
To all appearances his breast was whole,
But a keen arrow stuck within his soul.

A wound that's only surface-healed can be
A perilous thing, you know, in surgery,
Unless the arrow-head be taken out.
His brother wept for him and fell in doubt
Of his recovery until by chance
It came to him that when he was in France
At Orleans – he was a student then –
He lusted in his heart like all young men
To study things prohibited, to read
In curious arts of magic, and indeed
Search every hole and corner with defiance
To learn the nature of that special science.
And he remembered how he took a look
One morning, in his study, at a book
On natural magic which it chanced he saw
Because a friend, then bachelor-at-law
Though destined later to another trade,
Had hidden it in his desk. This book displayed
The workings of the moon; there were expansions
In detail on the eight-and-twenty mansions
Belonging to her – nonsense such as that,
For nowadays it isn't worth a gnat,
Since holy church has managed to retrieve us
And suffers no illusion now to grieve us.
And so, remembering this book by chance,
His heart as suddenly began to dance
For joy within him; quickly reassured,
He said, 'My brother surely shall be cured
For I am certain that there must be sciences
By which illusions can be made, appliances
Such as these subtle jugglers use in play
At banquets. Very often, people say,
These conjurors can bring into a large
And lofty hall fresh water and a barge
And there they seem to row it up and down;
Sometimes a lion, grim and tawny-brown,
Sometimes a meadow full of flowery shapes,
Sometimes a vine with white and purple grapes,
Sometimes a castle which by some device,
Though stone and lime, will vanish in a trice,
Or seem at least to vanish, out of sight.
'So I conclude that if I only might
Discover some old fellow of the kind

Who has these moony mansions in his mind
At Orleans, or has some power above
All this, my brother might enjoy his love.
A learned man could hoodwink all beholders
With the illusion that the rocks and boulders
Of Brittany had vanished one and all
And ships along the brink could safely call,
Coming and going, and, if this could but last
A day or two, the danger would be past.
She will be forced to recognize his claim
Or else she will at least be put to shame.'
Why draw my story out? What need be said?
He went to where his brother lay in bed
And brought him so much comfort with his plot
To visit Orleans, that up he got
And started off at once upon the road
High in the hope of lightening his load.
They neared the city; when it seemed to be
About two furlongs off, or maybe three,
They met a youngish scholar all alone
Who greeted them in Latin, in a tone
Of friendly welcome, and he struck them dumb
In wonder with 'I know why you have come.'
And ere they went a step upon their way
He told them all they had in mind to say.
The Breton scholar wanted to be told
About the friends that they had known of old
And he replied that they were all now dead;
He spoke with feeling, many tears were shed.
Down from his horse Aurelius soon alighted
To follow the magician, who invited
Him and his brother home, set them at ease
And served them victuals; nothing that could please
Was lacking and Aurelius soon decided
He'd never seen a house so well provided.
And the magician caused there to appear
Before their supper, parks of forest deer
And he saw stags among them, antlered high,
The greatest ever seen by human eye.
He saw a hundred of them killed by hounds
And others, arrow-wounded, lay in mounds.
Next, when the deer had vanished, he was show
A river bank and there a hawk was flown

By falconers; they saw a heron slain.
Then he saw knights at joust upon a plain
And after that Aurelius was entranced
At seeing his beloved as she danced
And he, it seemed, was dancing with her too.
And when the master of this magic view
Saw it was time he clapped his hands and banished
The figures, and farewell! our revels vanished.
Yet all the time they had not left the house
While being shown these sights so marvellous,
But sat within his study where there lay
His books about them; there were none but they.
The master called the squire who was to set
Their meal, and said, 'Is supper ready yet?
It's very near an hour I could swear,'
He added, 'since I told you to prepare,
When these two gentlemen came in with me
To see my study and my library.'
'Sir,' said the squire, 'it's ready, and you may
Begin, if it so please you, right away.'
'Then let us eat,' he said; 'that will be best.
These amorous people sometimes need a rest.'
After they'd eaten, bargaining began;
What payment should this master-artisan
Have to remove the rocks of Brittany
From the Gironde to where the Seine meets sea?
He made it difficult and roundly swore
He'd take a thousand pounds for it or more,
He wasn't too eager even at that price.
Aurelius with his heart in paradise
Readily answered, 'Fie on a thousand pound!
I'd give the world, which people say is round,
The whole wide world, if it belonged to me;
Call it a bargain then, for I agree.
You shall be truly paid it, on my oath.
But look, be sure no negligence or sloth
Delay us here beyond tomorrow, now!'
The scholar gave him answer 'That I vow.'
Aurelius went to bed in high delight
And rested soundly, pretty well all night.
Tired by his journey and with hope retrieved
He slept, the troubles of his heart relieved.
And morning came; as soon as it was day

They made for Brittany by the nearest way,
The brothers with the wizard at their side,
And there dismounted having done their ride.
It was – so say the books, if I remember –
The cold and frosty season of December.
Phoebus grew old, his coppered face was duller
Than it had been in Cancer when his colour
Shone with the burnished gold of streaming morn,
But now descending into Capricorn
His face was very pale, I dare maintain.
The bitter frosts, the driving sleet and rain
Had killed the gardens; greens had disappeared.
Now Janus by the fire with double beard,
His bugle-horn in hand, sits drinking wine;
Before him stands a brawn of tusky swine,
And ‘Sing Noël!’ cries every lusty man.
Aurelius, using all the means he can,
Gives welcome to the master, shows respect
And begs his diligence, that no neglect
Or sloth delay the healing of his smart,
Lest he should kill himself, plunge sword in heart.
This subtle sage had pity on the man
And night and day went forward with his plan
Watching the hour to favour the conclusion
Of his experiment, that by illusion
Or apparition – call it jugglery,
I lack the jargon of astrology –
She and the world at large might think and say
The rocks had all been spirited away
From Brittany or sunk under the ground.
And so at last the favouring hour was found
To do his tricks and wretched exhibition
Of that abominable superstition.
His calculating tables were brought out
Newly corrected (he made sure about
The years in series and the single years
To fix the points the planets in their spheres
Were due to reach and so assessed their ‘root’
In longitude) and other things to suit,
Such as his astrolabe, and argument
From arc and angle, and was provident
Of fit proportionals for the minor motion
Of planets, and he studied with devotion,

Measuring from the point where Alnath swam
In the eighth sphere, to where the head of the Ram
Stood in the ninth, in its eternal station
(As we suppose), and made his calculation.
And finding the first mansion of the moon,
He calculated all the rest in tune
With that. He worked proportionally, knowing
How she would rise and whither she was going
Relative to which planets and their place,
Equal or not, upon the zodiac face.
And thus according to his calculations
He knew the moon in all her operations
And all the relevant arithmetic
For his illusion, for the wretched trick
He meant to play, as in those heathen days
People would do. There were no more delays
And by his magic for a week or more
It seemed the rocks were gone; he'd cleared the shore.
Aurelius, still despairing of the plot,
Nor knowing whether he'd get his love or not,
Waited for miracles by night and day
And when he saw the rocks were cleared away,
All obstacles removed, the plot complete,
He fell in rapture at his master's feet.
'Wretch as I am, for what has passed between us,
To you, my lord, and to my lady Venus
I offer thanks,' he said, 'for by your care,
As poor Aurelius is well aware,
He has been rescued from a long dismay.'
And to the temple then he took his way
Where, as he knew, his lady was to be;
And when he saw his opportunity
With terror in his heart, and humbled face,
He made obeisance to her sovereign grace.
'My truest lady,' said this woeful man,
'Whom most I dread and love – as best I can –
Last in the world of those I would displease,
Had I not suffered many miseries
For love of you, so many I repeat
That I am like to perish at your feet,
I would not dare approach you, or go on
To tell you how forlorn and woebegone
I am for you; but I must speak or die.

You kill me with your torture; guiltless, I.
Yet if my death could never so have stirred
Your pity, think before you break your word.
Repent, relent, remember God above you
Before you murder me because I love you.
You know what you have promised to requite
– Not that I challenge anything of right,
My sovereign lady, only of your grace –
Yet in a garden yonder, at such a place
You made a promise which you know must stand
And gave your plighted troth into my hand
To love me best, you said, as God above
Knows, though I be unworthy of your love.
It is your honour, madam, I am seeking;
It's not to save my life that I am speaking.
I have performed what you commanded me
As if you deign to look you soon will see.
Do as you please but think of what you said
For you will find me here alive, or dead.
It lies in you to save me or to slay –
But well I know the rocks are all away!¹
He took his leave of her and left the place.
Without a drop of colour in her face
She stood as thunderstruck by her mishap.
'Alas,' she said, 'to fall in such a trap!
I never had thought the possibility
Of such a monstrous miracle could be,
It goes against the processes of nature.'
And home she went, a very sorrowful creature
In deadly fear, and she had much to do
Even to walk. She wept a day or two,
Wailing and swooning pitiful to see,
But why she did so not a word said she,
For her Arvéragus was out of town.
But to herself she spoke and flinging down
In pitiable pallor on her bed
She voiced her lamentation and she said:
'Alas, of thee, O Fortune, I complain,
That unawares hast wrapped me in thy chain,
Which to escape two ways alone disclose
Themselves, death or dishonour, one of those,
And I must choose between them as a wife.
Yet I would rather render up my life

Than to be faithless or endure a shame
Upon my body, or to lose my name.
My death will quit me of a foolish vow;
And has not many a noble wife ere now
And many a virgin slain herself to win
Her body from pollution and from sin?
'Yes, surely, many a story we may trust
Bears witness; thirty tyrants full of lust
Slew Phido the Athenian like a beast,
Then had his daughters carried to their feast,
And they were brought before them in despite
Stark naked, to fulfil their foul delight,
And there they made them dance upon the floor,
God send them sorrow, in their father's gore.
And these unhappy maidens, full of dread,
Rather than they be robbed of maidenhead,
Broke from their guard and leapt into a well
And there were drowned, so ancient authors tell.
'The people of Messina also sought
Some fifty maidens out of Sparta, brought
Only that they might work their lechery
Upon them, but in all that company
Not one that was not slain; they were content
To suffer death itself than to consent
To be despoiled of their virginity;
What then's the fear of death, I say, to me?
'Consider Aristoclide for this,
A tyrant lusting after Stymphalis
Who, when her father had been slain one night,
Fled for protection to Diana's might
Into her temple, clung to her effigy
With both her hands and from it could not be
Dragged off, they could not tear her hands away
Till they had killed her. If a virgin may
Be seen to have so loath an appetite
To be defiled by filthy man's delight,
Surely a wife should kill herself ere she
Were so defiled, or so it seems to me.
'And what of Hasdrubal? Had he not a wife
At Carthage who had rather take her life?
For as she watched the Romans win the town
She took her children with her and leapt down
Into the fire; there she chose to burn

Rather than let them do their evil turn.
‘Did not Lucrece choose death for her escape
In Rome of old when she had suffered rape
For Tarquin’s lust? Did not she think it shame
To live a life that had been robbed of name?
‘The seven virgins of Miletus too
Took their own lives – were they not bound to do? –
Lest they be ravished by their Gaulish foes.
More than a thousand stories I suppose
Touching this theme were easy now to tell.
‘Did not his wife, when Abradates fell,
Take her own life and let the purple flood
Glide from her veins to mingle with his blood,
Saying, “My body shall at least not be
Defiled by man, so far as lies in me”?
‘Since there are found so many, if one delves,
That gladly have preferred to kill themselves
Rather than be defiled, need more be sought
For my example? Better were the thought
To kill myself at once than suffer thus.
I will be faithful to Arvéragus
Or slay myself as these examples bid,
As the dear daughter of Demotion did
Who chose to die rather than be defiled.
‘O Skedasus, thou also hadst a child
That slew herself, and sad it is to read
How she preferred her death to such a deed.
‘As pitiable or even more, I say,
The Theban maid who gave her life away
To foil Nichanor and a like disgrace.
‘Another virgin at that very place
Raped by a Macedonian, it is said,
Died to repay her loss of maidenhead.
‘What shall I say of Niceratus’ wife
Who, being thus dishonoured, took her life?
‘And O how true to Alcibiades
His lover was! She died no less than these
For seeking to give burial to her dead.
‘See what a wife Alcestis was,’ she said,
‘And what says Homer of Penelope?
All Greece can celebrate her chastity.
‘Laodamia, robbed of all her joy,
Protesilaus being killed at Troy,

Would live no longer, seeing that he was slain.
'Of noble Portia let me think again;
She could not live on being forced to part
From Brutus whom she loved with all her heart.
'And Artemisia, faithful to her man,
Is honoured, even by the barbarian.
'O Teuta, queen! Thy wifely chastity
Should be a mirror for all wives to see;
I say the same of Bilia and as soon
Of chaste Valeria and Rhodogoun.'
Thus for a day or two she spent her breath,
Poor Dorigen, and ever purposed death.
On the third day, however, of her plight,
Home came Arvéragus, that excellent knight,
And questioned her; what was she crying for
But she continued weeping all the more.
'Alas,' she said, 'that ever I was born!
Thus have I said,' she answered, 'thus have sworn —'
She told him all as you have heard before.
It need not be repeated here once more.
Her husband, gladly smiling, with no fuss,
But with a friendly look, made answer thus:
'And is there nothing, Dorigen, but this?'
'No, no, so help me God!' with emphasis
She answered. 'Is it not enough, too much?'
'Well, wife,' he said, 'it's better not to touch
A sleeping dog, so I have often heard;
All may be well, but you must keep your word.
For, as may God be merciful to me,
I rather would be stabbed than live to see
You fail in truth. The very love I bear you
Bids you keep truth, in that it cannot spare you.
Truth is the highest thing in a man's keeping,'
And on the word he suddenly burst out weeping
And said, 'But I forbid on pain of death,
As long as you shall live or draw your breath,
That you should ever speak of this affair
To living soul; and what I have to bear
I'll bear as best I may; now wash your face,
Be cheerful. None must guess at this disgrace.'
He called a maidservant and squire then
And said, 'Go out with Lady Dorigen;
Attend upon her, whither she will say.'

They took their leave of him and went their way
Not knowing why their mistress was to go.
It was his settled purpose none should know.
Perhaps a heap of you will want to say,
'Lewd, foolish man to act in such a way,
Putting his wife into such jeopardy!'
Listen before you judge them, wait and see.
She may have better fortune, gentlemen,
Than you imagine; keep your judgements then
Till you have heard my story which now turns
To amorous Aurelius as he burns
For Dorigen; they happened soon to meet
Right in the town, in the most crowded street
Which she was bound to use, however loth,
To reach the garden and to keep her oath.
Aurelius garden wards was going too;
A faithful spy on all she used to do,
He kept close watch whenever she went out
And so by accident or luck no doubt
They met each other; he, his features glowing,
Saluted her and asked where she was going,
And she replied as one half driven mad,
'Why, to the garden, as my husband bade
To keep my plighted word, alas, alas!'
Aurelius, stunned at what had come to pass,
Felt a great surge of pity that arose
At sight of Dorigen in all her woes
And for Arvéragus the noble knight
That bade her keep her word of honour white,
So loth he was that she should break her truth.
And such a rush of pity filled the youth
That he was moved to think the better course
Was to forgo his passion than to force
An act on her of such a churlish kind,
And against such nobility of mind.
So, in few words, the squire addressed her thus:
'Madam, say to your lord Arvéragus
That since I well perceive his nobleness
Towards yourself, and also your distress,
Knowing the shame that he would rather take
(And that were pity) than that you should break
Your plighted word, I'd rather suffer too
Than seek to come between his love and you.

'So, Madam, I release into your hand
All bonds or deeds of covenant that stand
Between us, and suppose all treaties torn
You may have made with me since you were born.
I give my word never to chide or grieve you
For any promise given, and so I leave you,
Madam, the very best and truest wife
That ever yet I knew in all my life.
Let women keep their promises to men,
Or at the least remember Dorigen.
A squire can do a generous thing with grace
As well as can a knight, in any case.'
And she went down and thanked him on her knees.
Home to her husband then with heart at ease
She went and told him all as I've recorded.

You may be sure he felt so well rewarded
No words of mine could possibly express
His feelings. Why then linger? You may guess.
Arvéragus and Dorigen his wife
In sovereign happiness pursued their life,
No discord in their love was ever seen,
He cherished her as though she were a queen,
And she stayed true as she had been before;
Of these two lovers you will get no more.
Aurelius, all whose labour had been lost,
Cursing his birth, reflected on the cost.
'Alas,' he said, 'alas that I am bound
To pay in solid gold a thousand pound
To that magician! What am I to do?
All I can see is that I'm ruined too.
There's my inheritance; that I'll have to sell
And be a beggar. Then there's this as well;
I can't stay here a shame and a disgrace
To all my family; I must leave the place.
And yet he might prove lenient; I could pay
A yearly sum upon a certain day
And thank him gratefully, I can but try.
But I will keep my truth, I will not lie.'
And sad at heart he went to search his coffer
And gathered up what gold he had to offer
His master, some five hundred pound I guess,
And begged him as a gentleman, no less,
To grant him time enough to pay the rest.

'Sir, I can boast, in making this request,
He said, 'I've never failed my word as yet,
And I will certainly repay this debt
I owe you, master, ill as I may fare,
Yes, though I turn to begging and go bare.
If you'd vouchsafe me, on security,
A little respite, say two years or three,
All would be fine. If not I'll have to sell
My patrimony; there's no more to tell.'
Then this philosopher in sober pride,
Having considered what he'd said, replied,
'Did I not keep my covenant with you?'
'You did indeed,' he said, 'and truly too.'
'And did you not enjoy your lady then?'
'No . . . no . . .' he sighed, and thought of Dorigen.
'What was the reason? Tell me if you can.'
Reluctantly Aurelius then began
To tell the story you have heard before,
There is no need to tell it you once more.
He said: 'Her husband, in his nobleness,
Would have preferred to die in his distress
Rather than that his wife should break her word.'
He told him of her grief, as you have heard,
How loth she was to be a wicked wife
And how she would have rather lost her life;
'Her vow was made in innocent confusion,
She'd never heard of magical illusion.
So great a sense of pity rose in me,
I sent her back as freely then as he
Had sent her to me; I let her go away.
That's the whole story, there's no more to say.'
Then the magician answered, 'My dear brother,
Each of you did as nobly as the other.
You are a squire, sir, and he a knight,
But God forbid in all His blissful might
That men of learning should not come as near
To nobleness as any, never fear.
'Sir, I release you of your thousand pound
No less than if you'd crept out of the ground
Just now, and never had had to do with me.
I will not take a penny, sir, in fee
For all my knowledge and my work to rid
The coast of rocks; I'm paid for what I did,

Well paid, and that's enough. Farewell, good-day!
He mounted on his horse and rode away.
My lords, I'll put a question: tell me true,
Which seemed the finest gentleman to you?
Ere we ride onwards tell me, anyone!
I have no more to say, my tale is done.

Christine de Pizan,
*The Book of the City of
Ladies*

Christine de Pizan (c.1364-c.1430) was a woman of letters in the twilight of the Middle Ages, “the first female professional writer.” Her father had taken a position as astrologer in the Parisian court of King Charles V, and made sure his daughter received a solid education. Christine went on to read widely in the court library. She married at fifteen and had three children. It was a happy decade of marriage; however, her husband died, perhaps of bubonic plague—which had become endemic and would periodically reemerge. With her father also having died the previous year, Christine was without means to support her dependents; she bordered on destitution. She turned to writing and pursued the craft with great entrepreneurial skill, gaining noble patronage. Courtly love lyrics were in vogue, and that is where she started. She was key in the French reception of Dante. At the turn of the fifteenth century, a humanist sought her views on *The Romance of the Rose*. She set out to dissect and mock Jean de Meun’s misogyny. The “Quarrel of the Rose” expanded to become an important public conversation, even including Jean Gerson, chancellor of the University of Paris. Christine addressed court politics as civil war loomed (and as the Western Schism festered): she sought to foster peace and unity with her pen. At the end of her life, she was filled with melancholic despair over the future of France after Agincourt, but hope broke through with Saint Joan of Arc, a woman who vindicated so much of her own literary witness.

The course of Christine’s life was bound up with the latter half of the Hundred Years’ War. By 1378, Charles V had reversed most of the English gains from the Edwardian phase of the war. His son Charles VI acceded to the throne in 1380 at the age of eleven. However, he had his first psychotic episode in 1392. Charles the Mad was set under the regency of uncles, including the duke of Burgundy, whose successor John the Fearless jockeyed with Charles’s younger brother Louis d’Orléans for power. With the Hundred Years’ War in a period of abeyance, the Armagnac-Burgundian Civil War (1407-35) broke out after John had Louis murdered. A league of dukes and counts, including the count of Armagnac, took up the cause of the House of Orléans against the House of Burgundy. King Henry V of England saw his chance to press his claim on the French throne. On Saint Crispin’s Day, 1415, Henry led the English to an overwhelming victory at Agincourt. The use of the longbow, which could pierce the plate armor of knights, proved that the days of feudal chivalry were over. Many French noble houses were destroyed—especially among

the Armagnacs. Eventually the English laid siege to Orléans in 1428; France might have fallen with the city. The seventeen-year-old Joan of Arc went to the Dauphin, the son of Charles VI, and asked to be involved in lifting the siege, based on mystical visions she had received. He authorized this strange request, and with her to rally French morale, the siege was broken. This was the turning point in the long war. Joan saw to it that the Dauphin was consecrated King Charles VII at Rheims in 1429. She was captured by the Burgundians in 1430, who had commercial interests in common with the English and were allied with them at the time. They transferred her to England, where English ecclesiastics tried her for heresy. She was burned at the stake in 1431. The Hundred Years' War, which finally ended in 1453, began under the panoply of chivalry and ended with the firepower of professional soldiers, with the modern standing army not far off. The bitterness of the war, and the final dissolution of the feudal bonds between France and England, fostered a novel sense of nationalism.

But before the civil war and Agincourt, Christine wrote *The Book of the City of Ladies* (completed by 1405). Something of a comprehensive closing argument in the "Quarrel of the Rose," this book is itself presented as an allegorical dream-vision. But it also sets the question of the depiction of women within a broader political context, one that draws energy from its reference to Saint Augustine's *City of God*. The narrator falls into a fit of self-loathing after having read yet another depiction of women as vile. Christine is displaying the immemorial psychic operation of misogynist ideology.

In fact, both classical and medieval cultures have done supreme injustice to women, and so she sets about building a city in speech to serve as a free imaginary by which earthly cities and households might be reordered: a most salutary modernity.

I, 1.

HERE BEGINS THE BOOK OF THE CITY OF LADIES, WHOSE
FIRST CHAPTER TELLS WHY AND FOR WHAT PURPOSE
THIS BOOK WAS WRITTEN.

One day as I was sitting alone in my study surrounded by books on all kinds of subjects, devoting myself to literary studies, my usual habit, my mind dwelt at length on the weighty opinions of various authors whom I had studied for a long time. I looked up from my book, having decided to leave such subtle questions in peace and to relax by reading some light poetry. With this in mind, I searched for some small book. By chance a strange volume came into my hands, not one of my own, but one which had been given to me along with some others. When I held it open and saw from its title page that it was by Mathéolus, I smiled, for though I had never seen it before, I had often heard that like other books it discussed respect for women. I thought I would browse through it to amuse myself. I had not been reading for very long when my good mother called me to refresh myself with some supper, for it was evening. Intending to look at it the next day, I put it down. The next morning, again seated in my study as was my habit, I remembered wanting to examine this book by Mathéolus. I started to read it and went on for a little while. Because the subject seemed to me not very pleasant for people who do not enjoy lies, and of no use in developing virtue or manners, given its lack of integrity in diction and theme, and after browsing here and there and reading the end, I put it down in order to turn my attention to more elevated and useful study. But just the sight of this book, even though it was of no authority, made me wonder how it happened that so many different men—and learned men among them—have been and are so inclined to express both in speaking and in their treatises and writings so many wicked insults about women and their behavior. Not only one or two and not even just this Mathéolus (for this book had a bad name anyway and was intended as a satire) but, more generally, judging from the treatises of all philosophers and poets and from all the orators—it would take too long to mention their names—it seems that they all speak from one and the same mouth. They all concur in one conclusion: that the behavior of women is inclined to and full of every vice. Thinking deeply about these matters, I began to examine my character and conduct as a natural woman and, similarly, I considered other women whose company I frequently kept, princesses, great ladies, women of the middle and lower classes, who had graciously told me of their most private and intimate thoughts, hoping that I could judge impartially and in good conscience whether the testimony of so many notable

men could be true. To the best of my knowledge, no matter how long I confronted or dissected the problem, I could not see or realize how their claims could be true when compared to the natural behavior and character of women. Yet I still argued vehemently against women, saying that it would be impossible that so many famous men—such solemn scholars, possessed of such deep and great understanding, so clear-sighted in all things, as it seemed—could have spoken falsely on so many occasions that I could hardly find a book on morals where, even before I had read it in its entirety, I did not find several chapters or certain sections attacking women, no matter who the author was. This reason alone, in short, made me conclude that, although my intellect did not perceive my own great faults and, likewise, those of other women because of its simpleness and ignorance, it was however truly fitting that such was the case. And so I relied more on the judgment of others than on what I myself felt and knew. I was so transfixed in this line of thinking for such a long time that it seemed as if I were in a stupor. Like a gushing fountain, a series of authorities, whom I recalled one after another, came to mind, along with their opinions on this topic. And I finally decided that God formed a vile creature when He made woman, and I wondered how such a worthy artisan could have deigned to make such an abominable work which, from what they say, is the vessel as well as the refuge and abode of every evil and vice. As I was thinking this, a great unhappiness and sadness welled up in my heart, for I detested myself and the entire feminine sex, as though we were monstrosities in nature. And in my lament I spoke these words:

“Oh, God, how can this be? For unless I stray from my faith, I must never doubt that Your infinite wisdom and most perfect goodness ever created anything which was not good. Did You yourself not create woman in a very special way and since that time did You not give her all those inclinations which it pleased You for her to have? And how could it be that You could go wrong in anything? Yet look at all these accusations which have been judged, decided, and concluded against women. I do not know how to understand this repugnance. If it is so, fair Lord God, that in fact so many abominations abound in the female sex, for You Yourself say that the testimony of two or three witnesses lends credence, why shall I not doubt that this is true? Alas, God, why did You not let me be born in the world as a man, so that all my inclinations would be to serve You better, and so that I would not stray in anything and would be as perfect as a man is said to be? But since Your kindness has not been extended to me, then forgive my negligence in Your service, most fair Lord God, and may it not displease You, for the servant who receives fewer gifts from his lord is

less obliged in his service.” I spoke these words to God in my lament and a great deal more for a very long time in sad reflection, and in my folly I considered myself most unfortunate because God had made me inhabit a female body in this world.

2.

HERE CHRISTINE DESCRIBES HOW THREE LADIES
APPEARED TO HER AND HOW THE ONE WHO WAS IN
FRONT SPOKE FIRST AND COMFORTED HER IN HER PAIN.

So occupied with these painful thoughts, my head bowed in shame, my eyes filled with tears, leaning on the pommel of my chair’s armrest, I suddenly saw a ray of light fall on my lap, as though it were the sun. I shuddered then, as if wakened from sleep, for I was sitting in a shadow where the sun could not have shone at that hour. And as I lifted my head to see where this light was coming from, I saw three crowned ladies standing before me, and the splendor of their bright faces shone on me and throughout the entire room. Now no one would ask whether I was surprised, for my doors were shut and they had still entered. Fearing that some phantom had come to tempt me and filled with great fright, I made the Sign of the Cross on my forehead.

Then she who was the first of the three smiled and began to speak, “Dear daughter, do not be afraid, for we have not come here to harm or trouble you but to console you, for we have taken pity on your distress, and we have come to bring you out of the ignorance which so blinds your own intellect that you shun what you know for a certainty and believe what you do not know or see or recognize except by virtue of many strange opinions. You resemble the fool in the prank who was dressed in women’s clothes while he slept; because those who were making fun of him repeatedly told him he was a woman, he believed their false testimony more readily than the certainty of his own identity. Fair daughter, have you lost all sense? Have you forgotten that when fine gold is tested in the furnace, it does not change or vary in strength but becomes purer the more it is hammered and handled in different ways? Do you not know that the best things are the most debated and the most discussed? If you wish to consider the question of the highest form of reality, which consists in ideas or celestial substances, consider whether the greatest philosophers who have lived and whom you support against your own sex have ever resolved whether ideas are false and contrary to the truth. Notice how these same philosophers contradict and criticize one another, just as you have seen in the *Metaphysics* where Aristotle takes their opinions to

task and speaks similarly of Plato and other philosophers. And note, moreover, how even Saint Augustine and the Doctors of the Church have criticized Aristotle in certain passages, although he is known as the prince of philosophers in whom both natural and moral philosophy attained their highest level. It also seems that you think that all the words of the philosophers are articles of faith, that they could never be wrong. As far as the poets of whom you speak are concerned, do you not know that they spoke on many subjects in a fictional way and that often they mean the contrary of what their words openly say? One can interpret them according to the grammatical figure of *antiphrasis*, which means, as you know, that if you call something bad, in fact, it is good, and also vice versa. Thus I advise you to profit from their works and to interpret them in the manner in which they are intended in those passages where they attack women. Perhaps this man, who called himself Mathéolus in his own book, intended it in such a way, for there are many things which, if taken literally, would be pure heresy. As for the attack against the estate of marriage—which is a holy estate, worthy and ordained by God—made not only by Mathéolus but also by others and even by the *Romance of the Rose* where greater credibility is averred because of the authority of its author, it is evident and proven by experience that the contrary of the evil which they posit and claim to be found in this estate through the obligation and fault of women is true. For where has the husband ever been found who would allow his wife to have authority to abuse and insult him as a matter of course, as these authorities maintain? I believe that, regardless of what you might have read, you will never see such a husband with your own eyes, so badly colored are these lies. Thus, in conclusion, I tell you, dear friend, that simplemindedness has prompted you to hold such an opinion. Come back to yourself, recover your senses, and do not trouble yourself anymore over such absurdities. For you know that any evil spoken of women so generally only hurts those who say it, not women themselves.

3.

HERE CHRISTINE TELLS HOW THE LADY WHO HAD SAID
THIS SHOWED HER WHO SHEW AS AND WHAT HER
CHARACTER AND FUNCTION WERE AND TOLD HER HOW
SHE WOULD CONSTRUCT A CITY WITH THE HELP OF
THESE SAME THREE LADIES.

The famous lady spoke these words to me, in whose presence I do not know which one of my senses was more overwhelmed: my hearing from having listened to such worthy words or my sight from having

seen her radiant beauty, her attire, her reverent comportment, and her most honored countenance. The same was true of the others, so that I did not know which one to look at, for the three ladies resembled each other so much that they could be told apart only with difficulty, except for the last one, for although she was of no less authority than the others, she had so fierce a visage that whoever, no matter how daring, looked in her eyes would be afraid to commit a crime, for it seemed that she threatened criminals unceasingly. Having stood up out of respect, I looked at them without saying a word, like someone too overwhelmed to utter a syllable. Reflecting on who these beings could be, I felt much admiration in my heart and, if I could have dared, I would have immediately asked their names and identities and what was the meaning of the different scepters which each one carried in her right hand, which were of fabulous richness, and why they had come here. But since I considered myself unworthy to address these questions to such high ladies as they appeared to me, I did not dare to, but continued to keep my gaze fixed on them, half-afraid and half-reassured by the words which I had heard, which had made me reject my first impression. But the most wise lady who had spoken to me and who knew in her mind what I was thinking, as one who has insight into everything, addressed my reflections, saying:

“Dear daughter, know that God’s providence, which leaves nothing void or empty, has ordained that we, though celestial beings, remain and circulate among the people of the world here below, in order to bring order and maintain in balance those institutions we created according to the will of God in the fulfillment of various offices, that God whose daughters we three all are and from whom we were born. Thus it is my duty to straighten out men and women when they go astray and to put them back on the right path. And when they stray, if they have enough understanding to see me, I come to them quietly in spirit and preach to them, showing them their error and how they have failed, I assign them the causes, and then I teach them what to do and what to avoid. Since I serve to demonstrate clearly and to show both in thought and deed to each man and woman his or her own special qualities and faults, you see me holding this shiny mirror which I carry in my right hand in place of a scepter. I would thus have you know truly that no one can look into this mirror, no matter what kind of creature, without achieving clear self-knowledge. My mirror has such great dignity that not without reason is it surrounded by rich and precious gems, so that you see, thanks to this mirror, the essences, qualities, proportions, and measures of all things are known, nor can anything be done well without it. And because, similarly, you wish to know what are the offices of my other sisters whom you see

here, each will reply in her own person about her name and character, and this way our testimony will be all the more certain to you. But now I myself will declare the reason for our coming. I must assure you, as we do nothing without good cause, that our appearance here is not at all in vain. For, although we are not common to many places and our knowledge does not come to all people, nevertheless you, for your great love of investigating the truth through long and continual study, for which you come here, solitary and separated from the world, you have deserved and deserve, our devoted friend, to be visited and consoled by us in your agitation and sadness, so that you might also see clearly, in the midst of the darkness of your thoughts, those things which taint and trouble your heart.

“There is another greater and even more special reason for our coming which you will learn from our speeches: in fact we have come to vanquish from the world the same error into which you had fallen, so that from now on, ladies and all valiant women may have a refuge and defense against the various assailants, those ladies who have been abandoned for so long, exposed like a field without a surrounding hedge, without finding a champion to afford them an adequate defense, notwithstanding those noble men who are required by order of law to protect them, who by negligence and apathy have allowed them to be mistreated. It is no wonder then that their jealous enemies, those outrageous villains who have assailed them with various weapons, have been victorious in a war in which women have had no defense. Where is there a city so strong which could not be taken immediately if no resistance were forthcoming, or the law case, no matter how unjust, which was not won through the obstinance of someone pleading without opposition? And the simple, noble ladies, following the example of suffering which God commands, have cheerfully suffered the great attacks which, both in the spoken and the written word, have been wrongfully and sinfully perpetrated against women by men who all the while appealed to God for the right to do so. Now it is time for their just cause to be taken from Pharaoh’s hands, and for this reason, we three ladies whom you see here, moved by pity, have come to you to announce a particular edifice built like a city wall, strongly constructed and well founded, which has been predestined and established by our aid and counsel for you to build, where no one will reside except all ladies of fame and women worthy of praise, for the walls of the city will be closed to those women who lack virtue.”

4.

HERE THE LADY EXPLAINS TO CHRISTINE THE CITY WHICH SHE HAS BEEN COMMISSIONED TO BUILD AND HOW SHE WAS CHARGED TO HELP CHRISTINE BUILD THE WALL AND ENCLOSURE, AND THEN GIVES HER NAME.

“Thus, fair daughter, the prerogative among women has been bestowed on you to establish and build the City of Ladies. For the foundation and completion of this City you will draw fresh waters from us as from clear fountains, and we will bring you sufficient building stone, stronger and more durable than any marble with cement could be. Thus your City will be extremely beautiful, without equal, and of perpetual duration in the world.

“Have you not read that King Tros founded the great city of Troy with the aid of Apollo, Minerva, and Neptune, whom the people of that time considered gods, and also how Cadmus founded the city of Thebes with the admonition of the gods? And yet over time these cities fell and have fallen into ruin. But I prophesy to you, as a true sybil, that this City, which you will found with our help, will never be destroyed, nor will it ever fall, but will remain prosperous forever, regardless of all its jealous enemies. Although it will be stormed by numerous assaults, it will never be taken or conquered.

“Long ago the Amazon kingdom was begun through the arrangement and enterprise of several ladies of great courage who despised servitude, just as history books have testified. For a long time afterward they maintained it under the rule of several queens, very noble ladies whom they elected themselves, who governed them well and maintained their dominion with great strength. Yet, although they were strong and powerful and had conquered a large part of the entire Orient in the course of their rule and terrified all the neighboring lands (even the Greeks, who were then the flower of all countries in the world, feared them), nevertheless, after a time, the power of this kingdom declined, so that as with all earthly kingdoms, nothing but its name has survived to the present. But the edifice erected by you in this City which you must construct will be far stronger, and for its founding I was commissioned, in the course of our common deliberation, to supply you with durable and pure mortar to lay the sturdy foundations and to raise the lofty walls all around, high and thick, with mighty towers and strong bastions, surrounded by moats with firm blockhouses, just as is fitting for a city with a strong and lasting defense. Following our plan, you will set the foundations deep to last all the longer, and then you will raise the walls so high that they will

not fear anyone. Daughter, now that I have told you the reason for our coming and so that you will more certainly believe my words, I want you to learn my name, by whose sound alone you will be able to learn and know that, if you wish to follow my commands, you have in me an administrator so that you may do your work flawlessly. I am called Lady Reason; you see that you are in good hands. For the time being then, I will say no more.”

5.

HERE CHRISTINE TELLS HOW THE SECOND LADY TOLD
HER NAME AND WHAT SHE SERVED AS AND HOW SHE
WOULD AID HER IN BUILDING THE CITY OF LADIES.

When the lady above finished her speech, before I could resume, the second lady began as follows: “I am called Rectitude and reside more in Heaven than on Earth, but as the radiance and splendor of God and messenger of His goodness, I often visit the just and exhort them to do what is right, to give to each person what is his according to his capacity, to say and uphold the truth, to defend the rights of the poor and the innocent, not to hurt anyone through usurpation, to uphold the reputation of those unjustly accused. I am the shield and defense of the servants of God. I resist the power and might of evil-doers. I give rest to workers and reward those who act well. Through me, God reveals to His friends His secrets; I am their advocate in Heaven. This shining ruler which you see me carry in my right hand instead of a scepter is the straight ruler which separates right from wrong and shows the difference between good and evil: who follows it does not go astray. It is the rod of peace which reconciles the good and where they find support and which beats and strikes down evil. What should I tell you about this? All things are measured by this ruler, for its powers are infinite. It will serve you to measure the edifice of the City which you have been commissioned to build, and you will need it for constructing the façade, for erecting the high temples, for measuring the palaces, houses, and all public buildings, the streets and squares, and all things proper to help populate the City. I have come as your assistant, and this will be my duty. Do not be uneasy about the breadth and long circuit of the walls, for with God’s help and our assistance you will build fair and sturdy mansions and inns without leaving anything vague, and you will people the City with no trouble. ”

6.

HERE CHRISTINE TELLS HOW THE THIRD LADY TOLD HER WHO SHE WAS AND HER FUNCTION AND HOW SHE WOULD HELP BUILD THE HIGH ROOFS OF THE TOWERS AND PALACES AND WOULD BRING TO HER THE QUEEN, ACCOMPANIED BY NOBLE LADIES.

Afterward, the third lady spoke and said, "My friend Christine, I am Justice, the most singular daughter of God, and my nature proceeds purely from His person. My residence is found in Heaven, on Earth, or in Hell: in Heaven, for the glory of the saints and blessed souls; on Earth, for the apportionment to each man of the good or evil which he has deserved; in Hell, for the punishment of the evil. I do not bend anywhere, for I have not friend nor enemy nor changeable will; pity cannot persuade me nor cruelty move me. My duty is only to judge, to decide, and to dispense according to each man's just deserts. I sustain all things in their condition, nothing could be stable without me. I am in God and God is in me, and we are as one and the same. Who follows me cannot fail, and my way is sure. I teach men and women of sound mind who want to believe in me to chastise, know, and correct themselves, and to do to others what they wish to have done to themselves, to distribute wealth without favor, to speak the truth, to flee and hate lies, to reject all viciousness. This vessel of fine gold which you see me hold in my right hand, made like a generous measure, God, my Father, gave me, and it serves to measure out to each his rightful portion. It carries the sign of the fleur-de-lis of the Trinity, and in all portions it measures true, nor can any man complain about my measure. Yet the men of the Earth have other measures which they claim depend upon and derive from mine, but they are mistaken. Often they measure in my shadow, and their measure is not always true but sometimes too much for some and too little for others. I could give a rather long account of the duties of my office, but, put briefly, I have a special place among the Virtues, for they are all based on me. And of the three noble ladies whom you see here, we are as one and the same, we could not exist without one another; and what the first disposes, the second orders and initiates, and then I, the third, finish and terminate it. Thus I have been appointed by the will of us three ladies to perfect and complete your City, and my job will be to construct the high roofs of the towers and of the lofty mansions and inns which will all be made of fine shining gold. Then I will populate the City for you with worthy ladies and the mighty Queen whom I will bring to you. Hers will be the honor and prerogative among all other women, as well as among the most excellent women. And in

this condition I will turn the City over to you, completed with your help, fortified and closed off with strong gates which I will search for in Heaven, and then I will place the keys in your hands.”

7.

HERE CHRISTINE TELLS HOW SHE SPOKE TO THE THREE LADIES.

When the speeches of all three ladies were over—to which I had listened intently and which had completely taken away the unhappiness which I had felt before their coming—I threw myself at their feet, not just on my knees but completely prostrate because of their great excellence. Kissing the earth around their feet, adoring them as goddesses of glory, I began, my prayer to them: “Oh ladies of supreme dignity, radiance of the heavens and light of the earth, fountains of Paradise and joy of the blessed, where did such humility come from to Your Highnesses that you have deigned to come down from your pontifical seats and shining thrones to visit the troubled and dark tabernacle of this simple and ignorant student? Who could give fitting thanks for such a boon? With the rain and dew of your sweet words, you have penetrated and moistened the dryness of my mind, so that it now feels ready to germinate and send forth new branches capable of bearing fruits of profitable virtue and sweet savor. How will such grace be bestowed on me that I will receive the boon, as you have said, to build and construct in the world from now on a new city? I am not Saint Thomas the Apostle, who through divine grace built a rich palace in Heaven for the king of India, and my feeble sense does not know the craft, or the measures, or the study, or the science, or the practice of construction. And if, thanks to learning, these things were within my ken, where would I find enough physical strength in my weak feminine body to realize such an enormous task? But nevertheless, my most respected ladies, although the awesomeness of this news seems strange to me, I know well that nothing is impossible for God. Nor do I doubt that anything undertaken with your counsel and help will not be completed well. Thus, with all my strength, I praise God and you, my ladies, who have so honored me by assigning me such a noble commission, which I most happily accept. Behold your handmaiden ready to serve. Command and I will obey, and may it be unto me according to your words.”

8.

HERE CHRISTINE TELLS HOW, UNDER REASON'S
COMMAND AND ASSISTANCE, SHE BEGAN TO EXCAVATE
THE EARTH AND LAY THE FOUNDATION.

Then Lady Reason responded and said, "Get up, daughter! Without waiting any longer, let us go to the Field of Letters. There the City of Ladies will be founded on a flat and fertile plain, where all fruits and freshwater rivers are found and where the earth abounds in all good things. Take the pick of your understanding and dig and clear out a great ditch wherever you see the marks of my ruler, and I will help you carry away the earth on my own shoulders."

I immediately stood up to obey her commands and, thanks to these three ladies, I felt stronger and lighter than before. She went ahead, and I followed behind, and after we had arrived at this field I began to excavate and dig, following her marks with the pick of cross-examination. And this was my first work:

"Lady, I remember well what you told me before, dealing with the subject of how so many men have attacked and continue to attack the behavior of women, that gold becomes more refined the longer it stays in the furnace, which means the more women have been wrongfully attacked, the greater waxes the merit of their glory. But please tell me why and for what reason different authors have spoken against women in their books, since I already know from you that this is wrong; tell me if Nature makes man so inclined or whether they do it out of hatred and where does this behavior come from?"

Then she replied, "Daughter, to give you a way of entering into the question more deeply, I will carry away this first basketful of dirt. This behavior most certainly does not come from Nature, but rather is contrary to Nature, for no connection in the world is as great or as strong as the great love which, through the will of God, Nature places between a man and a woman. The causes which have moved and which still move men to attack women, even those authors in those books, are diverse and varied, just as you have discovered. For some have attacked women with good intentions, that is, in order to draw men who have gone astray away from the company of vicious and dissolute women, with whom they might be infatuated, or in order to keep these men from going mad on account of such women, and also so that every man might avoid an obscene and lustful life. They have attacked all women in general because they believe that women are made up of every abomination."

“My lady,” I said then, “excuse me for interrupting you here, but have such authors acted well, since they were prompted by a laudable intention? For intention, the saying goes, judges the man.”

“That is a misleading position, my good daughter,” she said, “for such sweeping ignorance never provides an excuse. If someone killed you with good intention but out of foolishness, would this then be justified? Rather, those who did this, whoever they might be, would have invoked the wrong law; causing any damage or harm to one party in order to help another party is not justice, and likewise attacking all feminine conduct is contrary to the truth, just as I will show you with a hypothetical case. Let us suppose they did this intending to draw fools away from foolishness. It would be as if I attacked fire—a very good and necessary element nevertheless—because some people burnt themselves, or water because someone drowned. The same can be said of all good things which can be used well or used badly. But one must not attack them if fools abuse them, and you have yourself touched on this point quite well elsewhere in your writings. But those who have spoken like this so abundantly—whatever their intentions might be—have formulated their arguments rather loosely only to make their point. Just like someone who has a long and wide robe cut from a very large piece of cloth when the material costs him nothing and when no one opposes him, they exploit the rights of others. But just as you have said elsewhere, if these writers had only looked for the ways in which men can be led away from foolishness and could have been kept from tiring themselves in attacking the life and behavior of immoral and dissolute women—for to tell the straight truth, there is nothing which should be avoided more than an evil, dissolute, and perverted woman, who is like a monster in nature, a counterfeit estranged from her natural condition, which must be simple, tranquil, and upright—then I would grant you that they would have built a supremely excellent work. But I can assure you that these attacks on all women—when in fact there are so many excellent women—have never originated with me, Reason, and that all who subscribe to them have failed totally and will continue to fail. So now throw aside these black, dirty, and uneven stones from your work, for they will never be fitted into the fair edifice of your City.

“Other men have attacked women for other reasons: such reproach has occurred to some men because of their own vices and others have been moved by the defects of their own bodies, others through pure jealousy, still others by the pleasure they derive in their own personalities from slander. Others, in order to show they have read many authors, base their own writings on what they have found in books and repeat what

other writers have said and cite different authors.

“Those who attack women because of their own vices are men who spent their youths in dissolution and enjoyed the love of many different women, used deception in many of their encounters, and have grown old in their sins without repenting, and now regret their past follies and the dissolute life they led. But Nature, which allows the will of the heart to put into effect what the powerful appetite desires, has grown cold in them. Therefore they are pained when they see that their ‘good times’ have now passed them by, and it seems to them that the young, who are now what they once were, are on top of the world. They do not know how to overcome their sadness except by attacking women, hoping to make women less attractive to other men. Everywhere one sees such old men speak obscenely and dishonestly, just as you can fully see with Mathéolus, who himself confesses that he was an impotent old man filled with desire. You can thereby convincingly prove, with this one example, how what I tell you is true, and you can assuredly believe that it is the same with many others.

“But these corrupt old men, like an incurable leprosy, are not the upstanding men of old whom I made perfect in virtue and wisdom—for not all men share in such corrupt desire, and it would be a real shame if it were so. The mouths of these good men, following their hearts, are all filled with exemplary, honest, and discreet words. These same men detest misdeeds and slander, and neither attack nor defame men and women, and they counsel the avoidance of evil and the pursuit of virtue and the straight path.

“Those men who are moved by the defect of their own bodies have impotent and deformed limbs but sharp and malicious minds. They have found no other way to avenge the pain of their impotence except by attacking women who bring joy to many. Thus they have thought to divert others away from the pleasure which they cannot personally enjoy.

“Those men who have attacked women out of jealousy are those wicked ones who have seen and realized that many women have greater understanding and are more noble in conduct than they themselves, and thus they are pained and disdainful. Because of this, their overweening jealousy has prompted them to attack all women, intending to demean and diminish the glory and praise of such women, just like the man—I cannot remember which one—who tries to prove in his work, *De philosophia*, that it is not fitting that some men have revered women and says that those men who have made so much of women pervert the title of his book: they transform ‘philosophy,’ the love of

wisdom, into ‘philofolly,’ the love of folly. But I promise and swear to you that he himself, all throughout the lie-filled deductions of his argument, transformed the content of his book into a true philofolly.

“As for those men who are naturally given to slander, it is not surprising that they slander women since they attack everyone anyway. Nevertheless, I assure you that any man who freely slanders does so out of a great wickedness of heart, for he is acting contrary to reason and contrary to Nature: contrary to reason insofar as he is most ungrateful and fails to recognize the good deeds which women have done for him, so great that he could never make up for them, no matter how much he try, and which he continuously needs women to perform for him; and contrary to Nature in that there is no naked beast anywhere, nor bird, which does not naturally love its female counterpart. It is thus quite unnatural when a reasonable man does the contrary.

“And just as there has never been any work so worthy, so skilled is the craftsman who made it, that there were not people who wanted, and want, to counterfeit it, there are many who wish to get involved in writing poetry. They believe they cannot go wrong, since others have written in books what they take the situation to be, or rather, *mis*-take the situation—as I well know! Some of them undertake to express themselves by writing poems of water without salt, such as these, or ballads without feeling, discussing the behavior of women or of princes or of other people, while they themselves do not know how to recognize or to correct their own servile conduct and inclinations. But simple people, as ignorant as they are, declare that such writing is the best in the world.”

9.

HERE CHRISTINE TELLS HOW SHE DUG IN THE GROUND,
BY WHICH SHOULD BE UNDERSTOOD THE QUESTIONS
WHICH SHE PUT TO REASON, AND HOW REASON REPLIED
TO HER.

“Now I have prepared for you and commanded from you a great work. Consider how you can continue to excavate the ground following my marks.” And so, in order to obey her command, I struck with all my force in the following way:

“My lady, how does it happen that Ovid, who is thought to be one of the best poets—although many believe, and I would agree with them, thanks to your correcting me, that Vergil is much more praiseworthy—that Ovid attacks women so much and so frequently, as in

the book he calls *Ars amatoria*, as well as in the *Remedia amoris* and other of his volumes?”

She replied, “Ovid was a man skilled in the learned craft of poetry, and he possessed great wit and understanding in his work. However, he dissipated his body in every vanity and pleasure of the flesh, not just in one romance, but he abandoned himself to all the women he could, nor did he show restraint or loyalty, and so he stayed with no single woman. In his youth he led this kind of life as much as he could, for which in the end he received the fitting reward—dishonor and loss of possessions and limbs—for so much did he advise others through his own acts and words to lead a life like the one he led that he was finally exiled for his excessive promiscuity. Similarly, when afterward, thanks to the influence of several young, powerful Romans who were his supporters, he was called back from exile and failed to refrain from the misdeeds for which his guilt had already punished him, he was castrated and disfigured because of his faults. This is precisely the point I was telling you about before, for when he saw that he could no longer lead the life in which he was used to taking his pleasure, he began to attack women with his subtle reasonings, and through this effort he tried to make women unattractive to others.”

“My lady, you are right, and I know a book by another Italian author, from the Tuscan marches, I think, called Cecco d’Ascoli, who wrote in one chapter such astounding abominations that a reasonable person ought not to repeat them.”

She replied, “If Cecco d’Ascoli spoke badly about all women, my daughter, do not be amazed, for he detested all women and held them in hatred and disfavor; and similarly, on account of his horrible wickedness, he wanted all men to hate and detest women. He received the just reward for it: in his shame he was burned to death at the stake.”

“I know another small book in Latin, my lady, called the *Secreta mulierum*, *The Secrets of Women*, which discusses the constitution of their natural bodies and especially their great defects.”

She replied, “You can see for yourself without further proof, this book was written carelessly and colored by hypocrisy, for if you have looked at it, you know that it is obviously a treatise composed of lies. Although some say that it was written by Aristotle, it is not believable that such a philosopher could be charged with such contrived lies. For since women can clearly know with proof that certain things which he treats are not at all true, but pure fabrications, they can also conclude that the other details which he handles are outright lies. But don’t you remember that he says in the beginning that some pope—I don’t

know which one—excommunicated every man who read the work to a woman or gave it to a woman to read?”

“My lady, I remember it well.”

“Do you know the malicious reason why this lie was presented as credible to bestial and ignorant men at the beginning of the book?”

“No, my lady, not unless you tell me.”

“It was done so that women would not know about the book and its contents, because the man who wrote it knew that if women read it or heard it read aloud, they would know it was lies, would contradict it, and make fun of it. With this pretense the author wanted to trick and deceive the men who read it.”

“My lady, I recall that among other things, after he has discussed the impotence and weakness which cause the formation of a feminine body in the womb of the mother, he says that Nature is completely ashamed when she sees that she has formed such a body, as though it were something imperfect.”

“But, sweet friend, don’t you see the overweening madness, the irrational blindness which prompt such observations? Is Nature, the chambermaid of God, a greater mistress than her master, almighty God from whom comes such authority, who, when He willed, took the form of man and women from His thought when it came to His holy will to form Adam from the mud of the ground in the field of Damascus and, once created, brought him into the Terrestrial Paradise which was and is the most worthy place in this world here below? There Adam slept, and God formed the body of woman from one of his ribs, signifying that she should stand at his side as a companion and never lie at his feet like a slave, and also that he should love her as his own flesh. If the Supreme Craftsman was not ashamed to create and form the feminine body, would Nature then have been ashamed? It is the height of folly to say this! Indeed, how was she formed? I don’t know if you have already noted this: she was created in the image of God. How can any mouth dare to slander the vessel which bears such a noble imprint? But some men are foolish enough to think, when they hear that God made man in His image, that this refers to the material body. This was not the case, for God had not yet taken a human body. The soul is meant, the intellectual spirit which lasts eternally just like the Deity. God created the soul and placed wholly similar souls, equally good and noble in the feminine and in the masculine bodies. Now, to turn to the question of the creation of the body, woman was made by the Supreme Craftsman. In what place was she created? In the

Terrestrial Paradise. From what substance? Was it vile matter? No, it was the noblest substance which had ever been created: it was from the body of man from which God made woman. ”

“My lady, according to what I understand from you, woman is a most noble creature. But even so, Cicero says that a man should never serve any woman and that he who does so debases himself, for no man should ever serve anyone lower than him.”

She replied, “The man or the woman in whom resides greater virtue is the higher; neither the loftiness nor the lowliness of a person lies in the body according to the sex, but in the perfection of conduct and virtues. And surely he is happy who serves the Virgin, who is above all the angels.”

“My lady, one of the Catos—who was such a great orator—said, nevertheless, that if this world were without women, we would converse with the gods.”

She replied, “You can now see the foolishness of the man who is considered wise, because, thanks to a woman, man reigns with God. And if anyone would say that man was banished because of Lady Eve, I tell you that he gained more through Mary than he lost through Eve when humanity was conjoined to the Godhead, which would never have taken place if Eve’s misdeed had not occurred. Thus man and woman should be glad for this sin, through which such an honor has come about. For as low as human nature fell through this creature woman, was human nature lifted higher by this same creature. And as for conversing with the gods, as this Cato has said, if there had been no woman, he spoke truer than he knew, for he was a pagan, and among those of this belief, gods were thought to reside in Hell as well as in Heaven, that is, the devils whom they called the gods of Hell—so that it is no lie that these gods would have conversed with men, if Mary had not lived.”

10.

MORE ARGUMENTS AND ANSWERS ON THIS SAME SUBJECT.

“This same Cato Uticensis also said that women who are pleasing to men naturally resemble the rose, which is pleasant to look at but whose thorn always lurks beneath to prick.”

She answered, “Again this Cato spoke truer than he knew, for every good and honest woman of virtuous life ought to be, and is, one of the

most pleasant things to look at which exist. And, nevertheless, there remains the thorn of fear of sinning and of contrition in the heart of such a woman, who cannot separate herself from what makes her remain tranquil, composed, and respectful, and it is this which saves her.”

“My lady, is it true that some authors have testified that women are naturally lecherous and gluttonous?”

“My daughter, you have many times heard the proverb repeated which says ‘What Nature gives, no one can take away.’ Thus it would be surprising if women were so much inclined that way and yet were *rarely* or *never* found in those places ordained to this purpose. They are, however, scarce there, and if anyone would respond that shame keeps women away, I say that this is not at all true, that nothing keeps them away except their nature, which is not inclined this way at all. But let us suppose that they were so inclined and that shame made them resist their natural inclination, then this virtue and constancy should redound to their credit. Furthermore, recall that not long ago, during a holiday, as you were standing in the doorway of your residence conversing with the honorable young lady who is your neighbor, you spied a man coming out of a tavern who was telling another man, ‘I spent so much in the tavern, my wife will not drink any wine today,’ and then you asked why she would not drink any wine that day, and he answered, ‘Because, my lady, every time I come back from the tavern, my wife always asks me how much I spent, and if it is more than twelve pennies, she makes up for what I have spent with her own sobriety and says that if we both wanted to spend so much, we could not afford it.’”

“My lady,” I said then, “I remember this well.”

And she to me, “Thus you have plenty of examples that women are by nature sober, and that women who are not go against their own nature. There is no uglier vice in a woman than gluttony, for this vice, wherever it might be, attracts many others. And you can see them quite well in big crowds and groups near churches during sermons and at confession, reciting the Our Father and the Offices.”

“This is obvious, my lady,” I said, “but these men say that women go there all dressed up to show off their beauty and to attract men to their love.”

She responded, “This would be believable if you saw only young and pretty women there. But if you watch carefully, for every young woman whom you see, you will see twenty or thirty old women dressed simply and honestly as they pray in these holy places. And if women possess

such piety, they also possess charity, for who is it who visits and comforts the sick, helps the poor, takes care of the hospitals, and buries the dead? It seems to me that these are all women's works and that these same works are the supreme footprints which God commands us to follow."

"My lady, you are only too right, but another author has said that women by nature have a servile heart and that they are like infants, and because of this, infants love to speak to them and they love to speak to infants."

She answered, "My daughter, if you observe closely an infant's condition, you know that infants naturally love tenderness and gentleness. And what is more tender and gentle than a well ordered woman? Indeed! They are evil, diabolical people who wish to twist the good as well as the virtue of kindness naturally found in women into evil and reproach. For if women love infants, such affection does not spring from the vice of ignorance but comes from the sweetness of their character. And if women resemble infants in kindness, then they are superbly well advised to be so, for as the Gospel recalls, did not our Lord tell His Apostles, when they were arguing among themselves who was the greatest among them and He called a child and placed His hand on the child's head, 'I tell you that whoever humbles himself like this child shall be the most rewarded, for whoever humbles himself is raised up and whoever raises himself up is humbled.'"

"My lady, men have burdened me with a heavy charge taken from a Latin proverb, which runs, 'God made women to speak, weep, and sew,' which they use to attack women."

"Indeed, sweet friend," she replied, "this proverb is so true that it cannot be held against whoever believes or says it. Early on, God placed these qualities in those women who have saved themselves by speaking, weeping, and sewing. And in answer to those who attack women for their habit of weeping, I tell you that if our Lord Jesus Christ—from whom no thought is hidden and who sees and knows every heart—had believed that women's tears come only from weakness and simplemindedness, the dignity of His most great Highness would never have been so inclined through compassion to shed tears Himself from the eyes of His worthy and glorious body when He saw Mary Magdalene and her sister Martha weep for their dead brother Lazarus the leper and then to resurrect him. What special favors has God bestowed on women because of their tears! He did not despise the tears of Mary Magdalene, but accepted them and forgave her sins, and through the merits of those tears she is in glory in Heaven.

“Similarly, He did not reject the tears of the widow who wept as she followed the corpse of her only son as it was being carried away for burial. And our Lord, the fountain of all pity, moved to compassion by her tears as He saw her weep, asked her, ‘Woman, why do you weep?’ and then brought her child back to life. God has performed other miracles, which are found in the Holy Scriptures and would take too long to relate, on behalf of many women because of their tears, and continues to do so, for I believe that many women, as well as others for whom they pray, are saved by the tears of their devotion. Was not Saint Augustine, the glorious Doctor of the Church, converted to the Faith by his mother’s tears? For the good woman wept continuously, praying to God that it would please Him to illuminate the heart of her pagan, unbelieving son with the light of faith. Saint Ambrose, to whom the holy lady often went to ask that he pray to God on behalf of her son, told her for this reason, ‘Woman, I believe it is impossible that so many tears could be shed in vain. ‘O blessed Ambrose who did not think that women’s tears were frivolous! And this might answer those men who attack women so much, because thanks to a woman’s tears does this holy luminary, Saint Augustine, stand at the fore of the Holy Church which he completely brightens and illuminates. Therefore, let men stop talking about this question.

“Similarly, God endowed women with the faculty of speech—may He be praised for it—for had He not done so, they would be speechless. But in refutation of what this proverb says, (which someone, I don’t know whom, invented deliberately to attack them), if women’s language had been so blameworthy and of such small authority, as some men argue, our Lord Jesus Christ would never have deigned to wish that so worthy a mystery as His most gracious resurrection be first announced by a woman, just as He commanded the blessed Magdalene, to whom He first appeared on Easter, to report and announce it to His apostles and to Peter. Blessed God, may you be praised, who, among the other infinite boons and favors which You have bestowed upon the feminine sex, desired that woman carry such lofty and worthy news.”

“All those who are jealous of me would do best to be silent if they had any real insight, my lady,” I said, “but I smile at the folly which some men have expressed and I even remember that I heard some foolish preachers teach that God first appeared to a woman because He knew well that she did not know how to keep quiet so that this way the news of His resurrection would be spread more rapidly.”

She answered, “My daughter, you have spoken well when you call them fools who said this. It is not enough for them to attack women. They impute even to Jesus Christ such blasphemy, as if to say that He

wished to reveal this great perfection and dignity through a vice. I do not know how a man could dare to say this, even in jest, as God should not be brought in on such joking matters. But as for the first question, regarding talking—in fact it was fortunate for the woman from Canaan who was so great a talker and who would not stop yelling and howling after Jesus Christ as she followed Him through the streets of Jerusalem, crying, ‘Have mercy on me, Lord, for my daughter is sick.’ And what did the good Lord do? He in whom all mercy abounded and abounds and from whom a single word from the heart sufficed for Him to show mercy! He seemed to take pleasure in the many words pouring from the mouth of this woman ever perseverant in her prayer. But why did He act like this? In order to test her constancy, for when He compared her to the dogs—which seemed a little harsh because she followed a foreign cult and not that of God—she was not ashamed to speak both well and wisely when she replied, ‘Sire, that is most true, but the little dogs live from the crumbs from their master’s table.’ ‘O most wise woman, who taught you to speak this way? You have won your cause through your prudent language which stems from your good will.’ And one could clearly see this, for our Lord, turning to His Apostles, testified from His mouth that He had never found such faith in all of Israel and granted her request. Who could sufficiently sum up this honor paid to the feminine sex which the jealous despise, considering that in the heart of this little bit of a pagan woman God found more faith than in all the bishops, princes, priests, and all the people of the Jews, who called themselves the worthy people of God? In this manner, at equal length and with great eloquence, the Samaritan woman spoke well on her own behalf when she went to the well to draw water and met Jesus Christ sitting there completely exhausted. O blessed Godhead conjoined to this worthy body! How could You allow Your holy mouth to speak at such length for the sake of this little bit of a woman and a sinner who did not even live under Your Law? You truly demonstrated that You did not in the least disdain the pious sex of women. God, how often would our contemporary pontiffs deign to discuss anything with some simple little woman, let alone her own salvation?”

“Nor did the woman who sat through Christ’s sermon speak less wisely. For she was so fired up by His holy words that—as they say, women can never keep quiet—she then fortunately spoke the words which are solemnly recorded in the Gospel, which she loudly pronounced after having stood up through great force of will, ‘Blessed is the womb which bore You and the breasts which You sucked.’

“Thus you can understand, fair sweet friend, God has demonstrated that He has truly placed language in women’s mouths so that He might

be thereby served. They should not be blamed for that from which issues so much good and so little evil, for one rarely observes that great harm comes from their language.

“As for sewing, truly has God desired that this be natural for women, for it is an occupation necessary for divine service and for the benefit of every reasonable creature. Without this work, the world’s estates would be maintained in great chaos. Therefore it is a great wickedness to reproach women for what should redound to their great credit, honor, and praise.”

11.

12. CHRISTINE ASKS REASON WHY WOMEN ARE NOT IN
THE SEATS OF LEGAL COUNSEL; AND REASON’S
RESPONSE.

“Most high and honored lady, your fair words amply satisfy my thinking. But tell me still, if you please, why women do not plead law cases in the courts of justice, are unfamiliar with legal disputes, and do not hand down judgments? For these men say that it is because of some woman (whom I don’t know) who governed unwisely from the seat of justice.”

“My daughter, everything told about this woman is frivolous and contrived out of deception. But whoever would ask the causes and reasons of all things would have to answer for too much in this question, nor would Aristotle be at all sufficient, in spite of all the many reasons which he gives in his *Problemata* and *Categoriae*. Now, as to this particular question, dear friend, one could just as well ask why God did not ordain that men fulfill the offices of women, and women the offices of men. So I must answer this question by saying that just as a wise and well ordered lord organizes his domain so that one servant accomplishes one task and another servant another task, and that what the one does the other does not do, God has similarly ordained man and woman to serve Him in different offices and also to aid and comfort one another, each in their ordained task, and to each sex has given a fitting and appropriate nature and inclination to fulfill their offices. Inasmuch as the human species often errs in what it is supposed to do, God gives men strong and hardy bodies for coming and going as well as for speaking boldly. And for this reason, men with this nature learn the laws—and must do so—in order to keep the world under the rule of justice and, in case anyone does not wish to obey the statutes which have been ordained and established by reason of law, are required to make them obey with physical constraint and

force of arms, a task which women could never accomplish. Nevertheless, though God has given women great understanding—and there are many such women—because of the integrity to which women are inclined, it would not be at all appropriate for them to go and appear so brazenly in the court like men, for there are enough men who do so. What would be accomplished by sending three men to lift a burden which two can carry easily? But if anyone maintained that women do not possess enough understanding to learn the laws, the opposite is obvious from the proof afforded by experience, which is manifest and has been manifested in many women—just as I will soon tell—who have been very great philosophers and have mastered fields far more complicated, subtle, and lofty than written laws and man-made institutions. Moreover, in case anyone says that women do not have a natural sense for politics and government, I will give you examples of several great women rulers who have lived in past times. And so that you will better know my truth, I will remind you of some women of your own time who remained widows and whose skill governing—both past and present—in all their affairs following the deaths of their husbands provides obvious demonstration that a woman with a mind is fit for all tasks.”

14.

MORE EXCHANGES BETWEEN CHRISTINE AND REASON.

“Certainly you speak well, my lady, and your words are most harmonious in my heart. But though such is the case as far as women’s minds are concerned, it is a proven fact that women have weak bodies, tender and feeble in deeds of strength, and are cowards by nature. These things, in men’s judgment, substantially reduce the degree and authority of the feminine sex, for men contend that the more imperfect a body, the lesser is its virtue and, consequently, the less praiseworthy.”

She answered, “My dear daughter, such a deduction is totally invalid and unsupported, for invariably one often sees that when Nature does not give to one body which she has formed as much perfection as she has given to another and thereby makes some things imperfect, whether in shape or beauty or with some impotence or weakness of limbs, she makes up the difference with an even greater boon than she has taken away. For example, just as is said, the great philosopher Aristotle had a very ugly body, with one eye lower than the other and with a strange face, but although he had some physical deformity, truly Nature made this up to him spectacularly by giving him a retentive

mind and great sense, just as he appears in his authentic writings. This recompense of such a fine mind was thus worth more to him than if he had had the very body of Absalom or a similar body.

“The same might be said of the great emperor Alexander, who was quite ugly, little, and had a sickly build. Nevertheless, it seems that he possessed great virtue in his heart. It is the same situation for many others. Fair friend, I assure you that a large and strong body never makes a strong and virtuous heart but comes from a natural and virtuous vigor which is a boon from God, which He allows Nature to imprint in one reasonable creature more than in another, and thus a malady is transformed into understanding or courage and not at all into the strength of the body or its limbs. We have observed this often, having seen many large men with strong bodies who are cowardly and recreant and others with small and weak bodies who are bold and vigorous, and the same holds true for other virtues. But as for boldness and physical strength, God and Nature have done a great deal for women by giving them such weakness, because, at least, thanks to this agreeable defect, they are excused from committing the horrible cruelties, the murders, and the terrible and serious crimes which have been perpetrated through force and still continuously take place in the world. Thus women will never receive the punishment which such cases demand, and it would be better, or would have been better, for the souls of several of the strongest men, if they had spent their pilgrimage in this world in weak feminine bodies. And truly I tell you, and here I come back to my major point, that if Nature did not give great strength of limb to women’s bodies, she has made up for it by placing there that most virtuous inclination to love one’s God and to fear sinning against His commandments. Women who act otherwise go against their own nature.

47.

REFUTATION OF THE INCONSTANCY OF WOMEN.
CHRISTINE SPEAKS, AND THEN RECTITUDE ANSWERS HER
REGARDING THE INCONSTANCY AND WEAKNESS OF
CERTAIN EMPERORS.

“My lady, you have given me a remarkable account of the marvelous constancy, strength, endurance, and virtue of women. What more could one say about the strongest men who have lived? Men, especially writing in books, vociferously and unanimously claim that women in particular are fickle and inconstant, changeable and flighty, weak-hearted, compliant like children, and lacking all stamina. Are

the men who accuse women of so much changeableness and inconstancy themselves so unwavering that change for them lies outside the realm of custom or common occurrence? Of course, if they themselves are not that firm, then it is truly despicable for them to accuse others of their own vice or to demand a virtue which they do not themselves know how to practice.”

She replied, “Fair sweet friend, have you not heard the saying that the fool can clearly see the mote in his neighbor’s eye but pays no attention to the beam hanging out of his own eye? Let me point out to you the contradiction in what these men say concerning the variability and inconstancy of women: since they all generally accuse women of being delicate and frail by nature, you would assume that they think that they are constant, or, at the very least, that women are less constant than they are. Yet they demand more constancy from women than they themselves can muster, for these men who claim to be so strong and of such noble condition are unable to prevent themselves from falling into many, even graver faults and sins, not all of them out of ignorance, but rather out of pure malice, knowing well that they are in the wrong. All the same, they excuse themselves for this by claiming it is human nature to sin. When a few women lapse (and when these men themselves, through their own strivings and their own power, are the cause), then as far as these men are concerned, it is completely a matter of fragility and inconstancy. It seems to me right, nevertheless, to conclude—since they claim women are so fragile—that these men should be somewhat more tolerant of women’s weaknesses and not hold something to be a crime for women which they consider only a peccadillo for themselves. For the law does not maintain, nor can any such written opinion be found that permits them and not women to sin, that their vice is more excusable. In fact these men allow themselves liberties which they are unwilling to tolerate in women and thus they—and they are many—perpetrate many insults and outrages in word and deed. Nor do they deign to repute women strong and constant for having endured such men’s harsh outrages. In this way men try in every question to have the right on their side—they want to have it both ways! You yourself have quite adequately discussed this problem in your *Epistre au Dieu d’Amour*.

III

HERE BEGINS THE THIRD PART OF THE BOOK OF THE CITY OF LADIES, WHICH TELLS HOW THE HIGH ROOFS OF THE TOWERS WERE COMPLETED AND BY WHOM AND WHICH NOBLE LADIES WERE CHOSEN TO RESIDE IN THE GREAT PALACES AND LOFTY MANSIONS.

1.

THE FIRST CHAPTER TELLS HOW JUSTICE LED THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN TO LIVE IN THE CITY OF LADIES.

Lady Justice then turned to me in her sublime manner and said, "Christine, to tell the truth, it seems to me that you have worked extraordinarily well at building the City of Ladies, according to your capacities and with the aid of my sisters which you have put to excellent use. Now it is time for me to undertake the rest, just as I promised you. That is, to bring and to lodge here the most excellent Queen, blessed among women, with her noble company, so that she may rule and govern the City, inhabited by the multitude of noble ladies from her court and household, for I see the palaces and tall mansions ready and furnished, the streets paved to receive her most excellent and honorable company and assembly. Let princesses, ladies, and all women now come forward to receive her with the greatest honor and reverence, for she is not only their Queen but also has ministry and dominion over all created powers after the only Son whom she conceived of the Holy Spirit and carried and who is the Son of God the Father. And it is right that the assembly of all women beg this most lofty and excellent sovereign princess to reside here below in her humility with them in their City and congregation without disdain or spite because of their insignificance compared to her highness. Yet, there is no need to fear that her humility, which surpasses all others, and her more than angelic goodness will allow her to refuse to inhabit and reside in the City of Ladies, and above all, in the

palace already prepared for her by my sister Rectitude, which is constructed solely of glory and praise. Let all women now accompany me, and let us say to her:

"We greet you, Queen of Heaven, with the greeting which the Angel brought you, when he said, *Hail Mary*, which pleased you more than all other greetings. May all the devout sex of women humbly beseech you that it please you well to reside among them with grace and mercy, as their defender, protector, and guard against all assaults of enemies and of the world, that they may drink from the fountain of virtues

which flows from you and be so satisfied that every sin and vice be abominable to them. Now come to us, Heavenly Queen, Temple of God, Cell and Cloister of the Holy Spirit, Vessel of the Trinity, Joy of the Angels, Star and Guide to those who have gone astray, Hope of the True Creation. My Lady, what man is so brazen to dare think or say that the feminine sex is vile in beholding your dignity? For if all other women were bad, the light of your goodness so surpasses and transcends them that any remaining evil would vanish. Since God chose His spouse from among women, most excellent Lady, because of your honor, not only should men refrain from reproaching women but should also hold them in great reverence.”

19.

THE END OF THE BOOK: CHRISTINE ADDRESSES THE LADIES.

My most honored ladies, may God be praised, for now our City is entirely finished and completed, where all of you who love glory, virtue, and praise may be lodged in great honor, ladies from the past as well as from the present and future, for it has been built and established for every honorable lady. And my most dear ladies, it is natural for the human heart to rejoice when it finds itself victorious in any enterprise and its enemies confounded. Therefore you are right, my ladies, to rejoice greatly in God and in honest mores upon seeing this new City completed, which can be not only the refuge for you all, that is, for virtuous women, but also the defense and guard against your enemies and assailants, if you guard it well. For you can see that the substance with which it is made is entirely of virtue, so resplendent that you may see yourselves mirrored in it, especially in the roofs built in the last part as well as in the other parts which concern you. And my dear ladies, do not misuse this new inheritance like the arrogant who tum proud when their prosperity grows and their wealth multiplies, but rather follow the example of your Queen, the sovereign Virgin, who, after the extraordinary honor of being

chosen Mother of the Son of God was announced to her, humbled herself all the more by calling herself the handmaiden of God. Thus, my ladies, just as it is true that a creature’s humility and kindness wax with the increase of its virtues, may this City be an occasion for you to conduct yourselves honestly and with integrity and to be all the more virtuous and humble.

And you ladies who are married, do not scorn being subject to your husbands, for sometimes it is not the best thing for a creature to be

independent. This is attested by what the angel said to Ezra: Those, he said, who take advantage of their free will can fall into sin and despise our Lord and deceive the just, and for this they perish. Those women with peaceful, good, and discrete husbands who are devoted to them, praise God for this boon, which is not inconsiderable, for a greater boon in the world could not be given them. And may they be diligent in serving, loving, and cherishing their husbands in the loyalty of their heart, as they should, keeping their peace and praying to God to uphold and save them. And those women who have husbands neither completely good nor completely bad should still praise God for not having the worst and should strive to moderate their vices and pacify them, according to their conditions. And those women who have husbands who are cruel, mean, and savage should strive to endure them while trying to overcome their vices and lead them back, if they can, to a reasonable and seemly life. And if they are so obstinate that their wives are unable to do anything, at least they will acquire great merit for their souls through the virtue of patience. And everyone will bless them and support them.

So, my ladies, be humble and patient, and God's grace will grow in you, and praise will be given to you as well as the Kingdom of Heaven. For Saint Gregory has said that patience is the entrance to Paradise and the way of Jesus Christ. And may none of you be forced into holding frivolous opinions nor be hardened in them,

lacking all basis in reason, nor be jealous or disturbed in mind, nor haughty in speech, nor outrageous in your acts, for these things disturb the mind and lead to madness. Such behavior is unbecoming and unfitting for women.

And you, virgin maidens, be pure, simple, and serene, without vagueness, for the snares of evil men are set for you. Keep your eyes lowered, with few words in your mouths, and act respectfully. Be armed with the strength of virtue against the tricks of the deceptive and avoid their company.

And widows, may there be integrity in your dress, conduct, and speech; piety in your deeds and way of life; prudence in your bearing; patience (so necessary!), strength, and resistance in tribulations and difficult affairs; humility in your heart, countenance, and speech; and charity in your works.

In brief, all women—whether noble, bourgeois, or lower-class—be well-informed in all things and cautious in defending your honor and chastity against your enemies! My ladies, see how these men accuse you of so many vices in everything. Make liars of them all by showing forth your

virtue, and prove their attacks false by acting well, so that you can say with the Psalmist, “the vices of the evil will fall on their heads.” Repel the deceptive flatterers who, using different charms, seek with various tricks to steal that which you must consummately guard, that is, your honor and the beauty of your praise. Oh my ladies, flee, flee the foolish love they urge on you! Flee it, for God’s sake, flee! For no good can come to you from it. Rather, rest assured that however deceptive their lures, their end is always to your detriment. And do not believe the contrary, for it cannot be otherwise. Remember, dear ladies, how these men call you frail, unserious, and easily influenced but yet try hard, using all kinds of strange and deceptive tricks, to catch you, just as one lays traps for wild animals. Flee, flee, my ladies, and avoid their company—under these smiles are hidden deadly and painful poisons. And so may it please you, my most respected ladies, to cultivate virtue, to flee vice, to increase and multiply our City, and to rejoice and act well. And may I, your servant, commend myself to you, praying to God who by His grace has granted me to live in this world and to persevere in His holy service. May He in the end have mercy on my great sins and grant to me the joy which lasts forever, which I may, by His grace, afford to you. Amen.

HERE ENDS THE THIRD AND LAST PART OF THE BOOK OF
THE CITY OF LADIES.

Niccolò Machiavelli,
The Prince

The Florentine Republic came under the control of Cosimo de' Medici in 1434, who maintained republican forms but managed outcomes through his banking wealth. Under the House of Medici, the Italian Renaissance took fire. Soon after their rise, the Council of Florence took place, in the context of the standoff between conciliarism and papal supremacy. In 1439, a grand ecumenical reconciliation between Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism was hammered out at the Council because the Eastern Roman Emperor, who came in person, was desperate for Western assistance against the Ottoman Turks. The large Byzantine delegation included scholars and brought Greek texts into Florence. Reconciliation of the two halves of the Church was negotiated, but the deal was popularly refused when brought back to Constantinople. The Byzantine Empire fell in 1453, marking the final end of the Roman Empire.

The Medici were forced out of power after the French invasion of Florence by King Charles VIII in 1494. (With this Italian campaign, Charles turned Italy into Europe's great arena of contest.) Then a puritanical firebrand, the Dominican Savonarola, effectively gained theocratic control. After being excommunicated by the pope, he was executed in 1498. The Florentine commune at this point erected a republic that was more than a façade, and Machiavelli entered government. Machiavelli later judged Piero Soderini, the head of that government, as having been too soft as this regime collapsed at the hands of a papal force that restored the Medici to power.

Machiavelli cherished the republicanism of Florence, which had fostered political freedom to a degree perhaps not seen since classical Athens. A Florentine born two centuries later than Dante (whom he loved to read), Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527) stands on the frontier between the Renaissance and modernity. He wanted a renaissance that was a return to the classical past, but a return that meant imitation of pre-Christian Roman republican *deeds*. And to imitate the grandeur of these deeds according to the spirit that gave rise to them would require being radically original: modern. His renaissance was a rebirth that was the birth of something new. Often considered the father of modern political science, Machiavelli had extensive experience in government service as an elected official of Florence's Second Chancery, a role he filled from 1498 to 1512, when the Medici family was out of power. He went on diplomatic missions, thus encountering Cesare Borgia, the son of Pope Alexander VI, who provided the original model for *The Prince*. (The Renaissance papacy was a brilliant patron of culture—and the office of a

warlord.) With the return of the Medici, Machiavelli was forced out of office. After being tortured, he retired to his estate and wrote his most famous work in 1513. This exile from politics, so painful to him, also stimulated his creativity: all his major writings come from this time. Along with Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*, *The Prince* was *de rigueur* reading for an educated European during the sixteenth century. In Cesare Borgia, Machiavelli initially saw a conjunction of *virtù* (ability or skill) and *fortuna* (good fortune). At Borgia's court, he sent for a copy of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*: for Machiavelli, political science meant attending to both literary exemplars as well as directly observing contemporary actors. By 1513, Machiavelli's hopes were on a Medici coordination of papal and Florentine power to meet the demands of the hour. In the end, Machiavelli opened the door to a modern transformation of ancient republicanism. John Adams valued him as a political philosopher.

With Machiavelli, we step into the modern world with its unleashed powers, and he asks us to look at the situation soberly. What to do with medieval ideals? If the papacy plays the same bloody games as other political players, where to turn to pursue a civilizational idealism in a prudent manner? What is left of Christendom? What was plausible or attractive in the notion of Christendom? What was incoherent? Is there still a place for *Romanitas*? If modernity has been shaped by Western Europe's technological, military, and ideological predominance over the world, we must understand the ancient and medieval ideas and ideals that gave rise to Europe and the "West." We must never tire of bringing within what has grown distant, never tire of thinking through every thought that has shaped the lives of humans. An ecumenic consciousness loves the adventure of a dialogue that never ceases to draw us out of ourselves. If the dignity of each person and the communion of every person are what we seek to foster, if that is the labor of civilization, then we will be glad for participation in The Great Conversation. philosopher.

Dedicatory Letter

Niccolo Machiavelli to the Magnificent Lorenzo de' Medici:

It is customary most of the time for those who desire to acquire favor with a Prince to come to meet him with things that they care most for among their own or with things that they see please him most. Thus, one sees them many times being presented with horses, arms, cloth of gold, precious stones and similar ornaments worthy of their greatness. Thus, since I desire to offer myself to your Magnificence with some testimony of my homage to you, I have found nothing in my belongings that I care so much for and esteem so greatly as the knowledge of the actions of great men, learned by me from long experience with modern things and a continuous reading of ancient ones. Having thought out and examined these things with great diligence for a long time, and now reduced them to one small volume, I send it to your Magnificence.

And although I judge this work undeserving of your presence, yet I have much confidence that through your humanity it may be accepted, considering that no greater gift could be made by me than to give you the capacity to be able to understand in a very short time all that I have learned and understood in so many years and with so many hardships and dangers for myself I have not ornamented this work, nor filled it with fulsome phrases nor with pompous and magnificent words, nor with any blandishment or superfluous ornament whatever, with which it is customary for many to describe and adorn their things. For I wanted it either not to be honored for anything or to please solely for the variety of the matter and the gravity of the subject. Nor do I want it to be reputed presumption if a man from a low and mean state dares to discuss and give rules for the governments of princes. For just as those who sketch landscapes place themselves down in the plain to consider the nature of mountains and high places and to consider the nature of low places place themselves high atop mountains, similarly, to know well the nature of peoples one needs to be prince, and to know well the nature of princes one needs to be of the people.

Therefore, your Magnificence, take this small gift in the spirit with which I send it. If your Magnificence considers and reads it diligently, you will learn from it my extreme desire that you arrive at the greatness that fortune and your other qualities promise you. And if your Magnificence will at some time turn your eyes from the summit of your height to these low places, you will learn how undeservedly I endure a great and continuous malignity of fortune.

OF PRINCIPALITIES

How Many Are the Kinds of Principalities and in What Modes They Are Acquired

All states, all dominions that have held and do hold empire over men have been and are either republics or principalities. The principalities are either hereditary, in which the bloodline of their lord has been their prince for a long time, or they are new. The new ones are either altogether new, as was Milan to Francesco Sforza, or they are like members added to the hereditary state of the prince who acquires them, as is the kingdom of Naples to the king of Spain.

Dominions so acquired are either accustomed to living under a prince or used to being free; and they are acquired either with the arms of others or with one's own, either by fortune or by virtue.

Of New Principalities That Are Acquired through One's Own Arms and Virtue

No one should marvel if, in speaking as I will do of principalities that are altogether new both in prince and in state, I bring up the greatest examples. For since men almost always walk on paths beaten by others and proceed in their actions by imitation, unable either to stay on the paths of others altogether or to attain the virtue of those whom you imitate, a prudent man should always enter upon the paths beaten by great men, and imitate those who have been most excellent, so that if his own virtue does not reach that far, it is at least in the odor of it. He should do as prudent archers do when the place they plan to hit appears too distant, and knowing how far the strength of their bow carries, they set their aim much higher than the place intended, not to reach such height with their arrow, but to be able with the aid of so high an aim to achieve their plan.

I say, then, that in altogether new principalities, where there is a new prince, one encounters more or less difficulty in maintaining them according to whether the one who acquires them is more or less virtuous. And because the result of becoming prince from private individual presupposes either virtue or fortune, it appears that one or the other of these two things relieves in part many difficulties; nonetheless, he who has relied less on fortune has maintained himself more. To have the prince compelled to come to live there in person, because he has no other states, makes it still easier. But, to come to those who have become princes by their own virtue and not by fortune, I say that the most excellent are Moses, Cyrus, Romulus, Theseus, and the like. And

although one should not reason about Moses, as he was a mere executor of things that had been ordered for him by God, nonetheless he should be admired if only for that grace which made him deserving of speaking with God. But let us consider Cyrus and the others who have acquired or founded kingdoms: you will find them all admirable; and if their particular actions and orders are considered, they will appear no different from those of Moses, who had so great a teacher. And as one examines their actions and lives, one does not see that they had anything else from fortune than the opportunity, which gave them the matter enabling them to introduce any form they pleased. Without that opportunity their virtue of spirit would have been eliminated, and without that virtue the opportunity would have come in vain.

It was necessary then for Moses to find the people of Israel in Egypt, enslaved and oppressed by the Egyptians, so that they would be disposed to follow him so as to get out of their servitude. It was fitting that Romulus not be received in Alba, that he should have been exposed at birth, if he was to become king of Rome and founder of that fatherland. Cyrus needed to find the Persians malcontent with the empire of the Medes, and the Medes soft and effeminate because of a long peace. Theseus could not have demonstrated his virtue if he had not found the Athenians dispersed. Such opportunities, therefore, made these men happy, and their excellent virtue enabled the opportunity to be recognized; hence their fatherlands were ennobled by it and became very happy.

Those like these men, who become princes by the paths of virtue, acquire their principality with difficulty but hold it with ease; and the difficulties they have in acquiring their principality arise in part from the new orders and modes that they are forced to introduce so as to found their state and their security. And it should be considered that nothing is more difficult to handle, more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to manage, than to put oneself at the head of introducing new orders. For the introducer has all those who benefit from the old orders as enemies, and he has lukewarm defenders in all those who might benefit from the new orders. This lukewarmness arises partly from fear of adversaries who have the laws on their side and partly from the incredulity of men, who do not truly believe in new things unless they come to have a firm experience of them. Consequently, whenever those who are enemies have opportunity to attack, they do so with partisan zeal, and the others defend lukewarmly so that one is in peril along with them. It is however necessary, if one wants to discuss this aspect well, to examine whether these innovators stand by themselves or depend on others; that is, whether to carry out their deed they

must beg or indeed can use force. In the first case they always come to ill and never accomplish anything; but when they depend on their own and are able to use force, then it is that they are rarely in peril. From this it arises that all the armed prophets conquered and the unarmed ones were ruined. For, besides the things that have been said, the nature of peoples is variable; and it is easy to persuade them of something, but difficult to keep them in that persuasion. And thus things must be ordered in such a mode that when they no longer believe, one can make them believe by force. Moses, Cyrus, Theseus, and Romulus would not have been able to make their peoples observe their constitutions for long if they had been unarmed, as happened in our times to Brother Girolamo Savonarola. He was ruined in his new orders as soon as the multitude began not to believe in them, and he had no mode for holding firm those who had believed nor for making unbelievers believe. Men such as these, therefore, find great difficulty in conducting their affairs; all their dangers are along the path, and they must overcome them with virtue. But once they have overcome them and they begin to be held in veneration, having eliminated those who had envied them for their quality, they remain powerful, secure, honored, and happy.

To such high examples I want to add a lesser example, but it will have some proportion with the others and I want it to suffice for all other similar cases: this is Hiero of Syracuse. From private individual he became prince of Syracuse, nor did he receive anything more from fortune than the opportunity. For when the Syracusans were oppressed, they chose him as their captain, and from there he proved worthy of being made their prince. And he was of such virtue, even in private fortune, that he who wrote of him said “that he lacked nothing of being a king except a kingdom.” Hiero eliminated the old military and organized a new one; he left his old friendships and made new ones; and when he had friendships and soldiers that were his own, he could build any building on top of such a foundation; so he went through a great deal of trouble to acquire, and little to maintain.

Of New Principalities That Are Acquired by Others' Arms and Fortune

Those who become princes from private individual solely by fortune become so with little trouble, but maintain themselves with much. They have no difficulty along the path because they fly there, but all the difficulties arise when they are in place. And such princes come to be when a state is given to someone either for money or by the favor of whoever gives it, as happened to many in Greece, in the

cities of Ionia and of the Hellespont, where they were made princes by Darius so that they might hold on to those cities for his security and glory; as also those emperors were made who from private individual attained the empire through corrupting the soldiers. These persons rest simply on the will and fortune of whoever has given a state to them, which are two very inconstant and unstable things. They do not know how to hold and they cannot hold that rank: they do not know how, because if one is not a man of great ingenuity and virtue, it is not reasonable, that having always lived in private fortune, he should know how to command; they cannot hold that rank because they do not have forces that can be friendly and faithful to them. Then, too, states that come to be suddenly, like all other things in nature that are born and grow quickly, cannot have roots and branches, so that the first adverse weather eliminates them — unless, indeed, as was said, those who have suddenly become princes have so much virtue that they know immediately how to prepare to keep what fortune has placed in their laps; and the foundations that others have laid before becoming princes they lay afterwards.

To both of the modes mentioned of becoming prince, by virtue or by fortune, I want to bring up two examples that have occurred in days within our memory; and these are Francesco Sforza and Cesare Borgia. Francesco became duke of Milan from private individual by proper means and with a great virtue of his own; and that which he had acquired with a thousand pains he maintained with little trouble. On the other hand Cesare Borgia, called Duke Valentino by the vulgar, acquired his state through the fortune of his father and lost it through the same, notwithstanding the fact that he made use of every deed and did all those things that should be done by a prudent and virtuous man to put his roots in the states that the arms and fortune of others had given him. For, as was said above, whoever does not lay the foundations at first might be able, with great virtue, to lay them later, although they might have to be laid with hardship for the architect and with danger to the building. Thus, if one considers all the steps of the duke, one will see that he had laid for himself great foundations for future power, which I do not judge superfluous to discuss; for I do not know what better teaching I could give to a new prince than the example of his actions. And if his orders did not bring profit to him, it was not his fault, because this arose from an extraordinary and extreme malignity of fortune.

Alexander VI had very many difficulties, both present and future, when he decided to make his son the duke great. First, he did not see the path to being able to make him lord of any state that was

not a state of the Church; and when he decided to take that of the Church, he knew that the duke of Milan and the Venetians would not consent to it because Faenza and Rimini had for long been under the protection of the Venetians. Besides this, he saw that the arms of Italy, and especially the arms of anyone whom he might have been able to make use of, were in the hands of those who had to fear the greatness of the pope; and so he could not trust them, as they were all with the Orsini and the Colonna and their accomplices. It was thus necessary to upset those orders and to bring disorder to their states so as to be able to make himself lord securely of part of them. This was easy for him, because he found the Venetians, moved by other causes, were engaged in getting the French to come back into Italy, which he not only did not oppose but made easier by the dissolution of the former marriage of King Louis. So the king came into Italy with the aid of the Venetians and the consent of Alexander, and he was no sooner in Milan than the pope got men from him for a campaign in Romagna, which was granted to him because of the reputation of the king. So after the duke had acquired Romagna and beaten down the Colonna, two things prevented him from maintaining that and going further ahead: one, that his arms did not appear to him to be faithful; the other, the will of France: that is, the Orsini arms of which he had availed himself might fail under him, and not only prevent him from acquiring but also take away what he had acquired; and the king might also do the same to him. He had a test of the Orsini when, after the capture of Faenza, he attacked Bologna and saw them go coolly to that attack; and regarding the king, the duke knew his mind when after he had taken the duchy of Urbino, he attacked Tuscany, and the king made him desist from that campaign. Hence the duke decided to depend no longer on the arms and fortune of others. And the first thing he did was to weaken the Orsini and Colonna parties in Rome. For he gained to himself all their adherents, who were gentlemen, by making them his gentlemen and by giving them large allowances; and he honored them, according to their qualities, with commands and with government posts, so that in a few months the partisan affections in their minds were eliminated, and all affection turned toward the duke. After this he waited for an opportunity to eliminate the heads of the Orsini, since he had dispersed those of the Colonna house. A good one came to him, and he used it better; for when the Orsini became aware, late, that the greatness of the duke and of the Church was ruin for them, they held a meeting at Magione, near Perugia. From that arose rebellion in Urbino, tumults in Romagna, and infinite dangers for the duke, who overcame them all with the aid of the French. And when his reputation had been restored, he trusted neither France nor other external forces, and so

as not to put them to the test, he turned to deceit. He knew so well how to dissimulate his intent that the Orsini themselves, through Signor Paolo, became reconciled with him. The duke did not fail to fulfill every kind of duty to secure Signor Paolo, giving him money, garments, and horses, so that their simplicity brought them into the duke's hands at Sinigaglia. So, when these heads had been eliminated, and their partisans had been turned into his friends, the duke had laid very good foundations for his power, since he had all Romagna with the duchy of Urbino. He thought, especially, that he had acquired the friendship of Romagna, and that he had gained all those peoples to himself since they had begun to taste well-being.

And because this point is deserving of notice and of being imitated by others, I do not want to leave it out. Once the duke had taken over Romagna, he found it had been commanded by impotent lords who had been readier to despoil their subjects than to correct them, and had given their subjects matter for disunion, not for union. Since that province was quite full of robberies, quarrels, and every other kind of insolence, he judged it necessary to give it good government, if he wanted to reduce it to peace and obedience to a kingly arm. So he put there Messer Remirro de Orco, a cruel and ready man, to whom he gave the fullest power. In a short time Remirro reduced it to peace and unity, with the greatest reputation for himself. Then the duke judged that such excessive authority was not necessary, because he feared that it might become hateful; and he set up civil court in the middle of the province, with an excellent president, where each city had its advocate. And because he knew that past rigors had generated some hatred for Remirro, to purge the spirits of that people and to gain them entirely to himself, he wished to show that if any cruelty had been committed, this had not come from him but from the harsh nature of his minister. And having seized this opportunity, he had him placed one morning in the piazza at Cesena in two pieces, with a piece of wood and a bloody knife beside him. The ferocity of this spectacle left the people at once satisfied and stupefied.

But let us return where we left off. I say that when the duke found himself very powerful and secure in part against present dangers — since he had armed to suit himself and had in good part eliminated those arms which were near enough to have attacked him — there remained for him, if he wanted to proceed with acquisition, to consider the king of France. For he knew that this would not be tolerated by the king, who had been late to perceive his error. And so he began to seek out new friendships and to vacillate with France in the expedition that the French were making toward the kingdom of Naples against the

Spanish who were besieging Gaeta. His intent was to secure himself against them: in which he would soon have succeeded, if Alexander had lived.

And these were his arrangements as to present things. But as to the future, he had to fear, first, that a new successor in the Church might not be friendly to him and might seek to take away what Alexander had given him. He thought he might secure himself against this in four modes: first, to eliminate the bloodlines of all those lords he had despoiled, so as to take that opportunity away from the pope; second, to win over to himself all the gentlemen in Rome, as was said, so as to be able to hold the pope in check with them; third, to make the College of Cardinals as much his as he could; fourth, to acquire so much empire before the pope died that he could resist a first attack on his own. Of these four things he had accomplished three at the death of Alexander; the fourth he almost accomplished. For of the lords he had despoiled he killed as many as he could reach, and very few saved themselves; the Roman gentlemen had been won over to himself; in the College he had a very large party; and as to new acquisition, he had planned to become lord over Tuscany, he already possessed Perugia and Piombino, and he had taken Pisa under his protection. And, as soon as he did not have to pay regard to France (which he did not have to do any longer, since the French had already been stripped of the kingdom by the Spanish, so that each of them was forced of necessity to buy his friendship), he would have jumped on Pisa. After this, Lucca and Siena would have quickly yielded, in part through envy of the Florentines, in part through fear; the Florentines had no remedy. If he had succeeded in this (as he was succeeding the same year that Alexander died), he would have acquired such force and reputation that he would have stood by himself and would no longer have depended on the fortune and force of someone else, but on his own power and virtue. But Alexander died five years after he had begun to draw his sword. He left the duke with only the state of Romagna consolidated, with all the others in the air, between two very powerful enemy armies, and sick to death. And there was such ferocity and such virtue in the duke, and he knew so well how men have to be won over or lost, and so sound were the found actions that he had laid in so little time, that if he had not had these armies on his back or if he had been healthy, he would have been equal to every difficulty. And that his found actions were good one may see : Romagna waited for him for more than a month; in Rome, though he was half-alive, he remained secure; and although the Baglioni, Vitelli, and Orsini came to Rome, none followed them against him; if he could not make pope whomever he wanted, at least it would not be someone

he did not want. But if at the death of Alexander the duke had been healthy, everything would have been easy for him. And he told me, on the day that Julius II was created, that he had thought about what might happen when his father was dying, and had found a remedy for everything, except that he never thought that at his death he himself would also be on the point of dying.

Thus, if I summed up all the actions of the duke, I would not know how to reproach him; on the contrary, it seems to me he should be put forward, as I have done, to be imitated by all those who have risen to empire through fortune and by the arms of others. For with his great spirit and high intention, he could not have conducted himself otherwise and the only things in the way of his plans were the brevity of Alexander's life and his own sickness. So whoever judges it necessary in his new principality to secure himself against enemies, to gain friends to himself, to conquer either by force or by fraud, to make himself loved and feared by the people, and followed and revered by the soldiers, to eliminate those who can or might offend you, to renew old orders through new modes, to be severe and pleasant, magnanimous and liberal, to eliminate an unfaithful military, to create a new one, to maintain friendships with kings and princes so that they must either benefit you with favor or be hesitant to offend you — can find no fresher examples than the actions of that man. One could only accuse him in the creation of Julius as pontiff, in which he made a bad choice; for, as was said, though he could not make a pope to suit himself, he could have kept anyone from being pope. And for the papacy he should never have consented to those cardinals whom he had offended or who, having become pope, would have to be afraid of him. For men offend either from fear or for hatred. Those whom he had offended were, among others, San Piero ad Vincula, Colonna, San Giorgio, Ascanio; Therefore the duke, before everything else, should have created a Spaniard pope, and if he could not, should have consented to Rouen, and not San Piero ad Vincula. And whoever believes that among great person ages new benefits will make old injuries be forgotten will make old injuries be forgotten deceives himself. So the duke erred in this choice and it was the cause of his ultimate ruin.

Of Those Who Have Attained a Principality through Crimes

But, because one becomes prince from private individual also by two modes which cannot be altogether attributed either to fortune or to virtue, I do not think they should be left out, although one of them can be reasoned about more amply where republics are treated. These are when one ascends to a principality by some criminal and nefarious

path or when a private citizen becomes prince of his fatherland by the support of his fellow citizens. And, to speak of the first mode, it will be shown with two examples, one ancient, mode, it will be shown with two examples, one ancient, the other modern, without entering otherwise into the merits of this issue, because I judge it sufficient, for whoever for whoever would find it necessary to imitate them.

Agathocles the Sicilian became king of Syracuse not only from private fortune but from a mean and abject one. Born of a potter, he always kept to a life of crime at every rank of his career; nonetheless, his crimes were accompanied with such virtue of spirit and body that when he turned to the military, he rose through its ranks to become praetor of Syracuse. After he was established in that rank, he decided to become prince and to hold with violence and without obligation to anyone else that which had been conceded to him by agreement. Having given intelligence of his plan to Hamilcar the Carthaginian, who was with his armies fighting in Sicily, one morning he assembled the people and Senate of Syracuse as if he had to decide things pertinent to the republic. At a signal he had ordered, he had all the senators and the richest of the people killed by his soldiers. Once they were dead, he seized and held the principate of that city without any civil controversy. And although he was defeated twice by the Carthaginians and in the end besieged, not only was he able to defend his city but also, leaving part of his men for defense against the siege, he attacked Africa with the others. In a short time he freed Syracuse from the siege and brought the Carthaginians to dire necessity; they were compelled of necessity to come to an agreement with him, to be content with the possession of Africa, and to leave Sicily to Agathocles. Thus, whoever might consider the actions and virtue of this man will see nothing or little that can be attributed to fortune. For as was said above, not through anyone's support but through the ranks of the military, which he had gained for himself with a thousand hardships and dangers, he came to the principate and afterwards he maintained it with many spirited and dangerous policies. Yet one cannot call it virtue to kill one's citizens, betray one's friends, to be without faith, without mercy, without religion; these modes can enable one to acquire empire, but not glory. For, if one considers the virtue of Agathocles in entering into and escaping from dangers, and the greatness of his spirit in enduring and overcoming adversities, one does not see why he has to be judged inferior to any most excellent captain. Nonetheless, his savage cruelty and inhumanity, together with his infinite crimes, do not permit him to be celebrated among the most excellent men. Thus, one cannot attribute to fortune or to virtue what he achieved without either.

In our times, during the reign of Alexander VI, Liverotto da Fermo, having been left a fatherless child some years before, was brought up by a maternal uncle of his called Giovanni Fogliani, and in the first years of his youth he was sent out to soldier under Paolo Vitelli so that when he was versed in that discipline, he would attain an excellent rank in the military. Then when Paolo died, he fought under Vitellozzo, his brother, and in a very short time, since he was ingenious and dashing in person and spirit, he became the first man in his military. But as it appeared to him servile to be at the level of others, he thought that with the aid of certain citizens of Fermo to whom servitude was dearer than the liberty of their fatherland, and with support from the Vitelli, he would seize Fermo. And he wrote to Giovanni Fogliani that since he had been away from home a few years, he wanted to come to see him and his city, and in some part to acknowledge his patrimony; and because he had not troubled himself for anything but to acquire honor, he wanted to come in honorable fashion accompanied by a hundred horsemen of his friends and servants, so that his citizens might see that he had not spent the time in vain. He begged Giovanni to please order that he be received honorably by the inhabitants of Fermo, which would direct honor not only to him but to Giovanni himself, since Liverotto was his ward. Thereupon Giovanni did not fail in any proper duty to his nephew; and when Liverotto had been honorably received by the inhabitants of Fermo, he was lodged in Giovanni's house. There, after a few days had passed, and after he had waited to order secretly what was necessary for his future crime, he held a most solemn banquet to which he invited Giovanni Fogliani and all the first men of Fermo. And when the food and all other entertainments customary at such banquets had been enjoyed, Liverotto, with cunning, opened certain grave discussions, speaking of the greatness of Pope Alexander and of Cesare Borgia, his son, and of their undertakings. While Giovanni and the others were responding to these discussions, Liverotto at a stroke stood up, saying that these were things that should be spoken of in a more secret place; and he withdrew to a room into which Giovanni and all the other citizens came behind him. No sooner were they seated than soldiers came out of secret places and killed Giovanni and all the others. After this homicide, Liverotto mounted on horse, rode through the town and besieged the highest magistracy in the palace so that through fear they were compelled to obey him and to establish a government of which he was made prince. And since all those who could have hurt him because they were malcontent were dead, he strengthened himself with new civil and military orders, so that in the period of one year that he held the principality, he was not only secure in the city of Fermo but had become fearsome to all his

neighbors. And to overthrow him would have been as difficult as to overthrow Agathodes if he had not permitted himself to be deceived by Cesare Borgia when at Sinigaglia, as was said above, he took the Orsini and the Vitelli. There Liverotto too was taken, one year after the parricide he committed, and together with Vitellozzo, who had been his master in his virtues and crimes, he was strangled.

Someone could question how it happened that Agathodes and anyone like him, after in finite betrayals and betrayals and cruelties, could live for a long time secure in his fatherland, defend himself against external enemies, and never be conspired against by his citizens, inasmuch as many others have not been able to maintain their states through cruelty even in peaceful times, not to mention uncertain times of war. I believe that this comes from cruelties badly used or well used. Those can be called well used (if it is permissible to speak well of evil) that are done at a stroke, out of the necessity to secure oneself, and then are not persisted in but are turned to as much utility for the subjects as one can. Those cruelties are badly used which, though few in the beginning, rather grow with time than are eliminated. Those who observe the first mode can have some remedy for their state with God and with men, as had Agathocles; as for the others it is impossible for them to maintain them selves.

Hence it should be noted that in taking hold of a state, he who seizes it should review all the offenses necessary for him to commit, and do them all at a stroke, so as not to have to renew them every day and, by not renewing them, to secure men and gain them to himself with benefits. Who ever does otherwise, either through timidity or through bad counsel, is always under necessity to hold a knife in his hand; nor can one ever found himself on his subjects if, because of fresh and continued in juries, they cannot be secure against him. For in juries must be done all together, so that, being tasted less, they offend less; and benefits should be done little should be done little by little so that they may be tasted better. And above all, a prince should live with his subjects so that no single accident whether bad or good has to make him change; for when necessities come in adverse times you will not be in time for evil, and the good that you do does not help you, because it is judged to be forced on you, and cannot bring you any gratitude.

Of Those Things for Which Men And Especially Princes Are Praised or Blamed

It remains now to see what the modes and government of a prince should be with subjects and with friends. And because I know that

many have written of this, I fear that in writing of it again, I may be held presumptuous, especially since in disputing this matter I depart from the orders of others. But since my intent is to write something useful to whoever understands it, it has appeared to me more fitting to go directly to the effectual truth of the thing than to the imagination of it. And many have imagined republics and principalities that have never been seen or known to exist in truth; for it is so far from how one lives to how one should live that he who lets go of what is done for what should be done learns his ruin rather than his preservation. For a man who wants to make a profession of good in all regards must come to ruin among so many who are not good. Hence it is necessary to a prince, if he wants to maintain himself, to learn to be able not to be good, and to use this and not use it according to necessity.

Thus, leaving out what is imagined about a prince and discussing what is true, I say that all men, whenever one speaks of them, and especially princes, since they are placed higher, are noted for some of the qualities that bring them either blame or praise. And this is why someone is considered liberal, someone mean (using a Tuscan term because a Tuscan term because *avaro* [avaricious] in our language is still one who desires to have something by rapine, *misero* [mean] we call one who refrains too much from using what is his); someone is considered a giver, someone rapacious; someone cruel, some one merciful; the one a breaker of faith, the other faithful; the one effeminate and pusillanimous, the other fierce and spirited; the one humane, the other proud; the one lascivious, the other chaste; the one honest, the other astute; the one hard, the other agreeable; the one grave, the other light; the one religious, the other unbelieving, and the like. And I know that everyone will confess that it would be a very praise worthy thing to find in a prince all of the above mentioned qualities that are held good. But because he cannot have them, nor wholly observe them, since human conditions do not permit it, it is necessary for him to be so prudent as to know how to avoid the infamy of those vices that would take his state from him and to be on guard against those that do not, if that is possible; but if one cannot, one can let them go on with less hesitation. And furthermore one should not care about incurring the fame of those vices with out which it is difficult to save one's state ; for if one considers everything well, one will find something appears something appears to be virtue, which if pursued would be one's ruin, and something else appears to be vice, which if pursued results in one's security and well-being.

Why the Princes of Italy Have Lost Their States

When the things written above have been observed prudently, they make a new prince appear ancient and immediately render him more secure and steady in his state than if he had grown old in it. For a new prince is observed much more in his actions than a hereditary one; and when they are recognized as virtuous, they take hold of men much more and obligate them much more than ancient blood. For men are much more taken by present things than by past ones, and when they find good in the present, they enjoy it and do not seek elsewhere; indeed they will take up every defense on behalf of a new prince if he is not lacking in other things as regards himself. And so he will have the double glory of having made the beginning of a new principality, of having adorned it and consolidated it with good laws, good arms, good friends, and good examples, just as he has a double shame who, having been born prince, has lost it through his lack of prudence.

And if one considers those lords in Italy who have lost their states in our times, like the king of Naples, the duke of Milan, and others, one will find in them, first, a common defect as to arms, the causes of which have been discussed at length above; then, one will see that some of them either had a hostile people or if they had friendly peoples, did not know how to secure themselves against the great. For without these defects, states that have enough nerve to put an army into the field are not lost. Philip of Macedon, not the father of Alexander but the one who was defeated by Titus Quintius, did not have much of a state with respect to the greatness of the Romans and of Greece, who attacked him; nonetheless, because he was a military man and knew how to deal with the people and secure himself against the great, he kept up a war against them for many years; and if at the end he lost dominion over several cities, his kingdom remained to him nonetheless.

Therefore, these princes of ours who have been in their principalities for many years may not accuse fortune when they have lost them afterwards, but their own indolence; for, never having thought that quiet times could change (which is a common defect of men, not to take account of the storm during the calm), when later the times became adverse, they thought of fleeing and not of defending themselves. And they hoped that their peoples, disgusted with the insolence of the victors, would call them back. This course is good when others are lacking; but it is indeed bad to have put aside other remedies for this one. For one should never fall in the belief you can find someone to pick you up. Whether it does not happen or happens, it is not security for you, because that defense was base and did not depend on you. And those defenses alone are good, are certain, and are lasting, that

depend on you yourself and on your virtue.

How Much Fortune Can Do In Human Affairs, and in What Mode It May Be Opposed

It is not unknown to me that many have held and hold the opinion that worldly things are so governed by fortune and by God, that men cannot correct them with their prudence, indeed that they have no remedy at all; and on account of this they might judge that one need not sweat much over things but let oneself be governed by chance. This opinion has been believed more in our times because of the great variability of things which have been seen and are seen every day, beyond every human conjecture. When I have thought about this sometimes, I have been in some part inclined to their opinion. Nonetheless, so that our free will not be eliminated, I judge that it might be true that fortune is arbiter of half of our actions, but also that she leaves the other half, or close to it, for us to govern. And I liken her to one of these violent rivers which, when they become enraged, flood the plains, ruin the trees and the buildings, lift earth from this part, drop in another; each person flees before them, everyone yields to their impetus without being able to hinder them in any regard. And although they are like this, it is not as if men, when times are quiet, could not provide for them with dikes and dams so that when they rise later, either they go by a canal or their impetus is neither so wanton nor so damaging. It happens similarly with fortune, which demonstrates her power where virtue has not been put in order to resist her and therefore turns her impetus where she knows that dams and dikes have not been made to contain her. And if you consider Italy, which is the seat of these variations and that which has given them motion, you will see a country without dams and without any dike. If it had been diked by suitable virtue, like Germany, Spain, and France, either this flood would not have brought the great variations that it has, or it would not have come here.

And I wish that this may be enough to have said about opposing fortune in general. But restricting myself more to particulars, I say that one sees a given prince be happy today and come to ruin tomorrow without having seen him change his nature or any quality. This I believe arises, first, from the causes that have been discussed at length in the preceding, that is, that the prince who leans entirely on his fortune comes to ruin as it varies. I believe, further, that he is happy who adapts his mode of proceeding to the qualities of the times; and similarly, he is unhappy whose procedure is in disaccord with the times. For one sees that in the things that lead men to the end that each has before him, that is, glories and riches, they proceed variously: one with

caution, the other with impetuosity; one by violence, the other with art; one with patience, the other with its contrary — and with these different modes each can attain it. One also sees two cautious persons, one attaining his plan, the other not; and similarly two persons are equally happy with two different methods, one being cautious, the other impetuous. This arises from nothing other than from the quality of the times that they conform to or not in their procedure. From this follows what I said, that two persons working differently come out with the same effect; and of two persons working identically, one is led to his end, the other not. On this also depends the variability of the good: for if one governs himself with caution and patience, and the times and affairs turn in such a way that his government is good, he comes out happy; but if the times and affairs change, he is ruined because he does not change his mode of proceeding. Nor may a man be found so prudent as to know how to accommodate himself to this, whether because he cannot deviate from what nature inclines him to or also because, when one has always flourished by walking on one path, he cannot be persuaded to depart from it. And so the cautious man, when it is time to come to impetuosity, does not know how to do it, hence comes to ruin: for if he would change his nature with the times and with affairs, his fortune would not change.

Pope Julius II proceeded impetuously in all his affairs, and he found the times and affairs so much in conformity with his mode of proceeding that he always achieved a happy end. Consider the first enterprise that he undertook in Bologna, while Messer Giovanni Bentivoglio was still living. The Venetians were not content with it; nor was the king of Spain; with France he was holding discussions on that enterprise; and nonetheless, with his ferocity and impetuosity, he personally put that expedition into motion.

This move made Spain and the Venetians stand still in suspense, the latter out of fear and the other because of the desire he had to recover the whole kingdom of Naples.

From the other side he pulled the king of France after him; because when that king saw him move, and since he desired to make Julius his friend in order to bring down the Venetians, he judged he could not deny him his troops without injuring him openly. Julius thus accomplished with his impetuous move what no other pontiff, with all human prudence, would ever have accomplished, because if he had waited to depart from Rome with firm conclusions and everything in order, as any other pontiff would have done, he would never have succeeded. For the king of France would have had a thousand excuses and the others would have raised in him a thousand fears. I wish to omit all

his other actions, since all have been alike and all succeeded well. And the brevity of his life did not allow him to feel the contrary, because if times had come when he had needed to proceed with caution, his ruin would have followed: he would never have deviated from those modes to which nature inclined him.

I conclude, thus, that when fortune varies and men remain obstinate in their modes, men are happy while they are in accord, and as they come into discord, unhappy. I judge this indeed, that it is better to be impetuous than cautious, because fortune is a woman; and it is necessary, if one wants to hold her down, to beat her and strike her down. And one sees that she lets herself be won more by the impetuous than by those who proceed coldly. And so always, like a woman, she is the friend of the young, because they are less cautious, more ferocious, and command her with more audacity.

**Niccolo Machiavelli to Francesco Vettori, Florence,
December 10, 1513.**

Magnificent ambassador:

“Never were divine favors late.” I say this because I appear to have lost, no, mislaid your favor, since you have gone a long time without writing me, and I was doubtful whence the cause could arise. And of all those that came to my mind I took little account except for one, when I feared you had stopped writing to me because someone had written to you that I was not a good warden of your letters; and I knew that, apart from Filippo and Pagolo, no one else had seen them on account of me. I regained your favor by your last letter of the 23rd of last month, where I was very pleased to see how orderedly and quietly you exercise this public office; and I urge you to continue so, for whoever lets go of his own convenience for the convenience of others, only loses his own and gets no thanks from them. And because Fortune wants to do everything, she wants us to allow her to do it, to remain quiet and not give trouble, and to await the time at which she allows men something to do; and then it will be right for you to give more effort, to watch things more, and for me to leave my villa and say: “Here I am.” Therefore, wishing to return equal favors, I cannot tell you in this letter of mine anything other than what my life is like, and if you judge that it should be bartered for yours, I will be content to exchange it.

I stay in my villa, and since these last chance events occurred, I have not spent, to add them all up, twenty days in Florence. Until now I have been catching thrushes with my own hands. I would get up

before day, prepare traps, and go out with a bundle of cages on my back, so that I looked like Geta when he returned from the harbor with Arnphitryon's books; I caught at least two, at most six thrushes. And so passed all September; then this pastime, though annoying and strange, gave out, to my displeasure. And what my life is like, I will tell you. I get up in the morning with the sun and go to a wood of mine that I am having cut down, where I stay for two hours to look over the work of the past day, and to pass time with the woodcutters, who always have some disaster on their hands either among themselves or with their neighbors. And regarding this wood I would have a thousand beautiful things to tell you of what happened to me with Frosino da Panzano and others who want wood from it. And Frosino in particular sent for a number of loads without telling me anything, and on payment wanted to hold back ten lire from me, which he said he should have had from me four years ago when he beat me at cricca at Antonio Guicciardini's. I began to raise the devil and was on the point of accusing the driver who had gone for it of theft; but Giovanni Machiavelli came between us and brought us to agree. Batista Guicciardini, Filippo Ginori, Tornmaso del Bene, and some other citizens, when that north wind was blowing, ordered a load each from me. I promised to all, and sent one to Tommaso which in Florence turned into a half-load, because to stack it up there were himself, his wife, his servant, and his children, so that they looked like Gabbura with his boys when he bludgeons an ox on Thursday. So, when I saw whose profit it was, I told the others I had no more wood; and all have made a big point of it, especially Batista, who counts this among the other disasters of Prato.

When I leave the wood, I go to a spring, and from there to an aviary of mine. I have a book under my arm, Dante or Petrarch, or one of the minor poets like Tibullus, Ovid, and such. I read of their amorous passions and their loves; I remember my own and enjoy myself for a while in this thinking. Then I move on along the road to the inn; I speak with those passing by; I ask them news of their places; I learn various things; and I note the various tastes and different fancies of men. In the meantime comes the hour to dine, when I eat with my company what food this poor villa and tiny patrimony allow. Having eaten, I return to the inn; there is the host, ordinarily a butcher, a miller, two bakers. With them I become a rascal for the whole day, playing at cricca and tric-trac, from which arise a thousand quarrels and countless abuses with insulting words, and most times we are fighting over a penny and yet we can be heard shouting from San Casciano. Thus involved with these vermin I scrape the mold off my brain and I satisfy the malignity of this fate of mine, as I am content

to be trampled on this path so as to see if she will be ashamed of it.

When evening has come, I return to my house and go into my study. At the door I take off my clothes of the day, covered with mud and mire, and I put on my regal and courtly garments; and decendy re clothed, I enter the ancient courts of ancient men, where, received by them lovingly, I feed on the food that alone is mine and that I was born for. There I am not ashamed to speak with them and to ask them the reason for their actions; and they in their humanity reply to me. And for the space of four hours I feel no boredom, I forget every pain, I do not fear poverty, death does not frighten me. I deliver myself entirely to them. And because Dante says that to have understood without retaining does not make knowledge, I have noted what capital I have made from their conversation and have composed a little work *De Principatibus* [On Principalities], where I delve as deeply as I can into reflections on this subject, debating what a principality is, of what kinds they are, how they are acquired, how they are maintained, why they are lost. And if you have ever been pleased by: my of my whimsies, this one should not displease you; and to a prince, and especially to a new prince, it should be welcome. So I am addressing it to his Magnificence, Giuliano. Filippo Casavecchia has seen it; he can give you an account in part both of the thing in itself and of the discussions I had with him, although I am all the time fattening and polishing it.

You wish, magnificent ambassador, that I leave this life and come to enjoy your life with you. I will do it in any case, but what tempts me now is certain dealings of mine which I will have done in six weeks. What makes me be doubtful is that the Soderini are there, whom I would be forced, if I came, to visit and speak with. I should fear that at my return I would not expect to get off at my house, but I would get off at the Bargello, for although this state has very great foundations and great security, yet it is new, and because of this suspicious; nor does it lack wiseacres who, to appear like Pagolo Bertini, would let others run up a bill and leave me to think of paying. I beg you to relieve me of this fear, and then I will come in the time stated to meet you anyway.

I have discussed with Filippo this little work of mine, whether to give it to him or not; and if it is good to give it, whether it would be good for me to take it or send it to you. Not giving it would make me fear that at the least it would not be read by Giuliano and that this Ardinghelli would take for himself the honor of this latest effort of mine. The necessity that chases me makes me give it, because I am becoming worn out, and I cannot remain as I am for a long time

without becoming despised because of poverty, besides the desire I have that these Medici lords begin to make use of me even if they should begin by making me roll a stone. For if I should not then win them over to me, I should complain of myself; and through this thing, if it were read, one would see that I have neither slept through nor played away the fifteen years I have been at the study of the art of the state. And anyone should be glad to have the service of one who is full of experience at the expense of another. And one should not doubt my faith, because having always observed faith, I ought not now be learning to break it. Whoever has been faithful and good for forty-three years, as I have, ought not to be able to change his nature, and of my faith and goodness my poverty is witness.

I should like, then, for you to write me again on how this matter appears to you, and I commend myself to you.

Be prosperous.

10 December 1513

Niccolo Machiavelli, in Florence.

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