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“VITIS MYSTICA,”

OR,

The True Vine.









EVJ

I AM THE VINE.

S John. 15. 5.

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“VITIS MYSTICA,”

OR,

The True Vine :

A TREATISE ON THE PASSION OF
OUR LORD :

(Ascribed to S. Bernard.)

TRANSLATED, WITH PREFACE, BY THE

REV. W. R. BERNARD BROWNLOW, M.A.

Priest of the Diocese of Plymouth.

London :



R. WASHBOURNE, 18 PATERNOSTER ROW.

1873.

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TO THE
DOMINICANESSES OF S. MARY'S PRIORY,
S. MARY CHURCH,
AT WHOSE REQUEST
THIS TRANSLATION WAS COMMENCED,
IT IS NOW DEDICATED
BY
THEIR FAITHFUL SERVANT IN CHRIST,
THE EDITOR.

APPROBATION.



HAVING read, by order of his Lordship the Bishop of Plymouth, the book entitled "*Vitis Mystica*," translated by the Rev. W. R. Bernard Brownlow, I gladly certify that no care has been spared to make it a faithful and elegant version of one of the sweetest writings of the Middle Ages. Therefore I shall not only say "NIHIL OBSTAT" to its being published, but I shall express the wish that the faithful may soon be refreshed and cheered by the vivifying fruit of the Mystic Vine.

J. S. CANON LAPÔTRE, D.D.

Canon Theologian.

Imprimatur,

✠ WILLIAM,

Bishop of Plymouth.

PLYMOUTH,

July 18th, 1873.



P R E F A C E.



Tis scarcely necessary to recommend a treatise which has been ascribed to S. Bernard, and from which, under his name, the Church has selected her Lectures for the Office of the Sacred Heart and of the Feast of the Five Wounds. Mabillon's note is very brief: "*Non est S. Bernardi, sed cujusdam alterius auctoris pii, nec indocti, nec inelegantis, qui parvos sermones conscripsit ex num. 53.*" A slight acquaintance with S. Bernard's writings is sufficient to convince the reader that he is not the author of the *Vitis Mystica*. Even when they are most alike, there is a difference which is readily perceived, but not easy to put into words. In tender, devoted, personal love for Jesus Christ, it would be difficult to say where this

author falls short of the Saint of Clairvaux. His whole soul is full to overflowing with the love of Jesus; but we miss those daring flights with which S. Bernard soars upwards into the mysteries of the Godhead, and with supernatural power and wisdom defines sharply and boldly the operations of the Spirit of God. The author of the *Vitis Mystica* makes no startling discoveries, but, well versed in monastic theology, he applies his knowledge simply to bring home to his reader's heart that which he already knows with his intellect. Again, he resembles S. Bernard in his wonderful acquaintance with Holy Scripture. The words of the inspired writers fill his memory, and his thoughts find their expression easily and naturally in scriptural language. The references at the foot of the pages in this translation give but a very faint idea of the allusions to the sacred writings which pervade the whole work. If the reader will take the trouble to refer to the passages cited in those references, he will see that the whole context has been in the author's mind, although the actual quotation may have been but a very few words. There

is a great power in words to affect the heart. The same idea expressed in different language by no means produces the same effect ; and one of the secrets of S. Bernard's power is, that, more than any other writer that ever lived, he expresses divine ideas in language consecrated for the purpose by divine inspiration. This power of sacred language has been long perceived by Protestant writers, who have endeavoured to make up for the loss of divine ideas by a laboured stringing together of scriptural phrases. The result has been only to bring the language of Scripture into contempt.

In his expositions of particular passages of Scripture, the author of this treatise appears particularly happy. He has not quite the power of S. Bernard, in making one wonder that one had not before seen the meaning of what, in his hands, appears so obvious ; and he is rather more far-fetched in some of his interpretations. Perhaps he differs most from S. Bernard in his use of symbols. S. Bernard breaks away from his symbol almost at once, and if he returns to it at all, it is only to prepare for another flight. The author of *Vitis*

Mystica is by no means in bondage to his symbolism, but he is very careful to complete it in all its parts, and the whole treatise has evidently been finished with the utmost care.

A very cursory reading of the following pages will confirm Mabillon's estimate of the piety, learning, and refinement of the author. His learning is by no means confined to Scripture and the Fathers, but he quotes Ovid, Juvenal, and Lucan with a readiness which implies a thorough acquaintance with the classics. His keen observation of nature, of the characteristics of plants and flowers, and his aptitude for seeing God reflected in His works, mark a cultured mind ; while the exquisite delicacy with which he applies his moral lessons, probing deeply, yet without irritating, the wounds of poor human nature, manifests the refinement of a tender, sympathetic, and yet true and faithful physician of souls.

Who this author was, must, I fear, remain a secret. Nothing appears to be known about him. From internal evidence, it may be inferred that he was a contemporary, or almost a contemporary, if not a disciple, of

S. Bernard. He lived in a time of great religious fervour, not in a time of religious declension. It was the fervour of S. Stephen Harding and S. Bernard, not of S. Dominic and S. Francis. The deserts which he describes as blossoming with monastic virtues (chap. xxiv.) were not the intellectual deserts which were reclaimed and cultivated by the Friars Preachers and the Friars Minor, but the pathless forests and wastes which were inhabited and made fruitful by the Cistercian communities. The whole tone of the treatise breathes the contemplative rather than the active spirit; and the theology is cast in the mould of S. Anselm, and not in that of Albert the Great and S. Thomas. These considerations point to the middle of the twelfth century as the most probable date for the *Vitis Mystica*. Whether its author was a Cistercian or a Carthusian is not so clear. His minute examination of the lily and other flowers savours more of the Carthusian, with his carefully-tended little garden, than of the ruder agricultural labours of the Cistercian. Perhaps, however, this characteristic may not tell much either way, since

the author speaks from his own experience of hard work in the fields, and the difficulty of exactly proportioning to it the amount of food necessary to maintain bodily strength.

I am not without fear that many persons will be repelled from this little work by its name. They will imagine that the *Vitis Mystica* must be a book of mystical theology, treating of extraordinary states of prayer, and abounding in such phrases as "the obscure night of the soul," or the terms used by S. John of the Cross to describe phases of the interior life which are altogether unknown to the ordinary run of pious Christians; and they will be inclined to put aside the book as intended only for contemplatives. Now it was precisely because of the absence of mysticism in it that I was induced to translate the *Vitis Mystica*. There are among us, thank God! great numbers of persons, both in the world and in the active Orders, who, although they may not have time or taste for mystical theology, have yet a true and simple love of Jesus Christ, and a sincere desire to imitate Him, to know Him better, and to love Him more. They want

to have the dry detail of homely duties elevated and beautified by the presence of Christ, and they are grateful for anything that can help to fill their imagination with His glorious image, and to warm their hearts with His love. Such persons will, if I mistake not, find great benefit from this little book. Like most of the devotional works which have come down to us from mediæval times, it will bear reading over and over again. Indeed, I believe few will read it once without wishing to read it again. It is no disparagement to the many excellent devotional works of modern times to say that they bear traces of the incessant turmoil of the age of railways and electric telegraphs, when few have leisure to meditate; and it is refreshing to take a draught of the untroubled waters of less artificial times. It may be that some will be inclined to go further, and say: "No man drinking old wine hath presently a mind to new; for he saith, The old is better."

The most carefully finished portion of the whole work is that which treats of the "Lily." It is the most complete treatise on the Virginal Life that I know of. Anyone who will

take the trouble to compare with it S. Augustine's treatise on *Virginity*, will see that the whole of the substance, and even the words of the most beautiful passages, are incorporated into this little work, while the arrangement is immensely improved. It was a bold idea, possibly suggested by some of the quaint illuminated MSS. in the convent library, to make the Vine blossom forth such a variety of flowers. The idea, however, was not quite original. It has its prototype in the "Tree of Life, bearing twelve fruits," which is described by S. John as standing in the midst of the street of the New Jerusalem. It must not therefore be too hastily condemned as inadmissible. But the "Lily" is a complete treatise in itself, and is best described in the author's words as being a compendium of "what has been treated of by the holy Fathers and others more diffusely, and encumbered with many weighty disputations, and thus, by reason of its difficulty, incapable of being comprehended by the simple understandings of simple virgins." It is a beautiful specimen of the spiritual reading relished by monks and nuns of the

twelfth century, and it gives us many an interesting glimpse of mediæval convent life in all its purity and simplicity. It is, however, far from being a mere antique; it is quite as applicable to consecrated virgins now, as in the twelfth century; and it may be doubted whether any manual for young Religious could be found more complete and practical than this mediæval treatise.

If anyone desires to make a comparison between a devout Christian of the twelfth, and a religious Protestant of the eighteenth century, he would do well to compare "The Flowers of our Vine" with Hervey's "Meditations in a Flower Garden." The pious reflections of the latter on the various flowers, with whose botanical names he is so familiar, are almost as dry and insipid as his scriptural allusions. He is as little able to read the book of Nature as the book of Revelation. The mediæval monk is at home in both. The letter of Scripture fills his memory, but Jesus—"my sweetest Jesus!" as he would say—is in his heart; and every petal of every flower speaks to him in no unknown tongue, and calls forth some fresh and beautiful thought of his In-

carnate God. A more scientific observation of nature is justly reckoned as one of the glories of our age. Could we but graft upon it some of this power of seeing God in each and all His works, there would be no room for a conflict between Science and Faith.

It may be well to observe that, although this is the first time that a complete translation of the *Vitis Mystica* has appeared in English, yet a considerable portion of it, paraphrased and intermingled with original matter, was published a few years ago by Father Crosbie, O.S.B. I am very far from thinking my translation perfect, and have no desire to deprecate criticism. For many years, I have had the wish to publish a translation of S. Bernard's celebrated Sermons on the Canticles, but have distrusted my own capacity for the task. If this translation of a work ascribed to him should be approved, I shall be encouraged to proceed with the more hazardous undertaking of turning into English the master-piece of the great Saint of Clairvaux.

W. R. B.

S. MARY CHURCH,
Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, 1873.



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Vitis Mystica;

OR,

THE TRUE VINE.

A

TREATISE ON THE PASSION OF OUR LORD.

"I am the true Vine."—S. JOHN xv. 1.



PREPARATORY PRAYER.



GOOD Jesus, true Vine, and Tree of life which is planted in the midst of Paradise! Lord Jesus Christ, whose leaves are for healing, and whose fruit is unto life everlasting! Thou Blessed Flower and Fruit of Thy most pure Virgin Mother, without whom none is wise, for Thou art the Wisdom of the eternal Father, vouchsafe to

B

refresh my weak and barren mind with bread of understanding and the water of wisdom ; that by Thy opening, O King David, things which are hidden may be revealed to me, and by Thy shining, O Light, things which are dark may be made clear ; so that through me, Thy humble servant, by Thine own manifestation and lightening, both we who speak and they who hear may together have eternal life. Amen





Chapter i.

CHRIST JESUS IS THE TRUE VINE.

I *Am the true Vine.* By our Lord Jesus Christ's own assistance we may see certain characteristics of the earthly vine, by which we may also designate the characteristics of that Vine who is above the heavens, even without going further than those points which are outwardly noticed in its cultivation. And first, the vine is generally planted in the earth, not sown, but transferred from its own parent vine: and this seems to me to have reference to the conception of Jesus. The vine springing from the parent vine is God begotten of God, Son of the Father, eternal and consubstantial with Him of whom He is begotten. But that He might bring forth more fruit, He was planted in the earth, that is,

conceived in the Virgin Mary, being made what He was not, and yet abiding what He was. How blessed is this earth, which bringeth forth blessings to all nations ! Truly blessed is she, who through the good gift of God brought forth so blessed fruit. This is the earth of which it is written : “ *There was not a man to till the earth, but a spring rose out of the earth, watering all the surface of the earth.*”* For this earth accepted not the operation of man, that the Son of God should be conceived in it, but it was watered with the water of the Holy Ghost ; for so you read : “ *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee.*”† Again, of this earth it is written : “ *Let the earth be opened, and bud forth the Saviour.*”‡ For it was opened by faith, when she believed and obeyed the angel : and it budded forth life and salvation, even our Saviour, who giveth us the rewards of eternal life. And so this Vine of ours was brought to light, and certain characteristics of the cultivation of a vine are to be found therein.

* Gen. ii. 5, 6. † S. Luke i. 35. ‡ Isa. xlv. 8.



Chapter ii.

*ON THE PRUNING OF THE VINE; OR,
THE VARIOUS MYSTERIES RELATING TO
CHRIST'S STATE OF HUMILIATION.*

THE vine that beareth fruit is wont to be pruned; and this may be taken both corporally and figuratively. For Jesus was circumcised: not that He needed this circumcision, which for the ancient fathers effaced original sin, as Baptism does in us. For He owed no debt to original sin contracted through the vice of concupiscence, since He was conceived without any carnal concupiscence whatever;* and yet [He was circumcised] that He might not seem to destroy the law which He Himself had given. Besides, morally, He teaches us that we ought

* *i. e.* Not only because He is God, but considered merely after His Sacred Humanity, Christ being conceived of a Virgin, could not fall under the sentence on Adam and his posterity conceived in the ordinary way of nature.

not to take it amiss, if sometimes we suffer the penalties of sin which we do not recognise in ourselves, when He the Cleanser from sin did not disdain for us to submit to the remedy for sin. Let us, therefore, who are by no means without sin, console ourselves in our sorrows by the sorrows of Him who suffered sorrow not for Himself but for us, and was wounded, not for Himself, but that He might heal our wounds. See how He hastened to undergo pain, how ready and prompt to shed His Blood. He was circumcised for us on the eighth day after His Nativity. Would that we might suffer something for our Lord, at least in the eighth year ! But what are we saying, since we find many planted for eight, nay, eighty years, when in the course of nature they are but labour and sorrow,* and yet not even in will are they converted to the Lord, neither so late in life are they mindful of His precious Blood ; nor do they amend their life so long subject to vanity ? What can be more wretched ? Christ barely waits for the eighth day from His nativity to begin to pay down His own Blood for you ;

* Ps. lxxxix. 10.

and you, after I say not eight days, but after eighty months—aye, and eighty years—do not repay Him even your mere will? He, scarcely born, sheds His blood for you : you, on the point of death, do not pour out your will to Him ! Good indeed is Jesus, who receives His servant who comes to Him in penitence, even in the fourth watch of the night.* Have you given the strength of your youthful years to Christ's enemy? Still offer, at least, your failing will to Christ, who waiteth for you so mercifully : and doubt not but that He will accept it, since to us He is born a Child, that He may be pleased with children's gifts : for little things are fit for a little One. But if what you offer is not little, that is, humble, by it you cannot find access to Him, the humble One, who says of Himself: "*I am the Door*;"† and elsewhere: "*Come unto Me, all ; and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart.*"‡

We may also take in another way the pruning of our Vine, and say He was pruned of all things which He lacked in this life, while yet He might have had them ; and we

* S. Mark vi. 48. † S. John x. 9. ‡ S. Matt. xi. 28, 29.

VITIS MYSTICA.

may learn this pruning from the word of the Apostle, who says : "*Who though He was in the form of God, debased Himself and took the form of a servant.*"* For this very debasement, or emptying of Himself, is a kind of pruning. And as the vine is made less when it is pruned, so Christ, the true Vine, by His Incarnation was made a little lower than the Angels ; yea, He was humbled beneath all men. How truly in Him was glory cut away by the pruning-knife of shame, power by the knife of abjection, pleasure by the knife of pain, riches by the pruning-knife of poverty ! See, then, how much He was pruned. He on whom waiteth all the glory of heaven ; yea, rather, who is Himself true glory, as it were, puts off glory. Clothed in the garment of a mean slave He endures shame, is covered with confusion, that He may redeem you from [everlasting] confusion, and call you back to primæval glory ; He to whose mighty sway all things in hell and earth and heaven are subject, becomes such an abject as to be reckoned the least of all men. He is subject to hunger and thirst, to heat and cold, to pain

* Philippians ii. 6, 7.

and infirmity ; and, after all these, does not draw back from the torment of death. He who inhabiteth the light which no man can approach unto, on whom the angels long to gaze, the odour of whose sweetness so inebriates the hearts of saints, that they forget this present world and even their own selves and run after Him with all their powers,—He is subject to such sorrow, that in Him is truly seen fulfilled what was before spoken by the prophet : “ *O all ye who pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow.*”* He, in whom are hidden all the treasures of the wisdom and the knowledge of God, the King of kings, rich over all, who alone hath need of none, is made so poor that, as He Himself testifies, He is found poorer than the foxes of the earth and the birds of the air, as He says : “ *Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests ; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.*”† Poor in His birth, poorer still in His life, poorest of all on the Cross. For at His birth He has virgin milk for food, and swaddling-clothes for raiment. But in His life, though

* Lament. i. 12. † S. Matt. viii. 20.

He had raiment, yet He very often failed for lack of food. In His death you find Him both naked and thirsty : unless you would supply a remedy for that thirst in the vinegar mingled with myrrh and gall.

In conclusion, by the pruning-knife of fear were cut off from Him all his friends and neighbours, so that there was not one to comfort Him of all whom He loved. For He trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was not a man with Him : and when His heart sustained reproach and misery, He looked for one that would grieve with Him, but there was none, and for one that would comfort Him, and found him not.* See how grievous was the pruning of our Vine. What vine was ever pruned so much ? But what was His consolation in the pruning ? Much fruit. Great and beyond comparison was the pruning He endured. And yet it seems to have been said significantly : "*And of the people there was not a man with Me :*"† as though it was to be understood that *women* alone remained with Him. For man's stouter nature fled for fear, while woman's weakness

* Ps. lxxviii. 21.

† Job xix. 20.

fled not, and deserted Him not when carrying His Cross nor when dying on the Cross. Blessed Job, speaking in the person of Christ, complains, "*Nothing but lips are left about my teeth.*"* By lips, which are softer than the other members of the body, is to be understood the female sex—soft and weak—which alone clave to Christ when the disciples fled away. For the Lord hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty. If, however, we understand it of mental flight, then with Him was left neither man nor woman, save only She, who alone is blessed among women, who alone through that sad Saturday stood firm in faith, and in whom alone the Church was saved from falling. For this cause has the whole Church been accustomed to celebrate the Saturdays throughout all the year in the praise and glory of that same Virgin. Truly and singularly blessed branch, which from her own Vine no fear could prune away! Cut off were the men who said, "*We trusted that He would have redeemed Israel.*"† Cut off were the women, who though they devoutly hastened to do the

* Isa. lxiii. 3.

† S. Luke xxiv. 21.

last kind offices for the dead, yet by no means believed that He would rise again. And perhaps (for I do not speak positively, lest I should seem to insinuate novelties) this was why it happened that that Mother, who had more devotion than they, yet did not come with the other women to anoint the Body of Christ in the Sepulchre, because she thought it was vain to anoint Him who she knew would rise again. Truly is this a valiant woman, and, after her Son, to be honoured above all others. Truly also may she be called Woman, who by the strength of her love was not separated from the Man Christ : but believed Him, whom she saw dying and dead, to be exalted in the glory of immortality.

NOTE.—This opinion, of the faith of the Church persevering in the B. Virgin alone on the first Holy Saturday, was very common in the middle ages ; and Liturgical writers, like Durandus, thought it was symbolised by the single unextinguished candle at Tenebræ. The Abbot Guéranger in his *Liturgical Year* adopts the opinion. See "Passion-tide," p. 549. Later writers, as Melchior Canus, Bellarmine, and Benedict XIV., reject the opinion, and say that the Church, being a collection of people, could not be said to exist in one individual. Benedict XIV. brings evidence to prove that Saturday was observed as a day of special honour to our Blessed Lady long before the time of S. Peter Damian, who mentions Votive Masses on Saturday in her honour as an established custom in his day, *i.e.*, about A.D. 1080. (*De Festis*, lib. ii. c. 11.)



Chapter iii.

ON THE DIGGING ABOUT THE VINE, THAT
IS, ON THE SNARES OF THE JEWS, AND
THE WOUNDS OF CHRIST.

THEY dig all round about a vine. This digging signifies the fraud of those who lay snares. For he, who plots to deceive another by craft, as it were digs a pit for him. And so the Psalmist complains, saying: "*They dug a pit before my face.*"* For no deceit could be concealed from Him whose eyes see forward and backward, and who looks upon the past and the future as [ever] present. For all things are naked and open before the eyes of Him.† Let us then show by an example some of the fraud of these diggings. "*They bring,*" says the Evangelist, "*to the Lord Jesus a woman taken in adultery: and say to Him*

* Psa. lvi. 7.

† Heb. iv. 13.

*that Moses in the law commanded us to stone such an one. But what sayest Thou?** See the pit which those most wicked husbandmen dug around our Blessed Vine, not that they might make it bear fruit, but rather that it might be withered. But their purpose was turned against themselves, and [the Vine thus] dug about became more fruitful and distilled the dew of mercy. Let us see their pits. They said among themselves: "If He shall say according to the law that the woman is to be stoned, He will fall into the pit of cruelty, —He, who says of Himself, '*I am meek and humble of heart;*'† and again, '*I will have mercy and not sacrifice.*'‡ But if He shall say she is to be let go, He will not escape the pit of transgression; and will justly be condemned as a breaker of the law." So do sinners lie in wait for the soul of the just, and observe the just man, and gnash with their teeth, and they know not that *in vain the net is spread before the eyes of them that have wings,*§ and that *he that diggeth a pit shall fall into it.*|| But our young Hart lightly skipped over¶ these

* S. John viii. 3, 4. † S. Matt. xi. 29. ‡ *Ibid.* xii. 7.
 § Prov. i. 17. || Prov. xxvi. 27. ¶ Cant. ii. 8, 9.

pits, and cast into them those who dug them. For He said : “ *He who is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her ;*”* as though He would say, “ I contradict not my own law, I forsake not my own loving-kindness. This woman, indeed, has deserved to be stoned ; but she shall not be stoned, because she has none who can justly cast a stone at her.”

Would you wish to see some further pits [around our Vine] ? They say, “ *Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not ?*”† For they said among themselves : “ If He shall say, It is lawful ; He will be held guilty, as a destroyer of our liberty : for the payment of the tribute is the sign of servitude. If He shall say, It is not lawful ; He will be guilty of high-treason.” O fools ! A fool is wont to judge others by himself ; and that which he knows not, he thinks wise men are equally ignorant of. But what said Wisdom ? “ I derogate not from liberty, I offend not against royalty ; I fall not into your pits. *Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.*‡ For the

* S. John viii. 7. † S. Matt. xxii. 17. ‡ Ibid. v. 21.

just God is not offended, since He wills that to each be rendered that which is his own. If you render to Cæsar that which is Cæsar's, Cæsar is not offended. If you render to God the things which He has created justly, you do what is just. Render therefore to Cæsar the denarius, which has Cæsar's image : render to God the soul which He has created to His own image and likeness ; and then you will be just." It would be too long to tell of all the pits which those wicked ones dug for our true Vine ; for they strove to entangle Him in all His words and works.

But when they saw their digging round about Him in no way injured the Vine, but rather that they themselves while they were digging fell into their own pits ; they laboured not only to dig round, but to dig through the Vine itself, that so at least, after the manner of other trees, it might fall into everlasting unfruitfulness. They dug therefore, and they dug through not only His hands, but also His feet, yea, and His side also ; and the very recesses of His most sacred Heart, they pierced with the spear of rage, though it had already been wounded with the spear of love.

“*Thou hast wounded,*” says the Spouse in the Canticles of love, “*thou hast wounded my Heart, my sister, my spouse.*”* O Lord Jesus ; Thy spouse, Thy love, Thy sister has wounded Thy Heart. Why then was it necessary that that Heart should be wounded further by Thine enemies? What do ye, O enemies? If the Heart of our sweet Jesus is wounded, yea because it is wounded, why do ye add a second wound? Know ye not that a heart touched with a single wound dies and becomes insensible, and the Heart of our Lord Jesus is dead because it is wounded? The wound of love, the death of love has taken full possession of Jesus, our Lord and Spouse. How shall a second death find entrance? Strong as death, yea, even stronger than death, is love.† For the first death, that is, the love which puts to death deadly evils, cannot be driven out of the citadel of the heart which He hath purchased for Himself by an inviolable right with His own Blood. And if two equally strong ones contend, of whom one is within and the other outside the citadel, there can be no doubt that he who is within will

* Cant. iv. 9.

† *Ibid.* viii. 6.

obtain the victory. See then how great is the force of love when it obtains possession of the citadel of the heart, even through the wound of one that slayeth most sweetly, not only in our Lord Jesus, but also in His servants.

Let us come to the Martyrs. The Martyrs, though they be threatened with terrors, yet they smile ; they are wounded, and they rejoice ; they are slain, and behold they triumph. And why ? Because by the death of charity inwardly in their hearts they are already dead to sin, dead to the world, become as it were insensible and unable to feel either threats or torments or death. What wonder is it ? They were dead. "*For you are dead,*"* says the Apostle. A certain fool † once wisely longed for such a death, when he said : "*Let my soul die the death of the just, and let my last end be like to them.*" O good death, which despiseth death ! good death, which confers everlasting life !

Thus, then, already wounded and dead was the Heart of Jesus put to death for us, all the day accounted as a sheep for the

* Col. iii. 3.

† Balaam. Num. xxiii. 10.

slaughter. But the death of the body came also, and overcame for a time, that it might be overcome for ever. It was overcome, because He rose again from the dead, death shall never more have dominion over Him.* But since we have once come to the most sweet Heart of Jesus, and it is good for us to be here, let us not allow ourselves easily to be torn away from Him of whom it is written: "*They that depart from Thee, shall be written in the earth.*"† But what of them that approach to Thee? Do Thou Thyself teach us. Thou hast said to them that approach to Thee: "*Rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.*"‡ We may compare these two writings; for if they rejoice, who are written in heaven, what shall they do who are written on the earth? Surely they shall mourn. But who would not wish to rejoice? Let us approach, then, to Thee, and we will rejoice and be glad in Thee, being mindful of Thy Heart. O how good and how pleasant it is to dwell in His Heart! Good

* Rom. vi. 9. The Lectons of the 2nd Nocturn of the Office for the Sacred Heart commence here.

† Jer. xviii. 13.

‡ S. Luke x. 20.

treasure, good pearl is Thy Heart, O good Jesus, which we shall find in the field of Thy Body dug into [with the spear].* Who would cast away this Pearl? Rather I will sell all that I have, all the thoughts and affections of my mind, and I will buy it for myself, and cast all my care into the Heart of my Lord Jesus; and without fail that will sustain me. At this Temple, at this Holy of Holies, at this Ark of the Testament will I adore and praise the name of the Lord, saying with David: "*I have found my heart to pray to my God.*"† I also have found the Heart of my King, my Brother, and my Friend, my kind Jesus. And shall I not adore Him? Yes indeed, I will pray [to my God]. For His Heart is mine, I may boldly say, if, yea because, my Head is Christ. That which belongs to my Head cannot but be mine. And therefore, as the eyes of my bodily head are truly mine eyes; so also is my spiritual Heart mine Heart. What wonder? when the whole multitude of believers had one heart.‡ This Heart, my sweetest Jesus, which is both Thine and mine, I have

* S. Matt. xiii. 44. † Kings vii. 27. ‡ Acts iv. 22.

found, and having found it I will pray to my God. Only let me enter into this sanctuary of Thy hearing of my prayers; yea, draw me wholly into that Heart of Thine. For though the crookedness of my sins may hinder me, yet because that Heart is enlarged and widened with inconceivable charity, and Thou who alone canst make clean him that is conceived from unclean seed,* so that I may put off the burthen of my deformity and pass through the entrance made by the spear, O Jesu, loveliest of all beauty, wash me more and more from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin, that purified by Thee, I may approach to Thee the pure One, and may be worthy to dwell in Thine Heart all the days of my life, that I may both see and do always Thy will!

For this cause was Thy side pierced, that an entrance might be opened for us. For this was Thy Heart wounded, that in it and in Thee we might dwell secure from exterior troubles. No less, also, was it wounded for this, that by the visible wound we may see the invisible wound of love. For can this

* Job xiv. 4.

burning [love] be better shown than in His having permitted, not only His Body, but even His Heart to be pierced through with the spear? Thus the carnal wound shows the spiritual wound. And this, it may be, was expressed in that sentence quoted above, in which it is said twice, *Vulnerasti*, "Thou hast wounded."* Of both these wounds is the same sister and spouse the cause; as though the Spouse said openly: "Because thou hast wounded Me with a zeal for thy love, therefore am I wounded with the soldier's spear." For who could have allowed Thy Heart to be wounded on the Cross, if he had not first perceived that wound of love? He saith, therefore: "*Thou hast wounded my Heart, my sister, my spouse, thou hast wounded My Heart.*" But why "*my sister and spouse?*" Could not the relation of spouse alone, or of sister alone, sufficiently express the affection of this loving Spouse? And why "spouse," and not "wife," when the Church, or each faithful soul ought to bring forth to Christ her Spouse the offspring of good works? I answer briefly, spouses

* Cant. iv. 9.

not yet bound in the marriage-tie are generally loved more ardently than they are afterwards. For in process of time love itself cools down. And so our Spouse, to teach us the greatness of His love, which diminishes not with time, calls His beloved one His spouse because His love for her is always fresh.

Again, because spouses are loved with a carnal love, He calls the same spouse His sister, that you may know that there is nothing carnal in the love of our Spouse; for sisters, even here on earth, are not loved carnally. Therefore He says: "*Thou hast wounded my Heart, &c.*," as though He said: "Because I love thee supremely as my spouse, chastely as my sister, my Heart is wounded because of thee." Who would not love that Heart so wounded? Who can refuse to return the love of a Heart so loving? Who would not embrace a Heart so chaste? She loves that wounded Heart who, wounded with His exceeding love, cries out: "I am wounded with love."* She returns the love of her loving Spouse, who says: "*Tell my Beloved that I languish with love.*"† She em-

* Cant. ii. 5.

† Ibid. v. 8.

braces Him who loves her with a brother's chaste affection, who says : " *Who will give Thee to me for my Brother, sucking the breasts of my mother, that I may find Thee without, and embrace and kiss Thee, and now no man may despise me ?*"* What meaneth 'without'? I think it means out of the body. As long as we are in this body, we are exiles from the Lord. And who would bear such exile without impatience? It is an exile full of sorrow for the past, labour for the present, fear for the future; an exile in which the Spouse, although sometimes He manifests Himself in the grace of consolation, yet *standeth* afar off, as it were, *behind our wall*,† while this body of sin separateth between us and Him; and He does not readily give Himself to be touched and kissed, except to that soul which has advanced to such a height of merit, that He may say to her: "*Surge, amica mea, columba mea, formosa mea.* Arise, my love, my dove, my beautiful one."‡ She alone, and that but rarely, yet thinking herself to some extent to have comprehended, cries aloud: "*I have found Him, whom my soul loveth;*

* Cant. viii. 1. † *Ibid.* ii. 9. ‡ *Ibid.* v. 10.

I hold Him, and will not let Him go."* But to this degree one does not easily ascend. Let us, therefore, while we remain still within, that is, in the body, let us love our Spouse as much as we can ; let us return love for His love : let us embrace our wounded One, into whose Hands and Feet, and Side and Heart, the impious husbandmen dug [so deeply] ; and let us be urgent that He would deign to take this heart of ours, still so hard and impenitent, and bind it with the chain, and wound it with the dart of His love.

* Cant. iii. 4.





Chapter iv.

ON THE BONDS OF OUR VINE, THAT IS,
ON THE VARIOUS BONDS AND PAINS OF
CHRIST.

THE vine is bound. Who cannot see the bonds of our Vine? Let us, however, contemplate this bond of His. The first was Obedience. For He obeyed His Father unto death, even the death of the Cross.* He obeyed His Mother and Joseph, as it is written: "*He came to Nazareth with them, and was subject unto them.*"† He obeyed earthly judges; He paid the tribute. The second bond was the womb of the Virgin, of whom we sing: "Thou didst bear in thy sacred womb Him whom the heavens could not contain,—*Quia quem cæli capere non poterant, tuo sancto gremio con-*

* *Philippians. ii. 8.*

† *S. Luke ii. 51.*

tulisti." (6th Resp. Nativ.) The third was in the Manger, as it is written :

Thus God made Man an Infant lies,
And in a sordid manger cries ;
His sacred limbs, by Mary bound,
The poorest tatter'd rags surround ;
And God's incarnate feet and hands
Are closely wrapped in swathing bands.*

His fourth bond was the cord with which He was bound when He was apprehended ; for so you have it related : "*Then,*" namely, when He had been betrayed, "*they laid hold on Jesus and bound Him.*"† O King of kings, and Lord of lords, what hast Thou to do with bonds? Vines are bound, lest they should fall on the ground, and so their fruit be lost or corrupted. But His fruit was and is incorruptible. Why then is He bound? A certain king,‡ when wounded with a spear, was asked to allow himself to be bound while it was being cut out, because the slightest movement might cause death. "No," said

* Vagit infans inter arcta
Conditus præsepia ;
Membra pannis involuta
Virgo Mater alligat :
Pedes, manus, atque crura
Stricta cingit fascia.

(*Hymn for Passion Sunday.*)

† S. John xviii. 12.

‡ Alexander the Great. (*Curtius*, lib. ix. c. 11.)

he, "it is not fitting for a king to be bound. Let the power of a king be free, and it is always safe." O God of gods, how great then was that humiliation of Thy liberty and power! Thou art thus bound with so many bonds, who alone hast the power of binding and loosing? But Thou art bound for Thine own mercy's sake, that Thou mightest make us free from the bonds of our miseries. Oh how pitiless were the bonds of those most pitiless ones, with which they bound that most meek Lamb! With the eyes of my mind I see Thee, O Lord Jesus, bound with such hard cords, and like a thief led to the judgment hall of the chief priests, and from thence to Pilate; I see Thee, and I shudder and am amazed, and I should faint with amazement if I did not know well that Thou wast first bound in Thy Heart with the cords of charity, and these had power to draw Thee easily to those most terrible cords of suffering. Thanks be to Thy bonds, O good Jesus, which so powerfully burst asunder ours!

The fifth bond was that with which He was bound to the pillar when He was scourged. Although the scourges themselves which went

all round His Body might not incorrectly be called bonds. But pitiless as they were, hard as they were, unjust as they were, I love the bonds of those scourges ; for to them it was given to touch Thy most sacred Body, and they were profusely stained with Thy most pure Blood, O good Jesus ! For if in Thy scourging Thy Blood was shed so copiously that, we are told, the pillar sprinkled with those drops bears the red marks still, how much Blood may I suppose to have clung to the scourges themselves, as they cut into that most gentle Body of Thine ? So sharply was our Lord scourged, that His Blood shot high up into the air. See, now, how well it agrees with this binding, that the vine is bound to a stake. For what else is to be understood by the stake but that pillar to which our Lord Jesus was bound ? As the vine to the stake, so is Christ bound to the pillar.

The sixth bond was the Crown of thorns, which encompassed with great bitterness that dear Head, and left in it the marks of its many points ; which drew from it drops of Blood, and sent them trickling across that venerable Face, off which the spittings of the

Jews had scarcely dried. Cruel was this bond, above all the pains which He endured on the Tree, and yet it has an honour and a beauty exceeding great. O King of glory, Lord Jesus Christ, the crown of all who confess Thee, and who follow Thee, who fight for Thee, live for Thee, abide in Thee! who hath bound Thee with so bitter a bond of confusion? Behold confusion covers Thy Head and Thy lovely Face. An evil and bitter generation hath forced a derisive honour on Thee for a crown; but in Thee sorrow and confusion vie with the points of the thorns. I know not which causes Thee most pain. The crown brings on Thee derision—the thorns pricking. “*Go forth, O daughters of Sion, and behold King Solomon in the diadem, with which His mother crowned Him, in the day of His espousals, and in the day of the gladness of His Heart.*”* Let every soul that acknowledges herself a daughter of Sion, that is, of the Church, go forth from worldly cares, from vain thoughts, and see by contemplation of heart King Solomon, that is, Christ Jesus, who is our Peace, destroying

* Cant. iii. 11.

enmities, and making friendship again between God and man. See Him, O happy soul, in the diadem with which His mother crowned Him ; that is, His mother the synagogue, the people of the Jews. O bitter mother ! What sin hath this good Son of thine committed, that He should even be bound with bonds ? He it is who looseth them that are bound ; who lifteth up them that are broken down ; who receiveth them that are strangers, and consoleth the orphans and the widows ; and hath He deserved to be bound ? Is this the dowry, these the presents thou bestowest upon Him at His wedding ? For this day is the day of His espousals ; a day of indignation and blasphemy, a day of tribulation and misery, a day of shocks and sorrow, a day of bonds and of death is the day of His espousals. With this dowry, O faithful soul, thy precious Spouse hath betrothed thee to Himself ; and He, as a Spouse, goes forth crowned to-day—crowned, it says, not with gold, nor gems, but with thorns. Nor lacked He a purple robe of derision. For they put around Him a purple cloak, although He had Himself empurpled the garment of His Body

far more nobly with the shedding of His own most precious Blood. Purple is not dyed more than twice : but He dyed the purple of His Body not only twice, but also in a three-fold stream of Blood. Behold, O spouse, this Spouse of thine is reddened in the sweat of Blood, in the scourging, and again at His crucifixion. Lift up the eyes of thy heart and see if this be thy Spouse's coat or not. Behold a most evil beast hath devoured Thy Son, Thy Brother, Thy Spouse.* Who can keep from groans and tears at this? Who can refrain from sorrow? For if it is good to rejoice because of Jesus, so is it also good to weep for our good Jesus.

The seventh band was of iron, with which He was bound on the Cross: This band was more cruel than the rest, for it not only separated from contact with each other His most sacred hands and feet, but even tore away that most pure Soul of His from the stainless home of His Body. Now, then, O daughters of Sion, go forth and see our Peace-maker, fighting for our liberty, contending in battle. See the Author of our life,

* Gen. xxxvii. 32, 33.

entering for us the gates of death,* to recall us to the way of life. See those most hard bands, the iron nails cruelly penetrating those feet and hands which wrought our salvation in the midst of the earth. See the wood of the Cross put on our Bread,† that Bread most white, Bread refined, the Bread of angels, Who came down from heaven to give Himself to us for Food, and to refresh our souls, ever subject to labour, not with strange food, but with Himself; and, by incorporating Himself with us, not to change Himself into our flesh, but to reform us into His own Spirit. See how the Just One is bound, how the most Free One, even our most good Spouse, is reputed with the wicked. Our Life dies, not for His own needs but for ours. Pour out floods of tears for Him who dieth in such bonds, for He Himself also wept first. Attend and see to how bitter, how shameful a death He is condemned. For He waiteth still, and anxiously looketh to see if there be one who will grieve together with Him;‡ if He may find one who will wipe away His streams of Blood, and take Him down

* *Januas vitæ.* † Jer. xi. 19. ‡ Ps. lxxviii. 21.

from the Cross, and enfold Him in the clean Winding-sheet, not of cloth but of the heart, and, weeping with the blessed weeping women, follow Him to the Tomb. Every soul that shall do this perseveringly will, I trust, merit one day to be most joyfully refreshed with the gladness of His Resurrection. For "*if we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him.*"* And this the spouse in the Canticles well expresses when she says—"*My Beloved is a little bundle of myrrh to me; He shall abide between my breasts;*" and then adds: "*A cluster of Cyprus my Love is to me.*"† What is a bundle of myrrh? The bitter myrrh signifies the bitterness of the Passion, and the bundle indicates the union of many sufferings in one. The Spouse, therefore, becomes to His Bride a bundle of myrrh when He presents Himself to her mind as afflicted with the many outrages [of His Passion], of which some have already been, and others remain to be enumerated. But what are the breasts of the spouse between which she says He shall abide? The two breasts of the spouse are prosperity and ad-

* 2 Tim. ii. 12.

† Cant. i. 12-13.

versity. She is nourished, as it were, with these breasts when she is comforted in adversity and not uplifted by prosperity. She places her Beloved between these breasts when she is mindful of Him both in adversity and in prosperity. And hence it comes to pass that He who was just now a bundle of myrrh, that is, who embittered the mind of His spouse with the bitterness of His sufferings, all at once is a Cluster of Cyprus, containing in Himself the wine of joy and gladness. And this He becomes to the Bride when she sees her Spouse, whom she had beheld oppressed with outrages, and condemned to a most shameful death, by His Resurrection triumphant in glory and crowned with honour ; and with that Humanity which He assumed seated at the right hand of the Father ; and she is filled with the surest confidence that, through divers tribulations, she will also enter into the same joy of her Lord.

Let us, then, also go forth, accordingly to the admonition of S. Paul the Apostle,* with our Spouse the good Jesus without the camp,

* Heb. xiii. 13.

that is, out of the concupiscences of this present world, bearing with Him the reproach of the Cross, the sharpness of the bands. For it is not fitting that there should be a pampered member beneath a crucified Head, and the member that has not shared in the suffering of the Head gives no indication of belonging to the Body of that Head. Let us, therefore, be bound with the bonds of the Passion of our good Jesus, that we may also be bound with Him in the bonds of charity. For He, bound with the bonds of charity, was drawn down from heaven to earth to receive the bonds of His Passion ; we, on the contrary, who desire to be drawn from earth to heaven, must first bind ourselves to our Head in the bonds of His Passion that, cleaving by this to the bonds of charity, we may be made one with Him, as He prayed the Father when He said : "*Father I pray that those whom Thou hast given Me,*" confirmed in charity, "*may be one in us, as Thou and I are one.*"* What can be more glorious than this unity ? What more can you have or wish ? You shall be one with your Spouse.

* S. John xvii. 9-21.

O happy, very happy, most happy unity of all! In this unity the Apostle felt he was united to Christ when he said: "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword? I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of Christ Jesus.*"* Let us long, with all our desires, to be bound in the bonds of this charity to our Spouse and Lord, so that, following in His footsteps, we may reach that place where He is who said, "*Father, I will that where I am there also may my servant be*"—*Volo Pater, ut ubi ego sum, illic sit e minister meus.*†

* 1 Rom. viii. 35, 38, 39.

† S. John xii. 26, and xvii. 24; 5th Antiphon for Martyrs.





Chapter v.

*ON THE CULTURE AND COMELINESS OF
OUR VINE, THAT IS, ON THE EXTERIOR
AND INTERIOR BEAUTY OF CHRIST.*

HAVING contemplated in part those matters which have to do with the cultivation of the vine in its more external aspect, we may now direct our attention to the vine itself, in order that, by certain resemblances which it bears [to Him], we may gain a nearer and more accurate view of our own True Vine. The whole trunk of the vine is found to be more ill-shapen than other trees and shrubs, and appears as though it were altogether useless and worthless; neither in appearance is it pleasant or agreeable to the sight. What are we to say to this? The body of the vine ought to symbolise that of our Lord Jesus Christ; and yet there seems a

very great dissimilarity between its deformity and the form of Him, of whom it is written : "*Thou art beautiful in form above the sons of men*"—*Speciosus forma præ filiis hominum*.* There are some, however, who apply these words not to the exterior but to the interior man, that is, to the Soul or to the Divinity, in which He far excelled not only the sons of men but even the sons of God, the angels. For He was made so much better than the angels, as He hath inherited a more excellent name than they.† Consequently, that we may not seem to contradict this opinion, we give the authorities for it, although we are aware that there are many not yet wholly spiritual who think otherwise, and picture to themselves a kind of spiritual beauty in the Body of our Lord. And if ever they are told that our Lord Himself was mean in form, they do not bear it patiently ; and even if they hold their tongue, yet they murmur against it in the anger and disgust of their minds, not remembering that it is written : "*It is the Spirit that quickeneth, but the flesh profiteth nothing*."‡ They do not listen to Isaias, or

* Ps. xlv. 3. † Heb. i. 4. ‡ S. John vi. 64.

they listen unwillingly when he says of Him :
“ *Behold we have seen Him, and there was no beauty in Him, nor comeliness ; and there was no sightliness that we should be desirous of Him ; He was despised, and the most abject of men, a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity ; and His countenance was, as it were, hidden and despised, whereupon we esteemed Him not. And we have thought Him, as it were, a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted.*”^{*} See how He is described by the prophet. What could be more clear? Yes, and so He really was in the eyes of the unbelieving and the carnal, who only understood how to see the flesh.

We may also prove this by evident reasons. First, by the affection of compassion ; and secondly, by the defect of the Passion. And because He really took on Him our affections, let us see how men are wont to be affected towards those whom they love, that by things well known we may attain to things we know not. Every one knows that when a man has a friend in great danger, he is

^{*} *Isaias liii. 2, 3, 4.*

often moved with such affection and sorrow as to wear away his own body. If man suffers this for his fellow-man, how much more, think you, did God-man suffer for man? If you, in sympathy for a single man, incur bodily danger, what, think you, did the Lord Jesus bear for all the human race? For all were His, and all were sick with a mortal disease. We know, indeed, that S. Paul the Apostle said of himself: "*Who is weak and I am not weak?*"* And truly, he was so weakened that, as he himself confesses, his [bodily] presence was contemptible; † and as he says: "*The world is crucified to me, and I unto the world.*" ‡ The world was crucified to him, since he counted all which belonged to the world as dead. And he was also crucified to the world; because, by the number of his sympathies and of his sufferings, his body was so attenuated and wasted away, that the world shrunk from him in horror, finding in him nothing in common with itself. If, then, Paul with the weak became weak—he their fellow-servant and brother out of sympathy for his fellow-servants and brethren,

* 2 Cor. xi. 29. † *Ibid.* x. 10. ‡ Gal. vi. 14.

what must have been the compassion of our kind Jesus, the Lord and Father, for His own creatures and children? S. Paul burned, being set on fire* as it were with a ray of the sun; what must have been the burning heat of the Sun itself? If by the affection of compassion he is burned down to such infirmity who has but a spark of charity, what must have been felt by Charity itself, out of whose fulness all have received?

It cannot possibly be doubted but that He, who came to bear the Cross, endured bodily weakness and wasting to an extent beyond comparison, and was beyond all others affected, as the affection of compassion was in Him so much greater than in them, seeing that His eyes perceived not only men's deeds but even their thoughts. Our Lord's own sentence confirms these arguments when He speaks thus: "*O Ferusalem, Ferusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldest not!*"† Let us see what this means—our Lord's being pleased to compare himself to a hen rather

* 2 Cor. xi. 29.

† S. Matt. xxiii. 37.

than to any other animal. It was, as the holy Fathers hold, so done to express the incomparable affection of His Charity. For no animal is moved towards her young with such tender compassion as the hen. She becomes all rough, her feathers sticking out all over her body, her note becomes hoarse and shrill, she is all in a fever of spirit and weak in all her members, and reduced to the last extremity. If then the hen, an irrational creature, has such tender compassion for her young, how much, think, did our most good Jesus suffer in His compassion for the human race? To what weakness and infirmity did it not reduce Him? How emaciated must not He have become who is known to have sorrowed for all? And hence Isaias says: "Truly He hath borne our infirmity and carried our sins. *Vere languores nostros ipse tulit, et peccata nostra ipse portavit.*"*

But let us now come to the [disfigurement He underwent from] the defect of the Passion. And we do not mean by His Passion that single day on which He died, but His whole life. For the whole life of Christ was

* Isaias liii. 4.

a cross and a martyrdom. We may say it shortly, but in meditation we will linger over it long—how great severity there was in His abstinence ; how lengthened were His vigils ; how unremitting He was in His prayers, in labour, and in the sweat of His brow ; how assiduous when He went about the towns and villages, preaching and healing everywhere ; and how often He endured hunger and thirst,—He, that living Bread, that Fountain of water springing up unto life eternal ! Let us contemplate that other fast of forty days and forty nights, after which He was hungry ; and then let us meet Him coming back to men from the desert, and let us consider that dear Face worn with such long fasts. Well did the Evangelist put it, that after the fast, "*He was hungry*,"* that you may know that Jesus fasted, not in the strength of His Divinity, but in the nature of His humanity. For it would have been no great thing, if, in the strength of His Divinity, in which He was never hungry, He had fasted forty days.

And now let us come to that agony of the

* S. Matt. iv. 2.

last day, and we cannot be ignorant of the causes of His Body being so marred. Let, therefore, our consideration begin in that place, where, as He Himself testifies, His Soul was sad even unto death.* The sweat of blood flowed copiously over all His limbs as He prayed and agonized, so that it not merely oozed out, but in great drops ran down upon the earth. Let us now proceed and pass through the afflictions of that night; how He was held, and bound, and dragged, and confined, and beaten, spit upon, struck with blows and buffets, crowned with thorns, beaten on the head with a reed, torn with most cruel scourges, laden with His own Cross, first carrying that which immediately afterwards was to carry Him. Behold Jesus thus! What room for delights is here? What beauty of comeliness here? Who would look for beauty of form in a Body so mangled?

But let us come to the end. Jesus is stripped. Wherefore? That you may be able to see the disfigurement of that most pure Body of His. Therefore is our good Jesus stripped.

* S. Matt. xxvi. 38.

Ah me ! He who adorned the heavens with the variety of the stars, before the Cross is stripped ; and all naked as He is and livid [with wounds], is fastened to the Cross. Alas ! The brightness of the eternal Light* grows black in the flesh for the salvation of flesh, and the Face which the cherubim and seraphim desire to look upon is swollen with tears. Stripped and bare is the Lord, who before the ages reigned as King, and put on beauty and strength, He to whom we sing : “ *Thou hast put on praise and beauty, and art clothed with light, as with a garment* ” — *Confessionem et decorem induisti ; amictus lumine, sicut vestimento.* † He is made a spectacle and a laughing-stock to the world and to men ; ‡ He is become, as it were, a wonder unto many, § and an object at which the people shake their heads,—He, our Head, our Joy, our Honour, good Jesus ! But why do I delay ? He is lifted up on the Cross, and the hands and feet of the best of men, the kind Jesus, are pierced through. His Blood, if any remains, is shed forth. Our

* Wisd. vii. 26.

‡ 1 Cor. iv. 9.

† Psalm ciii. 1 2.

§ Psalm lxx. 7.

Mediator stands in the breach in the sight of His Father, to turn away His anger, lest He should destroy us.* Truly He falls not in heart: He stands with constancy and perseverance in His goodwill. Oh how do I behold Thee, sweet Jesus! Oh sweetest and most loving Jesus, who hath condemned Thee to so bitter and so odious a death? O only Saviour from the ancient wounds of our forefathers, who hath dragged Thee to suffer these most dreadful and still more shameful wounds? O good Jesus, most sweet Vine; is this the fruit Thy vineyard which Thou hast transplanted out of Egypt has brought forth to Thee?† Thou hadst waited patiently even unto this day of Thy marriage that it might bring forth grapes;‡ but it has brought Thee thorns. For it has crowned Thee with thorns, and compassed Thee about with the thorns of its sins. See, into what bitterness is turned the vine, which is now no longer Thine, but a stranger's. For it denied Thee when it said and shouted: "*We have no king but Cæsar.*"§ And so the sacrilegious

* Psalm cv. 23.

‡ Isaias v. 2.

† Psalm lxxix. 9.

§ S. John xix. 15.

husbandmen cast Thee out from Thy city and community, and killed Thee,* not suddenly, but brought about by the long torment of the Cross, and tortured with the many wounds of the scourges and of the nails together. Oh! Lord Jesus, how many hast Thou to strike Thee? Thy Father striketh Thee, who spared not His own son, even Thee, but delivered Thee up for us all.† Thou strikest Thyself, for Thou dost deliver unto death Thy life, which without Thee, no man can take from Thee.‡ The impious disciple striketh Thee with the betrayal and the false kiss. The Jews strike Thee with cuffs and blows. The Gentiles strike Thee with scourges and nails. See how much Thou wast stricken and humiliated. Oh, how many hadst Thou to strike Thee and deliver Thee up! Thy heavenly Father delivered Thee up; for, as it is said, He delivered Thee up for us all.§ And thus one of Thy fervent disciples gives thanks to Thee and says: "*Who loved us, and delivered up Himself for us.*"|| O truly wonderful transaction! The

* S. Matt. xxi. 39. † Rom. viii. 31. ‡ S. John x. 18,
§ Rom. viii. 31. Eph. v. 2.

King has delivered Himself up for a slave, God for man, the Creator for the creature, the innocent for the guilty. Thou didst then deliver Thyself into the hands of the traitor, that false disciple. He delivered Thee up to the Jews, and those worst of traitors delivered Thee up to the Gentiles to be mocked, and spit upon, and scourged, and crucified.* Thou hast said and foretold all these things, and behold! they have been done. For all things have been accomplished, and Thou art crucified. And it is not enough for Thee to have been wounded, but they must add grief to Thy wounds,† and give Thee to drink, when Thou art thirsty, wine mingled with myrrh and gall.‡

I mourn over Thee, O Lord, my King, my Master and Father, yea, even my Brother, my Lord Jesus Christ, dear to me above the love of women, Thine arrow never turneth back.§ For thine arrows, that is, Thy teachings are sharp; for Thy word is living and effectual, and sharper than any two-edged

* S. Matt. xx. 18, 19.

† Psalm lxxviii. 27.

‡ S. Matt. xxvii. 34, and S. Mark xv. 23.

§ See David's lamentation over Jonathan, 2 Kings i. 20, which is paraphrased here.

sword, and pierceth even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit.* Nor is Thy shield cast away in the battle. For with the shield of Thy goodwill Thou hast crowned us. The spear of Thy prayers is not turned aside ; for even for Thine enemies hast Thou prayed that they might not perish : how much more for Thy friends ! Thou art stronger than the lion. For Thou, O Lion of the tribe of Judah, hast overcome that lion who goeth about seeking whom he may devour. Thou art swifter than the eagle. For Thou hast exulted as a giant to run Thy course, to accomplish the mystery of Thine Incarnation ; until, as an eagle enticing her young to fly, Thou didst spread forth the wings of Thine arms on the Cross, and hovering over us hast taken us up and carried us on Thy shoulders,† in Thine own strength to Thy dwelling-place, the home of Thy habitation and of Thy glory. And there, over the sheep and the goat that was lost and found, Thou hast made a feast for Thy neighbours and Thy friends, the blessed spirits, and joyfully dost Thou invite them

* Hebrews iv. 12.

† Deut. xxxii. 11.

to rejoice with Thee, and causest joy in heaven over one sinner doing penance.* And though Thou art so good and so great, Thou art condemned to a most shameful death, and commending Thy spirit into Thy Father's hands, Thou dost bow the head and give up the ghost.

Come then, I pray you, and condole with Him all ye who desire to rejoice in the Lord. Consider our strong One, how crushed He is; our desirable One, how miserably disfigured; our Peace-maker, how He lies slain in battle. Where is His rosy ruddiness? where His youthful brightness? where in His Body so sadly bruised will you find beauty? Behold our days have failed, the days of our Lord Jesus, who alone is day without darkness, and His bones are dried up like a cinder! He is stricken as the grass, and His Heart is dried up; He is lifted up and broken exceedingly; but in His exterior deformity† He retained within beauty and true glory as well. Do not, therefore, faint in your tribulations for Him; because all saw Him, who

* S. Luke xv. 10.

† *Decore*, probably a mistake for *dedecore*.

is beautiful in form above the sons of men, on the Cross: and they, who looked only on the outward appearance, saw Him as not having form or comeliness, but His face was, as it were, abject and deformed. Yet, from this deformity of our Redeemer flowed the price of our beauty, yea, our interior beauty. For all the glory of the king's daughter is from within.* She felt this, who in the Canticle of Solomon, cried out: "*I am black, but beautiful, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the curtains of Solomon.*"† If the Body of our Lord Jesus had not been disfigured (and its blackness we have above in part traced out), who should declare His interior beauty, for in Him was all the fulness of the Godhead? Let us, therefore, be disfigured outwardly in the body with our disfigured Jesus, that we may be reformed interiorly in soul with our beautiful Jesus. Let us be conformed in our body to the body of our Vine, that He may reform the body of our humanity according to the figure of the Body of His glory.* Let us be imitators of the Apostle Paul, as he was of Christ, who says

* Psalm xliv. 14. † Cant. i. 4. ‡ Philippians iii. 21.

of himself: "*I am crucified with Christ;*"* and again, "*I always bear about in my body the marks of Jesus Christ.*"† Well did he bear the stamp of the Passion of Jesus Christ in his body, to whom the world was dead and he to the world. He had become brown, because the sun had altered his colour,‡ the sun of the Passion and the love of Christ. Nevertheless, be it known that in what we have said of the disfigurement of the beautiful Body of our Lord, we have spoken not of His natural, but of His accidental deformity, not blaming in Him any defect of nature, but extolling the charity of His Passion.

* Gal. ii. 19.

† *Ibid.* vi. 17.

‡ Cant. i. 5.





Chapter vi.

*ON THE LEAVES OF THE VINE GENERALLY,
THAT IS, ON THE VARIOUS WORDS OF
CHRIST, RELATING TO THE COMMEN-
DATION OF VIRTUES.*

THE leaves of the vine are finer than those of almost all trees. And what is set forth to us in the leaves but the words of our true Vine, the most kind Jesus? The vine excels in leaves : our Lord Jesus excels in words. The servants of the Jews felt this who were sent to apprehend Jesus and returned, and when found fault with, said “ *Never did man speak like this Man.*”^{*} They did not find fault with the defects of the trunk [of the vine] when they saw the beauty of the leaves ; yea, by the leaves they felt that something lay hid, besides what

* S. John vii. 46.

appeared in that weak Body. Peter also had felt it, for, when many went back from the Lord Jesus, and the twelve disciples were asked by Him, "*Will ye also go away?*" he answered, "*Lord, whither shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.*"* And we, to whom shall we go?—God forbid. As though he would say, "Thou hast those most beautiful leaves, which protect us from all hurt. Give us then another more beautiful—that is, better than Thyself, and we will go to him away from Thee. But such an one, though thou canst do all things, thou canst not give us; to whom then shall we go if we leave Thee?" She had felt the beauty of these leaves, that is, the words of the kind Jesus, who, when he was speaking to the multitudes, was so rejoiced at the singular beauty of the leaves, that she not only thought or even spoke aside, but lifting up her voice she said, "*Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the breasts which Thou hast sucked.*"† Truly blessed, yea most blessed is the earth which brought forth such a Vine, the Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus. Truly art thou also

* S. Luke xi. 27. † S. John vi. 68, 69.

blessed, O woman, who didst consider the beauty of the leaves, and didst boldly bear testimony to the truth, alone among so many of His calumniators. I believe that even now thou hast a great reward, and wilt have a greater for this confession of thine; for He, the Truth itself, to whom thou barest witness, confesses thee now before His Father, and will confess thee none the less when He shall say to his calumniators, "*I know you not,* depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.*"† But to those who are known of Him He will say: "*Come ye blessed of my Father.*"‡ Peter and John and Matthew saw the greenness of the leaves of the true Vine, when at the mere voice of His call the former left their nets,§ and the latter his receipt of custom.|| Who is able to reckon up the power of the words of our kind Jesus? What power of words is there which is not set forth in those words of His? Assuredly none.

Will you now hear briefly words which, like the leaves, afford us a shelter from the burning heat of vices? To commend humi-

* S. Matt. xxv. 12. † *Ibid.* v. 41. ‡ *Ibid.* v. 34.
 § S. Mark i. 18, 20. || *Ibid.* ii. 14.

lity, He says: "*He who will be the greatest among you, let him be your minister:*" and "*The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life for the redemption of many.*"* To commend meekness as opposed to anger: "*Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart:*" and again: "*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*"† To commend charity as opposed to envy, He says: "*Love your enemies, do good to them who hate you and calumniate you, that you may be the children of your Father, who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and the bad, and sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust.*"‡ To commend alacrity in spiritual exercises as opposed to sloth, He says to His disciples; "*Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation.*"§ And elsewhere: "*That men ought always to pray and never to faint;*"|| in which passage it is explained that prayer is an affair not only of the voice, but also of devotion. For we cannot always be crying out with the movement of the lips; but we

* S. Matt. xx. 26, 28. † *Ibid.* v. 4. ‡ *Ibid.* v. 44, 45.
§ *Ibid.* xxvi. 41. || S. Luke xviii. 1.

may always be fervent in good desires, as the Lord shewed when He said to Moses who did not speak : "*Why cryest thou unto me?*"* He calls the desire of the holy man a cry, although as a fact his tongue was silent ; hence the Lord in the Psalm says : "*The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor : Thine ear hath hearkened to the preparation of their hearts.*"† To commend liberality as opposed to avarice : "*Give alms, and all things are clean unto you.*"‡ And that word : "*Make to you friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when you fail they may receive you into everlasting dwellings.*"§ Of the riches of iniquity or of inequality, that is, what we abound in which others are in want of, we make friends for ourselves when we bestow them on the poor ; so that, if we are now merciful to them, we may by them, after this life, obtain mercy—for blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.|| To commend abstinence in opposition to gluttony, he says : "*Take heed that your hearts be not overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and*

* Exodus xiv. 15. † Psalm ix. 17. ‡ S. Luke xi. 41.
§ *Ibid.* xvi. 9. || S. Matt. v. 7.

that day come upon you unawares."* And He framed a parable of the rich man who fared sumptuously every day, who died, and when he was in torments, begged a drop of water from Lazarus, who was at rest after his death, and could not obtain it, receiving everlasting evil things in place of his temporal pleasure now gone by.† To commend chastity in opposition to lust, He says: "*You have heard that it was said to them of old, Thou shall not commit adultery; but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*"‡ By the leaf of these words our eyes are covered, lest if they should be too incautiously opened, that may perhaps take place of which Jeremias speaks: "*Death is come up through our windows.*"§ For the windows of our soul are the apertures of our senses, our eyes, ears, nose, and mouth; and by these, as by a sort of windows, death comes up, as often as they are opened to coveting anything criminal. By these and numerous other words, as by the shade of so many

* S. Luke xxi. 34.

† *Ibid.* xvi. 19, &c.

‡ S. Matt. v. 27, 28.

§ Jeremias ix. 21.

leaves, we are sheltered by our Vine, the kind Jesus, from the burning heat of vices, and refreshed by the moderate temperature of virtues.





Chapter vii.

ON THE SHADE OF THE LEAVES OF THE VINE, THAT IS, ON THE WORDS OF CHRIST, UTTERED WHEN HE WAS LIFTED UP ON THE CROSS.

THE shade of the leaves of the vine is generally most grateful when the vine is lifted up on a kind of frame of trellis-work* and stretched over it in all directions. Let us, therefore, see whether our true Vine was ever lifted up and stretched out, and consider if He then put forth for our protection any leaves of sweet words. That our Vine was lifted up, He Himself testifies, saying: "*I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all things unto myself: †* and also, "*As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up.*" ‡

* Called in Italy *pergola*. † S. John xii. 32. ‡ *Ibid.* iii. 14.

Now it is evident that this lifting up was said of the Cross. And see how appropriately the trellis-work frame, on which vines are usually trained, signifies the Cross. For they are interlaced, that is, formed by cross-pieces; and so on these the vine is more conveniently raised up and stretched out. The wood of the Cross is interlaced, the good Jesus, our Vine, is lifted up upon it, and is stretched out by His arms and His whole Body. For so stretched out was He upon the Cross that all His members might be counted. So He speaks by the prophet: "*They dug through My hands and My feet, they have numbered all My bones.*"* How He was dug through has been told above; how He was stretched out is now added: "*They have numbered all My bones,*" as though He would say: "So sharply am I stretched out on the right hand and on the left, and from above and beneath, that My body is stretched like the skin of a drum, and all my bones may easily be counted."

Look upon the Face of thy Christ, O Christian soul, and lift up to His torments

* Psalm xxi. 17, 18.

thine eyes full of tears, and thine heart contrite and full of sighs, and see what great tribulation and sorrow He found, when He sought thee that He might find thee ! Open thine eyes that thou mayest look upon the Face of thy Christ. Listen with ears attentive, though in so much sorrow, for the word which He may utter ; and when thou hast once heard it, lay it up as a most precious treasure in the chamber of thy heart. Behold He is laid upon His cruel bed of death, His Cross. Treasure up the last commands of Thy Spouse if thou wilt obtain the inheritance undefiled and that fadeth not away. And they were not many words which He spake when He was dying ; they will be easily kept by the willing spouse of Christ.





Chapter viii.

ON THE LEAVES OF THE VINE IN PARTICULAR; OR, ON THE FIRST WORD OF CHRIST HANGING ON THE CROSS: "FATHER FORGIVE THEM, FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO:"

HERE are seven little words, which, like seven leaves ever green, our Vine put forth when lifted up on the Cross. Thy Spouse is made into a lute (*cithara*) for thee: the Cross has the form of the wooden part, and His own Body supplies the place of the strings stretched over the surface of the wood. For if He had not been stretched out and fastened to the wood, He would never have given forth that sound of words, as one of playing on the lute, with which thou mayest delight thyself for evermore. Attend diligently. Thy Lute has

seven strings. He sings to thee, He plays for thee, He invites thee to listen, whereas thou shouldest rather invite Him to speak. See, then, the leaves of thy Vine, and take heed to commit them indelibly to thy memory. These seven are sometimes variously arranged, and their order cannot easily be discovered, since they have not been arranged by any single Evangelist. We therefore arrange them according to what we have been able to make out for ourselves.

From the narrative of S. Luke we know that when Jesus was crucified, He said: "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*"* O green leaf! O word [most] appropriate to the Word of the supreme Father! The good Teacher practices what He had commanded. He prays not only for those who persecute and calumniate Him, † but even for those who are putting Him to death. Lay up in the treasury of your heart this leaf, that whenever your enemies rage you may be able to bring forth the memory of the abundance of the sweetness of Jesus, and ever oppose this leaf as a shield against

* S. Luke xxiii. 34. † S. Matt. v. 44.

the insults of your enemies. Christ prays for His murderers: will you not pray for your detractors?

But let us examine more carefully the prayer itself. "*Father,*" He says. Why does He put the word "*Father?*" Children are accustomed to beg for anything in a more affecting way when they mention their father's name, so that they may call his natural affection for them to mind, and more easily obtain their request. So also our Redeemer, merciful and pitiful, long-suffering and of great mercy, and sweet unto all, although He knew that He was always heard by the Father,* yet setting forth to us the affection with which we should pray for our enemies, He used a name of love. As though He said, "By Thy paternal love, in which we are One, I beg Thee to hear Me for these My murderers, and to pardon them. Acknowledge the love of Thy Son, and pardon His enemies." And so also He adds the reason why they should be pardoned: "*For they know not what they do.*" What shall we say to this? Were they ignorant that they were

* S. John xi. 42.

crucifying Him whom they were in the very act of crucifying? No ; but they were ignorant Who it was they were putting to death. For if they had known, they never would have crucified the Lord of glory.* They knew not what they did, because they knew not how greatly they sinned.

Thus must you think, and thus must you pray, who desire to be called the spouse of the Lord. When your enemies rage against you, when they abuse you, threaten you, bring evil upon you, even when they smite you on the face, yea even when they put you to death, remember the leaf of your Vine, call to mind the sound of your Lute ; follow, that is, imitate your Spouse, and say with your whole heart: "O Spouse forgive them, for they know not what they do : they know not how grievously they are sinning." For if they knew what blessedness they lose, what unhappiness they incur by sinning, surely they would not sin. For what is it which prompts all men to sin, but ignorance of the good which is lost and the evil which is incurred by sin? By sinning

* 1 Cor. ii. 8.

the most good God is lost, the pain of hell is gained ; and such an exchange none but a complete madman wishes. Yes, truly, those who lose the delights of heaven and plunge into the pains of hell by sinning knowingly are mad ; therefore they know not what they do. Therefore we must pardon such for the sake of our own salvation, and for the sake of their ignorance, and we must pray for them with great confidence ; for such prayers break their way with [a holy] violence into the ears of the Lord. Surely He hearkens to others on a matter on which He Himself wished to be heard. And He was heard, since at the preaching of Peter, in one day three thousand, on another day four thousand, of those who had cried out for our Lord's death were converted. O what gladness is there in heaven when he who had been slain brings his murderer, and he who has been smitten brings his smiter by his prayers to heaven ! O what was the exultation of Stephen over the conversion of Paul ! who, by his prayers converted to the faith, as he had stoned him, was afterwards himself stoned* for the faith of

* Acts xiv. 18.

Christ, and endured for Christ many evils which he before had inflicted on the Saints. Let us also follow these examples in praying for our enemies, that for them and for ourselves we may deserve to obtain everlasting salvation.





Chapter ix.

*ON THE SECOND LEAF OF THE VINE, OR ON
THE SECOND WORD OF CHRIST ON THE
CROSS: "THIS DAY THOU SHALT BE
WITH ME IN PARADISE."*

THE second leaf of our Vine and the second chord of our Lute is the sacred word of our crucified Lord, which He spoke to the thief who confessed Him, and begged for fellowship with the Crucified One : "*Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.*"* What greenness, what freshness has this leaf ! O what sweetness vibrates on this chord ! How suddenly from an enemy is made a friend, from a stranger a companion, from an out-cast a neighbour, from a thief a confessor ! O what confidence has this thief ! Conscious

* S. Luke xxiii. 43.

to himself of every evil and of no one good thing, a transgressor of the law, a violator both of the life and property of others, arrived at the very gates of death, at the end of life, with no hope for this present life, yet the hope of the life to come, which he has so often deserved to lose and never deserved to think of, even that he is not afraid to ask. Who will despair, when the thief has hope? But it is worth while to look diligently at what manner of man this thief was, lest if we know not the cause of his hope, we may fall into the vice of presumption. All our Lord's friends and neighbours and acquaintances, His brethren also, yea, even His very disciples, who were unto Him as His own soul, chosen out of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, in the trouble of such grievous straits, in the midst of such confusion and such outrages, when the Shepherd was stricken, they all were scattered abroad like sheep that had gone astray. The disciple whom Jesus loved had fled, that ardent [Peter] followed afar off; forgetful of the Divine miracles which they had so often seen our Saviour work, nay,

which even they themselves had worked in His Name. And now a thief, in the midst of so many reproaches and miseries, yea, in midst of so many torments of the cross and of death, confesses Him whom he had not known before, and confidently begs help from Him who seemed Himself to be in need of help. Which of the disciples was inflamed with such boldness? They all fled from Him, whom up to that time they had confessed while living; but this man confessed Him, while dying, whom when He was living he had denied.

He prays, moreover, in faith, hope, and charity, saying: "*Remember me, Lord, when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom.*"* He believes, then, in Him whom he calls Lord and King. And who ever begs for what he does not hope? And he loves Him with whom he desires to be united. Why should that good Father deny such a petitioner, when He had Himself stirred him up to ask, especially when He was seated upon His nuptial throne on the day of His espousals?† His nuptial throne was the Cross, in which

* S. Luke xxiii. 42. † Cant. iii. 11.

the true Bridegroom united to Himself His Bride the Church, and betrothed her to Himself with the shedding of His sacred Blood. Christ, therefore, granted the request of a soul, not now of a thief, but His confessor, His own spouse, and consoled the petitioner with an answer worthy of Himself: "*Amen, I say to thee, Verily, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.*" To whom? *To thee*: "to thee who hast confessed Me on the Cross of torments; thou shalt be with Me in the Paradise of delights." *With Me*, He says. O wonderful kindness! He does not say simply, "Thou shalt be in Paradise, or thou shalt be with the angels; but *thou shalt be with Me.*" Thou shalt have thy fill of Him whom thou desirest, thou shalt see in majesty Him, whom thou confessest compassed with infirmity. Neither do I delay what I promise; for *this day* thou shalt be with Me." The good and sweet Jesus quickly hears, quickly promises, quickly gives. Who would despair [of gaining favours] from so kind a hearer, so swift a promiser, so prompt a giver? We have hoped in Thee, who have

known Thy sweet Name : for Thou never failest them that seek Thee. We, therefore, approach to Thee, O good Jesus, as near as we can in heart, now that Thou art seated on the throne of Thy majesty; and we pray that thither by Thee and to Thee we may deserve to be brought in, whither has entered that thief of Thine, who confessed Thee on the throne of the Cross !





Chapter x.

ON THE THIRD LEAF OF THE VINE, THAT IS, ON THE THIRD WORD OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS: "WOMAN, BEHOLD THY SON,"—"BEHOLD THY MOTHER."

LET us now prepare both the eyes and ears of our hearts to contemplate the third leaf of our Vine: "*Woman,*" He says, "*Behold thy son.*"* O word good and sweet! wonderful word, containing great affection of tender love! Certainly we read† that our Lord Jesus, especially when He had reached His full age, kept close to His dearest Mother in familiarity, and with her ate and drank very frequently, and spoke to her more meekly than to all others. But how great the affection

* S. John xix. 26.

† S. Luke ii. 51, compared with chap. iii. 23, and S. John ii. 1-5.

of His love towards His Mother was in Him, when He was about to depart from her in the body, He has intimated in these few words. And, without mentioning the Passion of His Cross, with what exceeding compassion, think you, towards His blessed Mother was that most gentle Heart of His affected? And she too knew it to be stricken through with the sword so keen of her own sorrow. The Passion of His wounds was increased by His Mother's Compassion, when, with a most broken heart, with wringing hands, and eyes flowing with a torrent of tears, with her face drawn [in anguish], her voice tremulous, and destitute of all the strength of her heart, He saw her still bravely standing where He was hanging. How many times do you suppose she lifted up her bashful eyes to such cruel sights? Did she ever once turn them away? Or could she see through that great flood of tears? How often, covering her head, alike from virgin modesty and from the immensity of her sorrow, did she stand there, as I imagine, and groan, bewailing her Son and saying: "O my Son Jesus, Jesus my Son! Who would grant me that I might die with

Thee and for Thee, sweet Jesus my Son, my Son?"* How often, think you, must she have fainted for the immensity of her sorrow, for which I marvel greatly that she was not dead? She did die a living death, for living she bore a sorrow more cruel than death. But lest she should faint and die, her very mortality was strengthened by her Son. She was strengthened within, and externally she was consoled by kind words and deeds. How did His Mother stand by the Cross of Jesus? Truly, by the Cross she stood, for the Cross of her Son afflicted the Mother with sorrow beyond all others. Others also stood, but she nearest.

When Jesus, therefore, had seen His Mother and the disciple standing whom He loved, He said to His Mother: "*Woman behold thy son.*" And to the disciple He said: "*Behold thy Mother.*" As though He would say: "Thou art deprived of Me corporally: and hence I give thee My friend, beloved above the rest, for thy son, by whose presence, meanwhile, while I am gone, thou mayest be comforted. And thou [My

* 2 Kings xviii. 33.

disciple] art deprived of Me thy Father : and hence I give thee for a mother this Mother most dear to Me. Observe the laws of mutual love towards each other, thou by holding him for thy son, and thou by accounting her thy mother." O how munificent art Thou become at Thy nuptials, good Jesus, our King and Spouse ! How liberally hast Thou delivered up all that Thou hast ! Behold Thou hast given to those who are crucifying Thee the affection of Thy prayer, to the thief Paradise, to Thy Mother a son, to Thy son a mother, to the dead life, to the Father's hands Thy Soul ! On the whole world Thou hast conferred miracles of Thy power ; for the redemption of Thy servant Thou hast poured forth, not a part, but the whole of Thy Blood from many gaping wounds ; to the traitor Thou hast given the penalty of his guilt ; to the earth Thou hast given Thy Body, not to be corrupted, but only for a time.

Now it moves me that, when He had said : "*Woman, behold thy son ;*" He added : "*Behold thy Mother ;*" whereas, even if He had not added this, it would have followed as a

necessity that she should be the Mother of him, who had been given to her as a son. But His doing this seems to me to commend the affection of charity on both sides. For there are some who wish to be loved by all, but do not embrace any with affection in return. They do not care to alleviate their labours and burdens; and though they are stricken by many, they themselves will bear the burdens of none, &c. Not so did Christ either teach or act. For He bore thy burdens, and invites thee on thy part to bear His burdens, that is to imitate His sufferings. For Christ suffered, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps.* This also He taught when He commended His Mother to His disciple, and His disciple to His Mother, each to the other; not willing that spiritual charity should remain cold by being alone, but that both lying together, † that is, both abiding together in pure and true charity, each should warm the other, that is that they should be mutually inflamed by one

* 1 S. Peter ii. 21.

† If two lie together, they shall warm one another: how shall one alone be warmed?—Eccles. iv. 11.

another to the exercises of charity. For this is the effectual sign of a true and pure charity: that those, who in spiritual love are spiritually united by a pure charity, inflame each other to spiritual exercises, so as to be ready to pray more devoutly, to be more often on their knees, more frequently to take corporal discipline; especially, when the one who loves is not envious, but rather rejoices, if a third or a fourth or more unite themselves to the charity of him whom he loves. Provided only, that these be such as that their friendship be not suspected; and that in all these and such like things they maintain perseverance in the fervour of charity, since the river of charity that sometimes runs shallow does not appear to have had a good source. Let us, therefore, love one another, and prove by works the efficaciousness of our love; for such charity is from God, and it is the end of the commandment, and the fulfilling of the law.*

* 1 Tim. i. 5; Rom. xiii. 10.





Chapter xi.

ON THE THREE KINDS OF CHARITY, COM-
MENDED TO US BY THE THREE FIRST
WORDS.

IN the three short words upon which we have treated, three kinds of charity seem to be commended. One, which is maintained towards enemies who are even unwilling to be reconciled, and of which S. John says : “ *Let us love our Lord, who hath loved us,* when we were yet enemies;*”† and this is the highest and most wonderful love. For to love enemies is more divine than human. The second, is that love which is shown to those who once were enemies, but who have sought reconciliation and have been received into favour, and hence S. Paul says : “ *We are reconciled to God by His*

* 1 S. John iv. 19.

† Rom. v. 10.

Blood."* The third, is that love which is given to those who have never been enemies ; and of this the same Apostle speaks : "*Let us do good unto all men, but especially to them who are of the household of faith.*"† Now the first kind of charity is commended to us in the first word, when our Lord Jesus prays for His enemies. The second, where He promises Paradise to the thief who petitioned Him. The third, where He commits to each other His chief friends. Let us, therefore, cover ourselves with the shade of these leaves. Let us hear and hearken to these strains of our Lute in their most sweet harmonies ; and we shall refrain from the lust of all envy, hatred, and anger, and from all the bitterness of detraction, adulation, and deceit by the help of our Lord who is the true Charity. Him let us imitate in mind and in work in all these kinds of charity.

* Rom. v. 10, 9.

† Gal. vi. 10.





Chapter rii.

*ON THE FOURTH LEAF OF OUR VINE; OR,
ON THE FOURTH WORD OF CHRIST ON
THE CROSS: "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY
HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?"*

LET us now apply both the eye and the ear of our heart to see the fourth leaf of our Vine, and to hear the fourth chord of our Lute. This leaf requires keen eyes, this chord requires well purified ears: yea, it is itself able to purify and to sharpen both ears and eyes. For now our Lord Jesus does not simply speak this word as He did the rest, but, as the Evangelist testifies, about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "*Heli, Heli, lama sabbac-thani;*" which is being interpreted, "*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*"*

* S. Mark xvi. 34.

What eyes cannot see this leaf, what ears cannot hear this chord? What must have been the magnitude, think you, of that most bitter sorrow, when the Lord Jesus with all His Body stretched out gave forth this cry? But beware that you do not imagine, on account of the cry, that the Lord Jesus fell into impatience. For though He was in the very deepest bitterness of the Cross, yet nothing went forth from His Heart but sweetness. In His bitterest suffering, as we shall show in the next leaf and chord, He retained His patience, and showed the greatness of His sorrow. And this was exhibited beforehand in blessed Job (whose name signifies *one who grieves*), both in words and deeds. For, when he heard the words of the messengers, he showed exteriorly in words the bitterness of his soul. He rent his garments, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground. Behold the greatness of his sorrow! After this he said: "*The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: as it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done: blessed be the name of the Lord.*"* Behold the strength of his virtue of

* Job i. 21.

patience ! If Job patiently bore his miseries, how much more patiently, think you, did our Lord Jesus bear His Cross, for the bearing of which He had come ?

That He spake these words in the person of His assumed Manhood,—and this was one and the same Person with Himself, God the Son,—is evident by that which He said : “ *O Lord; My God;*” for He who is one God with the Father would surely not have said this, unless He had assumed the Manhood. For what is this which He says : “ *Why hast Thou forsaken Me ?*” Could the Father forsake His own Son who is One with Him ? God forbid. But in the name of His whole Body, that is, for Himself and the whole Church, He spake these things. For our Head, the Lord Jesus, wishing to commend unity and His own love which He has for the Church, His Bride, shows that He would suffer also in all His members ; and therefore He now bore the suffering in the Head, that is in the Body which he assumed of the Virgin. He who could not be forsaken cries out that He is forsaken ; because many of His members were to come to such tribulation that they

should appear to be altogether forsaken by God. And their character He was bearing who said : “ *They that watched for my soul took counsel together, saying : God hath forsaken him : pursue and take him, for there is none to deliver him.*”* And this reproach was also made to our kind Jesus Himself in the midst of the torment of the Cross : “ *If Thou be the Son of God, save Thyself.*”†

It may also be taken to mean that our Lord foreseeing that there would be some, yea very many [in His Mystical Body] who would depart from the unity of His Church by heresies, or by other grievous sins. And so transferring their personality to Himself, He cried : “ *Why hast Thou forsaken Me ?*” as though He would say—What ! has any one of these gone backward, so as to perish from the unity of My Body, who have been united to Me at the cost of such torment ? And thus in the person of the martyrs it is said in the Psalms : “ *Our belly cleaveth unto the earth.*”‡ By the belly, which is the softer and weaker part of man, is signified those who, lacking patience and firmness of perseverance, and

* Ps. lxx. 10, 11. † S. Matt. xxvii. 40. ‡ Ps. xliii. 25.

on this account failed in the sharpness of torments, and cleaved unto the earth, that is, consented to earthly counsels and deeds. We, however, who are still exercised with daily tribulations, who are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men, who are made as the refuse of this world, the offscouring of all, even until now*—we may conceive unspeakable confidence of spirit, especially from this, that our Lord Himself, the Comforter of all who are oppressed, is joined to us in such unity of spirit and love, that He deigned in such manifest words to transfer to Himself even the character of our infirmity; and He even now intercedes for us with the Father by exhibiting His wounds, and prays still that He may not be forsaken in His inferior members, who could not be forsaken in Himself, their Head. How then shall those members perish who know that their salvation rests on the will of their Head? In our mortal body is there any one member with which our head does not grieve [when it suffers]? If the foot or the hand be afflicted, at once the head cries out with the tongue :

* 1 Cor. iv. 6, 13.

Why am I afflicted? Our Lord cried out to Saul, raging against His members: "*Why persecutest thou Me?*"* while yet He Himself remained safe in heaven. Blessed be our Lord Jesus, who first in His own Person for us, and now in our persons with us, deigns to suffer the tribulation which justice demands that we should suffer, reckons it His own and cries: "*I am with him in tribulation,*"† that we may confide in Him with more security.

* Acts ix. 14. † Ps. xc. 15.





Chapter riii.

ON THE FIFTH LEAF OF OUR VINE, OR THE
FIFTH WORD OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS:
"I THIRST."

THE fifth leaf or the fifth chord seems brief; but if it be examined and very diligently considered it will be found efficacious in manifesting Christ's love for us. The Evangelist says: "*Jesus, seeing that all things were accomplished, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled*"* which were to be fulfilled, even those which say, "*They gave me gall for my food, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.*"† For the Evangelist adds: "*Now there was a vessel set there full of vinegar, and one ran and filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and gave Him to drink.*"‡ Another Evangelist, more

* S. John xix. 28. † Ps. lxxviii. 22. ‡ S. John xix. 29.

fully setting forth the manner in which the Scripture was fulfilled, also makes mention of gall, saying thus: "*And they gave Him myrrh to drink, mingled with gall.*"* When all His members were broken, our sweet Jesus would also have His tongue suffer punishment. That strange vine, therefore, which was turned to bitterness, gave Him a bitter drink of its own fruit, a drink not to be drunk but only tasted; for it sufficed for the suffering of the tongue that He tasted the vinegar.

But, although these things were done literally for the fulfilling of the Scripture, yet by this word, "*I thirst,*" something else seems signified. For it seems to me that in this draught He wished to commend the boundlessness of His most ardent love for us; since drink is much more ardently longed for by a man who is thirsty, than food by one who is hungry. Our Lord Jesus, therefore, by showing in Himself the desire for that thing which is most ardently longed for, showed that by it is symbolized the ardour of His love. Although we may also understand that

* S. Mark xv. 23.

He did thirst literally, for He was dried up throughout His whole Body by the shedding of His sacred Blood, and His bones were burned up like a potsherd. But it is not enough to suppose that He spake merely of bodily thirst, so as to beg for bodily drink when at the very moment He knew that He was about to die corporally ; for we believe that He thirsted rather with the most ardent desire for our salvation. And that which moves us to think so is that, when the hour of His last Passion was at hand, our Lord Jesus went forth to pray, and He fell upon His face and prayed, saying : “ *O my Father, if it be possible take away this chalice from Me ;*” * and this He said, not once only, but a second and a third time. By the chalice which He was to drink, without doubt He meant the Passion which He was to suffer ; but now, when the same chalice has already been drunk out, He says : “ *I thirst.*” What is this ? Before thou tastest, O good Jesus, Thou askest to have the chalice altogether taken away ; and after that Thou hast drunk of it Thou thirstest. Wonderful art

* S. Luke xxii. 42.

Thou, I see, in Thy drinking! Was that chalice of Thine filled with the wine of gladness, and not rather with the wine of compunction and of the deepest bitterness? Yea, it was full of the most bitter compunction, and such as should beget not thirst, but rather disgust of drinking.

Now, as it seems to me, before Thy Passion Thou didst pray the Father that this chalice might be taken away from Thee, not that Thou shouldst avoid the suffering to endure which Thou hadst come, and without which there had been no salvation for the human race. But, lest any one should imagine that Thou, true Man, didst not feel the extreme bitterness of Thy Passion by reason of the glorious [hypostatic] union, Thou hast made it clear to doubters, by the words in which Thou didst ask once, twice, and three times, for the chalice to be taken away from Thee. And also to us Thy followers, Thou hast left a pattern of teaching and example, that when perils are imminent, even though they are for our benefit, we may, and ought oftentimes to beseech the Lord, that He would vouchsafe to turn away the scourge of His anger from

us ; yet notwithstanding, if they are not taken away, they are to be borne after the example of Thine own Passion, gratefully, patiently, and manfully. When, however, the chalice of Thy Passion, which Thou hadst before asked to be taken away, Thou hast now drained, Thou saidst "*I thirst.*" Thou didst commend the greatness of Thy love towards us, as though Thou wouldst say : "Although My Passion was so bitter, that as far as human feeling went, I could have turned away from it ; yet love for thee, O man, overcomes Me, and overcomes even the very torments of the Cross ; so that more torments and greater, if need be, I thirst to undergo. There is nothing which I would shrink from suffering for thee, for whose ransom I lay down My life."

Therefore let every faithful soul imitate her sweet Spouse, Jesus, who for her sake both thirsts for and drinks out a cup of such bitterness ; so may she drink it out for Him by present adversities. And let her also thirst after Him, her most sweet Spouse, whose sweetness she will be better able to consider by contrast with the bitterness of the

present life. And when these evils have been drained to the dregs for His sake, she will be able to thirst after Him with greater confidence, and to say with the prophet: "*My soul is athirst for God the living fountain; when shall I come and appear before the face of God?*"* And again: "*For Thee my soul hath thirsted; for Thee my flesh longeth, O how exceedingly!*"†

* Ps. xli. 3. † Ps. lxii. 2.





Chapter xiv.

ON THE SIXTH LEAF OF OUR VINE, THAT
IS, ON THE SIXTH WORD OF CHRIST ON
THE CROSS: "CONSUMMATUM EST."

IN the sixth leaf of our Vine, or in the sixth chord of our Lute, the virtue of perseverance is commended to us. For the Evangelist says that, when our sweet Jesus had received the bitterness of the vinegar, He said, "*Consummatum est, It is consummated.*"* What is this? It was said above that our Lord, seeing that all things were consummated, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, said, "*I thirst;*" and when He had tasted the vinegar offered to Him, added "*It is consummated.*" For it was consummated, that is, the testimony of the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "*They*

* S. John xiv. 30.

gave Me gall for My food: and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink."* And by this every Scripture that there was concerning Him received its fulfilment. As, therefore, our Head for our sins endured the bitterness of His Passion even to the consummation, that is, to the fulfilment of the Scriptures that were written of Him, and patiently persevered; let us also, if we would be members of this Head, in all our adversities preserve the virtue of perseverance, that the kind Jesus being Himself our Leader, we may come to the end of all our sufferings, and with Him be enabled to say with confidence: "*Consummatum est*, It is done." That is, By Thy assistance, not by my own virtue, I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.† Render, therefore, to me that which by Thine own promise is laid up for those who strive lawfully for the mastery, even the crown of justice, which Thou the just Judge shalt render in Thy Day, that Day which has no cloud; in that Day which in Thy courts is better than a thousand,‡ in which Thou alone

* Ps. lxxviii. 22. † 2 Tim. iv. 7. ‡ Ps. lxxxiii. 11.

wilt be the one and only Sun,—O Sun of Justice, kind Jesus Christ, shining in Thy strength, rendering Thyself as the everlasting reward for all who have persevered in the fierceness of the conflict! For they shall receive from Thee everlasting glory, wherein they shall rejoice and be glad for evermore.

But this glory no one can obtain, but he who shall have persevered unto the end. For perseverance is the strength of a good work.* To this alone is rendered the crown of justice. What does it profit to be good, to be wise, or to be powerful, if you have not persevered unto the end? Saul was good, nay the best; for the Scripture teaches that there was not a better man than he among the people of Israel.† But to what did he come? He fell and became a reprobate; so that he obeyed not the voice of the Lord, he despised the prophet, he was vexed by an evil spirit, he persecuted an innocent man even unto death; and at last he went to take counsel of a pythoness, and miserably perished by the hand of a stranger. As to wisdom: who was wiser than Solomon? And yet he

* S. Greg. M. Hom. xxv. in Evang. † 1 Kings ix. 2.

fell away from the commandments of the Lord and joined himself to strange women, and built temples to their gods, or rather to their demons, in order that he might adore idols with them, becoming so much the more besotted and degraded in folly, as he had been before exalted in wisdom. In the lives of the Fathers, of how many do we read, men mighty in watchings and in fastings, in labours above human measure, yea, even shining in miracles, who yet fell, because they did not persevere unto the end! "*He who shall persevere unto the end, the Lord says, the same shall be saved.*"* The end, not the fight, wins the crown. Praise the happiness of the voyager, but only when he has arrived at the port.† Hence the poet says:—

Cœpisti melius quam desinis : ultima primis
Cedunt : dissimiles hic vir et ille puer.‡

Oh, how justly may you be stricken with deep humility and fear, when you recollect that the highest of the angels with a vast multitude of his followers fell in heaven; that the first man with his wife were expelled from

* S. Matt. x. 22. † S. Maximi Hom. lix.
‡ Ovid., *Heroid.* Ep. ix.

paradise ; that so many good and wise and mighty men in this earth of ours have perished, because they did not attain to the consummation of their good works ! One is more just than another, and yet he knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred.* Wherefore ? Because he knoweth not if he shall persevere, if he shall be crowned.

There is, however, an efficacious remedy which we may apply to this fear : namely, to place our confidence, our hope, and our strength in Him, to whom the Psalmist sings : *“ Unto Thee, O my helper, will I sing ; for Thou, O God, art my defence ; my God, my mercy.”*† of whom Isaias speaks : *“ Behold, God is my Saviour, I will deal confidently, and will not fear : because the Lord is my strength, and my praise, and He is become my Salvation.”*‡ For whoever have fallen, they have certainly fallen because they presumed more on themselves than on God. They built the house of their intention upon the sand. And, therefore, when the tempest arose, and the streams of temptations beat vehemently, that is, persuading the appetite to

* Eccles. ix. 1. † Ps. lviii. 18. ‡ Isaias xii. 2.

transitory desires ; or the winds of pride or vain glory blew, and that house of theirs fell, and all their works were destroyed : because they trusted in their own strength, and built it upon the sand, that is upon themselves.* But we, laying a far better foundation, even that of which the Apostle speaks : "*Other foundation no man can lay, but that which is laid ; which is Christ Jesus ;*"† upon that let us safely build good works ; and these while they are fixed on that foundation cannot fall, until by His assistance who began the work they are brought to their due consummation.

* S. Matt. vii. 26-29. † 1 Cor. iii. 11.





Chapter xv.

ON THE SEVENTH LEAF OF THE VINE, OR
ON THE LAST WORD OF CHRIST ON THE
CROSS, "FATHER, INTO THY HANDS I
COMMEND MY SPIRIT."

NOW, then, let us consider the last leaf of our Vine, or the last chord of our Lute ; in order that we may commit it indelibly to memory, yea, and evermore repeat it with unwearied lips. "*Father,*" says that good Jesus, "*into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.*"* The letter is plain enough. But why is it that that Son, co-eternal and consubstantial with the Father, so openly commended His soul into His Father's hands, when it would have none the less been commended to Him, even if He had not said this? In the Gospel of

* S. Luke xxiii. 46.

St. John, we have it mentioned that, when the Lord Jesus was about to raise Lazarus to life, He said: "*Father, I give Thee thanks that Thou hearest Me always; but because of the people who stand about have I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me.*"* So, surely, was it now: Although He knew that His most holy soul was commended to His Father's hands, as a little before He had said: "*The prince of this world,*" that is Satan, "*cometh, and in Me he hath not anything.*"† Yet that He might instruct us, who are but earth and ashes, to learn to commend our spirit into the hands of the eternal Father, that it be not, when it has gone forth from the body, caught by the prince of this world, who in us, alas! may find not a few things which belong to him. And thus He, who owed no debt to sin, yea, who had even come to take away sins, commended into His Father's hands His most pure Spirit when it was about to go forth out of His most pure Body, not, indeed, of necessity, but for the sake of example for us. And this we also shall be

* S. John xi. 42.

† *Ibid.* xiv. 30.

able to do in the hope of grace and mercy, if we have taken shelter under the shade of the preceding leaves : if we have listened with the ears of our heart to the strains of the chords of our Lute. In other words, if we pray for our enemies, if we forgive with all our heart those who are sorry for having sinned against us, if we render to each other charity to our neighbour, if in all tribulations we have hoped in Him, who for our sakes was made Man, that united to our nature He might be [God] with us, if with ardent longing we thirst for the salvation of our neighbours, and finally, if we shall have persevered in good works even to the end. In so far as we have done these things, we shall be able to say confidently to the Eternal Father with our Lord Jesus : "*Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.*" Ever praying while we live, that in these words, with which He gave up His Spirit, He would vouchsafe to grant us also to give up our spirit, and efficaciously to commend it into His hands.

Thus, according to our ability, not indeed,

as we ought, nor even as we wished, have we set forth to your charity the seven leaves of our Vine stretched out on high. And it is not sufficient merely to look at them, but we must rather draw near and sit under their shadow, that we may be able truly to say with the spouse: "*I sat down under the shadow of Him whom I desired.*"* Of whom? Of that Spouse, the shadow of whose leaves are so much the broader than all others, as He the Spouse, the Word of the supreme Father, has words more lovely in virtues and nearer to salvation, more conformable to godliness, and more adapted for the minds of all. For, though in all the prophets and apostles that good Jesus spoke, yet of no one at all will you find words which are so adapted both to the strong and the weak, that is to the learned and the unlearned, to the wise and to the unwise, as those most learned words of the Word, our Lord Jesus. For as a certain poet says:—

Dulcius ex ipso fonte bibuntur aquæ, †
 (Waters are sweetest drunk from the fount itself.)

It must, however, be understood, that in the

* Cant. ii. 3. † Ovid., *Ex Ponto*, lib. iii. Ep. 5.

shade of these leaves, that is on the words of the Lord, we must meditate day and night. And then, indeed, are we protected by their shadow, when as often as we are tempted by vices, or by the devil, we draw down to us by proper handling some word of the evangelical Scriptures, that by its admonition and authority we may resist the vices that rush upon us. For instance, when tempted by pride, viz., to wish to be first, to be unwilling to submit, at once there meets you the word of the Lord: "*He who will be first among you, let him be the servant of all;*"* for as "*he who exalteth himself shall be humbled,*" so "*he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*"† If the heat of anger infests you, you have at once a leaf of our Vine to oppose to that heat, even that word that "*every one who is angry with his brother without a cause is in danger of the judgment:*"‡ and so against every single temptation you will find words, by which you may be defended from the heat of vices, and duly preserve virtue, for our Vine itself, the kind Jesus, grants us His support.

* S. Matt. xx. 27. † *Ibid.* xxiii. 12. ‡ *Ibid.* v. 22.



THE FLOWERS OF OUR VINE.



Chapter xvi.

ON THE DELIGHTFULNESS OF THE
FLOWERS OF OUR VINE, *i.e.*, ON THE
VIRTUES OF CHRIST.

LET us turn our minds to the delightfulness of the flowers [of our Vine]; yea, let us rise up indeed and see how our Vine has flowered.* For He has flowered indeed, and so much the more abundantly and more delightfully than others, as He is better than all, He, whose magnificence is elevated above the heavens, and all things are subjected under His feet; although constrained by love of us He was for a time

* Cant. vii. 12. *Floruerit.* The word *flourish* would not express the full meaning of the author in these chapters.

made a little less than the angels.* For for this cause He debased Himself, and took the form of a servant, and was planted in this earth of ours, and accepted the vileness of this body of ours. And then He shot forth branches and flowers and bare much fruit, in order that by His union with our humanity He might unite us to His divinity. But since without a flower fruit does not come, so He our kind Jesus brought forth flowers. And what are His flowers but virtues? For this Vine flowered wonderfully and in a very singular and extraordinary manner, not with one kind of flower like other vines and trees, but it contained in itself the form and beauty of all flowers. Among the saints one is more chaste than another, one more patient than another, one more fervent in charity than another : but this Vine far excels all angels and men in humility, patience, chastity, charity, and all the other virtues. This true Vine then had not the form and beauty of one flower, but of all ; the Violet of humility, the Lily of chastity, the Rose of patience and charity, and the flower of

* Ps. viii. 2, 6, 8 ; Heb. ii. 9.

abstinence which we may call the Crocus. How delightful, think you, will be the fruit of our Vine which flowers with such delightfulness?

But now, with His own permission, let us say something special about each of these flowers. And we must bear in mind that flowers are chiefly regarded for their pleasantness to the eyes, and for the sweetness of their smell. They are not accustomed to be eaten, except that from some flowers the bees suck and collect a most sweet food. We said that no flower, that is no virtue signified by any flower, is wanting to our Vine. For what virtue can be wanting to the Lord of virtues—*Domino virtutum?**

* Ps. xxiii. 10.





THE VIOLET OF HUMILITY.



Chapter xvii.

*ON THE FLOWER OF HUMILITY, WHICH IS
THE VIOLET.*

FIRST then let us look on the flower of Humility, that is, on the Violet. In what does the violet flower signify humility? Its size, its locality, its perfume, its colour, and the influence of the flower itself show. For its *size* is small. What flower is less than this little plant? So also are the humble small in their own eyes. For so says of himself that Apostle, who laboured more than all: "*I am the least of all the Apostles, who am not worthy to be called an Apostle.*"* See this great Saint, how small he was in his own sight! And it is strange how it happens that those whose

* 1 Cor. xv. 9.

conscience is secure, who are not conscious to themselves of anything,* should yet come to think so humbly of themselves. The *locality* of this flower is near the earth, and well is it so. For thus you have the Apostle teaching: "*Not minding high things, but consenting to the humble.*"† They have not that property of this flower who think themselves better than others, or wish to appear better than others, although they are small to their own selves. For there are some who in their own conscience do judge themselves to be low indeed, but yet outwardly they wish to appear better than others. These have the lowly stature of this flower, in that they are small in their own eyes inwardly, but they have not its humble locality, since they wish outwardly to be raised above others, and of these Solomon says: "*A double measure and a double weight is an abomination to the Lord!*"‡ And in the law of Moses it is forbidden to have a double weight.§ Now he has a double weight who, conscious to himself of evil, esteems himself bad, and yet to

* 1 Cor. iv. 4.
† Prov. xx. 10.

† Rom. xii. 16.
§ Deut. xxv. 13—15.

others outwardly wishes to appear good, and better than others.

The *perfume* of the violet is sweet and wholesome, because even among the proud themselves the praise of humility is extolled. For its good report is worthy to be praised, and the sweetness of its perfume is truly healthful; and sometimes by the praise of humility, the hearers are made better, though they be such as lose this perfume even if they regard it with love. Its *colour*, as it appears, is poor, especially in the eyes of those who know not the virtue of the little flower; but, to those who are acquainted with the *influence* of the flower, even the mean appearance of the flower itself is commendable and worthy to be loved. This we easily recognise in that Teacher of humility, our kind Jesus, according to the words of the Apostle: "*We,*" he says, "*preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a scandal and to the Gentiles foolishness, but to them that are called, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*"* Christ crucified is the Violet. For on the

* 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

Cross He became the lowest of all. In that humility to those Jews and Gentiles who looked at the colour alone [the outward appearance] that colour appeared vile : but to us who acknowledge the power of His Passion, even that despised humility—the humility of Christ is pleasing, and by His humility He is all the more dear to us. Let, then, the pooriness of the colour be made up for by the inward virtue of the flower that lies concealed from view ; so that by means of this inward virtue that which outwardly appears vile, may not be despised, but may be loved the more.

Now, then, with a more perfect and more purified eye let us gaze upon the blossoming of that singular Flower of whom it is written : “ *There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root.*”* O good Flower, upon which the Holy Spirit the Lord resteth ! And although this flower is our Lord Jesus, who says of Himself : “ *I am the flower of the field*”†—and who has within Himself the virtue and beauty of all flowers without any diminution—yet on no flower is it so fitting, as on the

* Isa. xi. 1.

† Cant. ii. 1.

violet, that the Holy Spirit should rest upon Him. And it is not I who affirm this, but He who says : “ *Upon whom shall my Spirit rest, but upon him who is humble and quiet and trembleth at my words ?* ”* What can be more clear ? He might have put the rose of patience and charity, the lily of chastity, the crocus of abstinence, when He wished to indicate the resting-place of the Holy Spirit. But He passed these by, and put the violet of humility, whose handmaids are quietness and fear. For violets, *i.e.*, the humble, cannot be moved by the wind of pride ; which always seeks out hearts high and lifted to shake them, as a certain poet says : †—

Summa petit livor, perflant altissima venti,
(As winds blow violently on loftiest [peaks], so envy haunts
the mightiest.)

But when it finds the humble, they cannot be shaken. And so they are quiet, and do not shake away the Holy Spirit who resteth upon them, since they are not moved either by the wind of pride or of envy. Fear, too, is there : not fear of losing money, nor goods that pass away,

* Isa. lxvi. 2. † Ovid. *De remed. Amoris.*

but fear of the words of the Lord, the handmaid of humility. For while the humble man presumes not on his own strength, he attends to the words of the Lord for his consolation, and ever fears lest he should leave the commands unfulfilled, or by transgression offend his Father who gave the command. Good, therefore, is this flower which brings forth quietness and fear, yea which begets security, for it is written: "*He that feareth God will do good,*"* and the reward for this well-doing will be everlasting security.

Good indeed is that violet flower, which drew down the heavenly Flower, the Word of the eternal Father, into the womb of the earthly flower, the most Blessed Virgin, by the wondrous sweetness of its perfume, as she herself testifies: "*My spirit hath exulted in God my Saviour, because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid.*"† What sayest thou? Hadst thou no other flowers? I have, she says—for she is all full of flowers, wanting in none; because no virtue is lacking in her, since she is all fair

* Eccclus. xv. 1.

† S. Luke i. 48.

and there is not a spot in her.* She has the lily of chastity, because she first vowed to the Lord the vow of keeping her virginity. She has the rose of charity, because if she had not loved the Lord so deeply, how was it that she began so boldly, so confidently a new thing, while she was but a tender, bashful little girl, and still under her parents' authority and bound by the precepts of the law? But, to say the truth, love made her bold: the glowing rose compelled her, swallowing up servile fear, so that she made a new vow, and the lily *par excellence*, could say sometime to her Beloved: "I am white and ruddy, even as Thou art white and ruddy!"† She has also some other flowers, but none of these did the Lord deign to regard in her with such predilection as the flower of her violet. "*For,*" she says, "*He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid.*" And would you see how great she has become from this for which she has bartered all her flowers? "*Behold,*" she says, "*from this all generations shall call me Blessed.—Ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes. Ex hoc—*

* Cant. iv. 7.

† Cant. v. 10.

From this, I say, because I am regarded by the Lord. The flower of my violet; *for my spikenard sent forth the odour thereof.*"* And this signifies the same thing as the violet, *i.e.*, the virtue of humility: whose fragrance has delighted the King, the King's Son, God the Son of God, when He *was at His repose* in the Bosom of the Father. And with such violence was He drawn to her by that delightful odour, that He willed to be conceived,—the Flower in the flower, yea, within another flower, that is, in Nazareth, which means Flower, that He Himself might become the flowering Flower, that is, a Nazarene. Thus in the flower all meet together. The Flower abiding in the flower, that is, in Nazareth, is conceived. Good therefore, yea and best of all, is the violet flower, which with the fragrance of its perfume, as with a most delightful chain, drew down the Flower of heaven into the womb of our flower the humble Virgin.

Let all then learn, and above all, the flowers of the world, the virgins who spring up in all the Church of God like flowers

* Cant. i. 11.

among the grass, let them learn that the Virgin of virgins, the first of devout virgins, the holiest and the purest of all, placed her highest glory in the violet of humility; although in her, in a singular degree, glistened the lily of chastity and blushed the rose of charity. Do not then, O virgins, glory in corporal chastity, though that be a virtue worthy of praise. But the more great you are, so much the more do you humble yourselves in all things, that you may find grace with God.* For it was not the chastity that the Lord regarded, but the humility of His handmaiden. If therefore you wish to be regarded by our Lord with the eye of mercy and the eye of grace, be humble. For the Scripture says, "*He giveth grace to the humble,*"† for He regarded the humility of His handmaiden. If you wish your lamps to be filled with oil when the Bridegroom comes to the marriage,—that is, if you would have a sound and happy conscience (for oil in the lamp is spiritual joy in the heart),—do not mind the high things, boasting of the height of your lily, the purity of your chastity. Do not seek

* Eccclus. iii. 20.

† S. James iv. 6.

exterior glory ; lest the door of the kingdom of heaven be shut, and the Bridegroom say to you, "*Amen, I tell you I know you not,*" and shut you out from Him who regarded the humility of his handmaiden. Many virgins will be shut out, for none of the proud ones will enter in. Yet of those who are humble no one, whether married, or virgin, or widow will deserve to be expelled. The door of the kingdom of heaven is narrow, it takes in none but little ones. Those puffed up with pride are repelled, nay, they cannot even come near, of whatever sex, or condition, or age they be. And to speak briefly : no virtue approaches thither unless it be bent down to the violet of humility. For thus the Master of humility Himself says and teaches, when He called a little child to Him, and set him in the midst of His disciples and said : "*Unless you be converted and become as this little child you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.*"* Did He set there, for a example to the disciples, the lily of chastity S. John, or the rose of charity S. Peter, who were present then? No. The former of these, it is said,

* S. Matt. xviii. 3.

was called and chosen by our Lord at his very nuptials ; and the latter, by his threefold confession to our Lord, the kind Jesus, whom it is impossible to deceive,* testified the affection of his perfect charity. For as S. John is commended for his special prerogative of chastity, so is S. Peter for his more fervent charity. Yet He set not these as the example to those who were to enter the gate of heaven, but one who was a little child, yet far advanced in the virtue of humility.

Let us see then how greatly our Lord commended in Himself this virtue of all virtues. First attend to His words where He says : *“Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart; and you shall find rest unto your souls.”*† What is it, O good Master, Blessed Jesus? Are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hid in Thee reduced to this, that Thou shouldest teach this one thing, that Thou art meek and humble of Heart? Thou dost not teach us to learn to frame the heavens, to work miracles, to raise the dead, and other wonders of that kind, but to learn that *I am meek and humble of heart.* Is that which is

*S. John xxi. 15—17. †S. Matt. xi. 29.

little then so great a thing? Even so; for by this is found rest to souls. For what else but that we may find rest to our souls is the reason of all our labour and struggling? A short lesson, a short way is pointed out to us. Learn this from our Lord Jesus, who is meek and humble of Heart; that is, see how and why He was humbled, He who is the Lord high above all nations, and His glory above the heavens:* and learn also that thou art clay and ashes, and so thou wilt find rest to thy soul. But note that He says "*humble of heart.*" For He who is humble of Heart is pleased not with feigned humility, but with true humility. He who searches the heart is delighted with humility of heart; for in the heart of the humble He taketh His rest. For He seeketh the hearts of the humble, that He may lift them up: not the proud, from whom He will turn away.

We said that two things were to be considered, viz., how and why the Lord Jesus our Yine was humbled. We will now explain them both as is due to your charity. But the human mind fails, human reason despairs of

* Ps. cxii. 4.

reaching the extent to which our Lord humbled Himself, in His conversation with us. For how can you know the depth of His humility unless you could measure the height of His power? Say, What canst thou do? Canst thou reach the measure of His glory, His power, His beauty? No angels, nor cherubim nor seraphim have arrived at this. For no creature knows God as fully and perfectly as He is. How much less man, or the son of man, a worm?* And yet, though He was so great that *of His greatness there is no end*,† He stooped down so low as to become *the son of man, a worm*. O the depth of that humility! The incomprehensible God willed to be comprehended, the Supreme to be humbled, the Almighty to be despised, the perfect Beauty to be deprived of form and comeliness, the All-wise to be made like a beast of burden, the Immortal to die, and to sum up, in short, God willed to become a worm.

If therefore the son of man is a worm, truly is He also Himself a worm, for by His own testimony He is the son of man. He says :

* Job xxv. 6.

† Ps. cxliv. 3.

“*Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?*” Behold what kind of distinction He makes between man and the son of man! He calls these men, who have descended from the first man Adam through corruption. Wherefore Job said, “*How much less man that is rottenness?*”* For in rottenness is corruption. But He only is pure,† Christ the Lord, since without corruption He was born of a Virgin Mother; and so calls Himself, not *man who is rottenness*, but *the Son of man, who is a worm*. For as the worm is generated of the earth only, so is Jesus Christ of the Virgin alone.

What higher than God? what lower than a worm? “*I am a worm*,” He says, “*and no man.*”‡ And why a worm? Because the son of man. For so you have in Job: “*The stars are not pure in his sight, how much less man that is rottenness, and the son of man that is a worm?*”§ Many have been humbled even unto

* Job xxv. 6.

† *I.e.*, naturally, and of Himself. Mary's purity was not by nature or from herself, but “by a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, in view of the merits of Christ Jesus, the Saviour of the human race.” *Definition of Pius IX.*, Dec. 8, 1854.

‡ Ps., cxxi. 7.

§ Job xxv. 5, 6.

death ; but none ever yet went down to such a depth of low esteem as His, for none had ever attained to such lofty dignity. Which of all good men who die could ever claim to himself what is said of Christ Jesus : “ *Though He was in the form of God He thought it not robbery to be equal with God ?*” * None indeed, for none of men save Himself was God. Most profoundly therefore was He humbled who alone, when He was in the form of God, abased Himself, and took the form of a servant, and reached such a depth of abjection as to be esteemed by men no longer as a man, but as a vile worm. O how humble is that worm, Jesus Christ, who was made the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people, † by men despised without cause, trampled on as a worm without resistance ! When he was reviled, He did not revile ; when He suffered He threatened not. ‡ He humbled Himself to become man, to be subject to men, to His Blessed Mother, and His foster-father Joseph, § to Simeon who waited for Him, || and not to the good only, but even to the wicked

* Philipp. ii. 6. † Ps. xxi. 7. ‡ 1 S. Pet. ii. 23.
§ S. Luke ii. 51. || *Ibid.* v. 28.

powers of this world, paying with Peter the tribute found in the fish's mouth.* In His baptism He was subjected to John, who ought rather to have been baptised by Him.† He humbled Himself, good and kind Jesus! even to wash the feet of His own disciples. And at last He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.‡ Whither further can we go? He was condemned and died, not any death, but the death of the Cross,—death the most shameful. See you not, then, how abundantly in our Vine, our kind Jesus, this flower of the violet has blossomed?

But what is the reason of such deep humiliation in our kind Jesus? It was not without reasonable necessity and just cause that the Son and Wisdom of the Father, who doeth nothing without cause, so humbled Himself. Why do we linger over many reasons? For this cause was He made Man, that He might redeem man: He became weak, that He might heal our infirmities: He became poor, that by His poverty He might make us rich: He humbled Himself, that He might exalt us: He delivered

* S. Matt. xvii. 26. † *Ibid.* iii. 14, 15. ‡ Philipp. ii. 8.

Himself to death, yea He died, that He might give us life. Who in his sound senses will scorn to be humbled for sake of Him who was so humbled for us? And though there are many reasons which urge us to humility,—our shameful origin, our life full of sorrow, our end full of fear, the dread of hell, the hope of heaven; and yet, if all these and all other reasons that there may be should cease to influence us, still the humility alone of our King and Redeemer, our most sweet Father and good Jesus, ought to be enough not merely to incite us, but even to compel us to the virtue of humility. Let us humble ourselves, therefore, and for the reasons we have enumerated, render some return to our Lord Jesus, who humbled Himself for us. Let us offer and bear in our heart the violet of that same humility, with which He, our Vine, blossomed so pre-eminently: that He may recognize in us this His own flower, which He was pleased specially to commend in Himself, and may deign in the day of His visitation to exalt us with Himself, who is exalted above every name that is named.*

* Eph. i. 21.



THE LILY OF VIRGINITY.



Chapter xviii.

ON THE FLOWER OF CHASTITY, WHICH
IS THE LILY.

THERE could not be wanting in our flowering Vine, the flower of the glistening white Lily,* the special glory of chastity. Among all the virtues, Chastity, by a special prerogative, has deserved to be called the flower which is figured by the lily. And by the name of Chastity in this

* I have ventured to read *lilii cadentis* instead of *lilii cadentis* as in the original. The flower here treated of is evidently the *lilium candidum*. Botanical works do not mention any variety known as *lilium cadens*. S. Bernard, however, commenting on Cant. ii. 2, says: "*O cadens lilium! O tener et delicate flos!*" (In Cant. Serm. 48.) Yet, a little farther on he praises it for *inter malignantes innocentie retinere candorem*. If *cadentis* be the true reading, "the drooping Lily" will denote the characteristic noticed in Chap. xxix.

treatise, do not understand any kind of chastity, but that which is called *Virginity*. For there is also the chastity of the continent, or of widows ; and there is' conjugal chastity. But these are not any longer called flowers, for they have lost virginity—the flower of the lily. Those, then, who have not lost this flower, that is, virgins, we wish to be designated by the flower of the lily, which is our present subject. And, when we say this, we do no injustice to the continent and the married. For when we praise the chastity of John, we do not blame the marriage of Abraham ; neither when we extol the virginity of Mary, do we condemn the widowhood of Anna. But each have their merits, and yet there is no small difference of dignity between them. For who does not praise the thirty-fold fruit in the married, and the sixty-fold in widows, although above these is far preferred the hundred-fold fruit of virginity ?

On this grace, then, of the Lily, with which our Vine has blossomed, we are about to speak ; and let us see, by the illumination of the true Light, why it is that so great a virtue

is figured by the lily. And it strikes us at once, that it is on account of the purity of its whiteness, in which this flower surpasses other flowers. Hence, evidently, the purity of virginity is deservedly figured by the type of the lily. Besides, no other flower carries on its very face so much grace as this; and therefore rightly is virginity,—the purest [virtue], and by all pious persons most in favour,—figured by this flower. With what praises shall I proclaim thee, O virgin brightness? I am wholly ignorant. And yet, ignorant though I be, that peculiar Lily may teach me, the uncreated Wisdom of God, our Lord Jesus, the only Begotten Son of the Father, and the only Son of that special lily, His most chaste Virgin Mother, who, on the neutral ground between the old and new Law, consecrated the vow of perpetual and entire virginity. Let Him teach me, I say, how, by the consideration of the material lily, I may be able to learn the characteristics of the Lily of Virginity. For the sake of these characteristics, then, let us investigate with care and diligence the material lily itself, in its root, and its stalk, in its leaves, and in those other

foscules which are contained within it. For we hope that, when all these have been specially considered, we may be able to find a eulogium of perfect virginity.





Chapter xix.

ON THE ROOT OF THE LILY—THAT IS,
ON THE THOUGHTS HIDDEN IN THE
HEART.



THE root of the lily is remarkable for three things: it is *white*, it is *shining*, it is *pliant*. And what else is figured by the root hidden in the earth, but the thought hidden in the heart? By the *whiteness*, then, of the root, we understand purity of thought. What is purity of the flesh without purity of thought? The Lord commands this: "*Wash you,*" He says, "*and be you clean.*" And lest you should understand external cleanness only, He adds: "*Take away the evil of your thoughts from before mine eyes.*"* For evil thoughts separate from God. And as the Truth Himself testifies: "*Out of the*

* Isa. i. 16.

heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, thefts, blasphemies, and the rest, and these defile a man."* Thoughts are black or polluted when they are *devilish, worldly, or carnal*. When a man thinks himself better than another, when he wishes to appear like another who is greater than himself, or when he will not be subject to one who is set over him: these are devilish thoughts, because they were invented by the devil, and are more familiarly used by him than others; so that the character of the devil is properly called pride.

Worldly thoughts are those which ensnare the mind with desires after created things, that it may be too solicitously intent on acquiring them, and when they are acquired, may be too much delighted with them, so as not to impart to the necessities of our neighbours, and thus become strangers to the charity of God, because it is written: "*Who hath this world's goods and seeth his brother suffering need, and shutteth up his bowels from him, how dwelleth the charity of God in him?*" †

* S. Matt. xv. 19.

† 1 S. John iii. 17.

Carnal thoughts are those which draw men to luxury of the flesh ; as when men, with inordinate affection and delight, think about women, or women about men ; for foolish men presume to call that 'love,' which might more truly be called 'hatred.' There is also a luxury in meat and drink, when men seek more and more sumptuous and delicate dishes, only to gratify the taste, and not for the preservation of health. A man may use delicate food in moderation, yet it is difficult to observe this. The same judgment must be passed on those who long after the wearing of delicate clothing.

Now the characteristic of the lily, and the beauty of virginity is lost, if whiteness be wanting to the root, and virgin purity to the thoughts. For if the body be clean outwardly and the thoughts inwardly be defiled, it should no longer be called virtue, but hypocrisy. Yet, as S. Gregory testifies,* it is important to know that a thought, however unclean, does not defile the mind when the reason does not consent to it. For who can so bridle his thoughts as never to be

* Lib. xxi. Mor. c. 3.

stirred by any unclean suggestion? But the rising of such thoughts must be at once repressed ; so that the more the enemy hoped to conquer, he may the more victoriously be conquered and driven away. And this takes place as often as, when we are tempted by bad and foul thoughts, we have recourse at once to the sign of the Cross, to the remembrance of our Lord's Passion, and to the help of tears, and thus becoming valiant in battle, we strike the enemy with his own weapon.

2. Again, the root of the lily is not only white, it is also bright or *shining*. Now, by the brightness or shining seems to be designated gaiety of spirit. There are some, indeed, who do good works by compulsion or necessity of custom ; but they are not impelled to do them with any alacrity ; and this vice is properly called *acedia*—sloth or depression. And Religious are very frequently afflicted with this malady. For seculars, at least most of them, take no account of this vice, even when it exists ; since, in bondage to the world, they hardly understand the name of a spiritual vice,

although this vice is enumerated among the seven capital sins. But now we will speak to spiritual persons, who can understand this vice. The vice of sloth, or *acedia*, is that which inflicts a kind of torpor on the soul, so that all spiritual exercises seem to it as tasteless, and are changed into a heavy weariness. Of this weariness the Psalm says : *Dormitavit anima mea pro tædio* — “ *My soul hath fallen asleep through heaviness.*”* And again : “ *Their soul abhorred all meat, and they drew near the gates of death.*”† For when it is afflicted with this vice, the soul abhors, as it were, even all the food of good things, that is, every spiritual exercise, so that it can neither pray nor read nor meditate, nor practise manual labour. Yea, they drew near even to the gates of death, that is, they have such a disgust even for life itself, that they desire death to make an end of it, saying with holy Job : “ *My soul is weary of my life.*”‡ Now, this grievous vice is healed by gladness, or gaiety (*jucunditas*), which is designated by the shining of the root of the lily. It restores the sick and dejected soul,

* Ps. cxviii. 28. † *Ibid.* cvi. 18. ‡ Job x. 1.

stirs it up to spiritual meditation, and gives back to it the desire of labouring, praying, and reading, so that it rejoiceth as a giant to run its course, and says with the Psalmist :

*“I have run in the way of Thy commandments, when Thou hast enlarged my heart.”**

Since one runs in the way of God's commandments, when one's heart is enlarged, that is, when it is opened out by spiritual gladness. For the heart is naturally said to be shut by fear and sadness, to be opened by security and gladness. How appropriate is this virtue of cheerfulness think you, to consecrated virgins, who have despised the joy of this world and all secular pomps, for love of their Lord Jesus Christ, so that what they have not outwardly they may be filled with inwardly? Rejoice, therefore, in the Lord always; for vain joys you have cast away. Again, I say rejoice;† for you have merited to cleave fast to the true Joy, and to have ever in the consciousness of your heart the brightness of hilarity. For God loveth a cheerful giver, and He is the special giver of true cheerfulness.

* Ps. cxviii. 32.

† Philipp. iv. 4.

3. The root of the lily is also *pliant* or tractable, and by this we should understand the virtue of meekness. For we know how many there are who excel in the virtue of chastity; but who, for ever so slight a cause, yea, for no cause at all, have got into the way of being so disturbed, that they become exceedingly burdensome, both to themselves and to others against whom they are moved to anger, carrying about with them a mind ready to break out into bitterness at all that they see and hear. This is not becoming the virgin of Christ, who says and teaches: "*Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart,*" and who promises beatitude to the meek, saying: "*Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the earth.*"* And what then shall become of those who are not meek? They shall be outcasts on the earth. And whence shall they be outcasts? From that land of which it is said: "*I will please the Lord in the land of the living.*"† What profit will chastity be to those who are cast out from that land? They, then, are not true lilies who are wanting in this charac-

* S. Matt. v. 5.

† Ps. cxiv. 9.

teristic ; and hence they do not belong to that most perfect Lily, the kind Jesus, who says of Himself : “ *I am the flower of the field and the lily of the valleys.*”* Who are those lilies who belong to Him? Listen, “ *As the lily among the thorns, so is My beloved among the daughters.*”† Tractable and gentle is the lily, piercing and hard are the thorns. The lily loses not its gentleness, even though it be pierced through by the sharpness of the thorns. O how evil are they : daughters by the communion of faith, thorns by the bitterness of their ways ! You, therefore, if you would be a true lily, if you would be praised in union with your most sweet Spouse, be a lily among the daughters, among those souls who are with you in the same faith, the same religious profession. Even if they prick you with the bitterness of their ways, and the sharpness of their words, still among such be meek and tractable ; do not get angry at any of their words, but have forbearance, that you also may deserve to hear it said of you : “ *As the lily among the thorns, so is My beloved among the daughters.*”

* Cant. ii. 6.

† Ibid. v. 2.

And yet we do not say these things in order that all perversity may be suffered to pass unnoticed, or unquiet spirits be uncorrected, or the proud be unrepessed. Yea, those who are such must come to be reprov'd, in order that you who wish to be a lily may preserve the tractability of your root. But, as the Apostle has it, "*Reprove, entreat, rebuke, be instant in season, out of season, in all meekness and patience.*"* As though he would say: "Be bold in exercising the zeal of discipline, yet so as not to lose gentleness interiorly in thy heart, in order that when recalling the perverse to his duty, thou thyself mayest not be perverted." The vices of evil men are sometimes to be reprov'd, sometimes silently to be borne with, according as you see expedient for the good of each; for all sick persons are not cured with one kind of medicine.

* 2 Tim. iv. 2.





Chapter xx.

*ON THE STALK OF THE LILY, OR THE GOOD
PURPOSE WHICH SPRINGS OUT OF THE
ROOT OF GOOD THOUGHTS.*

WE go on to consider the stalk of the lily, in which three things are noticed : its uprightness, its strength, and its length. The stalk then of the lily, rising up from the root, is a good purpose arising from good thoughts. For when you think of things that are good, if these become fixed in you, like the root in the earth, you must needs purpose to bring what pleases your thought to the accomplishment of a good work ; and so you have at once the stalk of the lily or the good work, that is, a good purpose springing from a good root and thought.



Chapter xxi.

*ON THE UPRIGHTNESS OF THE LILY, THAT
IS, A RIGHT INTENTION.*

U*PRIGHTNESS* is a necessary characteristic of this stalk of the good purpose; or, in other words, that we purpose to do good with a right intention for God, not seeking earthly riches, nor human favours, nor to excel in honour which passes away. For that cunning serpent, Satan, when he cannot prevent the beginning of good thoughts, lays snares in the way, so that he may overthrow the intention of the good purpose, and by twisting the stalk embitter the very root of the good thought. Of these snares the Psalm complains: "*In this way in which I walked the proud have hidden a snare for me!*"* O how many

* Ps. cxli. 4 ; see Ps. cxxxix. 6.

are caught and deceived by these snares! They make good beginnings, and then thoughts of outward things coming across them, they swerve from the uprightness of their good purpose, and become altogether perverted. And, having by their good works once obtained riches, or honours, or earthly pleasures, they have forgotten their first intention, and seeking something else than God, have become idolaters, in that they have changed the glory of the incorruptible God, who alone is glorious and who alone ought to be sought after, into the likeness of birds, beasts, and serpents!* How do they change the glory of God into the likeness of *birds*? Because the good works, which formerly they intended to do for the glory of God, they now labour to do for the vain glory of the world, having changed the uprightness of their intention. They change the glory of God into the likeness of *beasts*, when the good works, which formerly they intended for the glory of God, they afterwards do for the satisfaction of carnal pleasure. They change the glory of

* Rom. i. 23.

God into the likeness of *serpents*, when the good works, which should be done for heavenly riches only, and for promoting the glory of God, are performed in order that by them they may obtain earthly riches. For by serpents, who eat dust, are signified the avaricious, who follow after earthly gains only, and desire with these to fill the belly of their soul.

These are scandals, or causes of stumbling, which the devil hides for those who go in the way of an upright intention, in order that he may twist the stalk of the lily, that is, the good purpose from its uprightness. Alas ! Lord God ! who shall escape these snares ? Not to speak of seculars, see how many and what famous prelates of divers Orders, whom we know with an undoubtedly good intention once followed Christ in poverty and nakedness : and yet, when invited to dignities, albeit they are attracted by them, they corrupt their intention, they spoil the stalk [of the lily], they change their purpose, and this, not after a long period, but at once. So that they willingly become attached to the dignities to which they have been invited and have

attained, desiring superiority rather than usefulness ; in more dainty and exquisite dishes they serve the pleasure of their own belly rather than public utility or the Will of God ; sometimes they are even reported to heap up money, not to bestow necessaries on their spiritual children, but to lavish it prodigally on their kindred, their nephews, and their friends. Oh, would that I were speaking falsely, Lord Jesus ! would that I were telling lies in this ! that I alone might be a liar, and all these might persevere in uprightness and truth.

But for you, O virgins of Christ ! we think that the virtue of humility, which we so often commend to your charity, will generally suffice to preserve the uprightness of your good purpose. For, while you are ascending to the lofty height of chastity, your adversary, Satan, labours to turn you aside. He cries out to you often, yea for ever is he suggesting that word, saying: "*Bow down, that we may pass over.*"* What means bow down ? "Bend down to earthly things your intention which you had raised to heavenly things, that

* Isa. li. 23.

a passage through you may be cleared for us, that we may trample you under our feet." Consent not to thine enemy, O chaste soul ! O virgin of Christ, beloved of thy Spouse, spouse of thy Beloved ! Consent not : bow not down. That is, seek nothing earthly,—not the praises of men, not the honours, or the riches of earth ; for if you stoop to these things, that deceiver will pass over, through you, will trample you down and oppress and crush you, and lay the insupportable yoke of his iniquity upon you, if you cast off the light and sweet yoke of Christ. Oh how foolish are those who thus bow down the uprightness of their intention, and allow that most foul and wicked Satan to make them his throne, and cast off their first ruler, the most lovely and good Lord Jesus, whose yoke, as He Himself avers, is most sweet, and His burden most light !





Chapter xxii.

ON THE STRENGTH OF THE STALK, OR
THE CONSTANCY OF A GOOD PURPOSE.

THE *strength* of the stalk marks the virtue which is called fortitude. Fortitude, as we understand it here, is a certain power of bearing up against all kinds of temptations, not only against those of adversity, but also those of prosperity. And this virtue is appropriate to the stalk of our lily, to the purpose of a good work, and especially to the vow of virginity. For the more praiseworthy a vow is, the more cunningly and strongly does the devil strive to hinder a good ending of that, in which he was powerless to prevent a good beginning.

It is very needful that such a stalk should be able to resist *cold*. For cold attacks the stalk, or the good purpose, in the form of

sluggishness—*acedia*. Now by this the elect are at times so tried, that they cannot pray, or read, or meditate, or carry on any of those works which are, as it were, the means of keeping vital warmth in the soul. Since it is by prayer, reading, meditation, or even the exterior exercise of the body, that the powers of the soul are repaired, preserved, and strengthened ; and when these are cut off from it, it must needs languish, and relapse into a deathlike coldness. And then, all at once, in comes sensuality, and claims for itself a place in the cold soul, and warms it after a most pernicious manner with its unholy fire. Hence, our lily, the virgin of Christ, must without ceasing pray and read and meditate, or else do some exterior work, so that in her the stalk of the good purpose may not be corrupted. For these things, as St. Augustine says,* if they are done with discretion, so as not to destroy the bodily health, turn into spiritual delights.

The *warmth* by which the stalk of a good purpose is corrupted, is worldly prosperity, in which too many hostile snares lie concealed.

* *De Bono Vidu.* c. xxi.

For we find many who stand firm against adversity: because then the temptation is manifest. But, when the body is healthy, when the trials of the mind which wear it and temptations are quelled, what remains but security? Take care! take care! woe to this security, woe to this peace, of which the Truth himself says: "*When a strong man armed keepeth his court, those things which he possesseth are in peace.*"* Fear then, when all things are prosperous and quiet, lest that strong man armed, Satan, have thee in undisturbed possession. Say not with thyself what that rich man said, whose fields brought forth abundant fruit: "*My soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: eat, drink, and be merry.*"† For when they shall say peace and security, then shall destruction come upon them, and they shall not escape.‡ But thou, if thou wilt have peace and true security, take care that thou never be secure. And know for certain, that you have nothing so much to fear as present security, which inevitably brings forth eternal fear. For you are not better than all

* S. Luke xi. 21. † *Ibid.* xii. 19. ‡ 1 Thess. v. 3.

the Saints, who were proved and tried by temptations. Who is better than holy Job, to whom the Lord Himself gave testimony that he was "*a simple and upright man, fearing God and avoiding evil, and there was none like him in the earth*" ?* See the same thing in all those who fear God, the apostles, the martyrs, how great torments they suffered that they might arrive securely at the reward of the kingdom,—*quanta passi sunt tormenta, ut securi pervenirent ad palmam regni*,†—who became valiant in battle,‡ not in prosperity.

The *storms* that rage against the stalk of our lily are manifest adversities. And in these there is one single rare remedy,—even that best Physician, that Guide who leadeth not astray, the King who exalts His subjects, the most strong Athlete who fights and conquers in His own and for His own, and then crowns them as conquerors,—our Lord Jesus. What seekest thou, which thou wilt not find in Him? If thou art sick, He is thy Physician. If thou art a wanderer, He is thy Guide. If thou art desolate, He is thy

* Job i. 1. † First Antiphon for Martyrs. ‡ Heb. xi. 34.

King. If thou art assaulted, He it is that fighteth for thee. If thou art athirst, He is drink indeed. If thou feel the cold, He is thy covering. If thou art sad, He is Joy. If thou art in darkness, He is thy Light. If thou art an orphan, He is thy Father. He is thy Spouse, thy Friend, thy Brother, the chiefest, the most merciful, most strong, most fair, most wise, who ruleth all things without end. Why do I labour thus? All that thou canst and oughtest to wish for, our Lord Jesus is. Desire Him, seek Him. For this is that one Pearl of great price, to buy which all that thou hast is to be sold;* and when thou hast possessed thyself of it, thou will not fear the blast of any tempest. Let Him be the end of thy purpose, let thy strength be rested on Him and not in thine own powers, and thou shalt in no wise be broken; for He Himself and not another is the truest and best consoler in all adversities and straits.

* S. Matt. xiii. 46.





Chapter xxiii.

*ON THE WORMS WHICH EAT AWAY THE
STALK—THAT IS, CONCERNING THE EVIL
SUGGESTIONS WHICH CORRUPT THE
GOOD PURPOSE.*

THE worms which corrupt the stalk of the good purpose are inward temptations: which, being nearer in proportion as they are more familiar, often corrupt the good purpose under the appearance of virtue. Take a person who from the root of a good thought has put forth the stalk of a good purpose. He purposes to leave all things that are of the world, that in poverty and nakedness he may follow Christ, who was stripped of all.* But there springs up within him the worm of an evil suggestion, saying, "Your

* *Ut nudus Christum nudum sequatur.*

sister has no dowry, your mother is poor. Or perhaps, your brothers, or your sons, or some other of your friends are in want of means, and they are solely dependant on you, and look to you as their only hope. If you leave them, they will then fall into shameful beggary, to the great disgrace of your family; or else they will be sure to lay hands secretly or openly on others' property, and so perish both in body and soul. And if you, who might have assisted them had you remained in possession of your property, shall be seen to have shut up your bowels against them, how dwelleth the charity of God in you?*

Therefore, in order that you may abide in charity, abide with them; since without charity nothing whatever you may do will profit you.† And even if it might have profited you, still it is better that you should save many others with you than only yourself. Is it anywhere commanded by our Lord that the world should be wholly given up by everyone? Nay, rather the elect will be commended and saved in the day of the last account by works of mercy. Why then do

* 1 S. John iii. 17.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 3.

you seek out of the world that which you might have better and more safely in the world?"

To these worms succeed other deadly worms, suggesting the hardness of the rules of the cloister, and that the higher the step the greater is the fall; stint in food, fasts, vigils, intolerable labour without any rest, hardness of beds, unremitting toil, and above all the entire renunciation of your own will, and that with the peril of false brethren and of hard superiors. Who will enumerate them all? Numberless are these worms of the worst suggestions, which do most grievously eat away the stalk of the good purpose. These worms must be resisted altogether, and must be killed outright by the arguments of the Holy Scriptures.

Now the worm, which so indiscriminately urges to charity and merciful compassion, must be killed with the ointment of our Lord's judgment, which says: "*If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he is not worthy of Me.*"* How they are to be loved

* S. Luke xiv. 26.

and how they are to be hated, we are taught by the cows that drew the cart with the Ark of the Lord upon it, while their calves were shut up at home. These cows, bearing the Ark and taking the straight way to Bethsames, when they heard the voices of their calves, gave forth lowings indeed as a sign of natural affection, and yet "*turned not aside, neither to the right hand nor to the left,*"* from the way they had once taken. So you,—if you already, either by open and solemn profession, or by a secret purpose, bear the Lord's yoke, that is, some rule instituted by our fathers through the Holy Ghost,—if the suggestions of these same worms begin to fasten upon you, imitate the cows of the Philistines that carried the Ark of the Lord. Utter a lowing, a sign of affection, that is, condole with, sympathise with, and console those who are united to you in natural affection. Nevertheless, keep on the way you have started, fulfil your good purpose by directing your feet towards Bethsames, towards the 'house of the sun,' in other words to the heavenly country where is the most high and spiritual

* 1 Kings vi. 12.

habitation of our Sun, the Lord Jesus ; who is the Sun of Justice, who in that house shineth in His own strength, dwelling in the light which no one can approach unto. So are friends to be hated, as that loving affection towards them may be preserved : so are they to be loved, that their love may be never preferred to the love of God ; yea, not even our own lives should we indulgently prefer to the love of Him ; but, as hating our lives, afflict them with fastings, watchings, and disciplines, that we may teach them to obey our Lord's commands. And those, whose necessities we might have supplied by remaining in the world, we shall commend for preservation to the same Lord, who is King of kings and rich unto all that call upon Him, praying Him so to order their condition in life as He knoweth shall be most expedient for their salvation.

Again, the worms that suggest the hardness of a life by rule will be speedily killed, if we take care to anoint our minds with myrrh, that is, with the bitterness of our Lord's Passion, compared with which whatever we may have to suffer can only be

accounted as little or nothing. These worms, however, are especially busy against the purpose of keeping virginity, because the master of worms, Beelzebub,* who in the beginning easily overcame the virgin Eve, now naturally grieves to find himself so often overcome by young virgins of both sexes.

See, therefore, take heed and beware of the worms that lie in wait for you, O virgin of Christ! For though sometimes you may think you have already attained, or will easily attain to the perfect stature of the chaste lily, yet still shake off and drive from you these worms of suggestions that are hurtful, and that threaten alike the stalk and the root of your lily, and say to you by way of suggestion,† “What are you doing? Whither are you turning? Will you destroy the flower of your youth? Will you

* The Lord of flies.

† Thus the evil spirits assaulted S. Catharine of Siena, and whispered: “Why, poor little one, will you torture yourself, and so uselessly? Why use all these mortifications—do you suppose you can be able to continue them—will you not thus destroy your body and become guilty of suicide? It is better to renounce these follies ere you become their victim; you can yet enjoy the world, you are young, and your body would speedily recover its strength. You desire to please God; but there are many

never know the sweetness of the marriage-bond? Will you never have dear sons and daughters to be the solace of your life, and to survive you? Will you not want the service of faithful attendants? It is a foolish way you are going; follow the example of your parents who begot you. Do you also have children and enjoy marriage after the Lord's command, for concerning virgins He did not give commandment."*

Insidious worms are these, O virgin of Christ, and you must spit upon them with contempt. If you care to escape them, mark very diligently, O virgin soul, who and what is Jesus Christ. Was he a virgin or a married disciple to whom He committed His Virgin Mother, and whom He loved with special tenderness?† What need of many words? A Virgin is Christ Jesus, born of a

among the saints who were married, as Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, and Rachel. Why be so imprudent as to select a mode of life in which you cannot persevere?" S. Catharine put to flight these and similar temptations with the answer: "I have chosen sufferings for my consolation; not only will it not be difficult for me, but even delightful to undergo similar afflictions, and even greater ones for the love of my Jesus, and as long as His Majesty wills."
—*Life of S. Catharine*, pp. 69, 71.

* 1 Cor. vii. 25.

† S. John xix. 26, 27.

Virgin, and her He committed to a most pure virgin, even to S. John, whom the special prerogative of chastity had made worthy of more abundant love. This Jesus Christ, your Spouse, is to be followed by you rather than your own parents, if you would preserve the youthful bloom of your soul from ever growing old. For virginity never fadeth away. Even if it were a question of the bloom of the body, do not those who are virgins, in body and soul, keep their bloom longer than those who are not virgins? * Yea, and still more do virgins in body and soul bloom truly, the special lilies of the one Lily. And He, as I firmly hope, even in this mortal life, lavishes the abundance of His sweetness more abundantly on His lilies than on others, for in them He sees His own likeness more distinctly expressed. Since whithersoever Christ goeth, virgins fol-

* "It is the special attribute of monastic life to transfigure human nature, by giving to the soul that which is almost always wanting to it in ordinary existence. . . . And sometimes . . . it adds by a supernatural gift the incomparable charm of childhood, with its artless and endearing candour; then may be seen upon a living countenance that simplicity in beauty, and that serenity in strength, which are the most lovely array of genius and virtue."—*Montalembert, Monks of West.* Vol. v. p. 352.

low: and they become fruitful, and conceiving by His Spirit a good purpose, they bring forth good works which never die. The generation of earth is conceived in sin, brought forth in sadness, nourished in anxiety, and at last is lost or left behind with sorrow. Not such are thy children, O virgin of Christ! not so. For they shall never die, they shall never be lost; yea, whether thou live or die they shall ever follow thee, ever defend thee, and bring thee to life eternal. Many more and far better are the children of the desolate, that is, of Christ's virgin, who for the present appears desolate, than of her who hath a carnal husband.* If you often bring these and things like these to mind, the worms of evil suggestions will of a certainty die in you, and by the aid of your Spouse, will not in any way prevail to eat away the stalk of your good purpose.

* Isa. liv. 1.





Chapter xxiv.

*ON THE LENGTH OF THE STALK; OR ON THE
VIRTUE OF LONG-SUFFERING AND PER-
SEVERANCE IN THE GOOD RESOLUTION.*

THE *length* of the stalk in the lily which is lifted up on high, suggests the virtue of long-suffering, which is highly necessary for those who wish to persevere. But as we have spoken of the virtue of perseverance at considerable length above, in treating of the sixth leaf of the Vine,* we may say something here more briefly. And this virtue appears most of all to be commended in virgins, especially of the female sex, in whose minds as well as bodies there is naturally a certain infirmity of purpose and weakness opposed to long-suffering and perseverance. But blessed be God, who, even in this our day hath chosen the weak things

* Chapter xiv.

of the world to confound the mighty; and has set Himself forth to the minds of the most tender youthful virgins as their defender, to bruise the head of that first and most powerful destroyer, I mean the old serpent, who lays snares for the most humble virgins of Christ! Who in his sound senses does not leap for joy, when, even in our own times, he sees so many bands of virgin lilies with such strength,—not theirs but their Spouse's,—bravely contending against the fury of the hateful dragon, and meriting the triumphal crown?

I indeed rejoice, that now both in villages, and towns, and cloisters, there is no lack of these lilies. Yea, since even many lands that were desolate and impassible, are filled with virgins' cloisters, it may be truly said the wilderness buds forth and blossoms the sweet odour of our Lord.* For young virgins go

* Isaias xxxv. 2. Thus wrote the monk of the 12th century. Montalembert writes of the present day: "Never since Christianity existed have such sacrifices been more numerous, more magnanimous, more spontaneous, than now. Every day since the commencement of this century, hundreds of beloved creatures have come forth from castles and cottages, from palaces and workshops, to offer unto God their heart, their soul, their virgin innocence, their love and their life."—*Monks of the West*. Vol. v. p. 353.

up from the desert, flowing with the delights of virtues, leaning not on themselves, but on their Beloved,* and perseveringly waiting for their Spouse, until He comes ; that when the cry shall be made, they may trim their lamps and enter with Him into the everlasting nuptials, when joy and gladness shall be heaped upon them, and the Lord our God shall give them to inherit an everlasting name.

You then, O virgin of Christ, faint not in waiting for Christ. For He, your Spouse, will come most quickly ; and He delayeth His coming in order that, with the reward of your other good works, He may give you the crown of them that wait for Him. I know, though I have not experienced it, how you groan, and how you are stricken with compunction in that pure chamber of your heart. Faint not in your good purpose, that you may be able to reach the consummation of the good work, even perseverance, through which you will merit the everlasting crown.

* Cant. viii. 5.



Chapter xxv.

*ON THE LEAVES OF THE LILY AROUND
THE STALK, THAT IS, ON THE PIOUS AND
FRUITFUL WORDS OF VIRGINS.*

NOW let us see what is to be noticed about the leaves which are round the stalk. Leaves, then, as we have said above on the leaves of the vine, signify words. And, as to these leaves, it is to be remarked that they are always green: and lower down near the earth they are larger and more abundant than on the higher part; moreover, when they are applied to swellings they break and reduce them. Verily, the words of virgins ought to be like these leaves. The greenness of the leaves signifies the virtue of their words: viz., that no word should come forth from the mouth of Christ's virgin which does not contain in it some virtue:

that here should be cut off not only shameful, scurrilous, jocose, sensual, proud, angry, detracting, and flattering words, but even superfluous words. For the superfluous word, that is the idle word, is a dry leaf. But the dry leaf is not the lily's leaf. If then you would be a lily, have virtuous words; green leaves of which it is said: "*His leaf shall not wither.*"* Would you see what the idle word, the dry leaf is? Hear the very Truth, our Lord Jesus: "*Every idle word which men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment.*"† Oh what terror! The most wise Judge, who numbers all the drops of rain, who discerneth all the thoughts of every man from Adam first even to the last man that shall be in the end of the world; He will have an account of all idle words, when He shall sit on the throne of the majesty of His judgment, where they shall sing to the Lord no longer of mercy, but of judgment. What shall we wretched and miserable sinners do? Thou, O Lord, art most wise; Thou canst not be deceived! Thou art most just; Thou canst not be corrupted!

* Ps. i. 3.

† S. Matt. xii. 36.

The time for mercy will then be past, for Thou shalt judge the world in equity; Thou shalt judge thy people in justice, who hast received them first in mercy. What then shall I do? Have mercy on me, I beseech Thee, O Father of mercies, while it is the time for mercy, that Thou judge me not in the time of judgment. Set a guard upon my mouth, and a door round about my lips, that I may turn away not only from evil speaking and shameful words, but may avoid even idle words; that I may not have to render an account of them in the day of judgment, when an account must be given not of good and green leaves of words, but of evil and dry ones.

But what is an idle word? An idle word, according to S. Gregory,* is a word which has neither the reason of a just necessity, nor the intention of pious usefulness. Whatever, therefore, you say, without intending any profit to any one, is an idle word. Who then can render an account of all such words? Therefore let every man bridle his tongue, but especially let Christ's virgins do so: that they

* *Mer. lib. vii. c. 18.*

may know when and how they may speak. For it is not becoming that from the mouth which is to sing the new song to her Spouse, any word should come forth contrary to that song.

What, then, is the new song? The Song of Charity. And wherefore new? Because at the beginning of the world there was an old song, sung by the first created beings; a song contrary to charity. Would you know it? The angel who was about to fall sang in heaven the song of pride, saying: "*I will set my throne in the north, and I will be like the Most High.*"* Afterwards he sang in Paradise the song of detraction, when he came to the woman and said: "*Why hath God commanded you that you should not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?*"† As much as to say, "It was with a bad motive He forbade you." The woman sang the song of doubting, and said: "*We should not eat of it lest perhaps we shall die.*"‡ O that *perhaps!* what infirmity has it brought upon us! The devil seeing the woman doubting, broke forth into the song of lying, and said: "*Ye shall*

* Isa. xiv. 13, 14.

† Gen. iii. 1.

‡ *Ibid.* v. 3.

not die the death.”* O wicked, wicked one ! where is now thy *not* ? Behold they are dead with a double death whom thou didst say should *not* die ! The evil and the old song was this word contrary to truth. For God had said : “ *In the day that you eat thereof, you shall die the death,*”† viz., the death of the soul ; or, as others expound it, “ *You shall die—i.e., you shall become mortal, so that then you shall be under the necessity of dying, whereas now you have the power of not dying.*” For had they persevered in obedience, they would not have died. Adam also sang the song of making excuses in sin‡ when he said : “ *The woman whom Thou gavest me to be my companion, she gave to me and I did eat.*”§ As much as to say : “Thou oughtest rather to be accused for having joined me in marriage to a woman such as to lead me into sin.”

Beloved, these are the old songs—the song of pride, the song of detraction, the song of doubt, the song of falsehood, and the song of excuse. They must be avoided ; yea in every way let these songs be avoided, O virgins of Christ, if you wish to sing the new song.

* Gen. iii. 4. † *Ibid.* ii. 17. ‡ Ps. cxl. 4. § Gen. iii. 12.

You, who long to hear the voice of Christ in a more special and familiar manner, do not even open your ears to such songs as these. For that malignant serpent lives still even under a virgin's face ; *i.e.*, under the pretext of good conversation he distils the poison of his malignity. Still he sings in the hearts of those who listen to him the song of pride, when he secretly suggests to them to aspire after honours and dignities and superiorships on account of their noble birth, or their intellectual acquirements, or even their goodness. For he was himself deceived by these, in that he saw himself preferred before the other angel choirs in nobility of beauty and wisdom and virtues ; and he broke forth into the song of pride, by which he fell, and causes others to fall, as many as presume to sing the same song with him.





Chapter xxvi.

ON THE NEW SONG TO BE SUNG BY
VIRGINS.

NOT thus sang the Mother of Christ, the learner of the new song, the true lily girl about with true green leaves. Would you see her leaves? would you hear her song? She was exalted even above all that we can say or think; preferred before the whole world and the heavens too, and yet she lifted not herself above herself, but sang the song of humility, which is also that of charity, for charity is not puffed up.* She conceived from her inebriated heart a good word† and a sweet word, the new song to be sung by virgins. And what did she say? "*Magnificat anima mea Dominum.*" See how contrary is this song to the song of the

* 1 Cor. xiii. 4.

† *Eructavit cor meum verbum bonum.* Ps. xliv. 1.

angel on the brink of his fall. He began on high, and forthwith not only went down but plunged into the lowest depths. Mary began from the lowest place, that she might be lifted up on high. She magnifies the Lord, not herself, although inconceivably exalted, observing that which is written: "*The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things.*"* And hence she merited to be exalted even above all the angel choirs. He (the devil) magnified himself above the Lord, and hence he merited to be hurled down below everything that is. The spirit of the humble Mary rejoiced in the Lord her Jesus,† and hence she merited to be anointed with the oil of gladness above her fellows; that foolish angel rejoiced in himself, and hence he merited to be condemned to perpetual sorrow. She gloried that her humility was regarded, and hence she shall have fruit in the regard of holy souls;‡ he gloried in the greatness of his own strength, and hence he incurs perpetual shame.

* Eccles. iii. 20.

† Compare S. Luke i. 47, with Habac. iii. 18.

‡ Wisd. iii. 13. Third Antiphon for Virgins.

You then, O virgins of Christ, be green in leaves, in words of charity, humility, and patience. Follow that chief lily, the Mother of the supreme Lily, the good Jesus; that magnifying Him alone, who alone is great, in Him, and through Him, and with Him you may deserve to be magnified. Beware, however, of the song of detraction which began in Paradise, the old song and leading to the oldness of sin. And see how entirely contrary it is to the new song of charity; since we cannot possibly love one whom we are detracting. For charity is accustomed not to speak against any one, not to detract, but rather to excuse the sins of others; or, if it be necessary to reprove them, she does it with a mind not to malign but to correct.

Beware also of the song of doubtfulness. Do not doubt of the mercy of the Lord, but boldly cast all your care upon Him, for He hath care of you.* For He is not so cruel as to let you fall, if you cast yourselves upon Him who exhorts you to do so, and who knows that for His sake you have voluntarily deprived yourselves of all earthly solace.

* 1 S. Peter v. 7.

Entertain no doubt of the punishment to be inflicted on the wicked for their demerits, that you fall not into the vice of presumption ; neither doubt of the reward to be conferred on the just, lest perchance you run the risk of despair.

Beware also that the song of lying never proceed out of your mouth, for by this you would be throwing contempt on the spiritual praises of your Spouse the Truth. The virgin's mouth loses its virginity, as often as it knowingly with a malignant mind speaks falsehoods contrary to truth.

Beware no less of the song of making excuses in sins,* having ever in mind that word of S. John, the virgin Apostle, who giveth testimony to the truth : "*My little children,*" says he, "*if we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity.*"†

Let none then think himself without sins ; and when one knows them let him not excuse them, as foolish people are wont to do,

* Ps. cxl. 4.

† 1 S. John i. 8, 9.

even now uttering the excuse of Adam, and saying: "The woman whom God gave me, she seduced me. Wherefore did God give me a woman such as should seduce me?" That woman who seduces the man is the flesh which induces our mind to consent to sins, on account of which foolish men every day blame God; wallowing in their sins, and saying that they cannot resist the passions of the flesh which they have received from God. Exceedingly great is that sin, to accuse the most good God, who made all things very good for thee,* and especially adorned man himself with gifts transcending those of all other creatures. Good without doubt did the good God make thee, who made all things good, very good, for thy sake. For He would not be good if He had made thee ill, for whose sake He made all things, all of which He made very good for thee. Good, therefore, yea very good, did God make thee. Good wert even thou thyself, though thou makest thyself evil. If thou clearest away in thee what thou thyself makest, thou wilt find thyself to be very good

*Gen. i. 31.

among the creatures which He made. He made thee first according to Himself. He was afterwards made according to thee. He made thee first according to His own image and likeness, and He Himself was afterwards made Man according to thy likeness. For "*the Word was made flesh.*"* Let us then praise our God, who made us according to Himself. Let us love our God, who for our sakes was made according to us. Let us pray Him, that He would mercifully vouchsafe to reform His image in our soul, where it is become deformed; and that our body also, which He took in our likeness and nature, He would thus vouchsafe to keep undefiled. And let us put forth green leaves, that is, words that contain virtue, if we would indeed be true lilies, such as have not the words of the old songs, but which are known to harmonize with the new song, even charity, hope, humility, and all the other virtues.

Let us all (and you especially, O virgins of Christ who have your name from viridity)† put forth leaves which are green, and which laid

* S. John i. 14.

† Virgo,—a virore ætatis. *Ainsworth's Dict.*

upon proud tumours break them and soothe and heal them when they have cast forth their corruption. And this takes place as often as the incestuous are led to chastity, the proud to humility, the ill-tempered to gentleness, the avaricious to liberality, the gluttonous to sobriety, the envious to charity, and the sluggish to alacrity through our good and truthful words. These vices oppress the soul like ulcers, and contain within them poison of uncleanness and evil habits. But, as we remember, we gave examples of each of them in treating of the leaves of the Vine,* we think we had better pass them over now. This only will we say, that we must consider well what vice it is under which each individual labours, that, in proportion to the degree and quality of his burden, we may minister the medicine of words, and so with other vices, as we have said above. For we must understand, that we are not always to study silence, although with great studiousness is silence to be kept: but we ought sometimes to open, sometimes to shut the door of our mouth, in such a manner as that evil may be silenced, and yet good and

* Chapter vi.

useful things not be silenced with the evil. And this the prophet insinuates in his prayer when he said: "*Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and a door round about my lips.*"* For a door is not always open, nor always shut; but in the house of the wise, it is open to the wise who should send forth their messengers, but shut for fools who should be retained within. So also our mouth,—which is the door of our heart through which words go forth as messengers, announcing what is going on in the heart within,—even this (door) is at times to be unlocked for prudent and useful words; but to evil words which rise from bad motions of the heart, it is ever to be closed. For there is a time to speak and a time to keep silence.† And he sins as much who withholds a word in season, as he who scandalises others by speaking evil things. Since he is evidently too avaricious and envious who neglects to minister to the benefit of his neighbour, words which he has freely received. For do you suppose that he would ever give away his substance, which is lessened by division, to his neighbour in

* Ps. cxl. 3.

† Eccl. iii. 7.

want, who gives him not words which never fail? Let our Lord, therefore, put a guard before our mouth, that we may know when and what sort of words we ought to speak ; and a door round about our lips, so that it may not only be opened, but also shut in due time, that we offend not either way. And let our words be laid on the swelling tumours of sick souls, like the leaves of lilies, that by our Lord's help, they may cast forth the corruption of vices, and may be able to infuse into our hearers the strength of virtues.





Chapter xxvii.

*ON THE LOWER AND HIGHER LEAVES OF
THE LILY, OR ON THE ABUNDANCE AND
FEWNESS OF WORDS.*

WHY is it that the leaves near the earth are larger and more numerous, and those higher up fewer and less in size? It is because the just, and especially virgins, the higher they ascend towards the summit of virtues, and leave below them earthly thoughts and desires, so much the more disciplined and sparing they ought to be in words. For, by the diminution of the leaves in the higher part is understood the disciplining of our words; because those who are well disciplined, circumscribe, as it were, and pare down their words, that nothing may be found in them contrary to purity or good discipline; while the undis-

ciplined and base pour forth words without honour, turgid and inflated. But by the fewness of leaves, fewness of words is appropriately understood : and after this all good people strive, the nearer they approach to the cultivation of the virtues. Hence, of a certain brother, who wished to learn, and to reduce to practice the correction of the tongue, we read that he carried a stone in his mouth for three years ; and of another, that for thirty years he had not spoken a word. We see many who, when they were at the commencement of their good purpose, and still as it were near the earth, influenced by former habits, were unable to observe either modesty or paucity of words ; and the words of such are denoted by the leaves of the lily near the ground. But as time goes on, and they receive a fresh accession of grace, according to their progress, they moderate their words, and study to practise silence, so as to avoid not only evil, but even idle words.

Now, to no class of good people are the disciplining and paring down of words more appropriate than to Christ's virgins. For if every Christian man is commanded that

no evil speech or scurrility proceed from his mouth, but rather giving of thanks,* how much more should virgins, who consecrate their modesty to their Lord, abstain from these at all times? They who have not violated modesty ought, doubtless, to give all the greater thanks to the Lord, as they have obtained greater graces. For it is good to be virgins ; yea it is the highest good and the highest grace, since they alone follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. They ought, then, also to abstain as much as possible from a multiplicity of words, since every one knows that all loquacity is a mark of want of modesty, such as never ought to be found in conjunction with virgin purity. Let modest virgins, then, especially avoid the vice of loquacity, if they wish to preserve the virtue of modesty. It is evident that in the multitude of words there shall not want sin,† and by degrees from idle words they come to detraction, until at last they break out into open abuse. The Apostle S. James reproves loquacity thus : “ *If any man think himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue, but*

* Eph. iv. 29 ; v. 4.

† Prov. x. 19.

deceiving his own heart, this man's religion is vain."* Let none, therefore, flatter himself on his religious Habit who has not yet learned to bridle his tongue. Bridle thy tongue, if thou wilt be a Religious, for without bridling of the tongue religion is vain. And hence it is that our most holy Fathers, the Founders of Religious Orders, and their followers, most wisely, as they were taught by the Spirit of Wisdom, instituted the strict observance of silence: knowing well, that as a city that lieth open and is not compassed with walls, so is a man that cannot restrain his own spirit in speaking.† And, as the Psalm says: "*A man full of tongue shall not be established in the earth.*"‡ Spiritual persons, also, who know it by experience, are well aware how much devotion this frequent loosing of the tongue takes away, and how much inward dissipation it brings. For as the furnace, if its mouth is always open, cannot retain within itself heat, so neither can the heart of devotion preserve in itself grace, if its mouth is not shut with the door of silence. Let us then shut our door, that with the fervour of devotion we

* S. James i. 26. † Prov. xxv. 28. ‡ Ps. cxxxix. 12.

may preserve Christ, the Giver of devotion, in the fervent affection of our heart.

You then, especially, O virgin spouses of Christ, enter into the chamber of your heart, and having shut the door of your mouth,* pray familiarly and yet humbly, with tears and yet with joy, with sweetness and with confidence, to your Spouse, your King, your Father, and your Comforter. Pour out your hearts before Him who is the searcher of all hearts ; converse with Him and call Him to remembrance ; pour out your souls above yourselves, and lift them up on the spiritual wings of charity, leaving behind you earthly and corporeal things ; and go over into the place of the wonderful tabernacle, even to the house of God, where you may hear not with the ears of the body, but of the heart, the voice of joy, and the sound of confession, keeping the festival day.† And there, having been refreshed with interior consolation, when the time of storm and hardship, of temptation and the flesh shall come, you may be able to call to mind the heavenly refreshment, and say : “ *Why art thou sad, O*

* S. Matt. vi. 6.

† Ps. xli. 5.

my soul, and why dost thou disquiet me? Hope in God, for I will yet give praise to Him, the salvation of my countenance and my God."* Be mindful of the most good Lord God; call Him to mind and delight your selves in Him, and let the spirit of your flesh faint, that you may be replenished with His Spirit, who is sweet above honey, and you may learn to esteem lightly external conversations, after you have tasted the sweetness of interior converse. O how good and how pleasant, O how good and how pleasant it is to dwell together in unity with Thee, O most sweet Jesus, to converse with Thee, to make known the cause of our soul to Thee, and to enjoy the response of Thy consolation! O how good it is to approach to Thee, who dwellest in the unapproachable light, with charity for our guide, for if this be our guide nothing can remain unapproached! Thy Heart, O sweet Jesus, wounded with the spear of charity, knoweth how to make a way for charity, which shall never more be closed.

Approach, therefore, unto Him, by Him [who is the Way], with the steps of charity

* Ps: xli. 6.

and be enlightened. Taste that He is sweet.* They know who have experienced it, and well they know, who have tasted in some sort the good gift of God,—they who have once been brought by our true Vine into the cellar of wine,†—how bitter and how wearisome it is to be separated from the sweetness of the contemplation of Him in His presence within, and to be brought back again to the hearing or the seeing of corporeal and external things. For when He, the good Jesus, leads forth His own familiar disciples, as far as it is possible in this present life, apart from their other brethren on the mount of contemplation, and is pleased to be transfigured before them, and to appear to their wondering eyes in the glistening white raiment of His sweetness and goodness,‡ and wishes to inebriate with strong charity those whom before He had visited in the fear of judgment, or in the violence of wholesome trials—for it is in the scourge that God sometimes makes His presence manifest in His people's hearts—when, therefore, as we have said, He sometimes deigns to be transfigured in their

* Ps. xxxiii. 6, 9. † Cant. ii. 4. ‡ See S. Matt. xvii. 1—4.

hearts, so that their sorrow is turned into joy ; and then, just while this is taking place (one knows not how), if any one from the outer world requires the presence of such an one, and he is minded to force himself to descend from the mount of sweet contemplation, you may suppose he cannot bear patiently such an outward interruption, but rather cries out with S. Peter : “ *Lord, it is good for us to be here ;*”* and with S. Paul : “ *Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?*”† O how bitter it is for those who have known what it is to be filled with such interior refreshment, to be again dragged away to external things. It seems to them like death ; for indeed it is a kind of death to be torn away from the contemplation of life, from the contemplation of our glorious Jesus, back again to this darkness ; and from the sweetness of Mary to be called back to the serving of Martha. †

To speak briefly, I say that they who know how to occupy the eyes of their minds with interior contemplation, and to unloose the tongue of their soul in converse with God, are

* S. Matt. xvii. 4. † Rom. vii. 24. ‡ S. Luke x. 39, 40.

not merely not delighted with external sights and conversations, but are even grievously fatigued by them. But they who are inwardly blind and dumb, and know not how to occupy themselves in divine contemplation and devout prayers, seek the help of their outward senses, and are eager to spend in useless confabulations the length of time which is a burden to them. For to wish to occupy oneself in exterior conversations is a most sure sign of an idle soul, and of one which raises itself with no devotion at all to converse with God. They have certainly not yet attained to the summit of the lily, who have neither the knowledge nor the will to refrain their tongue from multiplicity of words. And one may know that one ascends higher on the steps of virtue, in proportion as one takes less pleasure in the conversations of men; save perhaps of that class of men in whom God Himself speaks, and through whom the word of God is heard. For such as these are not listened to for their own sakes, but for God's sake, who dwells in them and speaks in them; and, when we speak *with such*, we are often by our Lord's co-

operation freed from our perplexities, drawn off from evil, and confirmed in our good purpose. Nevertheless, in all things is the spirit of discretion to be desired and implored from the Lord, in order that by His revelation we may know what spirit we may believe,* and to whom we may with simplicity reveal the thought of our hearts, and from whom we may hear the word of salvation ; lest our simplicity be ensnared by the deceit of that cunning serpent, who is generally accustomed to mingle evil with good, falsehood with truth, and error with uprightness.

* 1 S. John iv. 1.





Chapter xxviii.

ON THE POINTS TO BE CONTEMPLATED
IN THE LILY, THAT IS, ON THE BEAUTY
AND EXCELLENCE OF VIRGINITY.

LET us come now at last to contemplate the lily flower itself. Behold, O virgin of Christ, with what exceeding beauty this flower of thine stands pre-eminent, marking out thy flower above all other flowers! Behold what special grace it finds above all the flowers that are in the earth! See how by thy Spouse Himself it merits to be praised before all flowers. "*Consider,*" He says, "*the lilies of the field, how they grow. Amen, I say to you, that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these.*"* Read then, O virgin, yea read through, and read over and over again

* S. Luke xii. 27.

this word of thy Spouse, and understand how greatly, in the commendation of this flower, He has commended thy glory. All the glory of the world has that most wise Creator and Author of all heaped up upon thy one little flower ; and He has not put that glory before the flower, but this little flower before all that glory. For in Solomon, of whom it is written that he was magnified above all the kings of the whole earth for riches and glory,* you must understand all the glories of the world. And in the flower of thy lily, which bears the type of thee and of all Christ's virgins, contemplate the glory of virginity. If, therefore, the beauty of thy lily is so highly commended by the Truth itself, as that He is justified in placing beneath it all the glory of Solomon, who was doubtless magnificently arrayed in proportion to the magnificence of his glory ; how greatly do you suppose must be commended the true lily of thy virginity which is incorrupt, and never shall be corrupted by any spot, when the mere shadow and type of it has merited to be so highly honoured ? If all the array of all the

* 2 Paralip. ix. 22.

glory of Solomon cannot be compared to the beauty of one material lily, what beauty shall be compared to thy blooming virginity, which is thine own true and special lily? None, I say. For no beauty of earth can transcend the glory of the height of thy beauty, since “not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these.”

Never, then, sing with sadness: *Regnum mundi et omnem ornatum sæculi contempsi, propter amorem Domini nostri Jesu Christi* —“the kingdom of this world and all secular pomp I have despised for love of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* For He has given you even in this present life, a beauty greater than all the beauty of the world, keeping the lily of your integrity for Himself, and specially consecrating it to Himself before all other beautiful virtues, and binding it to Himself by a special love. You will see this clearly in the Canticle of love, where He passes by almost all other flowers, and speaks again and again of yours, oftentimes dwelling on the name of the lily: “*As the lily among the*

* Response sung by novices at their putting on the Religious Habit, according to the *Pontificale Romanum*.

thorns, so is my beloved among the daughters.”* And also : “*My Beloved is gone down into His garden, to the bed of aromatical spices, to gather lilies.*”† And again : “*My Beloved to me, and I to Him, who feedeth among the lilies.*”‡ Worthy of all praise is the lily, beloved of the Spouse : worthy of all love is the lily, which is gathered by the Spouse. For, I think, it is not gathered that it may wither any more; but that it may be placed on the golden Altar which is before the eyes of the Lord ; in other words, that it may be set in the heavenly sanctuary, that that same lily may be the ornament of other saints. It is indeed a delicate lily on which the Spouse feedeth : not that He delighteth in nothing else but this, but in this beyond all else He delighteth with a special predilection of love. And justly so. For the good, which in other Saints who are not virgins is single, in virgins is double. If the whole Church is virgin in soul, having neither spot nor wrinkle, incorrupt in faith, hope, and charity, and hence is called a virgin and merits to be praised by her Spouse, of what praise, think

* Cant. ii. 2. † *Ibid.* vi. 1. ‡ *Ibid.* v. 2.

you, are not our lilies worthy, who have both in soul and body that which the whole Church has in soul alone? For Christ's virgins are, as it were, the fatness and marrow of the Church,* and, with a privilege peculiarly their own, cling more familiarly than other flowers to the embrace of their Spouse.

Virgins, who are delighted with the beauty of the lily, should above all things consider that the flower is as white within as it is without. The white outside part of the flower signifies purity of body, and the inside part signifies virgin purity of mind. For it would be a shameful thing, indeed it would not be a lily, if it lacked the purity either of its inner or outer whiteness. So also it is a shameful virgin, nay, it is not a virgin, that hath not both chastity of mind and body. Hence I doubt not that there are many of both sexes, virgins in body, who are dead and will be saved, and yet who will by no means merit the virgin's reward. For they have died incorrupt in body, but they had been corrupted

* "They are the flower of the human race . . . They are the flower, but they are also the fruit; the purest sap, the most generous blood of the stock of Adam." *Monks of the West*. Vol. v. p. 354.

in mind, and yet that same corruption of mind did not doom them to eternal death, because they hoped for lawful marriage, and would not otherwise contract any unlawful ties. For if, as the Apostle says, "*a virgin marry she hath not sinned*,"* and yet she who has married only in will, has already in mind corrupted the flower of her virginity. And to this opinion agrees S. Augustine† when he says "that a virgin who aspires to marriage is by no means better than a woman who has already entered the married state, for she who has already married is content with one husband, whereas she who is about to be married, if she seeks among a whole crowd of people some one to cleave to, must necessarily commit fornication in mind with many. To-day one pleases her, to-morrow another, then a third and a fourth, and perhaps even more; and how, if such an one dies, will she obtain the merit of incorrupt virginity?"

As to those virgins who suffer violence after having made a vow of virginity, and in no way consent to corruption; or as to those again who, before their vow, once deliberately

* 1 Cor. vii. 28. † *De Sanct. Virginit. c. 11.*

aspired after marriage, although afterwards they were led to repent of it, and bound themselves by a vow of chastity; or as to those who, after such a vow, have merely in will drawn back from the vow of continence, but then have again returned to the fidelity of their vow, and persevered unto the end: whether such virgins, I say, will be rewarded with the virgin's crown I confess I do not know for certain. And I think this must be left to the determination of more experienced men, or indeed rather to the judgment of God. But I say, more as an opinion than as a strict definition, concerning the first-mentioned class, who suffer violence:—If they never consent to their own corruption, neither in will nor in delectation, they will not be deprived of the blessed reward of virgins, and this, it appears, may be proved from the words (if authentic) of S. Lucy.* Nay, if through violence and without any consent, virgin chastity be lost, I trust that such loss of

* See the 6th Lection in the Office of S. Lucy, Dec. 13th, when she replied to the diabolical threat of Paschasius: "*Si invitam jusseris violari, castitas mihi duplicabitur ad coronam.*" S. Augustine teaches the same doctrine as in the text in *De Civit. Dei*, lib. i. c. 16—18.

chastity would turn to the good of those who lose it: for it may be that our good Jesus permitted them to be deprived of such a treasure, because He foresaw that they would not make a good use of it. For if any one must needs grow proud on account of the merit of her virginity, it would be to the benefit of such an one to lose virginity, and by this means gain the virtue of humility.

Virgins, however, must avoid with the utmost care all places and times that afford opportunity for seducers; lest, if by their folly they give occasion to their own corruption, they should seem to have been deservedly the cause of their own injury, and so be deprived of their crown. If Bethsabée had not washed herself with a disregard of modesty, or at least of caution, on the housetop, and Susanna in the orchard, where they might perchance be seen; the former would never have fallen into adultery, nor the latter into peril of death. Let virgins be cautious as well as chaste. Let them learn to block up the windows of their eyes and ears, to hide their faces, lest by *seeing or hearing* what may not be expedient,

they call death to them ; and lest while they are seen and heard incautiously by others, they slay them, though they know it not. For this we know has often happened by the suggestion and lying in wait of that [serpent] of whom it is written : “ *He sitteth in ambush with the rich in secret places, that he may kill the innocent.* ” *

As to the other cases,—those [virgins] who at some time, either before or after their vow, have fallen solely in will, it appears to me, without prejudice to any better judgment, that they do not lose the crown of virginity, if they quickly come back to their vow and continue in it faithfully. But yet I think the merit of the crown will be somewhat lessened in proportion to the wavering of their will, so that if for any long time, or with a strong will they persisted in the resolution of breaking the vow of virginity, so much less merit would they have in the crown. Those, I consider, will possess the crown in all its integrity, who have from their earliest years been careful to vow and to preserve their virginity for their Spouse, the Lord Jesus.

* Ps. ix. 8.



Chapter xxix.

*·THAT THE FLOWER OF THE LILY LOOK-
·ING TOWARDS THE EARTH TEACHES
·HUMILITY.*



WE must not omit to notice that the very flower of the lily, so tall, so white, so delightful as it is, always bends down towards the earth. What is recommended to us by this but humility? For to bend the head towards the earth is to turn our mind to our earthly origin, and to that frailty which we have contracted from the earth, that we never dare in any way to presume anything on ourselves, when we consider that we are but slime and ashes. And to none is this virtue so necessary as to virgins, lest they should fall into the abyss of pride, from the consideration of the excellence of their merits. For Christ's

virgins, while still living on earth, are living the life of angels, since they are already such as our Lord has said that men shall be after the resurrection ; because then they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels of God in heaven.* Now Christ's virgins do not merely wait for the incorruption of the resurrection, but even in this present life live incorrupted, emulating certainly the angelic life. Therefore, lest from such a lofty step, which they have boldly ascended of their own free will and not by the command of any one, they should have through pride a degrading fall, let them look down towards the earth, as doth the flower of the lily. Let them remember that they are dust, and that their days are as grass ; and let them not esteem themselves to have risen again to the beatitude of immortality, but to be encompassed still with that wall of flesh which separates between them and Jesus their Beloved. Let them beware of that cunning serpent who lies in waiting for them in manifold ways, that he may seduce them to presume some-

* S. Matt. xxii. 30.

thing on themselves ; whether to imagine that the good which they have, they have not from God, but from their own virtue ; or to suppose that it has been given them on account of their own merits ; or, from the fact of their having received it from God, to believe themselves specially better than others ; or to think that they have what they have not. These are four species of boasting with which that most wicked serpent not unfrequently deceives even good people.

1. Those who are deceived by the *first* species,—who do not think that what they have they have received from God, fall into the crime of ingratitude, than which no sin is greater. For what is worse than not to recognise that God is the Giver of all good ? He who does not acknowledge this, how will he render thanks to Him from whom he does not think that he has received ? And certainly not a few are in this condition ; and you may recognise them by their own words. What do they say ? “Why,” say they, “have *you* not kept your chastity ? Why have *you* not the virtue of *humility* and *patience* ? Why have *you* not

devotion in prayer and floods of tears?" What do you suppose they are thinking of who say this, but that they have these things from themselves, and that any that please can have the same from themselves? Think not thus, O virgin of Christ, but know well that thou hast nothing from thyself, except thy sins; all else, which are good, are the graces of thy Spouse. Congratulate Him, then, that is, rejoice, and at the same time give thanks to Him, from whom thou hast thy being and thy well-being, and love thy Beloved with so much the greater love, as by the number and greatness of His good gifts He proves His own love towards thee. Yea, even the gifts of virtues themselves love more and keep more diligently, because thou hast merited to receive them from One so beloved and so worthy of love, than if thou couldst obtain them by thy own strength. In keeping lovingly that which is given thee, show thy love for thy beloved Spouse who giveth: for so precious a giver could not give gifts of little worth.

2. The *second* class of persons,—who

believe that they have received what they have from God, but yet on account of their own merits,—these wish to rob our kind Lord Jesus of His grace. Why thinkest thou that thou hast received virtue for the sake of thine own merits? Tell me, who gave thee the power of meriting? For what hast thou which thou hast not received? Why dost thou boast, as though thou hadst not received it?* And yet, if thou wouldst know how thou hast received it, listen to the same Apostle: “*By the grace of God, he says, we are saved.*”† The fact that we are saved according to our works, is not that we are saved by our own justifications, but that grace is given for grace. For by the grace of God we are what we are, whether in having grace, or in obtaining heavenly rewards.

3. The *third* class are those, who from their gifts imagine themselves better than others, and despise others as more vile than themselves; and these are overcome by that plague of the Pharisee, who, even when he would give thanks for the virtues he had

* 1 Cor. iv. 7.

† Ephes. ii. 8.

received, sinned, because he despised the publican.* And because very many suffer under this plague, we may endeavour, with our Lord's assistance, to administer some remedy to them. I think they must consider thus: He who is wanting in some one spiritual virtue, perhaps has another equal to it, or perhaps greater than that. So S. Jerome says: "A glorious thing is virginity and the virtue of modesty, if only it be not weakened by falls into other blemishes." For the greater the person is who is to be pleased, the greater need there is for taking pains to please him. If you are a virgin, it is still doubtful to what degree of virgin dignity you will attain. For all virgins have not the same merit. Who among saintly men ever came near to S. John, so as to be like him in chastity, and equalled with him in praise? Who among virgin women has attained to the height of the dignity of Mary, the most exalted Virgin? Do not, therefore, exalt yourself above any one whose inmost heart you do not know, lest you fall below all. Again, if, perchance, you hold the lowest place in the rank

* S. Luke xviii. 11.

of virginity, how will you venture to compare yourself with him who, in humility, or charity, or obedience, has risen perhaps to the highest step? What if he, before whom you dare to prefer yourself, has reached such a degree of perfection that he hesitates not,—yea God, to whom his conscience is known, bears him witness, that with all his heart he pants—to drink to the very dregs the chalice of suffering for his Lord? Perhaps, however, you here tell me that you also, and your conscience bearing you witness, are ready to endure suffering. To this we reply, that it is not every one who is able truly to discern in himself the constancy [capable] of this virtue, unless he has learned it actually and by the teaching of experience. How many, do you suppose, have failed in the bitterness of their torments, who thought that they would persevere bravely even unto death? You may not then judge yourself, for you do not know yourself, since one of the most perfect of all, S. Paul, says: "*But neither do I judge my own self; but he that judgeth me is the Lord.*"* Much less ought you to judge

* 1 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

others, and hence it is immediately added :
*“ Therefore judge not before the time ; until the
 Lord come, who both will bring to light the
 hidden things of darkness, and will make
 manifest the counsels of the hearts.”** And
 then, doubtless, many will be put first in the
 judgment of the Lord, who seeth all things,
 and contrary to the opinions of men, and
 many others will be put last who were
 falsely supposed to be designed for the first
 place.

There is, moreover, another valid reason
 still, which should call you away from this
 kind of boasting. For, have it so as you
 think. Suppose one is more just than another,
 one more holy than another ; yet even that
 one knoweth not whether he be worthy of
 love or hatred.† Hence, let even the best
 exercise their mind, and after the example of
 the lily, they will, by the influence of fear
 and humility, look downwards towards the
 earth ; since they bear in mind that they
 know not whether they are worthy of love or
 hatred. And truly they know not, and they
 are ignorant of what the coming day, yea, even

- * 1 Cor. iv. 5.

† Eccles. ix. 1.

the coming hour may bring forth ; how much less do they know what their own end will be, or what will be the end of those who now are bad ! If you had seen Judas the traitor, while he was still a disciple, and among the highest of them, casting out devils in the name of the kind Jesus ; and you had seen the thief, who was afterwards crucified with Christ, and who had been up to that time pursuing his career of robbery and murder, I have no doubt you would have preferred the disciple to the thief ; and yet we all know which was preferred to the other in the end. Do you, therefore, if you have arrived even at such perfection of life as to work miracles, fear lest at last you be found a reprobate with Judas himself. But if you see any one else steeped in the worst crimes, do not you prefer yourself to him, for you know not whether at the last he may not be converted after the example of the thief, as it is written : "*Blessed is the man to whom the Lord hath not imputed sin.*"* And this is commonly taken to be said of those who after their sins are converted to the Lord, by that Lord who considers a

* Ps. xxxi. 2.

man according as his death shall be. Do not you, then, presume to judge any one; neither prefer yourself, though you were the best of men, to any other, though he be the worst; for you know not what may be the ending of you and of him. To the earth, therefore, with the flower of the lily, bend down: that is, consider thy frailty in thyself, because thou art earth and ashes; and the greater thou art the more humble thyself in all things,* bowing down the purity of the flesh in the virtue of humility.

4. What can be more vain than those who imagine that they have what they have not? And yet in truth, almost all the human race labours under this malady. For who is there who perfectly knows himself, except he to whom it is given by the Father of lights, by the true Light which enlighteneth everyman? From heaven it came, *γνώθι σεαυτὸν*, that is, Know thyself. For in the Canticle of canticles the same spouse, who panted for the embrace of her Bridegroom, who had experienced the fragrance of His ointments, is in a way reproved for her ignorance: "*If thou*

* Ecclus. iii. 20.

know not thyself, O fairest among women, go forth * from Me." Behold, then, what a great evil is any ignorance of herself, on account of which she deserves to be repelled by her most loving Spouse. Let us return, therefore, to our own self knowledge—that is, to our earth—if we would be true lilies, and be admitted to the presence of the Spouse. Let us continually look into ourselves, and unceasingly cry out to our true and kind Jesus ; that He would deign to enlighten the eyes of our mind, that we may know our own selves.

* Cant. i. 7.





Chapter rrr.

ON THE NUMBER OF THE PETALS OF OUR LILY, OR ON THE THREE DISADVANTAGES OF THIS PRESENT LIFE WHICH VIRGINS ESCAPE, AND THE THREE ADVANTAGES OF THE LIFE TO COME WHICH THEY LOOK FOR.

NOW let us turn our attention to the number of the petals of the flower itself, and may our most pure white Flower, the kind Jesus, enlighten us to understand them! In perfect lilies, the white flower itself generally consists of six petals, and by these we understand six reasons that should incite the minds of virgins to the purity of virginity, of which three belong to the present life and three to that which is to come. There are three disadvantages of this present life in the married, for the sake of avoid-

ing which virgin chastity is to be desired. There are also three advantages in future glory, for the sake of acquiring which the vow of virginity is to be kept. Two disadvantages of this present life we have in the curse which was inflicted on our first parent Eve after her sinful transgression. For the serpent fell under three curses, Eve under two, Adam under one. To the serpent it was said by the Lord: "*Upon thy breast shalt thou go, earth shalt thou eat, and the woman shall crush thy head.*"* To Eve God said: "*In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children, and thou shalt be under thy husband's power.*"† And to Adam: "*In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.*"‡

1. Two curses on Eve, and through her on all married women, are expressed in this sentence, namely, that in sorrow they shall bring forth children, and that they are under the power of their husbands. What and how great is the sorrow of women in child-bearing no one knows but they who have experienced it. In the Scriptures, however, we often find a testimony to this sorrow. Our Lord, who is

* Gen. iii. 14, 15. † *Ibid.* v. 16. ‡ *Ibid.* v. 19.

acquainted with all sorrows, when He saw His disciples in exceeding sadness at His death, was pleased to compare their sorrow with this very sorrow of a woman in child-birth, saying: "*A woman, when she is in labour, hath sorrow, because her hour is come: so also you now indeed have sorrow.*"* Likewise also S. Paul speaks of it, when wishing to show the sorrow of those who at the day of the last judgment shall be found unprepared, he says: "*When they shall say, Peace and security, then shall sudden destruction come upon them, as the pains on her that is with child, and they shall not escape.*"† And oftentimes in the prophets and in the other Scriptures many samples are found of the greatness of this sorrow. But virgins, happy and truly prudent, who have chosen a more close union in spirit with the Lord rather than temporal advantages, they bring forth to Jesus their immortal Spouse spiritual offspring, even good works, far better, more abundant, more secure, and not at intervals of once a year, but every day; loving Him, into whose most chaste bridal chamber they

* S. John xvi. 21, 22.

† 1 Thess. v. 3.

have entered under the guidance of purity, or rather, whom they have received into the chamber of their own hearts. They have heard His voice articulating in His precepts and promises of heavenly rewards, and when their Spouse has spoken to them, they have answered Him by obedience; for His love breathes chastity, His touch confers purity, His nuptials make and keep them virgins. O truly happy spouses, who have consecrated to such a husband not only their purity of mind but of body also! Whose union is so fruitful in their souls that they are made the mothers of all virtues, and their children dwell eternally in the heavenly house; the seed of their works shall be set before their Spouse for ever!

2. Christ's virgins also escape the second malediction of our mother Eve, and through her of all married women, for they are not under the power of a mortal husband. And behold in this how great a good you find, and how great an evil you avoid! Let us hear the Apostle S. Paul's opinion on this point: "*The virgin who is unmarried thinketh on the things of the Lord, that she may be holy*

both in body and in spirit. But she that is married thinketh on the things of the world, how she may please her husband."* What is gained? No small evil is escaped—worldly solicitude, how she may please her husband. What increase of devotion, think you, is gained by virgin souls, in their being able freely, when they will and when they ought, without the hindrance of any care, to give themselves to prayers and other spiritual exercises? What great troubles have married women, who are religious and wish to find time for God, when they are forbidden to do so by their husbands, to whom they must needs be subject! For this is the great burden of marriage, when women are united to such husbands as quarrel with their good habits and good conversation. How many matrons, think you, are there who would purchase even with torments freedom from the power of the wicked that they might render unto God a free service? Happy, therefore, are virgins who take Christ for their Spouse, and subject themselves only to Him, whose yoke is sweet

* 1 Cor. vii. 34.

and whose burden is light! They desire with a whole and undivided mind to please Him alone who is indeed beautiful above the sons of men; *—not with divided mind, so as to desire to be solicitous in one part to please God, and in the other part to please a husband;—but giving themselves wholly and entirely to Him, from whom they have received both being and well-being, and besides this, have freely received Himself for their Spouse.

What worthy return canst thou ever make to Him, who hath given thee so much? He gave thee to thyself when He created thee, that thou mightest have thy being; He gave thee again to thyself when He regenerated thee, that thou mightest have well-being; He gave His own Body and Blood, Himself true God and true Man, to thee for a Viaticum, lest thou shouldest faint in the way; and thou,—what wilt thou render in return? If for that which He gave thee when He created thee, thou canst not make Him a recompense in return, what wilt thou ever render for His gift of Himself? Verily,

* Ps. xlv. 3.

if thou couldst give thyself again and again a thousand times, what wouldst thou be in comparison of God? Yet render what return thou canst, render thyself wholly to Him, who gave thee once and again all thou art; and, not content with this, gave Himself wholly to thee. Love Him, who loveth thee so dearly, and as thine only Beloved, with thy whole soul, and with thy whole heart, and with all thy strength; because He Himself hath given thee the heart of a good will, and a reasonable soul, and strength to fulfil that which is good. Let thy soul bless the Lord, and forget not all His benefits; and bind thyself with the bonds of His love, and so thou mayest have the greater freedom to serve Him, and to see how sweet the Lord is. And if thou have rightly tasted Him, and He draw thee, then wilt thou never any more be brought under the power of another. For every one who is wise would refuse to free himself from the service of Him, whom to serve is to reign. Who is there who does not wish to reign? Wouldst thou reign happily? Serve our kind Jesus, and thou shalt reign; for to serve Him is to reign.

And thus it is written of the Saints, that "*they shall reign with Christ for ever.*"* What means 'they shall reign'? They shall be kings. And this also the Apostle says: "*They shall be heirs indeed of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.*" † They shall, therefore, be true kings, heirs of the kingdom of God, joint-heirs with the King. Most happy then are virgins who are subject to His yoke alone, who changes His servants into kings, whose kingdom shall not be changed for ever.

3. The *third* reason, for which virginity is to be desired, is the absence of the manifold anxieties about the bringing up of children, which inexpressibly trouble people. How great is this anxiety parents only know. For, in proportion to the love which they feel for their children does the greatness of their solicitude for them extend; and that love none know but parents. He spoke truly who said:

"Quis sit amor proli, soli novere parentes."

(Parents only know what love of offspring means.)

And hence it sometimes happens that that solicitude extends so far as to occupy all the powers of their mind, and they let alone all else

* Apoc. xxii. 5.

† Rom. viii. 17.

and can speak of nothing but their children. Their mind runs hither and thither, and wanders away, and runs through the sea and land, and leaves nothing untried ; while very often even the body of these poor parents is worn away with their various exertions in order to obtain money and property for their children. And even then they do not rest ; nay, wealth is more exacting than poverty ; because through love of their children avarice steals in, and

*"Crescit amor nummi quantum ipsa pecunia crescit."**
(The love of money grows as grows the wealth itself.)

And one craves for money less when one has it not. And so they die in their miseries. They cannot be sympathised with, nor will they show mercy on others, and these most miserable parents make themselves unworthy to obtain mercy. Now, I think you see how much evil excessive solicitude about children does, and to what end it leads. Think what a burthen of anxiety lies upon even good parents, and especially on mothers, who are usually most strongly moved with affection towards their children, when they see their

* Juvenal, Sat. 14.

children's lives leaving the path of virtue, and wandering along the byways of vice, and when they see them afflicted with divers bodily ailments, and at last approaching the ruin of death ! Among such miseries, what place is left for divine contemplations ? How can the heart be lifted up to the Lord when oppressed with such heavy cares ? O how blessed are virgins, whose Spouse cannot die any more ! whose children, that is their virtues, ever live ; yea, bring even the virgins themselves to eternal life ! whose minds, forgetting those things that are behind, do not come down to all the various distractions of earth ! Already do blessed virgins bear in their mind, as far as is permitted to man, heaven with all its joys ; and this, moreover, will conduct them thither. Even now they wander through heavenly joys, they pass through each particular choir of blessed spirits, they take in with spiritual quickness of perception each office of each choir, and with free mental appetite they taste those joys which belong to each and every virgin, prepared for them by their King and Spouse, and are never a prey to any solicitude for children of earth.



Chapter xxxi.

ON THE THREE ADVANTAGES OF THE
LIFE TO COME, WHICH VIRGINS SHALL
OBTAIN.

LET us follow on and pursue, in our treatment of the subject before us, the three advantages of the life-to come, which will be especially reserved for the virgins of Christ. Blessed John the Evangelist in his Apocalypse saw twelve times twelve thousand saints, with their harps of unstained virginity in body, of unspotted freshness in heart, and that they shall follow the Lamb, the Spouse of virgins, whithersoever He goeth.*

4. Behold the special reward of virgins, by which the *fourth* petal of the lily flower is

* Apoc. xiv. 1—5. We may notice that a great portion of this chapter is taken word for word from S. Augustine, *De Sancta Virginitate*, cc. xxv.—xxxv.

marked : that *they follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth*. Whither, think you, doth this Lamb go, where none can have the courage or the power to follow Him but you? Whither, I ask, do we suppose Him to go? Into what forests? Into what meadows? Thither, I reckon, where the true joys are : not the joys of this world, vain, senseless, false ; nay, not even such joys as are given to others in the very kingdom of God ; but a portion distinct from that of others are the joys of the virgins of Christ, joys of Christ, with Christ, after Christ, through Christ, joys peculiar to the virgins of Christ. The joys of those who are not virgins are not the same, although they are yet Christ's. For some joys are for some, some for others, but for none such as these. They follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, because the Lamb's flesh is virgin. For He kept that in Himself which He took not away from His Mother, although He was in the body. A Virgin, He was conceived of a Virgin ; and Virgin born of a Virgin, after His nativity He, together with His Virgin Mother, remained a Virgin, the author, the guardian, the lover

of virginity, and its most bountiful rewarder, our Lord Jesus Christ. Deservedly, then, do they follow Him whithersoever He goeth, even in this life, in virginity of heart and flesh. What is to follow but to imitate? For "*Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example,*" as the Apostle S. Peter says, "*that ye should follow his steps.*"* Each one follows Him in that in which he imitates Him, and in Him there is much to imitate proposed to all. But virginity of body is not for all: for all have not the power of being virgins. Let the rest of the faithful, who have lost virginity of body, follow the Lamb, not whithersoever He goeth, but whithersoever they are able to follow Him. They can do so in all virtues, except when He goeth in the beauty of virginity. For how shall they go after Him in the virgin's path, who have lost that which in no way can they regain? You, then, O virgins of His, ye who on this account follow Him whithersoever He goeth, go after Him, keeping with perseverance that which you have vowed; do with ardour what you can, that the good gift of your virginity may not

* 1 S. Pet. ii. 21.

be lost to you, for once lost you cannot do anything to bring it back. Oh with what admiration, with what joy will you be beheld by the rest of the multitude of the saints who are unable to follow the Lamb in this ! They will see, but they will not envy your happiness, and by rejoicing in you will possess in you what they have not in themselves. For the Lamb, He whom you follow whithersoever He goeth, will not desert even those who cannot follow Him where you can. We speak of that Omnipotent Lamb, who will go before you, and yet not be absent from them, since God shall be all in all ; and they who have less will not be angry at you, for where no envy is, even difference is concord. Be bold, then, and have confidence ; be strong and persevere in that which you have vowed, and render unto the Lord your God your vows of perpetual continence, not only for the sake of avoiding the cares of this present world, but far more for the sake of those special delights of the world to come, which Christ our Lamb will pass by and spiritually minister unto you.*

* S. Luke xii. 37.

But let Christ's virgins take heed that they do not understand this in a childish manner : so as to imagine that virginity alone is sufficient for them to follow the Lamb of God whithersoever He goeth ; since that same Lamb walketh not only in the path of virginity, but in the way of all virtues. Christ's virgin must, therefore, even in this life, imitate that most gentle Lamb in the way of all virtues, if she would reach that land where she shall follow Him for ever whithersoever He goeth. How could a virgin who is proud follow the Lamb, who walketh in the way of humility? Nay, she can in no way get near Him. How could an ill-tempered virgin follow Him who is most meek? How could an envious one follow Him who burns with charity? How could an avaricious virgin follow Him who is most bountiful? Or, an intemperate one Him who is sober? The Lamb walketh in every way of every virtue : so also let the virgin walk, who desires to imitate the Lamb. Let her be meek, let her be humble, let her be fervent in charity, let her be bountiful, full of alacrity and sobriety ! and she will imitate the Lamb

whithersoever He goeth ; and at length will deserve to hear from her Spouse Himself : “ *How beautiful are thy steps in thy shoes, O prince's daughter !* ”* The special daughter of God the Prince, and Lady of the kings of all the earth shall be the virgin soul, whose steps in her shoes are commended. By shoes we understand the examples of the dead ; for shoes are made of dead animals. Beautiful, therefore, are the steps of virgins in shoes, when they follow in a direct course, by the way of all the virtues, Christ the Lamb, who died for them, ready also themselves for the sake of the Lamb to go even unto death, and by death, if necessary, to follow the Lamb ; in every work they do, fortifying the feet of their affections by the examples of that most good Lamb, Jesus Christ, against the serpent who lies in wait for the virgin's heel, when his serpent head, by the same Lamb's help, is crushed by the virgin's foot. †

5. The *fifth* petal of the lily flower marks the fifth reason for which virginity is to be desired, namely, that they shall sing a new

* Cant. vii. 1.

† Gen. iii. 15.

song before the throne of God and the Lamb, which none besides virgins can sing.* O happy virgins ! yea, virgins happier than all others, who bring to those eternal nuptials of the Lamb the new song which you shall sing upon your harps ; not such as all the earth sings, as it is said, "*Sing unto the Lord a new song, sing unto the Lord, all the earth ;*"† but such as none can sing but you ! Yet all the multitude of the faithful shall hear, and shall be delighted with that song, which is your own peculiar and excellent gift. But you, who shall both sing it and hear it, for it shall be sung by you, shall exult with greater happiness and reign with greater delight. Who can unfold that happiness ? What human heart can conceive the jubilee of such glorious exultation ? Now, if all virgins shall sing that song, shall not that Virgin, who is the first-fruits of virgins, sing it too ? Yes, she shall sing, and more delightfully, as she is more pure than all the rest. And she shall set an example to all the choir in singing, as by her example she has incited them to the love of virginity. Virgins, then, in that fes-

* Apoc. xiv. 3.

† Ps. xcvi. 1.

tive gladness shall sing their own song to the Heart of their Virgin Spouse, from whom they have received the power to sing such a song as that.

What can we say more? Will not He Himself, the Lamb, who exceeds in excellence not only the band of other virgins, but even His own Virgin Mother—for from him they have not only their virginity, but even their being—will not He, I say, the Virgin Spouse of virgins, the chiefest Virgin, will not He sing too? Yes, verily; even He shall sing, and that most delightful voice of the Eternal Word of the Father shall be heard with them all, before them all, and in them all. O most happy song! O most delightful festival—beyond compare, and without end! Who will not pant for this? Who will not make light of toil, in order that he may reach that country, where he may hear the new song of such glorious virgins; where he may distinguish, sounding out wondrously above the other virgins, the voice of the Mother of the Lamb; where he may hear even the most kind and sweet Lamb Himself pouring forth a melody all surpassing honey in its sweet-

ness? For if, as the Psalmist testifies, the words of the Lord, even in the very body of this death, are so sweet to anyone as to be sweeter than honey and the honeycomb ;* with what sweetness must they overflow when all mortality, all fear, all sorrow have passed far away : when no place of bitterness shall be left, but all shall drink of the pleasures of God, and be inebriated with the abundance of His house? O chieftest felicity for all who hear the most sweet virgin song of the Lamb ; yet more abundant still for Christ's virgins, who sing it with the Lamb Himself !

With what carefulness, assuredly, ought virgins to keep their lips, to sing that song which is to be sung by virgins only ! and with all purity should they keep them not only from every unseemly act, but from every sinful, shameful, scurrilous, jocose, yea, even idle word. And then virgins' lips will be, as is said in the Spouse's canticle : "*As a scarlet lace, and their speech sweet.*" † As scarlet lace are lips that always abound in words of ardent charity, since carnal movements and thoughts are restrained by them. For by

* Ps. xviii. 11.

† Cant. iv. 3.

scarlet is understood the colour of charity, by lace that binds the hair the restraining of carnal thoughts, which are symbolised by hairs.* It is, therefore, especially fitting that the lips of the spouses of the Lamb, the virgins of Christ, should be as scarlet lace: that their speech should always burn with charity, and be reddened with the Passion of the Lamb and the Spouse, who ought ever to be in their mouth, white and ruddy,† the sweet Jesus. And I have no fear of falsehood in such lips as these; for they altogether refuse to utter lies, since they speak of the Truth—their most sweet Jesus. Scurrilous, shameful, jocose, and idle words cannot mingle with words on His Passion. What, then, is more useful, what more lovely, what more becoming than the Passion of Jesus Christ?

O most sweet and loving Jesus, immaculate Lamb, white by Thine innocence, ruddy by the Blood of Thy Passion, how sweet is it to think, how wholesome to speak of Thee! For Thou, who are near at hand to them who

* A common interpretation of mediæval writers when treating of the tonsure.

† Cant. v. 10.

speak of Thee, sweetly kindlest the heart,* informest the words, and drawest to Thyself the affections of all who speak of Thee ; and they run in the odour of Thy ointments, until they are brought by Thee, O King of kings, into Thy store-rooms,† and drink the most sweet wine of Thy consolation in the delight of their heart, and hear Thy sweet voice saying, “ *Drink, and be inebriated, My dearly beloved,*” ‡ and feel themselves unworthy to be loved so freely by Thee, O most loving and gracious Jesus ! See, then, the tendency of words of charity and of the Passion of the kind Jesus ; whose Name, which is above every name, should be named so often and relished so sweetly by no one as by consecrated virgins, His spouses ; that never may the Name of their most sweet Jesus be absent from their mouth, wherewith to Himself, the Lamb of our heavenly Father, they alone will sing the new song. Begin, then, O virgins, as soon as you may, to enjoy your Spouse, bearing Him ever in your mouth, ever in your heart ; that your lips may become to Him as a scarlet lace and your speech sweet ;

* See S. Luke xxiv. 14, 15, 32. † Cant. i. 4. ‡ *Ib.* v. 1.

that so you may be counted worthy hereafter to be kissed with the kiss of His mouth,* and to be brought in by Him to the heavenly nuptial chamber.

6. The *sixth* and last reason for which virginity is to be desired is marked by the sixth petal of the lily flower. We are shown what this reason is by the testimony of Isaias, where he says, "*To the eunuchs, that is, to my virgins, will I give in my house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and daughters; an everlasting name will I give them which shall never fail.*"† O sublime merit of virgins! O excellent glory! O spiritual reward! Let all virgins read and understand and commit to memory this word, a good word and sweet; let boys and girls alike rejoice, and let them who have already vowed continence perseveringly run, until they attain the prize. Let them hear it who have not yet made the vow, and let them be delighted at the greatness of the rewards: that they also may vow the vow of chastity to our most chaste Jesus, that they may take hold of the most high and narrow path‡ of

* Cant. i. 1. † Isa. lvi. 5. ‡ Prov. ii. 19.

virginity, and going along it may receive the prize of an everlasting name, and may deserve to inhabit a place far better than that of those who have begotten sons and daughters.

What, then, is pointed out by this *name* which the Lord promises He will give to His virgins? Verily, a peculiar and excellent glory is signified, which shall be for virgins, not in common with the many, although in the same kingdom with them. Perhaps this is why it is called *a name*; for a name distinguishes from others those to whom it is given, as men are distinguished by their own proper names. For although all those predestined to eternal life will abide in one kingdom, and will enjoy one God, yet, as the Apostle says, "*As star differeth from star in glory, so is the resurrection of the dead.*"* These are the merits of different Saints. For as it is common to all the stars to be in heaven, and yet there is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; so in eternal life itself the lights of different merits each shine distinctly. In the house of our eternal Father there are many mansions,† and

* 1 Cor. xv. 41, 42.

† S. John xiv. 2.

yet one will not live longer than another, for all will have eternal life. But in the many mansions one is honoured with brighter glory than another. What, think you, will be the glory with which will shine Christ's virgins who follow Him in purity both of heart and mind? They alone shall follow the Sun of Justice, Christ, as the Lamb of the Father, whithersoever He goeth, and therefore they alone are like and most like Him. Hence they will be honoured before others, who are in the same kingdom, with a more excellent brightness, as we see the moon shining out beyond the rest of the stars; and they shall possess in the Lord's House a place better far than of other sons and daughters, who are not distinguished by the merit of virginity.

Go on* then, holy ones of God, boys and girls, youths and maidens, celibates and unmarried: go on perseveringly to the end! Praise the Lord more sweetly, as you think of Him more abundantly; hope in Him the more happily, as you serve Him more constantly; love Him the more ardently, whom you are more attentive to please. Let no in-

* S. Aug., *De S. Virg.* c. xxxvii.

centive to vice remain in you, but your whole being consecrate and keep for your Spouse, who is beautiful above the sons of men.* Never † let there be remarked in your virgin body the unseemly glance, the wandering, the unbridled tongue, the unrestrained laughter, the scurrilous jest, the unbecoming habits, the proud or careless gait. Render no longer evil for evil, or cursing for cursing. ‡ And attain at last to that measure of love, that, in imitation of your Spouse, you may lay down your life for your brethren.§ These virtues added to virginity show forth to men the angelic life, and exhibit on earth the manners of heaven. But the greater you are, the more humble yourselves in all things, || that you may find grace with God, who resisteth the proud, who humbleth those that exalt themselves, and who admits not those who are puffed up through the narrow gate that leadeth unto life. Let there be no superfluous solicitude, and where charity burneth let not humility be wanting.

* Ps. xlv. 3.

† 1 S. Pet. iii. 9.

† S. Aug. *loc. cit.* c. liv.

§ 1 S. Joh:n iii. 16.

|| Ecclus. iii. 20.

If, then,* you have despised the nuptials of the children of men, from which you might bring forth sons of a man, with all the larger heart love the Son of Man who is beautiful above the sons of men. Gaze upon the beauty of your Lover, and that very thing in Him which the proud deride, look how beautiful it is to interior eyes. Look upon the Wounds of Him who hangeth on the Cross, the scars of Him who riseth again, the Blood of Him that dieth, the price and the cost of Him that redeemeth you. Consider of how great a value these things are, weigh them in the balance of charity: and whatever of love you deem Him to have overpaid in espousing you, pay back to Him, who seeks not carnal beauty, but desires the interior beauty of your souls, and who hath given you power to become the sons and daughters of God.† See what security you have in loving Him, for you have no fear of displeasing Him by false suspicions. Husband and wife love each

* S. Aug., *De S. Virginitate*, cc. lv. lvi., is slightly amplified in this paragraph.

† S. John i. 12.

other, because they see in each other manifestly the signs of love ; and yet oftentimes they suspect some evil of each other, because they do not look into each other's hidden thoughts. It is not so with your Lover, Jesus, the most sweet and desirable One, in whom you can find nothing with which you can find fault ; and there is no fear that He who beholdeth the reins and the hearts should ever falsely suspect any evil of you. If therefore you would owe much love to your spouses [if you had them], how much more ought you to love Him, for whose sake you have refused to have [earthly] spouses. Let Him be fixed whole in your heart, who for you was fixed whole on the Cross ; ever bearing in mind what great charity He has manifested to you.

He, who has preserved you for Himself intact both in body and soul, how great and what a special glory has He prepared for you, whom He has raised so high ! A special glory, I say, that special crown He has granted you in heaven, which our Fathers call the *Aureola*. And I consider it is so called from gold—*ab auro*, in order

that the very name of the crown, which is to be given you for the reward of virginity, may suggest the excellence of virgin glory. What shall be given to the consecrated virgins of Christ? A pre-eminence above other Saints such as gold has above other metals. For Isaias says: "*In that day the Lord shall be a crown of glory, and a garland of joy to the residue of His people.*"* Mark! A crown is made of gold and precious stones: a garland is made of flowers, such as roses, violets, and the like. Mark how great a thing it is to have God Himself for a crown! and virgins not only shall have God for their crown, for this is common to all the glorified; but they shall have Him for a flowery wreath of joy, their prerogative of spiritual excellence, which in the heavenly country shall appear in virgins. What is that *place far better than of sons of God*? † What is that *everlasting name*? What is that aureola? It is very great and such as cannot be explained to those who know it not; and hence you must run after it with great eagerness, you must persevere in its search with

* Isa. xxviii. 5.

† *Ibid.* lvi. 5.

great fortitude, for they alone can know it who possess it.

In commemorating the special grace, freely granted to virgins by their Spouse, and the special glory equally prepared for virgins in heaven by Him, we have been desirous to stir up the minds of pure virgins to the special love of their heavenly Spouse, the kind Jesus, so far as He, the author of virginity and love, has vouchsafed to grant us power. And now, prosecuting our work in due order, we may endeavour to add a few words on the love of our neighbour, without which the love of God doth not subsist; for "*on these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets.*"*

* S. Matt. xxii. 40.





Chapter xxxii.

ON THE SIX YELLOW FLOSCULES IN THE MIDDLE OF THE LILY; THAT IS, ON THE LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOUR AND THE SIX WORKS OF MERCY.

THE floscules* of a golden colour and six in number which stand in the lily in the centre of the white flower, typify the charity which we must have towards our neighbour; and this consists in the six works of charity, which are also called works of mercy. S. Gregory says: "The proof of love is the manifestation

* *Flosculi*. The term is now employed by botanists to designate the monopetalous florets, of which a number enclosed in one calyx form what are called a compound flower. In this chapter it is used to denote the pistils and stamens, the former of which carry the stigmas that receive the pollen from the anther on the head of the stamen. *Golden stigmas* would thus be the strictly correct term here, and *stamen* for the *floscule* mentioned further on.

of works."* And that specially beloved Apostle] of our Lord, S. John, says: "*He who hath the substance of this world, and hath shut up his bowels from him: how doth his charity of God abide in him?*"† "*He that loveth not his brother, whom he seeth, how can he love God, whom he seeth not?*"‡ Moreover, the works of mercy by which the charity of God is manifested, the Truth Himself has taken care to explain, when He shows that on account of these alone He will praise the just in the Day of the last judgment, and for lack of these will condemn he reprobate. He says: "*When the Son of man shall come and sit upon the seat of His Majesty, and shall set the just on His right hand, and the reprobate on the left, the King Himself shall say to them that shall be on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom which is prepared for you. For I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me to drink; I was a stranger, and you took Me in;*

* *Probatio dilectionis, exhibitio est operis.*—S. Greg. I., *Hom. in Evang.* xxx.

† 1 S. John iii. 17.

‡ *Ibid.* iv. 20.

*naked, and you covered Me; sick and in prison, and you visited Me. As long as you did to one of the least of Mine, you did it to Me. Then He shall say to them who shall be on the left hand, Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire. For I was hungry, and you gave Me not to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me not to drink; I was a stranger, and you took Me not in; naked, and you covered Me not; sick and in prison, and you did not visit Me. As long as you did it not to one of the least of Mine, neither did you it to Me.**

Behold the works of mercy proceeding from the root of charity. We must therefore consider of what great value those works are, which alone deserve to be praised at the strict account; and their value is expressed in the golden colour of the floscules of the lily. Of no avail is the purity of the white flower, that is, virgin chastity, without the works of charity.

But what are we to say about those who, by reason of their lack of this world's substance, cannot fulfil this actually, whether they remain in the world, or have renounced the world

* S. Matt. xxv. 31-45, abridged.

and all that they possessed and have followed Christ in nakedness? Will all these be reprobate because they cannot minister to Christ in works of mercy? God forbid. Not those who lack the *power*, but those who lack the *will*, will be condemned. For he does not shut up his bowels, that is his compassion, from his neighbour suffering want, who would help him if he could; and our Lord who seeth the heart is satisfied, if only the will be there; nay, He even reckons the will for the deed. No one, then, will be able to excuse himself from giving to every one who asks him either in deed or in will. They who are not able to give may not excuse themselves. Those who have been unfortunate, as well as those constrained by voluntary poverty, are yet bound to give the will. Now let each examine himself and see if he has this will. When you see the poor, or the sick, or the stranger, and are moved by no compassion, but pass such by, and do not even pour out a prayer or a sigh for them, have you the will to give? Certainly not. For if you divide not the affection of charity with your needy neighbour, it is

precisely as though you did not compassionate a suffering one. And if you do not weep with him that weeps, how would you [if you had it] divide your outward substance with him? If you do not give the feeling of compassion, which more abounds the more it is given away, how would you give your worldly substance, which is lessened when divided? Therefore, as often as we see any one in need, let us recognise Christ in him; for even that indigent man is a member of Christ. Let us not shut up the bowels of our compassion from him, and by this we shall know that the charity of Christ abideth in us. Especially let Christ's virgins have within the white flowers of virgin purity these golden floscules of charity, without which no purity of chastity, no toil of suffering, no fulness of knowledge, will find an entrance within the gate of eternal life.

No less mercy, yea, even much more, is to be shown to those unhappy ones who are wandering out of the way of the right faith, or of the works of faith, and lie wallowing in the mire of sin, whether they acknowledge their sins or not; and to them we must

break, that is, incline to mercy by our prayers and tears, that heavenly Bread of angels, our sweet Jesus. Likewise also they, to whom the Lord has given understanding, should break the bread of Holy Scripture to such, and set it before them, praying our Lord to deign to open their eyes, that they may acknowledge Him, and heal the palate of their hearts, that they may taste and see how altogether sweet the Lord is, and may know Him in the breaking of bread, that is, in the Holy Scripture; for their eyes before — were held that they should not know Him,* by [reason of] the mire of sins which lay upon them. We must break the bread of consolation to those who are in distress, whether in sickness of body or in grievous poverty themselves or their friends; so that according to the advice of the Wise Man we may give "*strong drink to them that are sad,*" and the sweet *wine* of consolation "*to them that are grieved in mind;*"† having a will rich unto all; not only to our friends and to those who are of the household of faith, but even to our enemies, that we

* S. Luke xxiv. 16, 35.

† Prov. xxxi. 6.

“ may be the children of our Father who is in heaven, who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and the bad, and sendeth rain on the just and upon the unjust.” * But, perchance, some one will say: “What does my God lose by His bounty in giving His sun and rain to the bad as well as the good?” Nothing, I say; yea, He even gains. For oftentimes the bad are convinced by the multitudes of the good and the benefits of God, and are converted from their evil ways. And now do you tell me: “What do you lose, if your charity, which as the sun illuminates all other virtues, the rain of your tears, you divide even with your enemies, by praying and weeping for them, that some day they may enter into their own hearts and acknowledge their errors, and recover the unity of charity?” Oh! if you did but know the goodness of our most good God, and how good He is who admonishes you to pray for those who persecute and calumniate you, † and what a great reward He prepares for them that offer such prayers! Verily you would long ago have asked of

* S. Matt. v. 45.

† *Ibid.* v. 44.

Him, and He would have given the sun of such charity as that, and the rain of such tears; for He giveth liberally to all, and upbraideth not, and with Him is the fountain of life, and in His light we shall see light, even the true Light which enlighteneth every man, our sweet Jesus. After His example, then, divide your charity; divide your tears with your enemies as well as with your friends, that you may be the child of your Father who is in heaven, and the brother and imitator of the Lord Jesus, who wept over the sinful city, and prayed for His murderers that they might not perish.

And now we are close upon the end of this flower. The floscule standing up high in the middle of the golden floscules, longer than all the rest, denotes the Godhead, who is over all God blessed for ever, Amen. This floscule [or stamen] has one triangular head, by which the Holy Trinity is pointed out. For the one head is a figure of the unity of the divine substance, and the three corners standing up and distinct from each other mark the Persons of the Blessed

Trinity. This floscule is the highest in the virgin lily ; because the Lord's virgin must refer all her thoughts, all her will, all her words, all her actions, all the purity of her body and of her heart to the honour of her heavenly Spouse. For, if she seeks her own glory, she will have a lamp, that is a pure body, but she will lack the oil of spiritual gladness and the fire of charity. Now, we know what the Spouse will say to those virgins who shall have lamps without oil,— a word horrible not only to hear, but even to think of—“*Nescio vos*, I know you not.”* O sharp word ! Deliver us, Lord Jesus, while there is yet time for deliverance, deliver us poor sinners from the snare of the hunters, that we may not hereafter hear that sharp word.† We know that our adversary, that most cunning serpent, spreads innumerable and most subtle snares for us ; so that those whom he cannot turn away from good works, he may at least by his evil

* S. Matt. xxv. 12.

† Psalm xc. 3 : “*Ipse liberavit me de laqueo venantium et a verbo aspero.*” (He hath delivered me from the snare of the hunters, and from the sharp word.)

suggestions cause to glory in their good works. You may suppose how he foams with rage, how he gnashes his teeth, when he sees tender young virgins from the first dawn of their childhood despising the kingdom of this world and all secular pomp, and scaling the steep path of virginity. You may imagine how many snares he spreads, now for the root, now for the stalk, now for the white petals, and now for the golden floscules of the lily of virginity, so as to induce them in one or other of their good works to seek their own glory, and thus not attain to the summit of perfect virginity. But let Christ's virgin ever gaze upon the Face of her Spouse, so as to do all for Him, to refer all to Him, in all things to seek Him, and to say with Him: "*I seek not my own glory,** but I honour my Lord, and He will honour me, for He alone is my refuge and my glory, and He is the lifter up of my head, my sweet Jesus!" If any virgin thus shall speak and thus shall act, she shall be a perfect lily, and she shall bloom for ever before the Lord, and in her Lord and in her

* S. John viii. 50.

Spouse ; and her Lord and her Spouse shall bloom in His own Self, for He cometh down into the garden of His Church to gather such lilies as these.

We have taken pains to treat thus at some length on the flower of the spiritual lily, with which the Lord Jesus our Vine and our Life pre-eminently blossoms, for the sake of the virgins to whose knowledge we think this treatise will come. And we have done it with greater diligence, in order that here they may find drawn up compendiously—and may more easily commit to memory, reading it the more eagerly on account of its brevity—what has been treated of by the holy Fathers and others more diffusely and encumbered with many weighty disputations, and thus, by reason of its difficulty, incapable of being comprehended by the simple understandings of simple virgins. We are not afraid of the tongues of carping critics, who will say that we have not observed due uniformity in our subject, in having from a treatise on the vine dropped into a treatise on the lily ; because we know for certain, that we shall

be excused by the charity and kindness of Christ, the Spouse of virgins, whom in this treatise we confess that we have served as far as we know how. In His hand are we, and our words; and Him, as we firmly hope, we have followed in the treatment of this subject, not seeking the glory of [being] teachers, but the fruit of our scholars. Nevertheless, as far as I understand, there is no flower whatever with which our Vine blossoms more abundantly, and no other flower whose fragrance is so attractive as that of this lily. For this is that virgin virtue, by love of which so many young maidens are drawn, and run so freely in the odour of the ointments of their Spouse, crying out at once in word and deed: "*Draw us after Thee, we will run in the odour of Thy ointments.*"* What is it that so many thousand virgins love, despising the allurements of the world? What is it, I say, that they love in their Spouse, with the delightfulness of whose virtue they are attracted, so much as the odour of the lily, the love of virginity? Let us, then, be permitted espe-

* Cant. i. 3.

cially to commend this flower in our Vine; for none is more precious, none more beautiful in the Vine itself.* Now, however, let us pass on to a more compendious treatment of other flowers.

* Compare Montalembert: "Who is this invisible Lover, dead upon a cross eighteen hundred years ago, who thus attracts to Him youth, beauty, and love? who appears to their souls clothed with a glory and a charm which they cannot withstand? who darts upon them at a stroke and carries them captive? who seizes on the living flesh of our flesh, and drains the purest blood of our blood? Is it a man? No: it is God. There lies the great secret, there the key of this sublime and sad mystery. God alone could win such victories, and deserve such sacrifices. Jesus, whose Godhead is among us daily insulted or denied, proves it daily, with a thousand other proofs, by those miracles of self-denial and self-devotion which are called vocations. Young and innocent hearts give themselves to Him, to reward Him for the gift He has given us of Himself; and this sacrifice by which we are crucified is but the answer of human love to the love of that God who was crucified for us."—*Monks of the West*, vol. v. pp. 360, 361.





THE ROSE OF SUFFERING.

Chapter xxxiii.

ON THE FLOWER OF SUFFERING, OR ON
THE ROSE RED AND GLOWING.

OUR Vine, the kind Jesus, blooms [not only with the violet and the lily, but] equally with the red and glowing rose: red with the Blood of His Passion, glowing with the fire of His charity, and full of dew with the tears of our sweetest Jesus. For He wept and was sorrowful for us—He, my joy, yea, the angels' joy, our Lord Jesus—who, as the Apostle says: "*Who in the days of His flesh, with a strong cry and tears offering up prayers and supplications to Him that was able to save Him from death, was heard for his reverence.*"* Thou hearest,

* Heb. v. 7.

O my heart, not of flesh but of stone, thou hearest that that great and most good Jesus, in the days of His flesh, which He took for my redemption, was wet with His own tears, and dost thou remain still dry? O hard heart! Thou hearest that for me He was moved to tears who standeth fast for ever and shall not be moved, and art not thou yet moved to tears? I will apply to thee also the fire of charity, and the Blood of His Passion, if so be thou wilt be warmed, and be softened, only so far as to repay tears at least to thy sweet Jesus in return for His tears, and for the pouring out of His Blood. Further, I will add also that heavy hammer, and drive into thee those iron wedges that thou mayest be rent asunder. For if thou art hard and dry, O my heart! like earth without water, thou mightest even a little be softened when watered with the mere tears of Jesus weeping. But if from the biting frost of thy iniquities thou art come to the hardness of a stone, then I must bring powerful instruments, the hammer of the Cross, and the wedges of the iron Nails, that when these are driven into thee, thou

mayest be rent asunder, and pour forth the healthful fountain of tears.

But if even thus thou art still unmoved, O hard and impenitent heart! then thou art harder than the flint-stone, which, struck by Moses in the desert, sent forth waters in abundance; especially since the hammer of the Cross of our Lord striketh far more powerfully than the rod of Moses, and the three iron Nails driven into thee ought to be more effectual to draw out the water of tears than the twice repeated blow of the rod of Moses. But if even yet thou remainest unshaken, because thou art turned into the hardness of adamant, which can only be softened with goat's blood; then I apply to thee also the abundance of the Blood of our most good Jesus, who is at once the [scape] Goat, and the Lamb undefiled, warm with the heat of His incomparable charity, which by its strength broke down and destroyed altogether that adamantine wall of enmities that stood between God and man. This wall had lasted through so many thousand years, and had not been broken either by the law or the prophets, that smote it.

with the hammers of divers precepts, warnings, and threatenings alike ; but when the Blood of the Goat and our Lamb, the kind Jesus, came, it was not merely broken through but even destroyed. The good Jesus, although most pure, is called the Goat, which is an unclean animal, because He bore our flesh, full in us of the uncleanness of sins, though in Him it had nothing of the kind. On account of His exceeding purity is He called the Lamb, who not only has no sin, but has taken away the sins of the whole world.

In the abundant Blood, then, of this Goat and Lamb, be anointed and bathed, O heart of adamant ! Cast thyself in it that thou mayest be warmed, that when warmed thou mayest be softened, that softened thou mayest pour forth a fountain of tears. For there is need of water in great abundance, that my people and their cattle may be refreshed.* My "people" are the rational motions of my mind, which seek those things that belong only to my spirit. I have also "cattle," namely other thoughts, that are

* See Numbers xx. 8, 11.

occupied about the flesh, which are bound to render service to the soul as cattle. And both these kinds of thoughts ought to be refreshed with the fountain of tears, that they may not faint in the way of this life, nor turn out of the straight road, and that what is good in them may be strengthened, and what is filthy may be cleansed; and both these virtues are found in tears. I will, therefore, seek for myself, and God grant that I may find! a fountain of tears in the tears, the Cross, the Nails, and lastly in the Blood of Jesus, our ruddy One.* I will read, then, and understand, as well as He shall grant me, the ruddiness of the Flesh and of the Soul of the Beloved of the beloved,† our most loving Jesus. He was ruddy in both, that is in Body and in Soul: in the Flesh by nature, because all flesh is naturally ruddy; and also by the Blood of His Passion, which, by His urgent charity for us, so often and so abundantly flowed over His Flesh. These outpourings of that most sacred Blood we remember that we have explained frequently in previous chapters; and hence we must not

* Cant. v. 10.

† *Ibid.* v. 9.

linger over them here, lest our readers should grow weary.

Yet who, unless he were altogether flesh and blood, and had nothing spiritual about him, would grow weary of that Blood? Who that wishes to be delivered from the blood that speaketh against him,* has not a devotion to that most pure and saving Blood of our purest Jesus? Who, that has once been inebriated with that most sweet Blood, which God in His sweetness hath provided for the poor,† does not thirst for it more and more, hearkening to the true voice of the Wisdom of God, the Only-Begotten of the Father, our most good Jesus saying: "*They that eat Me shall yet hunger, and they that drink Me they shall yet thirst?*"‡ If it is true—yea, because it is true,—that there is naturally in man's blood such sweetness beyond that of other blood, that when it has once been tasted by any beast of prey, that beast ever after desires to taste it again, insomuch that it leaves untouched other animals, and lies in wait for human blood, and rushes on its

* Compare Ps. l. 16, and Heb. xii. 24.

† Ps. lxxvii. 11.

‡ Ecclus. xxiv. 29.

own death in the search of it; if this be so, what sweetness, think you, has in itself the Blood of the Son of Man, Jesus Christ? Behold! brutes without reason thirst for the blood of men, and shall not I thirst for the Blood of the Son of God? Beasts, the more they taste, the more they thirst for the blood of man; and shall I grow weary of the Blood of God and Man, my kind Jesus? Beasts rush upon their own death, attracted by the sweetness of the blood of men; and shall I not hasten to my life, even to the Blood of the white and ruddy Jesus? Yea, truly, I will make haste, I will buy, and I will drink. I will buy, without money and without any price, wine and milk:* which the Wisdom of the Father, the most High, hath kindly mingled for us † in the goblet of His Heart, His own Blood, the price of our life. Make haste then with me, you who love the Lord, buy, not with corruptible gold and silver but with the change of your morals and your conversation, wine and milk—that Blood, I say, most pure and precious, which inebriateth the perfect as wine, and nourisheth the little

* *Mel*, probably *lac*. Isa. lv. 1.

† Prov. ix. 5.

ones as milk. If thou art perfect, if thou art strong, it is wine to thee, that Blood, that most unmixed wine of Blood. If thou art still weak, and one who has need of milk, it is milk to thee for thy nourishment. Drink, then, this most unmixed Blood, [drink it] by faith, by memory, and by spiritual perception. Behold, I reduce again for thee in a compendious manner the manifold sheddings of the Blood of our most bountiful Jesus, by which He made ruddy the rose of His Passion and His charity. The ardour of that charity man's intellect is not capable of comprehending, except so far as it comprehends it from His Passion, which was manifest to all.





Chapter xxxiv.

ON THE ROSE OF CHARITY.

LET us consider the rose of His charity, before we go on to the rose of His passion. We shall estimate the rose of His charity, if we diligently consider who and what kind of Lover He is, how much, and wherefore this merciful and wonderful Lover hath loved us. Our Lover is better than whom none is more just, none more rich, none more strong, to whom every spirit confesses: "*Thou art my God, for Thou hast no need of my goods.*"* In this short verse we comprehend *who* our Lover is: who but God? And *wherefore* He hath loved us is gathered from the next words; namely, He hath loved us in order to receive some-

* Ps. xv. 2.

thing of ours, for He has no need of our goods; but His grace is given gratuitously. Even if there were something good in us that He could desire, we should possess this not from ourselves but from Him. But *how* our Lover hath loved us, he sets forth who says: "*When as yet we were enemies, we were reconciled to God.*"* The Just hath loved the unjust, the only good and kind and pious One hath loved sinners and the impious. O what great condescension! But now we may see how much He hath loved us. Who can speak of it enough?

* Rom. v. 10.





Chapter xxxv.

ON THE ROSE OF SUFFERING.

IN the explanation of this subject we have need to join the rose of suffering to the rose of charity,—that the rose of charity may be reddened in suffering, and the rose of suffering may glow with the fire of charity. For our Lover hath loved us so much, that the ardour of His charity has constrained Him to fall into the redness of His Passion, and to deliver His soul unto death, even the death of the Cross; not a brief and passing Cross, but one which lasted from the beginning of His life even to the end of His most cruel death. For, as we have before commended to your charity, the Cross of our most good Jesus Christ was not only for one day, but His whole life was

a Cross and a martyrdom. All, therefore, that our Lord suffered in the days of His Flesh, even up to the redness of His Passion, belongs to the rose of suffering, although that rose was specially reddened by the frequent shedding of His most sacred Blood. And since we cannot enumerate all that He suffered, it should not seem tedious to us to go over again the saving sheddings of that Blood, in order that what are often commemorated may be more firmly imprinted on the tenacious memory.





Chapter xxxvi.

ON THE SEVEN SHEDDINGS OF THE BLOOD OF OUR VINE, JESUS CHRIST.

WE read of the first shedding of His Blood in the Circumcision, when His name was called Jesus, already signifying by this mystery that, by the shedding of His Blood, He was to be our true Jesus, that is, Saviour. Let tender children, both boys and girls, hearken and understand; and let the mature martyrdom of the innocent Jesus be impressed upon their minds. And hence Isaias, speaking of the Nativity of the same Jesus Christ, says: "*A child is born to us, whose government is upon His shoulder.*" * The Cross which he signified by the name of government, he adds immediately after the nativity, because forthwith from the begin-

* Isa. ix. 6.

ning of His nativity there sprang up at the same time the suffering of the Cross. It is no small part of the praise of the redness of His Passion, that Our Saviour was born in a strange place, in the midst of winter, in the middle of the night, in a stable of the inn, of a poor humble Mother; and though there was not there any shedding of His Blood, yet even that followed in a short space of time, at the interval of seven days. O what charity! O what commendation of His charity to us! Hardly is born the glory of heaven, the riches of heaven, the delights of heaven, our sweet Jesus; and behold coupled with His recent birth the Cross's ignominy, the Cross's pain, and the Cross's poverty! But the misery of the Cross He redeemed, [and gave it its] true name of "government." For by the Cross He subjugated the whole world and hell as well,—He who reigned from the wood,* the mighty Jesus. For the sake of the Cross, to which He humbled Himself and became obedient, God the Father hath

* *Dominus regnavit a ligno.* S. Justin Martyr and other early Fathers maintained that the Jews erased the words translated *a ligno* from Psalm xcvi. 10.

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exalted Him, and hath given Him a name which is above every name: that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth.* Well fitted to Him, therefore, at the first shedding of the Blood of that most pure Lamb was this name of Jesus; because there it was that He began to shed for our Salvation that Blood which in the completion of our Salvation was to be all poured out.

* Philipp. ii. 8—10.





Chapter xxxvii.

ON THE SECOND SHEDDING OF HIS BLOOD.

THE second shedding of the Blood of Jesus Christ, by which the rose of His Passion is coloured, is found in the Bloody Sweat of our kind Jesus praying in His agony. For thus says the Evangelist : “ *And being in an agony, He prayed the longer. And His sweat became as drops of blood trickling down to the ground.*”* If all the other sheddings of that most pure Blood should cease, would not this alone be able to redden our rose sufficiently? Truly may my wretched heart be rent and steeped in tears of blood ; for behold my Creator for me is bathed in Blood, and that not lightly, but it is running down to the earth. Woe to thee, wretched heart, that thou art not steeped

* S. Luke xxii. 43, 44.

and drenched with such a terrible sweat! Look into the tribulation of that most meek Heart, with which it was racked, when the Sweat of Blood poured over the whole Body from every part. The Body without would not have streamed with such a great and terrible sweat, if the Heart within had not been broken with the anguish of sorrow. "*My heart is broken within me,*"* says the Prophet. Therefore when His heart is rent within, the skin of our Solomon is also rent without. His Sweat of Blood is poured forth upon the ground; reddened is the rose of the Passion and charity of Christ, the ruddy Jesus. Behold how He is ruddy, yea, how altogether ruddy. And this general effusion of the Blood of Jesus is not without its mystery. For He poured out a Sweat of Blood from His whole body, who came to bear the infirmities contracted from our flesh and blood, in order that it might suffice for the convalescence and health of the whole body spiritually, the Church, that Sweat of Blood was formed from every part of His body, who is her Head, our Lord Jesus Christ. We there-

* Jer. xxiii. 9.

fore are delivered from blood.* Thanks be to God, the kind Jesus, the author of our salvation, who poured forth most liberally for us His own Blood ! Or else the Bloody Sweat poured from the whole body of our Head signified that in His whole Body spiritual, which is the Church, the blood of martyrs was to be shed, and thereby the Church made ruddy.

* Ps. l. 16.





Chapter xxxviii.

ON THE THIRD SHEDDING OF HIS BLOOD.

THE third shedding of Blood was in the tearing of His cheeks, of which we have testimony in the Prophet, in the person of the Crucified : “ *I gave my body to the strikers, and my cheeks to them that plucked them.*”* And this some expound as referring to the tearing of His cheeks, caused by the nails of the impious Jews, and others of the plucking out of our Lord’s beard. Both may have been the truth. I believe that was not done without some shedding of Blood. I see then, the sacrilegious hands of that most impious nation, not satisfied with buffets and blows and spitting upon the lovely Face of Christ, but even

* Isa. l. 6.

daring to proceed to the tearing of His cheeks, and drawing from that most sweet Face Blood for the reddening of our rose. I see the patience of that immaculate Lamb, worthy of all wonder and imitation, with which in all gentleness He offered His most modest cheeks to be lacerated by the nails of those shameless ones, that we might suffer patiently, if ever for His sake confusion should cover our face,* yea, even if any one should smite us on the face for the sake of our sweet Jesus.

* Ps. lxxviii. 8.





Chapter xxxix.

*ON THE FOURTH SHEDDING OF HIS
BLOOD.*

WE may find the fourth shedding of that most pure Blood on the Crown, the Crown of thorns, not lightly imposed, but violently pressed upon the most sweet Head of my Head, sweet Jesus. For it was consistent with truth that they who hated the Truth should seek, not only His dishonour, but His torment also. And I do not suppose that streams of Blood were wanting here ; and from that Head, crowned in derision and in envy, they flowed down upon both the neck and Face of our sweet Jesus. For if they had not wished to inflict pain as well as derision, they might easily have plaited a crown of other branches or of

the twigs of some tree ; but that they might show the stings of their disposition, Him who is now crowned with glory and honour they crowned then with the sharp points of thorns, that most meek Lamb, sweet Jesus. And though they crown Him in derision, yet, ignorant and derisive as they were, they confess Him to be a crowned King ; for it is the prerogative of kings to be crowned. He is, therefore, proved to be a crowned King by those who knew Him not ; though in the thorns appears the malice of them that crown Him. Morally, however, we are taught to imitate our Head, our King and Captain, our sweet Jesus. For if, by the perversity of any wicked men, we are ever pricked and derided ; when we behold our Head so pierced and so derided, we cannot murmur, we cannot shrink back from bearing with all long-suffering and patience the few trials which come upon us in this short life, that we may be worthy members of our Head and good warriors in following our Standard-bearer's footsteps.



Chapter xl.

ON THE FIFTH SHEDDING OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD.

THE fifth reddening of the rose is found in the cruel scourging of the meek Lamb Jesus, thus red as a rose. Oh in what abundance did that most holy Blood from His stricken and scourged Body drop down to the ground! Oh with what cruelty and foaming impiety, with what foaming out of His cruel executioners, was scourged our sweet Jesus, who came to deliver us from everlasting scourges! "They have beaten Me with scourges without a cause," He says.* Truly without a cause, unless perhaps those perverse wretches, who held Thy Truth in a lie, judged Thy good

* Response to 3rd Lection in Office for Wednesday in Holy Week.

works worthy of punishment ! Yet even here we are morally instructed, that we may learn to bear with equanimity the scourge of our most kind Father, the sweet Jesus, who for us unworthy so patiently endured the scourge of the most wicked ones. What man ready for the scourge, born to labour, nourished and brought up in sins, destined for the inheritance of the heavenly palace, which receives none but the pure, what man would not suffer the scourge when he sees the King of all kings and Lord of lords, the sweet Jesus, who did no sin, and in whose mouth there was found no guile, broken with such grievous scourgings ? Hear, O man foolish and without wisdom, hear and learn, and not only do not flee away, but even embrace discipline, lest at any time thou perish from the right way,* and the Lord be angry, who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up to be scourged for thee. His own Son by nature, consubstantial with Himself, co-eternal and impassible, He spared not from being, for thy sake, born in time and passible, from being bruised with scourges, as it is written :

* Ps. ii. 12.

*"It pleased the Lord to bruise Him in infirmity.** And how shall He spare thee, His son by adoption, when thy senses are prone to evil? No. He will bind fast thy jaws with bit and bridle, † so that at least vexation may give thee understanding; until thou art forced to draw near to Him, who painfully yet wholesomely scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. ‡

* Isa. liii. 10.

† Ps. xxxi. 9; see v. 10. "Many are the scourges of the sinner."

‡ Heb. xii. 6.





Chapter rli.

*ON THE SIXTH AND SEVENTH SHEDDING
OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD.*

THE sixth shedding of Blood which has reddened the rose of the Passion is found most abundantly in the clefts of the Nails. For who doubts that an abundance of that sacred Blood flowed forth from the Hands and Feet of the innocent Jesus, pierced as they were; yea, pierced through and through? In the streams of this Blood our Rose is empurpled; since here indeed is found the most ardent charity, here the most blood-red suffering. In this greatness of suffering may be contemplated the greatness of His charity. Consider the glowing of the rose of charity, the redness of the rose of suffering. Who ever suffered such grievous, such shameful things? It is God

who suffers : and yet in no way for Himself does He alleviate the hard wine-press of suffering, who is wont in the case of His servants to take it wholly away, or else to alleviate or to shorten the strength of their torments. He spared not Himself, who knows how to spare His servants. You see the proof of this in the gospel of S. John, where, when they who had come to take Him said that they sought Him, He added : "*I am He*" whom you seek. "*If therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way.*"* O ardour of most true charity ! He—charity itself—manifests and delivers up Himself to His raging enemies, not sparing Himself, and asks [only] for His servants that they may be spared ! And then taken captive,† after a host of mockings both by Jews and Gentiles, after many sheddings of His Blood, our Saviour, the most gentle Jesus, is pierced through both His Hands and His Feet with the pitiless nails, and fastened to the wood of the Cross.

Look well and gaze upon the Rose of His

* John xviii. 8.

† Lections iv. and v. in the Office of the Five Wounds, or the 3rd Friday in Lent, are taken from this Chapter.

Bloody Passion, how red it blushes in token of His most ardent charity! Suffering contends with charity. Suffering that it may be more ardent, charity that it may be more red [with Blood]. But by the ardour of charity suffering is marvellously made red, for if He had not loved, He had not suffered; and, in the redness of His Passion is manifested His most great and incomparable charity. For as the rose, shut up by the cold of the night, when the burning sun arises it opens out altogether, and stretching out its leaves in redness displays its delightful glowing [colour]: so the delicious Flower of heaven, our most good Jesus Christ, who, for a long time, by the sin of the first man, was shut up from sinners as it were in the cold of night, and did not impart His fulness; then at last, when the fulness of time had come, He was opened out in every part of His Body by the rays of burning charity, and the glowing of the rose of His charity was resplendent in the redness of His Blood that was shed.

See, then, how our most good Vine, the ruddy Jesus, blossomed with this flower of the rose. See His whole Body! Where in

it can you not find the flower of the blood-red rose? Look upon one Hand and upon the other; you may find the flower of the rose in both. Look upon His Feet, both one and the other; are they not roseate? Look into the opening of His side, for not even that is without its rose, although this may be partially rosy because of the mixture of water, since, as the Evangelist relates: "*When one of the soldiers with a spear opened His side, there came out blood and water.*"* For He it is who came by water, and not by water only, but by water and blood, even the most good Jesus Christ.† O most sweet Lord and Saviour of all, good Jesus, what worthy thanks shall I ever be able to render unto Thee? From the beginning of Thy life even to Thy most cruel death, yea and even after Thy death, Thou didst shed for me Thine own most precious Blood, and Thou hast been careful to manifest the ardour of Thy most excellent charity by such frequent sheddings of Thy Blood! Oh, with what a vast number of leaves is Thy rose adorned and multiplied! Who can

* S. John xix. 34.

† 1 S. John v. 6.

count them all? Reckon up the drops of Blood shed from the most sweet Body of our sweetest Jesus, and you will have enumerated the leaves of His Passion and His charity. For each of the drops of His Blood are the leaves of the blood-red rose of His Passion.

But now let us pass on to other matters, since we have already spoken briefly of the seventh shedding of our Lord's Blood, when we were teaching about the opening of His side, from whence came out blood and water, by which we understand the Sacrament of Baptism.





THE CROCUS OF ABSTINENCE.

Chapter *xlii.*

ON THE CROCUS OF ABSTINENCE IN OUR VINE.

WE perceive that there blossomed also on our Vine, the most sweet Jesus Christ, the Crocus of abstinence. He practised abstinence, not in order to chastise His Body and bring it into subjection, lest perchance He should become a castaway,* but that He might give us a model and proof of the value of abstinence. Just as, in His Circumcision and Baptism, to which He submitted, not for His own cleansing, for He was most clean and the Cleanser of all, but that He might give us a model of obedience and justice.† Undoubtedly He had the virtue of abstinence, who is the King

* 1 Cor. ix. 27.

† S. Matt. iii. 15.

of virtues, and beyond all His Saints past and to come He excelled in denying Himself, not of necessity, but willingly. Perhaps an objection may be made to us from the words of the same Lord our Saviour, speaking of Himself: "*John the Baptist came to the Jews neither eating nor drinking, and you said: He hath a devil. Again, the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say: Behold a man that is a glutton and a wine-drinker, a friend of publicans and sinners.*"* Behold the testimony of the Truth, that John neither ate nor drank, and that Jesus Himself both ate and drank! Did John then, in the virtue of abstinence, excel our beloved Jesus? By no means.

We must, however, notice that the virtue of abstinence is of two kinds. One within, in the mind; the other without, in action. And that which is in the mind is always to be kept; but that which is in action is to be manifested according to circumstances and times. Now S. John, who was mere man, practised abstinence both in mind and body, lest perchance he might be defiled. But our true Man, Jesus, who could not be defiled,

* S. Matt. xi. 18, 19.

used meat and drink, as occasion served, in order that He might draw to the virtue of abstinence, and to other virtues, those who ate with Him. And do not imagine that it is at all a greater virtue to abstain altogether from meat, than to use the same meats in moderation. For it is most difficult to observe a perfect moderation in food, so as to take nothing more than may suffice for nature, and yet not to deprive nature of what is needful. If then it happens that one has with S. John the virtue of abstinence, so as to practise it both in mind and act, let not such an one condemn him who abstains with our most perfect Jesus, that is, who practises abstinence, according as times and persons require—now insisting on it and now relaxing it—for the benefit of his own body, or the profit of his neighbour; and yet in all circumstances observes all that ought to be observed, so as always to avoid the charge of the vice opposed to abstinence, that is, gluttony.

The extravagances of this vice are pointed out in this verse :—

“ Præpropere, laute, nimis, ardentè, studiose.”
(Over hastily, daintily, to excess, ravenously, intently.)

1. They eat and drink *over hastily* who anticipate the time of meals, out of mere pleasure in it, and not obliged by necessity. We read, in the "Lives of the Fathers," of certain holy Fathers who anticipated the usual time of taking food out of charity for spiritual guests ; but then, eating as they did in charity, they by no means considered that they had broken their fast, so that even some of them did not scruple after such a light repast to celebrate Masses. Now, though it would not be right for us to deduce an example to follow them in this, since we are far from their perfection, yet we may be sure that they did these things without sin, for they would never have done them but by a true revelation of the Holy Ghost.

2. They eat *daintily*, who make use of delicate meats, attracted thereto by mere pleasure. And these are not satisfied with the natural flavour of flesh or fish, such as their Creator has bestowed on them ; but in ways contrary to nature they hanker after strange flavours of spices and various sauces, in order to give themselves an appetite for eating ; and in this, they are not afraid of casting

blame on the most good Creator of man in His creatures, when they are manufacturing flavours different to those which the Creator of nature bestowed upon them. Oh, how should a Christian man avoid flavours of this kind, when he remembers that his most sweet and most wise Lord made all things very good, and none but the evil one has been wont to change creatures that are truly good ! Has been *wont*, I say. Since sometimes to use more dainty meats in order to remedy bodily weakness, when the palate does not fancy but refuses its food, is but a slight fault or none at all.

Hence I speak to the shame of those, of whom, as the Apostle says, "*Their god is their belly, and their glory is in their shame,*"* of whom he also asserts *weeping that they are enemies of the Cross of Christ* ; and imitators of that most poor and most wretched rich man, who used to feast, not once in a way for the remedy of his health, but sumptuously every day for his own pleasure. For this cause, when he was buried in hell, he did not deserve to obtain the favour of even a drop

* Philipp. iii. 19.

of water to cool his tongue burning in the flame,* [that tongue] which had been always pampered with strange and superfluous delicacies. He did not deserve to be refreshed with the natural coolness of water, who in his pleasures [of the table] had adulterated the natural flavour [of meats]. To the shame of these gluttons, I repeat, I shall not shrink from recalling the opinion of a heathen, so that a Christian may blush for his name, when he is taught a lesson by an ignorant heathen who is better than himself. A heathen, who knew not how to reverence creatures through the Creator, nor how to endure things bitter to the taste for Christ; for he either did not know Him, or did not believe that for him Christ on the gibbet of the Cross drank the wine mingled with myrrh and gall; but yet, instructed solely by nature, this heathen exclaims against the voluptuous:—

" O prodiga rerum
 Luxuries, numquam parvo contenta paratu,
 Et quæditorum terra pelagoque ciborum
 Ambitiosa fames, et lautæ gloria mensæ !
 Discite quam parvo liceat producere vitam,
 Et quantum natura petat : non erigit ægros

* S. Luke xvi. 19, &c.

Nobilis ignoto diffusus consule Bacchus,
 Non auro gemmisque bibunt, sed gutture puro
 Vita redit : satis est populis fluviisque Ceresque.*

That is, water and bread. This is in complete accordance with that well-known and true maxim: "*Man's life is water and bread.*"†

And still the most hardened faces of the gourmandisers are not subdued by this shame, even when smitten with the reproof and teaching of the Truth itself, our most true Jesus, and also of his Apostle, yea, even of a heathen man, and they say: "We are Christians." Yet they do not receive the voice of Christ speaking in His Apostle, and admonishing them, "*Make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences.*"‡ And hence it frequently has occurred that while as yet their

* Lucan. lib. iv. vers. 373, &c. These lines may be thus rendered, in default of a better translation:—

"Luxury, lavish of wealth, and never content with a little!
 Craving for savoury meats, the spoils of the earth and the ocean!
 Ye who covet the glory of having the daintiest table!
 Learn for how small a price your life may really be lengthened,
 And instead of all that waste how little nature requireth.
 'Tis not your generous wine, renowned for its age and its vintage,
 Precious as gold or gems, that brings back health to the languid
 But a pure and simple fare calls again the life that was ebbing.
 Bread suffices for food, and the popular drink is the river."

† Ecclus. xxix. 27. "The chief thing for man's life is water and bread, and clothing, and a house to cover shame."

‡ Rom. xiii. 14.

meat was in their mouth, the wrath of God came upon them ; * and they who have passed their days in the worst ends, in a moment descend into hell ; where the worm that feedeth upon them dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished, receiving instead of their brief delicacies everlasting evils. †

3. What it is to eat *too much* is familiar to all. For he eats too much, who takes more nourishment than may suffice to support nature, especially if he does this knowingly. Since it not seldom happens that a man, looking forward to his labour, takes more of ordinary food, in order that he may support his labour ; and then, from fear of sinking under it, he goes beyond the measure of his meal. And I suppose that hardly any one is free from this sin. But such sins are, as soon as they are detected, to be purged away by frequent confessions, mingled with voluntary abstinences. And in no sort of food is that vice of excess in meat and drink to be excused. We read that "*the sin of Sodom was fulness of bread, and abundance ;*" † and the devil coming to tempt our Lord tempted Him

* Ps. lxxvii. 30, 31. † S. Luke xvi. 25. ‡ Ezech. xvi. 49.

with nothing else than with bread ; for he knew that in undue taking of bread sin was not wanting, since he deceived our first parents, and through them all mankind, by the eating of a single apple. However, in common food the due limit is not so easily exceeded, when the taste is not flattered, as in meats daintily prepared, and in new-fangled savoury dishes.

4. To eat *greedily* is to take meat or drink with too great a longing ; and this may happen with common as well as with delicate meats. We have an example of this in Esau, who, attracted by the pleasure he took in some common food, readily sold his birth-right. For thus Genesis relates, that Esau, coming out of the field, saw Jacob his brother boiling pottage of lentiles, and said to him, "*Give me of this red pottage, for I am exceeding faint.*" And when Jacob had made a bargain with him about the selling of his first birth-right, he ate voraciously of the pottage he had longed for overmuch, and lost the dignity of the first birthright. For he had too greedily longed for the pottage of lentiles. "*Lo, I die,*" said he, "*what will the first*

birthright avail me ?" * There is no doubt that he greedily ate, when he got it, that which he so greedily longed for. O Lord, most merciful Jesus, have mercy on me a miserable sinner, for I feel that I never pass a day without some sin of this kind ; and grant that for such transgressions I may not deserve to lose the dignity of Thy faith, by which I am made Thy son ! We have, besides, examples of the opposite virtue, such as Elias and S. John the Baptist, those most holy men who took no flesh at all, and we know that by so doing they lost not a particle of merit through the sobriety of their temperance.

5. To eat *intently* is to linger too long over one's meat and drink. We speak of this from experience. And would to God that we had not experienced it, nor ever should do so ! It is a common and usual occurrence, that, when one has taken food such as generally may and ought to suffice for his needs, a new kind of pleasure arises, which makes a man who is careless, and heedless of the devil's snares, cleave to that food with such earnestness as though he had taken

* Gen. xxv. 29—34.

nothing before, or as though after this he was going to take nothing for many days. But they who catch themselves out in this form of gluttony, may, by God's assistance, easily resist it ; for its onslaught does not last longer than the time taken in rising from table, and the memory of that which was desired with such longing vanishes away. There are many, however, who do not regard such fondness for eating as a sin, nor do they yield credence to anyone who suggests that it is ; for they are held in bondage by the damnable habit of not resisting any desire which can be excused by any shadow of a natural want, and they put no bounds to their desire of eating, until, in time, they leave off through weariness. But a Christian man eats in order to live : he does not live in order to eat, as someone says. And so that verse of the poet concerning the useless and the greedy suits them well :—

“ Nos numerus sumus, et fruges consumere nati.” *

(A numerous tribe are we, and our destiny is to eat fruit.)

But not so a Christian. He always rises from table so as to have still some appetite

* Horat. lib. i. Epist. 2.

for more, and he conforms that appetite which would fain be filled with meats as a grateful offering to the Lord Jesus, who for our salvation was pleased often to be hungry and thirsty. By these and other similar reasons a man was *once* led to afflict himself with such abstinence, that wasted with over much privation, he fell into a long illness, so as to be altogether incapable of being of use either to himself or to others ; yea, he became a burden to all, even to those whose burdens he ought rather to have lightened. But who teaches these follies? What wise man practises them? Such enthusiasts forget that

“Virtus est medium vitiorum utrumque reductum.” *
(Virtue is the happy mean
That checks each vice and steers between.)

For there is a middle course between eating too much and abstaining too much ; and that middle course is virtue ; that is, to take so much nourishment as that nature may not be weakened, and yet not so much as that vices may grow. And if a man cannot altogether observe this middle course, yet he can avoid swerving too much from the happy

* Horat. lib. i. Epist. 18.

mean. In other words, that he who eats less than he ought should not abstain too much ; and he who exceeds the due measure of eating, should not exceed it too far ; and thus the body will not be pampered with vices, but preserved in virtue.

The point in which the flower of the Crocus signifies abstinence is shown by its colour. For abstinence makes its votaries sallow, like the yellow crocus flower. The face cannot be rubicund with a stomach given to abstinence. Again, the numerous flowers of the Crocus point out many forms of abstinence. For there is not only abstinence from meat and drink, but also from sleep, from luxury, from clothing, and other conveniences which are superfluously bestowed on the body, as baths, unguents, musical instruments, and sweet songs, and things of this kind, which corrupt men's senses, and subvert their minds. Moreover, some crocus petals are of a red colour, and this signifies that charity ought always to be mingled with the practice of abstinence ; since, if without charity one should deliver his body to be burned, it profiteth him

nothing.* For there are some who, not for the sake of the charity of God, but for the sake of vain glory, afflict themselves by abstinence, as the Truth itself, our Lord Jesus, shows, when He says to His disciples: "*When you fast, be not as the hypocrites, sad. For they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward.*" † Wherefore? Because they are not the true crocus who lack the red leaves of charity, without which no work is perfect. For charity is the virtue of which it is said: "He who hath one hath all; and he who hath not this, even that which he hath shall be taken from him?"

* 1 Cor. xiii. 3.

† S. Matt. vi. 16.





Chapter xliii.

ON THE ODOUR OF THE FLOWERS OF
OUR VINE.

LET us now come to the odour of our Vine, and let us beg the same sweetest Jesus, that He would deign to breathe over our hearts the fragrance of His perfume, that we may be able both to feel and to speak sweet things of Him. But what can we say of this perfume? Wonderful and priceless, beyond all that can be believed or thought, is this perfume of our Vine. There have bloomed other branches,—the Saints,—in whom, indeed, He Himself bloomed: but assuredly those men were wont to cry out to Him alone our Head, the most good Jesus, as that spiritual spouse, *“Thy breasts are better than wine; smelling sweet of the best ointments. Thy name is as*

oil poured forth; therefore young maidens have loved Thee. Draw me after Thee; we will run in the odour of Thy ointments.* It is not wonderful if the odour is above all price which proceeds from this our flowering Vine, if we diligently attend to its names, which are *Jesus, Christus, Nazarenus*,—Jesus, Christ, of Nazareth. *Jesus*, as you know, is interpreted *Salutaris vel Salvator*,—Saving or Saviour,—of which the Psalm speaks: “*Converte nos, Deus salutaris noster*,—Convert us, O God our Saviour.” † And, again: “*Thou hast saved us from them that afflict us.*” ‡ Who that is in affliction does not wish to be saved? If you wish to be saved and to be drawn by the odour of this saving Name, which is poured out as oil, begin by taking your delight in our most sweet Jesus, and seek salvation with confidence in the true Saviour. Imitate not those who are delighted when they have done evil and rejoice in the worst of things, in which they imagine their salvation stands. But rather imitate Her whose spirit rejoiced in God her

* Cant. i. 1, 2, 3. † Ps. lxxiv. 3.
‡ Ps. xliii. 8.

Saviour,* and who drank in the odour of this saving Name all the more sweetly, and felt it the more perfectly, as she was nearer to Him in faith, hope, and charity ; for she had conceived in her womb His own self, true and perfect God and Man, Jesus the Saviour. She knew well how without carnal concupiscence He was conceived, how without any pain He was born of her, how He was preached to the shepherds, adored by the Magi, how He was nourished by her virgin milk, and how He was glorified by Simeon and Anna. She knew, I say, all these things, and many more, that most faithful Virgin, and with most perfect faith she followed the saving odour of the true Saviour. And she could not but hope in Him whom she knew by most perfect faith had the power, the knowledge, and the will to save all that desire salvation. For as a man believes so he hopes ; as he hopes so he loves. As, then, this best of mothers was more perfect in faith, so was she more strong in hope, and more fervent in charity, casting all her care on Him.

* S. Luke i. 47.

“*Oleum effusum est nomen tuum*,* Thy name is as oil poured forth.” And why? Because with oil the sick are healed, the famished are fed, the lamps have their light renewed. Who is so sick, that will not be *healed* by this saving oil, the Name of Jesus who bringeth salvation, if only he wills to be healed? For so said the Saviour Himself to a sick man who lay at the pool of Probatica: “*Wilt thou be made whole?*” And he replied: “*Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool.*” † O foolish man! Behold the oil that maketh whole of Jesus the Saviour, whose Name is as oil poured forth. What hast thou to do with the water? If thou wilt receive salvation, behold the fountain of the oil of mercy, in which no one hinders thee to be baptized; and His Name is as oil poured forth, that is manifested to all nations, and sick anointed with this oil are healed. When thou hearest and understandest the exceeding mercy of the most good Jesus, who for thy redemption came down from the Bosom of the Father to earth,

* Cant. i. 2. See S. Bernard *in Cant.*, Serm. xv. 5.

† S. John v. 6, 7.

and redeemed Thee by His most merciful Passion, how is it that there springs not up in thee the certain hope that He willeth not to lose thee, redeemed at so great a price, yea whom He came down to redeem? Already while thou art thinking this, hoping thus, the oil of the Name of Jesus is poured forth to thee. Anoint thyself, that thou mayest be healed; that is, hope in the mercy of the Saviour, who saveth all that hope in Him.

Moreover, this oil *feeds* thee, if thou art famished; if thou art hungry, He is the Word. In this Word of God, our most good Jesus, thou findest what will satisfy thee, if thou be willing to incline the ear of thy heart to His words and deeds. For whatever our sweet Jesus said or did healeth the hungry soul. If thou hunger after justice, thou shalt be healed by the word of His mouth, who said: "*Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice; for they shall have their fill.*"* One may also apply fire to oil; and this is highly characteristic of this Name of Jesus; since by the power of His Name faith is confirmed and charity is kindled. Few had faith before

* S. Matt. v. 6.

the pouring forth of this oil, or before the preaching of Thy name, O good Jesus ; few burned even with a little fire of charity. But after that pouring forth behold how many have been enlightened by faith ! How many have burst forth into flames of charity ! *Dedit odorem*—it sent forth its odour,* that is a good report,—the oil of Thy Name poured forth, the oil of Jesus, and it opened the way for Thee to be also Christ, that is, Anointed. For so says the Psalm of Thee : “ *God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows.*”† Therefore is the oil also ointment : for ointment is made of oil and spices. Why, then, is it wonderful, if this Vine sent forth an admirable odour, since it is both anointed and flowering ? For Nazarene is interpreted ‘flowering.’

Our Vine, Jesus Christ the Nazarene,—that is, Saviour, anointed, and flowering,—might well attract all who desire salvation, glory, riches, or delights. Let all come to this Vine. For *Jesus* will give *salvation*, since He is the Saviour ; *Christ* will give a kingdom in which are both glory and riches,

* Cant. i. 11.

† Ps. xliiv. 8.

since He is *anointed*, and this belongs properly to kings ; the *Nazarene* will give delights, since He is *flowering*. And what is more delightful than the flower? But many flowers—yea, all—even all the flowers of virtues, are in our Nazarene, and by their delicious odour He has drawn the whole world after Him. They who come to Him for the sake of humility follow the odour of His violet ; they who come for chastity follow the odour of His lily ; they who come for charity, the rose of His Passion ; and they who come for abstinence follow the odour of the crocus. From these virtues of our most good Jesus Christ, preachers everywhere, as from most precious ointment poured forth, have extracted His perfume, and young maidens delighted with His wonderful odour have run after the anointed Jesus. Even still they run in crowds crying out with all their hearts : “ *Draw us after Thee, that we may run in the odour of Thy ointments,*”* knowing that [the grace to do so] is neither of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God alone that showeth mercy.†

* Cant. i. 3.

† Rom. ix. 16.

All the odours of all the virtues of our anointed Jesus are surpassed by the odour of Jesus crucified ; for there His perfection especially flowered forth, and from the flowers of His Wounds He poured forth a priceless odour. For when the alabaster box* of the most pure virgin Body of our sweet Jesus was broken, then was poured forth the ointment of His most sacred Blood. The Soul also itself, which was redolent with the ointment of the sevenfold Spirit, was sent forth, and the odour of our flowering Vine was spread abroad and scattered, not only throughout the earth, but even throughout hell ; and the dead were raised to life, as indeed they are every day raised both to bodily and spiritual life ; for the house of Christ, that is the Church, is filled with the odour of the ointment† of our Vine, flowering especially in His Passion. The bag is torn asunder, the Body of the Lord Jesus is rent, the grains of the drops of Blood have fallen out, and they still may be gathered up by the faithful in their minds, and are gathered by those who come near to the Cross in faith and devotion.

* See S. Mark xiv. 3.

† S. John xii. 3.

Most precious treasures and beyond compare are the drops of the Blood of Jesus Christ.

Come hither, O faithful soul, and gather up for thyself the remains of the banquet of thy Spouse, crumbs full of grace, leaves of roses. Behold in what abundance those drops trickle both from the Hands and the Feet, and also from the Side of our sweetest crucified Christ Jesus! There is no disease of the mind of which thou mayest not be healed by these flowers. Only gather up the leaves of the flowers of our flowering Jesus, the dew-drops of His red Blood, and lay them up in the chamber of thy heart as remedies.* Their taste and their odour shall be for wholesome medicine, driving away what diseases there may be, and warding off those that are about to come. Only take care that thou never wish to be without them, for they have the true name in every faithful Christian mouth of *Constant companions*.† Drink in, therefore, with all the affection of thy heart the odour of the true Vine, Jesus

* Literally " pills : " *Constant companions*.

† *Sine quibus esse nolo*, apparently the name of some favourite medicine, like "*Parr's Life Pills*."

Christ of Nazareth, and delight thyself in Him, even as His Heavenly Father delighted in Him, so that He could truly say : "*Behold the odour of my son is as the odour of a plentiful field, which the Lord hath blessed.*"* Truly *plentiful!* In whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.†

There is yet another reason wherefore the Crucified gave forth such a fragrant odour. The odour of the body of any animal while living is little or nothing ; but when flesh is applied to the fire, how sweet and how delicious a fragrant odour proceeds from it every one knows. Let us therefore consider what a fire was applied to the Body of our Vine, and how great that fire was. Interiorly, He burned with a conflagration of unbounded charity, exteriorly, with the heat of His Passion ; and thus Jesus crucified became a most true, most pleasing, and most healthful holocaust on the altar of the Cross. What holocaust was ever like this ? None, indeed ; for none is mentioned as so wholly burnt. And if that is truly called a holocaust which

* Gen. xxvii. 27.

† Col. ii. 3. 9.

is burnt whole, while yet the flesh alone burns there, how much more truly may our Victim be called a holocaust, since it burned within and without with a completeness beyond compare. S. Laurence also burned wholly, both within and without, S. Vincent, and very many others ; but none like this Victim. For who would venture to compare any torment with the burning heat of the furnace of the Cross ? But we remember that we have given many examples of it before. From our Holocaust, the crucified Jesus, burning in a manner beyond comparison, a priceless odour went forth : and the Lord, even God the Father, smelled a sweet savour,* and blessed us, and turned away His wrathful indignation far from us ; for peace was entirely restored, and the Blood of our ruddy Jesus, ours as well as His, is the security that ensures that eternal peace. Many others also have smelled the sweet savour, and have come running from the east and west, from the north and south ; and to this Body, flourishing with its sweetest odour, they are gathered together, that they may satiate themselves with it, al-

* Gen. viii. 21.

though it remains entire, and have fulfilled the word of the same most sweet Jesus, who says: "*Wheresoever the Body shall be, thither will the eagles also be gathered together.*"* But this Flesh is not eaten raw, it is most thoroughly roasted† with the double fire of His charity and of His Passion. And hence, inebriated with its delicious odour, not only men of stronger natures, but even the tenderest young virgins, run with all the affection of their hearts, and with all the powers of their mind, to the delights of the Cross, to draw from it their hearts' delight, as far as may be in this present life, even the ointments which flow out from our Holocaust, who burneth with so fierce a fire.

The odour of spiritual ointments, or the bestowal of the graces, conferred by the Lord Jesus on the Apostles after His Passion, have added not a little to the delicate odour of that burning Body. For before the Passion the Spirit was not given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.‡ But when the kind Jesus had been humbled and exalted, the ointment

* S. Luke xvii. 37.

† See Exod. xii. 9.

‡ S. John vii. 39.

of the Holy Ghost flowed down *from the Head*, that is, from Christ, the Anointed, *upon the beard*,* that is on those who have played the man, and been strengthened to overcome in the Lord. And, not only *upon the beard of Aaron*, that is, not only to Christ's Apostles was this unction given, which was melted in the fire of Christ's Passion, that it might give forth the odour of a good report through all the earth ; but *it also ran down to the skirt of His garment*, that is, to the lowest members of the Church, which is as it were the garment of Christ. And the Church has been so filled, and is still filled, that even upon the Gentiles also is poured out the grace of the Holy Ghost : † and they perceive the odour of Christ, the spiritual ointment, flowing down from the Supreme Head of all ; and by it they become pure young maidens ; so that they are drawn by and love our Anointed One, and run in the odour of His ointments. ‡

No wonder if they are greatly delighted with the odour of our Vine. For it is two-fold : one which proceeds from the ointment,

* Ps. cxxxii. 2. † Acts x. 45. ‡ Cant. i. 3.

another from the flowers. And they scent out and follow the sweet odour of Jesus, like an animal, which is so delighted with the smell of new-baked bread, that wherever it perceives it, it follows even to its own destruction. Behold, "*the living Bread which cometh down from Heaven,*"* as He Himself testifies, baked with the double fire of charity and suffering, He scatters His odours far and wide! Who would not follow Him? The irrational animal follows the odour of bread baked and about to be consumed: shall not rational man follow the odour of the twice baked Bread of Angels? Yea, more foolish than animals are they, who do not understand the odour and the honour of that odoriferous Bread. Moreover, we cannot pass over the reflection, that persons about to make a sea-voyage, require bread that has been twicebaked. And therefore he who has known that he is [floating] on the great sea of this world;—which he cannot quickly cross because it stretcheth wide its arms; and because of the creeping things without number; † it is perilous, for it also rages with

* S. John vi. 51.

† Ps. ciii. 25.

winds and storms ;—if he would be secure, let him have this baked Bread, the most mighty Jesus, in the ship of his cross, that he may eat Him, adore Him, be refreshed by Him, consoled by Him, and, in brief, that by Him he may be delivered from all perils. For if, as the Psalm says, “ *There the ships shall go,*”* that is, men on their crosses shall follow Jesus, what ship has ever gone over that sea so grandly as the ship of Jesus crucified? But according to the sentence of S. Paul, who says : “ *I am crucified with Christ,*† let us also be crucified with Christ : let us embrace His Cross,—yea, Himself on the Cross,—with unfailing affection of heart ; and let us delight ourselves in the lifegiving odour of Jesus burning [with love], who says of Himself : “ *As the Vine I have brought forth a pleasant odour : and My flowers are the fruit of honour and riches, and My Spirit is sweet above honey.*”‡ Yea, I say, let us delight ourselves with His odour, let us console ourselves with the ointments of His graces, let us comfort ourselves with the heavenly Bread, His own most pure Body.

* Ps. ciii. 26. † Gal. ii. 19. ‡ Ecclus. xxiv. 23, 27.

And thus eating His Body, and drinking His Blood that was shed for our salvation, we may be able to taste it to our salvation ; and may be permitted to see, through a glass and in a riddle, that the Lord is most sweet ; so that His own promise may be fulfilled even in us, as far as possible in this present life :
“ They that eat Me, shall yet hunger : and they that drink Me, shall yet thirst.” *

* Ecclus. xxiv. 29.





Chapter xlv.

*THAT FLOWERS [BEARING HONEY] ARE
TO BE SOUGHT AND FOUND ON OUR
VINE.*

FIRSTLY, let us consider that flowers are delightful both to sight and smell. Although they are not accustomed to be eaten, yet they are sucked by bees, who make from the juice extracted from flowers the sweetest honey. Now these bees are figuratively, in my opinion, those who have the knowledge and ability to raise themselves up on the wings of contemplation, and are able to leave their hives, that is the care of their bodies, and to fly over the garden of delights, in which they find the treasures and rich delights of all flowers. For this garden is Paradise. And thus you have in

the Canticle of love: *Thy plants*, thy bud-
dings forth *are a Paradise*, O Mary most
fruitful Virgin.* For this Paradise came
forth from her virgin womb, replenished with
every flower and every fruit. The fruits we
postpone for a time. But let us see, and read,
or rather suck the flowers of this Paradise.
And it is right that we should be now bees
such as know how to suck honey out of the
rock. For the garden and the rock are the
same, that is Christ. If then flowers are to
be sought for, where can they be better
sought, where more quickly found, than in
our most sweet Christ? The flowers of His
virtues and of His wounds are manifest to
all. Behold He standeth with outstretched
arms, with His Body stripped and bare, with
hands and feet pierced through, with Head
bowed down! Be strong now and raise thy-
self aloft, O my miserable soul! and on the
wings of faith and hope betake thee to this
garden of charity, and collect together on the
one thing necessary all the attention of thy
mind distracted by such various objects, and
after the example of the bees' industry, make

* *Emissiones tuæ paradisus*: Cant. iv. 13.

for thyself the honey of devotion, and go up to the Paradise of charity, drawing nigh to that deep Heart;* for behold, He whom thou seekest is lifted up and yet humbled. He was not lifted up on the Cross that He might be difficult of access, but rather that He might more readily be found by all.

Draw nigh, then, with confidence to this Paradise, recognise Him in the stretching out of His arms, receive His affection which is ready for thine embrace, and which invites thee to His own, and which cries out in a manner both pitifully and mercifully: "*Return, return, that we may behold thee.*† Return from thine evil will, from thine evil deeds, from obstinacy, from despair. Return, I say, to Me, thou who hast turned away from Me, that we may look upon thee with the look of grace with which I looked upon the woman who was a sinner, upon Peter, and upon the [penitent] thief! Read Me, who am the Book of life, written within and without, and understand what thou readest.‡

* Ps. lxiii. 7: *Accedet homo ad cor altum.* See S. Augustine's Comment, in the 2nd Nocturn of the Office for Holy Saturday.

† Cant. vi. 12.

‡ Acts viii. 30.

Gather for thyself My flowers red with Blood ; that thou mayest be able to enter the gate of that Paradise, before whose doors are placed the Cherubims with the flaming sword turning every way.* For the knowledge which thou mayest learn of Me in fulness is able to remove the obstacle of the Cherubim. The flowers of My Blood will draw out from that turning sword those flames which are so dreadful and full of terror for thee. Enter then, O soul, that Paradise better than any other paradise, now by the sole affection of thought, that hereafter in both soul and body thou mayest be able to enter the Paradise both of earth and heaven !”

This Paradise is not to be enjoyed hurriedly ; but one ought to hover over each of the flowers of that Paradise, and suck [honey] from the petals of every single flower, scattering to the right hand and to the left their streams and drops of Blood, and so one should approach nearer to its inmost recesses. Devotion and the grace of compunction and tears, we may seek where we will : and we must consider, how cruel are the fastenings of

* Gen. iii. 24.

the nails! how bitter the tearing through of the veins and sinews in the Hands of Him who framed the heaven and the earth, and who wrought salvation in the midst of the earth!* And during the consideration of these things we must repeat again and again, "*Restore to me the joy of Thy salvation:*" † like the bee, which in her flight ever gives forth a humming, and ceases not until she enters into a flower, where she gathers and sucks out the sweetness of the wished-for honey. Oh how happy wilt thou be, if thou shalt have been permitted to enter into the bleeding flowers—I mean the Wounds—of our flowering Paradise! And, for even half an hour, shalt be altogether freed from the noise of this world and the onslaughts of temptations, and contemplating Him alone to whom thou hast entered in, shalt be able to taste and understand how good and how sweet the Lord is! ‡ And thus also must we linger over those Feet of His which are no less rich in Blood,—no less than His Hands are they also pierced through, and torn, dripping with drops of Blood.

* Ps. lxxiii. 12.

† Ps. li. 14.

‡ 1 S. Pet. ii. 3.

Finally, we may draw near to the most humble Heart of Jesus the most High through the gate of His spear-stricken side. There, indeed, is hidden an ineffable treasure of charity greatly to be desired. There is new devotion ever found. Thence is drawn forth the grace of tears. There is learned gentleness, patience in adversity, and compassion for the afflicted. Especially is a contrite and a humble heart found there. Jesus Himself desires thy embraces: He waits that He may embrace thee. His Head that should be crowned with flowers is pierced with many points of thorns, and He bows it down to thee, that He may invite thee to the kiss of peace, as though He said to thee: "Behold after what fashion I have been formed, how I have been pierced, how I have been slain, in order that I may lay thee on My shoulders—thee My sheep which had gone astray,—and bring thee back to the pastures of Paradise. Make Me some return. Be moved with compassion over My wounds: and put Me,—such as thou seest Me now,—as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thine arm,*

* Cant. viii. 6.

so that in all the thoughts of thy heart, and in all the works of thine arm, thou mayst be formed like unto Me, such as thou seest Me now. I had conformed thee to the image of My Godhead, when I created thee : I was conformed to the image of thy manhood, that I might reform thee. Thou, therefore, who hast not retained the form of My Godhead impressed upon thee in thy creation, retain at least the form of thine own manhood impressed on Me for thy regeneration. If thou retainest not that which I created thee, retain at least thyself as I created thee anew. If thou understandest not what riches of virtues I gave thee in creation, understand at least what miseries in thy manhood I accepted for thy sake in thy regeneration, when I formed thee again to richer delights than those for which I formed thee first. For this cause was I made Man and visible, that I might be seen and loved by thee, whereas in My Godhead when I was invisible I was not loved. Give thyself, then, to Me as the reward of My Incarnation and My Passion : since it was for thee I gave Myself both to be incarnate and to suffer !”

O sweetest and most loving Jesus ! Father

of lights, from whom is every best gift and every perfect gift,* mercifully look upon us who humbly confess to Thee, and who truly feel that without Thee we can do nothing. Thou who gavest Thyself a ransom for us, grant, although we are far from being worth such a price, grant us so to render ourselves wholly unto Thee, that, being conformed to the image of Thy Passion, we may be reformed after that image which we lost by sin,—even the image of Thy Godhead!

We must not omit to notice that, from the juice of the flowers which they gather, bees make their comb, that is, the wax which contains within it the honey. What is the signification of this? By wax, which is adapted to receive the form of a seal, and to feed the flame of a candle, if there be a wick in it, understand a retentive memory. And this wax contains within it the *most sweet, purifying, and clear-dropping* honey. Now we, if we are truly spiritual bees, may from the flowers of our Paradise of Nazareth,—that is, of the flower-garden of Christ who is rich in flowers,—we may compose for ourselves a

* S. James i. 17.

retentive memory, such as cannot be dissolved by any temptation. And that memory may be adapted to receive the impression of the seal,—that is, of Jesus crucified,—that we have ever in our memory Him, who says : “*Put Me as a seal.*”* The King’s Seal is the Cross. And if we bear this in the memory of our heart, we may pass safely through all the great King’s dominions, which have no end. This seal has the image of Jesus crucified, graven with many a stroke, and stamped upon the very seal of the Cross ; just as in seals the image of kings is stamped by engraving. It has also a superscription,† the title written by Pilate : “*Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews,—Jesus Nazarenus, Rex Judæorum.*” The spiritual meaning of this superscription will be attained by any one who takes care to bear this seal of the Cross imprinted on a retentive memory. He will have *Jesus*, that is salvation, which is the first word in the superscription. Now salvation, which is desired by all people of sound mind, consists in three things, which

* Cant. viii. 6.

† Compare S. Matt. xxii. 20 with S. Mark xv. 26.

are expressed in three words,—[*Nazarenus, Rex, Judæorum*]. In this word *Nazarenus*, which is interpreted ‘flowering,’ understand pleasure or delight, because the beauty of flowers gives delight. And hence in the Book of Wisdom the pleasure of the luxurious is expressed in these words: “*Let no meadow escape our riot: let us crown ourselves with roses, before they be withered.*” * In the word *Rex*, riches are expressed. For kings are accustomed to be rich, and more so than all over whom they reign. In the word *Judæorum*, glory is understood: because *Judæus* is interpreted in one way, ‘He who glories.’ Therefore he who of his own will bears the Seal of our King, Jesus crucified, will obtain *salvation*, namely, the attainment of everlasting pleasure, being made to drink of the torrent of the pleasure of the Supreme King. † He will also treasure up eternal *riches* in our most good Jesus, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ‡ And in Him he will *glory* without end, for He is high above all nations, and His glory above the heavens. §

* Wisd. ii. 8. † Ps. xxxv. 9. ‡ Col. ii. 3. § Ps. cxii. 4.

This wax also illuminates the house of our heart, and feeds in it the fire of divine charity. The wax of a retentive memory is understood by the candle : if so be there is a linen wick in it, that is, the exercise of spiritual labour ; and this is signified by the linen wick, made of flax, which is generally beaten out with much labour, so as to be brought to any usefulness. If then we expend some labour in calling to our remembrance the Passion of Christ, we may have kindled and burning within us the charity of Him, who illuminates the darkness of our ignorance, and warms the coldness of our sluggishness, so that we also may be ready to suffer for Him and with Him, who suffered first for us.

In this wax of our memory there ought to be honey, that is, delight in the recollection of the Cross ; for this is the *sweetest* honey.* What is there so bitter that cannot become sweet at the recollection of His lifegiving Passion ? We read that the Hebrews, when they went forth out of Egypt, came to some exceeding bitter water, such as none of them could so much as taste ; and yet when Moses

* See above, p. 316.

cast a tree into it, it was turned sweet,* so that they drank of it with delight. By the bitter water is evidently signified the bitterness of any adversity ; into which the tree of the Cross is cast, that is, when the Passion of our sweet Jesus is considered, and then all man's suffering seems light in view of the Lord's suffering, which He was pleased to endure for man,—He who is God and Man, the Mediator of God and Man, our Lord Jesus.

Again, it is *purifying* honey. For, indeed, there is nothing which so purifies our thoughts from the assaults and defilement of all vices, so preserves them in purity, as the constant remembrance of the Cross and Passion of the Lord Jesus.

It is also *clear-dropping* honey.† Because, contrary to the natural tendency of other liquids, in honey that which is clearest sinks down to the bottom, and the impurities rise up to the top. Now what is signified by this sinking down, but the virtue of humility? And this virtue is certainly acquired and preserved in the remembrance of our Lord's

* Exod. xv. 25.

† Descensivum.

Passion; for no one can help being humbled, when he remembers how the Lord of glory was humbled for him. It would indeed be a shameful thing for man, dust and ashes as he is, by his own self-exaltation to rise up to that height, where the angel, most perfect in all knowledge and beauty,* could not remain, because he lacked humility. Let us therefore gather in the flowers of our Vine, the Lord Jesus, such remembrance and such delight as this; that ever keeping in memory the wounds of our Crucified One, we may find such delight in Him, who alone is sweet, that by Him we may overcome all the bitterness of this present life, may be purified from every sin, and in our good works may be continually preserved by the guard of humility.

* Ezech. xxviii. 12, 15.





Chapter xlv.

ON THE ODOUR OF THE FLOWERS OF OUR VINE.

IT remains for us to declare, by the assistance of our sweet Jesus, why it is that all poisonous things are especially driven away by the odour of the flowers of the vine. The signification of this is very soon discovered, if we recognise what serpents are figures of. Now what is said of serpents may be understood also of other poisonous reptiles. And by serpents what can we more clearly understand than diabolical suggestions? Like serpents they glide unperceived through the minds of men, and then suddenly, if they are not recognised, they inflict deadly bites on the incautious. This we understand was prefigured by the children of Israel, who

were miserably destroyed by serpents in the desert. The Apostle gives the cause of this destruction, when he says: "*Neither let us tempt God, as some of them tempted Him, and were destroyed by serpents.*"* But what is to "tempt God?" Not to believe the Lord. For they were upbraided with the vice of unbelief, and therefore were slain by serpents. And what is the desert in which they were slain, but this world in which we are wandering now, having by Baptism passed over as it were the Red Sea, being delivered by our Lawgiver, the Lord Jesus, from the bondage of Egypt, by which before the grace of Baptism we were oppressed?

If, however, we were to consider the matter diligently, we should find that almost all vices arise from the vice of unbelief. For who would seek the vain glory of this world, if he perfectly believed that there was another to come, a glory in the heavens that fadeth not away, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which are laid up for the humble? † Think you [if he perfectly

* 1 Cor. x. 9.

† 1 Cor. ii. 9.

believed in this] that he would bend his mind to the glory of this world, so uncertain and transitory? Never. But the assertions that such men make, that they believe God, proceed from a kind of habit, because they see and hear almost all the world holding such a belief. But if the number of unbelievers were to increase, and the Name of Christ could not be confessed without punishment or without fear; then you would very quickly find these people openly saying with their tongues what they now hold in their hearts, and abjuring even in words Him, whom they now scruple not to deny by their deeds. It is the same with the avaricious, who care not for heavenly riches; with the envious, who look not for the praise and reward of charity; with the irritable, who possess not their souls in patience; with the idle, who refuse to undergo temporal toils for everlasting rest; with the luxurious, who fix not the eyes of their mind on heavenly pleasures; and with the gluttonous, who prefer their earthly banquets to that most delicate Bread of angels. For if all these really believed in those good things to come that

are promised, they would never pant so eagerly after earthly things. Hence, on account of their unbelief they are given over, not only to be wounded by temptation, but even to be slain by these fiery serpents with the injection of their poison—that is, by the demons who are ministers of that great and crooked serpent, the first deceiver; who deceive them and turn them after themselves, and lead to everlasting burnings those whom in this life they corrupt with the burning of their evil suggestions.

Let us now attend to the remedy, by which the vice of unbelief is corrected. The Lord said unto Moses: "*Make a brazen serpent, and set it up on a pole: whosoever shall look upon it shall be healed of the serpents' bites.*"* The mystery of this serpent—the Lord Jesus Himself took care to explain, when He said: "*As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish.*"† Do you not see whither

* *Ligno erecto*: Numb. xxi. 8. The text differs from the Vulgate.

† S. John iii. 14, 15.

we are brought? At once to our kind Jesus lifted up on the Cross, who is most excellently compared to the serpent brazen and lifted up. For the serpent is called death-bearer, because by the suggestion of the serpent death entered into the world. It is brazen, because it is molten by the fires both of charity and suffering; red with the Blood of the Passion; and hardened like brass in the resurrection, because He dieth no more.* The lifting up of the [brazen] serpent is a figure of the lifting up of Jesus crucified. This is the serpent upon which unbelievers, wounded by the evil spirits, are admonished to look, and to be converted to belief if they would be saved. For this serpent has been transformed from Moses' rod.† By the rod, the mark of royalty, understand God: and by the serpent, at whose suggestion our first parents incurred death, understand mortal man. The rod was changed into a serpent, when *the Word was made flesh,*

* Rom. vi. 9.

† The author combines the rod of Moses, in Exod. iv. 2—4, with the rod of Aaron, Exod. viii. 9—15, and possibly the blossoming rod in Numbers xvii. 8 with the brazen serpent: all these being types of Christ.

assuming that which He was not, yet remaining what He was, that is God. As, then, [the rod] which became a serpent devoured the serpents of the Egyptian magicians, so God made man brought to nought the sins and the deceits of the enemies who suggest them; especially, however, when He was lifted up upon the Cross, when He displayed the flowers of His Blood, when He poured forth through the whole world the odour of His flowers, in other words, His virtues, and healed hearts that were wounded by all kinds of vices.

Let us, therefore, also look upon the Face of the brazen serpent lifted up, upon Christ, if we would be delivered from the serpent-like suggestions of the evil demons. To look upon Him is to tend towards Him by faith: and this is accomplished not by weak, but by strong and perfect faith. The former are those who confess with their mouth that they are Christians, but by their deeds deny it: and these I do not consider tend by faith towards our kind crucified Jesus. We may to some extent show this by a similitude. For [such] faith is like wine which has only

the colour of wine, but is far from having the taste and strength of true wine. And I do not sincerely believe that wine of this description is accepted by God, but [that He requires wine] such as is commended in the Canticle of Canticles, when the Bridegroom Himself says to the spouse: "*Thy throat is as the best wine.*"* And she at once replies: "*Worthy for my Beloved to drink, and for His lips and His teeth to ruminat.*" † And after a few other words, she says: "*I will give Thee a cup of spiced wine, and new wine of my pomegranates.*" ‡ Behold what sort of wine will be pleasing to our Beloved, and what will inflame Him with love of us! For the best wine is perfect faith, when the judgment of the heart and the confession of the mouth both agree together. And that which is added, "*I will give Thee spiced wine,*" is meant to indicate faith spiced and exercised with the good works of virtues. With such faith as this we tend and hasten towards our kind God, but not with faith feigned and destitute of works, without which faith is dead. Let us,

* Cant. vii. 9.

† *Ibid.*

‡ Cant. viii. 2.

therefore, give to our Beloved, our kind God, the best wine of perfect faith, even wine flavoured with divers spices of virtues ; and so let us look upon the Face of Him who, after the likeness of the brazen serpent, hung upon the Cross for us. And as often as we find ourselves wounded by the bite of any serpent-like suggestion, let us run to the Cross, and approach to that, which was once the throne of the cross' shame, but now of the highest glory ; and looking by faith and hope and charity upon our most kind Deliverer, by the death of our Serpent, who destroyed the death of the old serpent, we may ask and be delivered from the serpents' bites.





Chapter xlvj.

*ON THE FRUIT OF OUR VINE; OR, CHRIST
SUFFERING AND CRUCIFIED FOR US.*

WE have made a much more lengthy discourse than we expected on the flowers, and yet I trust our kind Jesus, the best Leader and Teacher, has been with us, both teaching and leading us. But now, with the aid of the same Jesus, who loves and directs His own even unto the end, in whose hand are both we and our words, let us bend our thoughts upon the fruit of this same Vine, who was to redeem the expense of the flowers with the profit of His fruits. For the knowledge of the fruit of our Vine is lifted up very high, and the slowness of our feeble understanding cannot raise itself up to it. In order, therefore, to cut short all pre-

ambles, if we seek for fruit, first of all Redemption is planted in the earth [which the Lord hath] blessed, in Mary, Virgin of virgins. That true Vine, our sweet Jesus, appeared in the Nativity, was pruned in His circumcision,* was dug round by the snares † [laid for Him by the Jews], was dug through by the Nails, ‡ was bound by manifold bonds, § blossomed in His virtues, || bore fruit in His Passion, and redeemed man, whom it was not fitting to redeem in any other way.

You may, however, say : “ How can He be said to have borne fruit in His Passion, when a little before He was said to have blossomed in His Passion ? Are blossoms and fruits, then, the same ? Or, did the fruit succeed its blossom all at once without any interval of time ? We do not see that done in the natural order of things. For the blossoms come first, and an interval of some time intervenes, in order that the fruit may be brought to maturity.” We acknowledge that this is true. But the subjects we have in hand are not merely human, they are also divine ; and

* Page 5. † Page 13. ‡ Page 16.
 § Chap. iv. || Chap. xvi.

hence they do not follow in everything the natural order, but the natural order rather follows its own Creator. You will understand this more clearly, if you would diligently consider that in every kind of tree, when the fruit begins to form, the blossom falls and perishes. In the human race also, and in almost all living creatures, the fruit destroys the flower of virginity. It was not so in the Nativity of our Vine. For His most blessed Mother brought forth her blessed Fruit without losing the flower of her virginity, yea, by that wonderful and most pure bringing-forth she was adorned with greater beauty. Where is the law, where the rights of nature are done away? It is then no great marvel if, without any interval of time, the flowers of our Vine do not perish, and yet its most wholesome fruit succeeds. His fairest Mother brought Him forth without losing her virgin flower, and He Himself brought forth the fruit of our Redemption, without the fading of the flowers of His virtues. Neither is the accelerated ripeness of the fruit without its meaning. For it is well known that the ripeness of the fruit is accelerated or retarded in proportion to the

increase or decrease of the heat. See, then, the greatness of the heat, nay of the burning [charity] in our kind suffering Jesus, and you will not wonder at the acceleration of the ripening of His fruit. Beyond comparison He burned with the fire of charity within and of suffering without, in order that He might without delay produce the fruit of our Redemption. That cluster of grapes was produced, which was so longed for by all the patriarchs and prophets and other just [men of old]—namely, our Redemption. And the Church, justly gathered not only out of those who lived in the time of grace, but out of all from the beginning of the world, congratulates herself on the sweetness of this fruit when she says of her Spouse in the Canticle of love: “*I sat down under the shadow of Him whom I desired: and His Fruit was sweet to my palate.*” *

What wonder is it, if the Redemption of the just from the devil's tyranny, from darkness and the shadow of death, from the prison of Hades, where they were shut up and detained, their being brought back to Paradise,

* Cant. ii. 3.

and given in charge to the angels,—[if this were sweet]? What wonder is it that the presence of Christ was delightful and longed for, when He had been expected and desired for so long a time? To those who are in afflicting circumstances, the coming of a deliverer is generally the more grateful, the longer the affliction has lasted. And for how long a time had Abel waited, the first of the just, the first martyr, the first who by his own suffering had prefigured his Deliverer! How long had Adam himself, and Eve, our first parents—who even in Hades recalled to each other's memory the joys of Paradise—how long had they thirsted for that Redemption, together with other holy and just persons who hoped to be delivered! With what bounds they must have leaped for joy when that Crucified One came, and the angels went before Him and shouted: "*Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, ye eternal gates, and the King of Glory shall enter in!*"* With what alacrity they must have sung together, and broken forth into universal gladness in harmonious jubilees, and have

* Ps. xxiii. 7.

said : " Thou hast come, O long-desired One, for whom we waited in darkness, that Thou mightest lead out from the prisons them that are bound ! Our sighs cried out for Thee : our frequent lamentations required Thee. Thou hast become the hope of them that desire Thee : our grand consolation for ever ! " Oh how sweet was the fruit of Redemption to those who were in such long and bitter bondage !

This is the fruit of which the Spouse speaks in the Canticle of love : "*I said, I will go up to the palm-tree, and will take hold of the fruit thereof.*" * What is meant by 'to the palm-tree?' To His Cross, one part of which is said to have been made of the palm-tree. For it is reported to have been composed of four kinds of trees : the cypress, the cedar, the olive, and the palm ;—the cypress in its depth, the cedar in its length, the olive in its breadth, and the palm in its height. And hence the Apostle says : "*That you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth.*" † Now in the Cross that piece of wood which was fixed

* Cant. vii. 8.

† Eph. iii. 18.

in the earth is called *the depth*; and on this was the part that stood erect, to which the back of our Lord was applied when He was crucified, and which is *the length* of the Cross. The beam that was placed across this, and to which His Hands were fastened, is styled *the breadth* of the Cross. And that which was placed upon it by Pilate, on which His triumphal Title was written, is called *the height*. All these kinds of wood have also each their mystical meaning, according to their characteristics. The *cypress* signifies fear or humility, and there is the root of the Cross; and humility is expressed not only by its humble position, but also by its nature; for, it is said, the cypress drives away by its scent serpents, that is devils, whose proper character, pride, is driven away by the virtue of humility. The *cedar*, a tree surpassing other trees in length, signifies the length of the Cross, that is perseverance, or patience. For it is esteemed for its natural strength, since it is very durable, and of a nature that it cannot be corrupted. The *olive*, a tree that yields oil, by which are signified the works of mercy, typifies charity; and this tree has

appropriately the breadth of the Cross, because charity is broad, and it is enjoined to be extended even to enemies. The *palm*, however, a tree symbolising victory, excellently signifies the height of the Cross, or that hope is to be had from above, and is not to be depressed into the depths. This tree has on it the triumphal Title written, in which the fruit of the Cross is found. For Christ was crucified in order that He might redeem man. And the word which says *I will go up to the palm-tree*, by a part of the Cross signifies the whole Cross—and appropriately by the palm, on which is found the Title, the sign of Redemption.

But some one may say : “ You were going to speak of the fruit of the vine, and you are speaking of the fruit of the palm-tree. What has the palm to do with the vine ? ” To this I reply : “ The palm-tree signifies the Cross : the vine Him who is crucified. Tell me, then, Is the fruit of the Cross different from that of the Crucified ? I think not. Then also is the fruit of the vine and of the palm one and the same.” The Vine goes up to the palm-tree, takes hold of the fruit of the

palm-tree, not that fruit which the palm-tree had of itself, but that of the Vine stretched out upon the palm-tree. Wherefore, then, does the Vine Himself say : "*I will take hold of the fruit thereof,*" and not rather "of my own fruit;" since the palm has fruit from the Vine, not the Vine from the palm? I answer, Christ had not this fruit without the palm-tree, yea it was even by the palm, that is by the Cross; for if Christ had not been crucified, Redemption had not been secured. Therefore Christ took hold of the fruit of the Cross, that fruit which He Himself has wrought by the Cross.

This cluster hath many grapes; namely, the fulfilment of Scripture, victory over the devil, the glory of the Resurrection, the wonderful exaltation of the Ascension, the sending of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

1. Of the *fulfilment of Scripture* our Lord Himself gives testimony, when He says to Peter : "*The Chalice which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?*"* "*How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that so it must be done?*"† And in another place : "*All things*

* S. John xviii. 11.

† S. Matt. xxvi. 54.

*must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning Me.”**

2. The victory over the devil, although it might have been accomplished in another way, yet it was not fitting that it should in any other way [but this].† For he trifles greatly who imagines that the wisdom of our God and Lord ordered anything, but that which was most excellent. It was necessary that he, who had overcome man by the tree, should himself be overcome by man and by the tree; “*ut unde mors oriebatur, inde vita resurgeret; et qui in ligno vincebat, in ligno quoque vinceretur*”—(that from whence death came, thence life might arise; and that he who overcame by the tree, might also by the tree be overcome).‡ Now by this it is evident that [this victory must be accomplished] by a Man who was God, and not by a simple man; for all men were liable to sin, and no one could loose the bonds of others, who was

* S. Luke xxiv. 44.

† S. Anselm enters very fully into this question in his *Cur Deus Homo*.

‡ Preface in *Missa De Cruce*.

not able to loose himself. But Christ the Mighty One,* who owed no debt to original sin, in that by a singular prerogative of birth He was conceived without carnal concupiscence, and He who alone was "*free among the dead,*"† alone could free the dead from death; as saith the Apostle: "*He needeth not, as the other priests, to offer sacrifice for himself, first for his own sins, and then for the people's.*" ‡

If, however, it be inquired, wherefore God was pleased to deliver man by Himself rather than by any other creature, we may truly attribute this to His charity; and that He might commend this charity of His to us, He was not only incarnate, but He also died for us. § Moreover, by this He gave us a pattern of charity, that we should be ready, when necessity requires, to lay down our lives for our brethren, since we see our King hath laid down His life for us. || There is also still a further reasonable cause wherefore we have been redeemed by our Lord: viz. that it would not have been fitting for us to be created anew by anyone else than by Him, by whom

* Isa. ix. 6. † Ps. lxxxvii. 6. ‡ Heb. vii. 27.

§ Rom. v. 8, 9.

|| 1. S. John iii. 16.

we were created first. For our new creation, as we have often remarked above, excites us to charity, even more than our original creation. If, then, we had been created anew by another than Him, by whom we were originally created, we should have owed more to our regenerator than to our Creator; and so should have loved a creature more than the Creator,* and this would have been wholly out of order. Hence, that He might stir us up to love Him with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength, our most good God hath bestowed upon us all that He could in creating, and creating us anew, and in the bestowal of His benefits no stranger hath a part.

Let us, therefore, with all our desires embrace the fruit of our Redemption, and let us often, nay without ceasing, call it to remembrance, and with the tongue of our understanding taste the sweetness that is hidden in that fruit; and let us store up in the vessel of our memory the unadulterated blood of this grape,—the Blood, I say, of our ruddy Jesus. For He is made unto us Redemption,†

* Rom. i. 25.

† 1 Cor. i. 30.

because by Him we are saved and delivered. By these flowers, and by this fruit, wherewith she has been redeemed from the devil's tyranny, the faithful soul is to be refreshed continually, that she may not faint in this weary wilderness, where she labours without rest and without respite, sighing after that land flowing with milk and honey, and crying out with the spouse: "*Stay me up with flowers, compass me about with apples: because I languish with love.*"* She is not ignorant of the nature and the dignity of the fruit of her Vine, the Tree of life, Jesus Christ. For sometimes she strews the bed of her conscience with the flowers of the virtues and of the Passion of her Spouse, and she cries out to Him in the same Cantic of love: "*Lectulus noster floridus,—Our bed is flowery,†—flowery,* not with any other flowers but Thine, O sweet Jesus! Come, then, and acknowledge Thine own flowers: repose in the bed adorned with Thine own flowers!" With those flowers the spouse asks to be "stayed up" by the friends of the Bridegroom,‡ the preachers of the Word of God.

* Cant. ii. 5. † Cant. i. 15. ‡ S. John iii. 29.

For she knows what virtue they have, what effects they work in her,—these flowers called to remembrance by the ministry of the Word ; how they strengthen her in the temptations and perils of this life, and how they inflame her desire after the heavenly country. And I doubt not but that same spouse has been introduced sometimes into the Garden of the Holy Scriptures of her Bridegroom, where doubtless she has found the Tree of life, the true Vine, whose fruit she takes hold of eagerly, turning it over and over in her mind, and considering diligently and with clearness of perception what precious fruit it is that she has obtained from the ardour of her Beloved, yea from her Beloved Himself. Such an one infallibly feels how much love she owes to Him, how much comfort and strength to overcome all dangers she must surely derive from that most fruitful spiritual draught, which she has drawn from that much-loved Tree. Hence it is, that she longs oftentimes to call to remembrance these flowers, and this fruit : because she prays to be stayed up with the flowers that she may not fall, and to be compassed about with the fruit that she may

not be moved. For she knows what virtue they have,—the odour of those flowers, and the savour of this fruit.

Now that which she adds, "*because I languish with love,*" is nothing else than that the spouse, inflamed with desire after the heavenly country, does not brook a long delay. And hence, in the same strain, she says: "*O daughters of Jerusalem, tell my Beloved, that I am sick with love.*"* What is that love so strong, and yet bringing on sickness? Is it not the love of which it is written: "*Love is strong as death?*" † What sort of strength is this, which brings on weakness? Let those reply, who have read the solution of this question in the book of experience. I said 'of experience.' And why not 'of wisdom,' which has its name from savour? ‡ They, then, who have read in the book of wisdom—that is, they who have experienced the interior flavour,—let them tell and teach us what that love is, which, while it is strong as death, yet makes lovers sick even to death: for by the death of this body, and not before, they are healed. They may indeed, in the

* Cant. v. 8. † Cant. viii. 6. ‡ *Sapientia,—a sapore,*

meantime,—while they remain in this mortal life, or rather in this living death,—by the flowers and fruits of their Beloved and their desired One, they may be consoled, but not satisfied ; until the day cometh for which they long with the Prophet, saying : “ *I shall be satisfied when Thy glory shall appear.* ” * And in another place : “ *Thou shalt fill me with joy with Thy countenance : at Thy right hand are delights even to the end.* ” † Of this ‘ right hand ’ it is elsewhere written : “ *His left hand is under my head, and His right hand shall embrace me.* ” ‡ And see how admirably this authority agrees with what went before. The *left hand* of the Beloved expresses the remembrance of His love, greater than which is none, for by it He laid down His life for His friends. § In the *right hand* is seen the beatific vision of God, which He has promised to His friends, and joy in the presence of the Divine Majesty. That vision of God which also maketh divine, || that incomparable love of the divine presence, well deserves to

* Ps. xvi. 15.

† Ps. xv. 11.

‡ Cant. ii. 6.

§ S. John xv. 13.

|| *Deifica.* See 2 S. Pet. i. 4; and 1 S. John iii. 2.

be attributed to the right hand, of which it is delightfully sung, "*at Thy right hand are delights even to the end.*" That love of remembrance, and always to be remembered, is well assigned to the left hand: that upon it the spouse may lean and repose, until iniquity shall pass away. Well, therefore, is the left hand of the Bridegroom under the spouse's head, so that upon it her head may lean and be sustained,—in other words, that she may have the intention of her mind bent upon it, that she may not incline to carnal and worldly desires; for the corruptible body is a load upon the soul, and the earthly habitation presseth down the mind that museth upon many things.* Hence the same thing is signified by the flowers and the fruit of our Vine, and by the left Hand of the same Spouse; but the healing of our sickness by His right Hand.

They who have placed their hope and confidence in no fading things, seek to be stayed up with these flowers and fruit of our Vine, and glory in not being sustained by any other love. But that soul alone, who is sick

* Wisd. ix. 15.

of bodily and worldly cares for love and desire of her Beloved,—yea, and even dies of this love—she it is to whom is said : “ *Who is this that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning upon her Beloved?*” * From the desert of this world she goeth up, who hath bound her heart with the Heart of her Beloved in the bonds of that love, seeking those things which are above, not those which are upon the earth. † And hence she is flowing with the delights of virtues, being anointed as with ointment of divers spices, which she has gathered from the Paradise of her Beloved, following Him who suffered for her and left her an example. ‡ Hence it is also well said, “ *Leaning upon her Beloved;*” not upon man, for “ *Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm;*” § nor upon any earthly things, for these she counteth all as dung, that she may gain Christ. || Therefore such a soul,—which now is stayed up with the flowers and fruit of the true Vine her Spouse, which now is sick even to death for

* Cant. viii. 5. † Col. iii. 1, 2. ‡ 1 S. Pet. ii. 21.

§ Jer. xvii. 5.

|| Philipp. iii. 8.

love of Him, saying with holy Job : "*I have done with hope, I shall now live no longer ;*"* —such a soul, I say, will merit hereafter to be embraced in an ineffable manner by the most sweet right Hand of her Spouse, and to be satiated with the fruit of everlasting gladness, when her sickness will not only be healed, but also increased. For the sickness of her intolerable desire will be healed by the most glad fruition of her Beloved whom she desired, and yet that same desire will not be taken away, yea, it will be increased. Only then it will be no longer sickness, but the absence of weariness, when the longing shall be fully satiated with the longed-for Object ; and the satiated one shall learn in satiety to long still, and desire shall generate satiety, and satiety shall bring forth desire by a mutual generation which shall never end, and which cannot be explained. But let us now return to our grapes.

3. There is a third grape in the cluster of our Redemption, the *Resurrection* of our Lord. And who can unfold the amount of sweetness that this grape had, and has still ?

* Job vii. 16.

Let a man lay up, if anyone can, in his heart the unspeakable greatness of His most blessed and most sad Passion. Let him see with what desperation of grief were stricken the hearts of those lovers of the suffering Jesus. Let him behold the lamentations of those faithful women who forsook not our sweetest Jesus on His way to the place of His Passion, when He carried His own Cross, and when He breathed out His most sweet Soul. Let him especially look upon her,—then a weak Woman gazing, now the empress of the world,—the Mother of our Lord, how sharp a sword of sorrow pierced through her soul! Let him see the whole fabric of the world sympathising with its Creator, and shrouded in black darkness. Let him behold, I say, these things, and then add on to this mighty tempest the calm serenity of the Third Day, and the unhopèd-for gladness of the most glad Resurrection; and let him think over more at length, with what exceeding joy they received their Lord rising again from the dead, whom they had seen dying with such intense sadness. See with what delight He hath, in His Resurrection, recom-

pensed the disciples for that sadness of theirs at the most holy Supper of His last eating with them, at which He said: "*I will not drink from henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I shall drink it new with you.*" * Behold, the true Vine hath now risen again in glory, and He eateth and drinketh with the same disciples, doubtless with the greatest joy, and to some who doubted He offered Himself to be both seen and handled !

And let not anyone imagine that He rose again for the joy of the disciples only. Yea, for us also and for the whole world He rose again, and pronounced those blessed, who though they do not see, yet believe † that He suffered for our sins and rose again for our justification. By this we are taught, that if we shall be partakers in the suffering, we shall be also in His resurrection ; ‡ and that we may not doubt that our mortal bodies shall be raised in the glory of the resurrection, since we believe that our Head hath risen again, who was condemned to the most shameful death. "*For as in Adam all die, so also*

* S. Matt. xxvi. 29.

† S. John xx. 29.

‡ Rom. vi. 5.

in Christ all shall be made alive."* For Christ, the firstfruits of them that sleep [hath risen first]; then they that are of Christ, at His coming,† and after the example of Christ rising again, they also shall rise again to glory never more to die.

4. The *Ascension* is also another grape in the cluster of the Redemption wrought by the Passion. It is a sweet grape, containing in itself a vast store of sweetness, causing joy both in heaven and on earth. For who can doubt that great joy was caused to the disciples, when they saw Him penetrating as Man into the heavenly places? They stood gazing up into heaven with both mind and heart, and they could not contain the joy of their souls; but with the voice of jubilee they congratulated their Lord on His way.‡ Without a doubt heaven also rejoiced; all the choirs of angels came to meet their Lord empurpled with the state-robe of our flesh, and with the loftiest praises welcomed the supreme Conqueror. If at the coming of a single just man or martyr all the angelic choir rejoices,

* 1 Cor. xv. 22.

† *Ibid.* v. 23.

‡ S. Luke xxiv. 52, 53.

how exceedingly must the spirits of all the angel ranks have exulted at the coming of their own special Emperor? Man's understanding fails before the magnificence of this praise and joy. Nevertheless, we also may rejoice, and wonder as we call to mind the sweetness of this grape; in loving contemplation we may suck its juice, and rejoice in the Holy Ghost for that a portion of our flesh is, in our sweetest Lord, seated on high in the supreme throne of the most Holy Trinity. And we too may strain our minds, as far as we can, after Him and in Him, supplicating Him in the spirit of humility that He would deign to draw us after Him, that we may run in the odour of His ointments,* and may deserve to be brought in to that cellar of wine,† that supreme store-room of spices, that inner Holy of Holies, whither Christ Himself, our Head, is gone before.

5. The fifth grape of our cluster is the *Mission of the Holy Ghost*. Who can adequately explain the most delightful wine of this grape? Wine, I say, and, if you like it better, new wine. For no sooner had the

* Cant. i. 3.

† Cant. ii. 4.

Holy Ghost been received by the Apostles, and by those who with them were waiting for Him, than they were inebriated, and they conceived a good word, and spake in divers tongues the wonderful works of God.* Before, they hid themselves for fear : now, they ran out abroad. They no longer feared the many waters of the raging populace, for they were burning with the fire of charity. Then, for certain, did they experience the truth of that which is written : “ *Many waters cannot quench charity, neither can the floods drown it.*” † For the floods of the powers [of evil] arose against them, the waters of multitudes of people came in torrents, the winds and storms of threatening words blew; and yet the fire of charity was not quenched, yea, it was even augmented. The Apostles “ *went from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus.*” ‡ The fire of charity was augmented, for many more were set on fire by their preaching, and burned with the same gladness which consumed them. But what said the Jews who disbelieved all these good

* Acts ii. 4, 11. † Cant. viii. 7. ‡ Acts v. 41.

things? They said: "*These men are full of new wine.*"* Liars and ignorant as they were, yet they said the truth. For they were filled with that most noble wine of the charity of God,—yea, with God who is charity,—inflaming them to love and fortifying them against fear. And hence, as new wine does not allow itself to be confined in a vessel, unless it has a vent by which it can burst forth, so [in bursting forth] from these men's hearts through their mouths the new wine of the Holy Ghost manifested itself, as they spake with marvellous eloquence the wonderful works of God. The draught of this new wine, far from checking, only stimulated their tongues; that that verse of the poet might be found true:—

"Fœcundi calices quem non fecere disertum?"†
(Whom has not the fruitful bowl made eloquent?)

The fruitful and glorious Chalice of the Lord has indeed inebriated them; since, as the Apostle says: "*The charity of God is poured forth in their hearts.*"‡ But our words seem to be contradicted by the words of S. Peter, who was made so bold with a

* Acts ii. 13. † Hor., lib. i. Epist. 5. ‡ Rom. v. 5.

draught of this new wine, that now he no longer feared, not merely any words of any woman, as before, but not even the words of princes. He put himself forward in the midst of the crowd, and said, that the disciples were not drunk with wine. But let us hear his own words distinct and clear: "*For these men,*" he says, "*are not drunken, as you suppose.*"* For they are not drunken with new wine of earth, as you think, but with the Spirit from heaven. Let us also, beloved, draw deep draughts of the most glad wine of this grape. Even if we have not wherein to draw, † viz. a vessel of understanding, let us run with full confidence to our provident and only Creator, whose workmanship we are, and let us pray Him to form in our soul a vessel capable of holding this most sweet new wine; so that, receiving our Consoler, the seven-fold Spirit of grace, we may escape the manifold snares of our adversary, the tempter; and may put the feet of our affections into the fetters of wisdom, ‡ so that, being bound in the bond of charity with Wisdom Herself, we may unceasingly and unweariedly run after

* Acts ii. 15. † S. John iv. 11. ‡ Ecclus. vi. 25.

her, until we attain to the fulness of her savour ; and there no longer through a glass and in a dark manner, but face to face, we shall see our King in His beauty,* and know even as we are known.†

Here, I think, we ought to notice that the fruit of our Vine is both eaten and drunk. For the grape is chewed, but the wine which is contained in the grape is drunk : and there is pleasure in both ; but in the wine, both the pleasure and the utility are of longer duration : and this seems to me to appertain to the enjoyment of this cluster of which we have spoken. For in the life that now is, we chew these grapes, when we discuss with the teeth of our understanding the delight and utility of our Redemption ; when we turn over in the consideration of our hearts the power of the Resurrection, the glory of the Ascension, and the utility of the coming of the Holy Ghost, as grapes in the mouth, and from these sometimes there comes a certain gladness in our heart. But this gladness shall be full, when time or the change of times shall have ceased,—when we shall no longer eat

* Isa. xxxiii. 17.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

these things, but drink them, and obtain from them an everlasting gladness beyond all price. For in eating there is a certain labour ; but that which is drunk, is taken in without trouble. And hence in eating the delight, whatever it may be, of whatever kind, or however great, is not perceived without the body ; but this body is always a load upon the soul.* But by draughts, quaffed without trouble, are signified the joys of that place and of that time, in which there shall be no longer any more mourning, nor crying, nor any sorrow, for all these shall have passed away.† And He who standeth fast from eternity,—who for us, that we might not pass away as a shadow,‡ became as one that passeth away,§—He shall minister to us|| [this new wine]. There, no longer with labour and fear and the hindrance of the body of this death shall we *eat*, but with great delight we shall *drink* the wine of our Redemption. And such shall be the nature of that noble wine, that the more we drink, although we shall be satisfied, yet the more we shall thirst,¶ won-

* Wisd. ix. 15. † Apoc. xxi. 4. ‡ Job xiv. 2.
§ Jerem. xiv. 8. || S. Luke xii. 37. ¶ Ecclus. xxiv. 29.

dering at and praising without end and without intermission the marvellous goodness of our Redeemer, which He was pleased to show towards us in the fruit of our Redemption.

See now if this difference between eating and drinking be not set forth to us in words of the Spouse in the Canticle of love, where He says : "*Eat, O friends, and drink, and be inebriated, my dearly beloved.*" * He first exhorts us to eat, and this indeed belongs to the life that now is, in which, as we have said, contemplation is mingled with the labour of action. But in the life to come, which has no action, we shall thoroughly enjoy delights as from a wine-cup, for we shall drink and be inebriated with the abundance of the house of God, and drink of the torrent of His pleasures. † Then shall we recognize clearly how exceeding dear we are to our King and Spouse ; when all the water of labour and earthly activity shall be changed into the wine of divine contemplation, and all the water-pots shall be filled even up to the brim. For all shall be filled with the good things of the house of the Lord, when those longed-for

* Cant. v. 1.

† Ps. xxxv. 9.

nuptials of Christ and His Spouse the Universal Church shall be celebrated ; and we shall drink in supreme gladness of heart, and all shall cry aloud to the Lord, and say: "*Thou hast kept the good wine until now.*"* However, we admit that this gladness is also signified by eating, since it is written: "*that you may eat and drink at My Table in My Kingdom;*" † although the explanation of the authority above mentioned may be extended also to this passage.

If anyone asserts that it would be an unworthy thing, if so great a Vine, so laborious and so laboriously cultivated, should produce only one cluster of grapes ; such an one may, if he will, call those clusters which we have called grapes, and add to each of them a multitude of grapes. Nevertheless, we may with reason find even here innumerable clusters on our Vine, if we choose to look at all the churches, all the monasteries, all the congregations that there are in the Universal Church. Who has produced these clusters, but our Vine? For Christ and His Church are one Vine, as they are one Body. Each congrega-

* S. John ii. 7, 10.

† S. Luke xxii. 30.

tion is a particular cluster. And the grapes express the individuality of the persons composing these congregations; and not inappropriately, as it appears to me. For by the outside skin of the grape is expressed the body; by the pulp, the bones; and by the juice is figured the soul, or the blood, which is the seat of the soul. At a man's death his soul is forced out of his body, as the wine is pressed out of the skin; and if it be found worthy, it is conveyed into the royal cellar of the heavenly Paradise, that it may be a joy to the heavenly King and to His guests, the blessed ones, who are called and who have come to the nuptials of the Lamb.* For the Spouse Himself also drinketh His own wine of His Vine and His vineyard, the Church, of which He is Himself the Head. He drinketh also Himself of the most pure blood of grapes: in other words, the souls of Saints pressed out and separated from their bodies in the wine-press of the Cross, in labour and thirst, in cold and nakedness, in many vigils and in other spiritual exercises. He shall drink these, that is, He shall delightfully incorporate them into

* Apoc. xix. 9.

Himself, and bring it to pass that, being made one Spirit with Him, they shall with Him and in Him from henceforth rest from all their labours.* Let them fear and take heed to themselves, those rotten grapes—I mean false brethren, perverse Christians—who have within them, not wine but poison, who refuse to be pressed in the winepress of the Cross, and are not in the labour of men.† Let them take heed, while there is time, that they be not cast forth to the swine, that is to the devils, to be devoured ; for into the King's wine-cellar there is no way save through the winepress of the Cross.

There was something left for us to say on the second crop of flowers on our Vine, and on their fruits, according to that which is written : “ *And my flesh hath flowered again—et reffloruit caro mea,*”‡ and this no one can doubt is spoken of the Resurrection, the fruit of which will be the glory of the second resurrection. But we had rather leave our reader thirsty than wearied, and so we put a stop to this discourse ; being ready to amend it, to

* Apoc. xiv. 13. † Ps. lxxii. 5. ‡ Ps. xxvii. 7.

cut off from it, and to alter it, if in any part we have said anything contrary to faith, and contrary to the Holy Scriptures. And in all things we humbly render thanks to Him, who by His gratuitous grace hath taught us, who openeth the mouth of the dumb, and maketh eloquent the tongues of infants, to whose Name we consecrate anew the beginning and the end of this little work, even our most good and most sweet Jesus. Amen.

LAUDETUR JESUS CHRISTUS IN SÆCULA,
AMEN.



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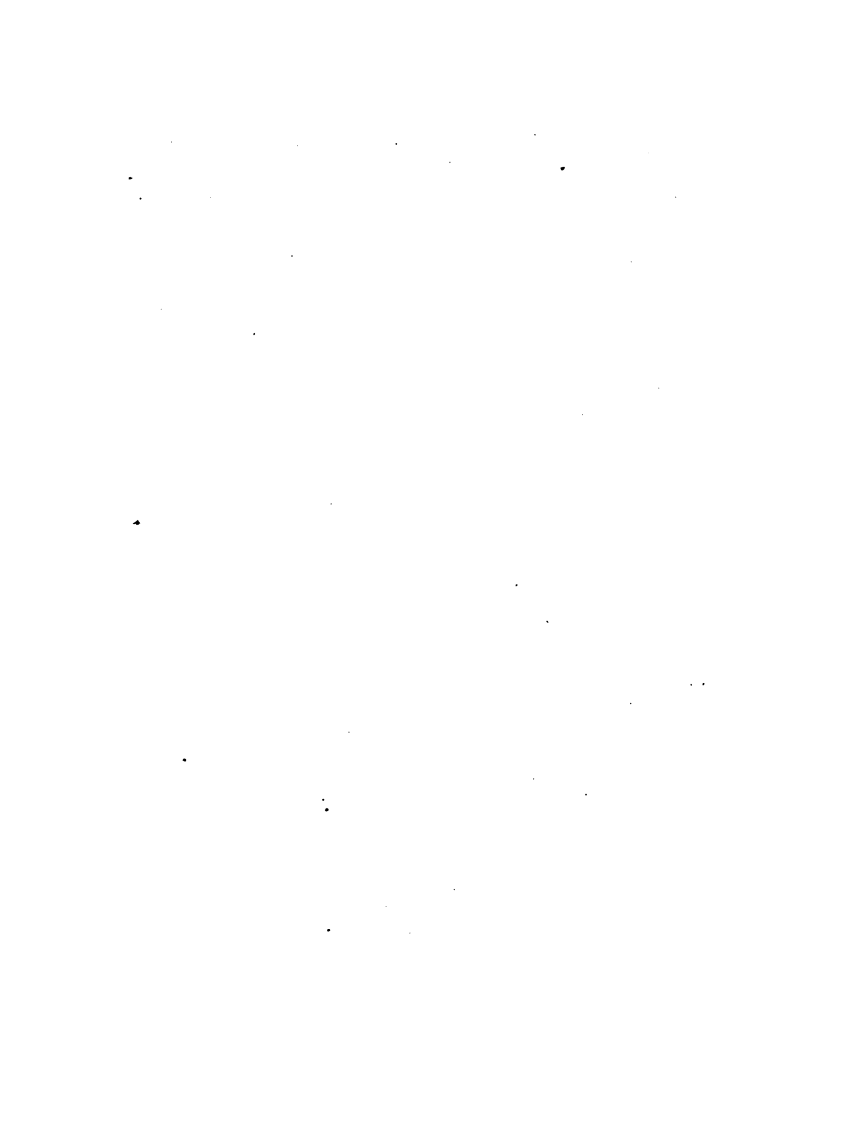
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