

SAINT PETER DAMIAN

APOLOGY ON CON-
TEMPT OF THE WORLD

Apologeticum de Contemptu Saeculi

SABBATISMUS

Saint Peter Damian (1007–1072)
Apologeticum de Contemptu Saeculi · Apology on Contempt of the
World

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TWELFTH WORK. A DEFENSE CONCERNING
THE CONTEMPT OF THE WORLD. TO AL-
BIZO THE HERMIT AND PETER THE MONK*ARGUMENT.*

In this little book, he deplores with all the contention of his spirit the miserable state of religion in his time, daily slipping into a worse condition on account of the contempt for monastic discipline. He inveighs against the monks who, although they profess to have renounced the world, are nevertheless held entangled by worldly tides and affairs. He complains that among them the laws and institutes of the Fathers are of no authority, since indeed, fearing nothing, each one possesses and everywhere seeks money, which they are forbidden to have for themselves under penalty of the most grievous sacrilege. He emphasizes their levity and inconstancy, in that they do not remain in their cells as they ought, but wander about everywhere, from which it happens that they fall into the most grievous sins. He detests their pride and arrogance, in that they use showy garments and are seekers of popular favor through feigned probity. Then he graphically describes and places before the eyes the external occupations and the burdens of secular affairs in which they entangle themselves. Finally, he concludes by beseeching them that, if they have any care for their own salvation, they should withdraw themselves completely from the world and make it clear to all

that they have renounced the world in reality, not just in appearance.

[A DEFENSE CONCERNING THE CONTEMPT
OF THE WORLD.]

CHAPTER I. A complaint concerning the decline of monastic discipline.

Concerning the contempt of this world, dearest brothers—namely Albizo, the venerable hermit, and Peter, once a rhetorician of the world, now a philosopher of Christ—we have often, as you know, been accustomed to dispute with a certain familiar zeal, and have both lamented our own imperfection and complained about certain brothers of this sacred warfare who wander through precipices. Indeed, this world is daily sinking into such dregs, becoming worse than itself, that not only does every order of whatever condition, whether secular or ecclesiastical, lie collapsed from its proper state, but even monastic discipline itself, utterly cast down, so to speak, languishes far from its accustomed perfection of loftiness. Shame has perished, honor has vanished, religion has fallen, and, as if forming a battle line, the whole crowd of holy virtues has departed far away. For "all seek what is their own" (Philippians 2), and, despising celestial desire, they insatiably covet the earth. And because they do not cease to gape for things even at the very end of the world, it is as if, having been carried to the shore after the high seas, they strike the land in vain with their oars, while they still

stubbornly hasten to sail. And although the end of labor is without doubt rest, those to whom a place of rest is freely offered are penally fatigued by a superfluous zeal for labor.

But let it be that the sons of this age are tossed about in the wave-wandering flood of worldly storms, and now scatter the seeds in which they take greater delight, only to reap afterwards not the fruits they wished for. For what is it to me, according to the Apostle, to judge concerning those who are in the world? (I Cor. V). But we, who are said to have renounced the world, who glory in having escaped the shipwreck of the earthly tide, why do we slide back to it again, as if violently absorbed by some vortex? Why, striving with backward steps, do we grow warm again with ill-seething desire for those things which we scorned for the sake of divine love? Why do we not fear to seek again, with the importunity of dishonest ambition, that which neither earthly laws nor the authority of divine law had forbidden us to possess? Furthermore, we ourselves have brought it about that what was justly possessed by us should no longer be ours, and that which was under our jurisdiction should pass over and come into another's dominion. What counsel was it, therefore, to bring ourselves into so perilous a contest, that now it should be necessary to fight against the decrees of all human and divine laws, by whose peace we were, in fact, enjoying ourselves? For we indeed, though not at all provoked, have with spontaneous reckless-

ness started a war, and now we do not fear to contend against the sentences of Holy Scripture.

Who, I ask, compelled Ananias and Sapphira to renounce their own property? (Acts 5) But because each of them retained a part of the money as if to sustain a long life, they did not escape the sentence of sudden death. And because they were by no means content to live according to the rule of those who have renounced, they were compelled, according to the punishment for transgressors, to expire unhappily by a premature end. And indeed, they, being unlearned and newly come to the faith, had perhaps not yet fully learned the evangelical precepts, nor had the sacred books of the new doctrine yet gone forth to the public for common use; nevertheless, having sinned in a certain simple way in the very apprenticeship of faith, they were punished, by a strict but pious judgment, we believe, only with the death of the body. But we, who know all the volumes of sacred eloquence, who keep before our eyes with constant examination the lives and precepts of innumerable holy Fathers existing after that golden age of the apostles, what excuse shall we be able to offer, what argument for evasion shall we be able to find before the tribunal of Christ? Behold, we have not only left behind far nobler gains and all earthly profits, but we have also professed a perpetual renunciation of them not to man, but rather to God. If, therefore, a coin is still enclosed in our purse, if any amount of money is reserved, to the injury of the internal spectator, what shall we say to Him when render-

ing an account? By what art of defense shall we clear ourselves? To this is added that they, with their faith still wavering, seemed unable to trust in any ecclesiastical support; doubtless because in the very beginning of the Christian religion, the churches themselves had not yet been constructed as material buildings.

But we, who see everywhere on earth such very large patrimonies of the churches that daily, while the world is contracted with diminished possession, the Church is most copiously expanded; if we set aside carnal profit as if for future sustenance, while we grow rich by providing for ourselves for the future, we show ourselves to be empty of the treasure of faith. 246 Concerning which the Apostle says: "We have," he says, "this treasure in earthen vessels (II Cor. 4)." And when we break the bond which we have made with Christ, we should rather fear the torments for violated faith than hope for rewards from our conversion. For in the agreement of a pact, which is made between two, the voice of the pledge proceeds from both sides: so that, to be sure, whichever of the two shall have kept the agreements, receives the measure of the intended fruit; on the contrary, he who shall have transgressed, incurs the loss for the violated pledge.

But in that pact which we made with our God, our voice was without doubt this: that in following Christ, we promised to renounce the world and all that is of the world. The divine voice, however, consequently responded to these things: "Amen," it says, "I say to you, that you who have

followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the seat of his majesty, you also shall sit upon twelve seats, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. 19)." And this, indeed, if we keep the laws of the proposed pledge; otherwise, if we look behind, we soon hear the terrible oracle of the divine threat: "No one," it says, "putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God (Luke 9)." Behold, we have heard that to those who renounce perfectly are promised not just any gifts, but seats, on which, made judges, they will preside—they who once feared to be judged for their own excesses. Doubtless it was fitting that this change of the right hand of the Most High should occur, so that those who for the love of perfection were made poor for Christ, now made rich with Him, might sit together as senators of the celestial court, as it is written: "Her husband is noble in the gates, when he sitteth with the senators of the land (Prov. 31).

CHAPTER IV.

That a monk cannot possess Christ and money at the same time.

But he who returns to the earthly things he has left behind by accumulating them, just as he is a stranger to the world which he has resolved to cast off, so also is he no longer fit for the kingdom of God, which he has undoubtedly refused to possess when it was offered. A foolish traveler, indeed, he can neither return to whence he has ir-

revocably departed, nor has he reached where he had intended to go. For when we renounced the world, we established God as our property; and consequently, we have been made His property, so that He might be our portion, and we His special inheritance. For we say: "You are my portion, O Lord" (Psalm 118). And He says to us: "You are the work of my hands, my inheritance, O Israel" (Isaiah 19). For concerning earthly inheritance it is written: "An inheritance gotten hastily at the beginning, in the end shall be without a blessing" (Proverbs 20). If, therefore, almighty God Himself deigns to be our portion, what kind of riches, I ask, will anyone be able to acquire that he ought deservedly to heap upon this singular treasure? For that treasure is of such a kind that, if it is alone, all riches can be truly possessed in it. For in the heart of Jesus are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2). But if he who possesses this treasure should wish to pile upon it other and foreign riches, it immediately disdains entirely the companionship of a vile and ignoble abundance; and, impatient of an unworthy companion, it is lost while it is thought to be retained; and in this way it flies from the hands of its frustrated possessor: "For no one can serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6).

Therefore, O monk, do you wish to store Christ in your coffer? First, cast out the coin; for they are not suitably joined in one receptacle; for if you enclose both together, you, an empty possessor, will find one without the other. For the more you abound in the paltry gains of the world, the

more wretchedly you are emptied of true riches. Therefore, if there is a coin, let it pass at once into another's possession, so that Christ may find the coffer of your breast empty. For a great guest seeks to descend into the narrow confines of your lodging, and for that reason He wishes to dwell alone and without companions. He whom the vastness of heaven and earth cannot contain, how do you strive to bring in foreign companions to cohabit with Him in a tiny corner of your dwelling? Let earthly money yield, let it yield, where the heavenly treasure is admitted: "For what fellowship has light with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6). What agreement has God with the mammon of iniquity? Let money, therefore, be cast away, which is subject to rust and moth and thieves. Let the chamber of the heart be empty, that it may be filled with heavenly merchandise: "Do not," He says, "lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where rust and moth destroy, and where thieves break in and steal" (Matthew 6).

For money is more dangerous for the soul when it is being acquired than when it is possessed as something readily available. In the latter case, indeed, there is a just possession in an earthly manner, but in the former, a deadly ambition often reigns. It would have been more salutary, therefore, to possess what one has with a quiet mind, than to seek again what was cast aside, not without a certain anxiety of troubled rancor. Therefore, be ashamed, O soldier of Christ, to grow rich in this world with perishable

wealth, lest in the future you be forced, naked and destitute, to beg perpetually. For you have sworn by the arms of such a militia, which seeks naked and agile warriors; but it keeps those who are burdened and sluggish in God away from the watches of the camp, exempt from the donative. That militia renounces the one heavily burdened with baggage, and deservedly substitutes the unburdened one for him, shamefully and before his time. It is not permitted there for purses of coins to hang, where only the sheaths of gleaming weapons are seen. Namely, in the line of battle, one does not safely serve inert money, where the conflict is waged with constant struggle in crowded ranks. That man does not safely count the sum of his coins, who, surrounded by a multitude of enemies, constantly expects the flying of projectiles. For often in such situations, while a talent of whatever metal is being weighed, an unexpected arrow, coming from a hidden enemy, pierces the stomach of the one weighing it; and so it happens that he who seemed least able to be sufficient for himself alone, without the support of his household property, now laments that by a sudden misfortune he has irretrievably lost both himself and his possessions; and he who disdained to live poor with Christ in freedom, is compelled, rich without Him but a slave to money, to perish damnably. Hear what the divine voice promises to the rich: "Woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation (Luke 16)." And let this not escape you, which James says: "Woe to you who are rich; your riches

have rotted, and your garments are moth-eaten, your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be a testimony against you, and will eat your flesh like fire (James 3)."

Have you heard, I ask, O money-worshipper (nummicola) and monk, what the heat of avarice brings forth for you? Have you heard to what end hoarded money leads? For it is just that he whose mind now burns with desire in the love of the flesh, should afterwards have that very flesh burned in punishment. Now the furnace of the mind is kindled with the invisible fire of concupiscence; it is fitting that then the flesh, too, should inextinguishably feed upon the flame of material fire. Listen further, money-worshipper: when I call you a money-worshipper, I draw the term from the quality of your work; I do not usurp a name as an insult to you, for you worship coins, you who love money. And while the Lord says through the Prophet: "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 45); you offer to coins the worship of stillness that you owed to God, for you are at leisure in guarding them. "For where your treasure is, there your heart is also" (Matthew 6). Therefore, just as he who worships Christ is rightly called a Christian (Christicola), so too he who serves coins by guarding them is not undeservedly said to be a money-worshipper. But perhaps I am still judged to be following the whim of my own heart, if I do not affirm the etymology of this name with testimonies from Holy Scripture. Indeed, Truth Himself says: "You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6), as if to say

openly: No one can worship God and money at the same time. The Apostle declares this more clearly when he says: "But know this and understand, that no fornicator, or unclean person, or covetous man, which is a serving of idols, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Ephesians 5). Therefore, while so many crimes are simply enumerated, by asserting that avarice alone is the serving of idols, he teaches more clearly than light that the avaricious man is a worshipper not of God, but of coins, and thereby of demons.

But while I linger too long in explaining the name 'money-worshipper,' I turn the hand of my disputation, or rather, of my dissipation, from pouring out this heap of coins. Therefore, having given you satisfaction concerning your own name, O money-worshipper, now listen attentively to what I was about to say. Hear, then, what Truth says about you and those like you: "With difficulty," He says, "will they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19). And this sentence indeed concerns those who possess riches according to the custom of the world; as for those who, having rejected everything, have relapsed to their vomit, unless they repent, they can merit the kingdom of heaven with no confidence, not even with difficulty.

But from this number of money-worshippers, some hot-headed person will perhaps not be lacking to answer me thus: 'Why do you attack me so bitingly for my riches, when you see that I, content with a very small sum, have scarcely a

few small coins?' 'And while I consent to this for my own frailty, I am only providing for future necessity to be relieved; I do not seek to abound in riches.' 'Indeed, with the whole community of my brotherhood as witness, from a weft thread to a shoe-latchet I receive nothing from the resources of my monastery: and if I empty myself completely of my own few trifles, how do I live?' Behold, our man of property, or better, as before, our money-worshipper, uses the patronage of poverty so that he himself might seem irreprehensibly rich; and with what painted arguments does he conceal this mortal vice, so that in a way a tomb full of foul corpses might gleam with the whiteness of the plaster laid over it?

Come now, brother, if you had been allowed to hope for any benefit from the monastery's expenses, would you not have been given clothes to wear as soon as they were offered, rather than profits of money to be kept in service to your coffers? Why do you not use the same short-cut in those things also which are conferred by outsiders? Namely, that upon receiving any gift, necessities might be immediately purchased, and the poison of money not linger with you? For in this way, both a swift consolation for your need is advanced, and the leprosy of money does not sprinkle you with its foul spots. But why do you applaud yourself as if secure on account of the smallness of your money, when you do not doubt that a copper coin, just as a penny, is forbidden to you? He for whom the entire whole of anything is forbidden does not gain a refuge

of excuse from the minutiae; and for whom the whole has been ceded, a part without doubt has not remained; especially since this is the nature of the human mind, that it is as occupied with the smallest things, if it is in need, as with great things, if it is rich. For whether you are awash in a sumptuous flood of riches, or the most tenuous straits of household affairs press upon you, that sentence cannot be changed: "Where your treasure is, there your heart is also" (Matthew 6). Croesus and Amyclas, possessors of different things, indeed, yet do not exhibit different wills concerning those things which they enjoy. For although the one measures out gold pieces, and the other counts his thousands, they are afflicted by a discrete quantity of means, but are held by a not dissimilar love for those things which fall to each one individually. Furthermore, if a tiny mouse, or any crawling thing, should by chance fall into the most capacious cask, do they not immediately run up from all sides with axes, is not the whole of whatever was in it poured out, and with everyone hawking and spitting, is there not a nausea with the stomach threatening to vomit? If the tiniest drop of poison is diffused in a wide pot of vegetables, is not the whole dish, however delicious, judged utterly abominable?

If, therefore, very small evils most often corrupt the greatest goods, how can you boast of a flattering conscience, because what you possess in private property against the resolution of your profession is minimal? For according to the Apostle: "A little leaven corrupts the whole lump" (1

Corinthians 5). And elsewhere: "He that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little" (Ecclesiasticus 10). For our first parents were not debauched in frequent feasts on that forbidden fruit (Genesis 3), but are read to have been corrupted by a single, ill-fated partaking of it; yet they were not for that reason perplexed by the punishment of a momentary penalty, because they did not persist longer as transgressors in their fault.

CHAPTER VIII.

How a monk can attain to true riches.

Therefore, brother, whoever you are, if it delights you to acquire provisions by which you might meet future poverty, prudently seek true riches, and fear the want of true poverty. For in consideration of that poverty, this poverty is most easily scorned; in comparison with those riches, all abundance of earthly substance is despised like seaweed on the shore, which is trampled underfoot. Therefore, if you truly strive to escape the want of that most wearisome poverty, endeavor to labor at sowing the best of crops in the field of your heart. For as the Apostle testifies: "He who sows in the spirit, from the spirit will reap eternal life (Gal. 6)." And again: "And let us not grow weary in doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up (Ibid.)." Hide that supreme and unique grain in the fallow fields of your mind: which, falling into the ground, died and brought forth much

fruit (John 12). Let this be your treasure, let this be for you an abundance of all kinds of fruits. In it establish the end of your acquiring, in it place all your confidence for both lives. For the Lord is Lord of all, and is rich to all who call upon him (Rom. 10).

Indeed, if you strive to keep that grain with competent care, you will see the storerooms of your inner cellar overflow with talents of gold, silver, and all riches. You will also see your barns overflow incomparably with a new harvest of crops. Therefore, cultivate that treasure constantly with careful solicitude; keep nightly and daily watches around it with vigilant assiduity. For in that one thing you will be rich in all things, nor will you be able to lack an abundance of those things which are necessary for you. Indeed, in it you will possess the gold of divine wisdom, the silver of edifying eloquence. In it, the diverse cloaks of a seemly and honorable way of life, namely, the scarlet twice-dyed of twofold charity, the tunic of shining chastity. In it, the fine linen of patience, the flame-colored veil of divine fear, the purple of royal dignity. For just as wool is dyed with the blood of the murex to be turned into the color purple, whoever so presides on the throne of right judgment that he hastens to mortify all the allurements of his flesh and the barbarity of vices by a violent command, he is not undeservedly called a king and is clothed in the beauty of spiritual purple. In it, the two-ply garment of ever-green hope, being called, of course, to an inheritance that is undefiled, unfading, and

kept in heaven (1 Pet. 1). In it you will have the ring of faith, the bracelets of perfect work in the active life, and also the armlets of speculative contemplation. "For his left hand is under your head, and his right hand will embrace you (Cant. 2)."

And what more shall I promise you? since in it you will enjoy the gems of all virtues, the pearls of all charisms? Nor will you lack flocks of all clean and unclean animals, which will pass under the rod of your discipline. Indeed, the unclean herds of vices will be tamed under the command of your authority; but the clean ones will fatten the belly of your inner man with the dishes of a most sweet refection. The flock of the sheep's fleece, more delicately tended, will provide the food of sweet innocence for your dishes. The meat of fattened domestic fowl will not cease to increase the richness of divine love in you. All kinds of birds will more sumptuously prepare a spiritual banquet upon the table of your mind; but the bull's neck of pride, placed under your dominion, will groan under the yoke. The unbridled liberty of equine lust will, under you, insatiably chew the iron bit of a bridled mouth. All the beasts of vices, all the monsters of reptiles, trembling, will dread the command of your dominion. And indeed, all these things in this life will willingly become your own private property, if you have carefully striven to guard that precious and singular treasure which we have mentioned before.

Moreover, what great and better things will be given to you in that life of true beatitude, it is not, I confess, within our strength to discuss,

nor within our ability to unfold. Let it suffice to report this only for a summary conclusion of an inexplicable matter, that those who have perfectly left the world will receive this: "What eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, what God has prepared for those who love him (1 Cor. 2)."

Therefore, this treasure—namely Christ, our God and Lord, who was made for us both redeemer and price, himself the promiser and the prize, who is both the life of men and the eternity of angels—this treasure, I say, store away with diligent care in the chamber of your breast. Cast upon him all solicitude for any necessity whatsoever. Delight yourself in him through the conversation of assiduous prayer. Refresh yourself in him with the watchful feasts of holy thoughts. Let him be your food, and likewise your clothing. But if it should happen that you are in need of any external comfort, do not hesitate at all, nor distrust his faithful promise, by which he pledges, saying: "Seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things will be added to you (Matt. 6)." For he who commanded abundant rivers of water to flow from that dry metal of the rock for the thirsty hosts of the Israelite people (Exod. 17), who was able to minister heavenly manna to the hungry through long spans of time, who commanded an innumerable multitude of quails to descend into the camp of the murmurers—will he not be able to provide the necessities for one little man who constantly persists in his service? And he who for the course of about forty years kept the

garments of that infinite crowd unharmed, is it difficult for him to provide new clothes for you when the old are worn out? We, certainly, we of little faith, compel Christ to be stingy. Indeed, the diffidence of the fainthearted makes Christ poor; but full faith experiences him as rich and generous in giving. Only be busy to exercise yourself in those things which he has commanded, and let there remain no doubt at all concerning those things which he has promised. Let the collector be secure where the debtor is ready to pay. One distrusts without cause where the promiser is he who never lies. The creditor walks secure when simple truth is bound by the promise.

We have thought it fit to touch briefly upon these matters concerning monks who hold property; but now let us transfer the article of our discourse to those who are constantly delighted by riding horses.

CHAPTER IX.

On monks who constantly wander about.

Nor do I think it could have escaped your memory, dearest brothers, that we have very often lamented together in harmonious fellowship about this ruinous conduct of monks: and we have commiserated with brotherly charity for the restless brothers who are perishing through the vice of wandering. For there are some who, while they were engaged in the service of the world, grew weary of running hither and thither under the yoke of human servitude, so much so that

they decided, for the love of freedom, to pass over to the leisure of the monastery; but now they are so inflamed with the ardor of a pestilential restlessness that if ever an occasion does not present itself dictating that they should travel further, they seem to be enclosed in the dark horror of a prison's confinement: which, without a doubt, is known to be done by the cunning of the ancient enemy. For those whom the most wicked rider still mounts, he therefore spurs on with the relentless goads of wandering, so that they themselves may perish by returning to the vanity of the world, and may turn others away from seizing the path of true salvation. For there are very many established in the secular life who, unless they take refuge in this port of monastic institution with Christ as their guide, despair completely of being able to be saved otherwise in those stormy waves of the worldly sea.

CHAPTER X.

What the laity say about secular monks.

But when they contemplate those who recently, with great fervor, had scorned all worldly things, now being eagerly drawn back into the whirlwind of secular affairs, and wallowing in the filthy dregs of the same muddy pit they had escaped, astonishment arises in the onlookers, a sigh is drawn from their inmost depths, and despair is generated in their minds. For each one lays down a complaint of this kind within himself, saying: Woe, woe, where have I placed

the hope of my own salvation? Why, then, did I decide to pass over to that order at the peril of my own head? In a short moment, I almost lost both body and soul at once. I nearly cast myself into the fire with open eyes and by my own will. For who ever sought the monastery more fervently than he? Who, as it seemed, hastened to the soldiery of Christ with more courageous constancy? But now, forgetful of all that he promised, he continually involves himself in earthly business, he handles the world, he breathes the world: and he whom the habit of mortification makes unlike me, lives with me in the world in a not dissimilar way. Plainly, as is clear, the body was able to change its external appearance, but the mind remained badly fixed in the state in which it had been. Why should I accuse the instigators of his conversion? Indeed, in matters of warfare I have only lost a fellow soldier, but in the remaining earthly acts I have not lost a companion. With me, certainly, he stirs up forensic disputes; with me, he does not cease to plead in the tribunals of judges; with me, importunately, he penetrates the courts of princes; with me, at the same time, he instills into their ears counsels of earthly profundity.

But with what temerity do I presume to call him a companion, whom I now customarily follow not as a companion, but in all things as a foot-servant, scarcely as a forerunner? Indeed, he gains so much glory from the people for his conversion that all rise for him when he arrives, they believe whatever he brings forth as if it were

an oracle of prophecy, and they reverently show him the deference of devotion. But evidently, as far as the flesh is concerned, his conversion is not believed to have been fruitless; because he who did not lay aside his secular garment with his mind, as a cunning trader, has more fully acquired secular pomp.

And so, while detractors pour forth these and similar murmurings, who can suffice to enumerate for how many the wandering of monks in the world is an occasion of perishing? For they more easily resolve to perish even in the secular habit than, by following the examples of the lost, to lose both worlds at once, as they say. And in truth, it is not to be wondered at if this scandal arises for those who see it, which is proven to be contrary both to God and to sacred authority. For the Apostle says: "No one serving as a soldier for God entangles himself in secular affairs, so that he may please him to whom he has enlisted (2 Tim. 2)." And the Lord himself admonishes his disciples, saying: "Take heed, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, and drunkenness, and the cares of this life (Luke 21)."

CHAPTER XI.

That the wandering of a monk both expels virtues and introduces a multitude of vices.

For from this poisoned root of restlessness so many offshoots of vices arise that whomever it is known to flourish in is stripped of every fruit of monastic perfection, like a dry tree. And just as

unripe figs exposed to the winds cannot remain on the tree, so in him the fruits of good works cannot remain, with the diverse temptations of the world blowing from this side and that. For this vice is of such violence that once it has claimed dominion for itself in the breast of a monk, the choir of virtues, if present, soon for the most part departs; and several monstrosities of vices burst in, as if into a prison of their own right. For, to mention a few things out of many, a monk on a journey cannot keep the fast, because the kindness of hospitality does not permit it; he does not chant the psalms wisely, because the talkativeness of his traveling company hinders him; he does not persist in the night vigils, because the secret place of solitude is lacking; he does not labor in bending his knees, because the labor of the journey does not accord with the practice of holy devotion; he is by no means constrained under the rule of silence, because with causes frequently arising, even unwillingly he is let loose into much talking.

What shall I say, that he has no time for reading or prayer, whom an imminent necessity rather dictates to go outside himself and to handle all sorts of earthly matters? Charity is diminished in him, because the mind, which receives so many winds of secular actions, grows lukewarm from the fervor of intimate love. The chastity of his mind also suffers its own loss, because sometimes the mind is pierced by the dart of concupiscence through the sight of the flesh, which it contemplates outwardly. The strength

of patience is also broken, because while he is undertaking anything, unexpected events often arise against his wish and stand in his way, and he who was hastening to carry out his business does not bear it with equanimity: and then through impatience he pours forth such words, which, when he returns to leisure, he severely punishes with avenging tears. The rule of sobriety is not observed, because while the preparation for a banquet is arranged with richer foods, and while the diligence of the duty of hospitality is shown, since he thinks it inhuman not to condescend to the requests of his hosts, he also delights in softly indulging his belly under the guise of charity. In which matter, to be sure, a doubt often arises in the mind of the servant of God, lest, namely, where sobriety is provided for, there also hypocrisy (which is an abominable vice) be served. Hence among some, the measure of sobriety is entirely scorned, so that the mark of hypocrisy may also seem to be far away. But in this way, in that which is believed to be done with discretion, discretion is not maintained. For he knows how to discern rightly who knows how to separate virtue from vice; but he who eradicates the wheat along with the tares, this one without doubt is ignorant of the power of discretion. Whoever therefore, with a view only to the heavenly reward, does not exceed the limit of sobriety, both tramples hypocrisy under the feet of his humility and unhesitatingly awaits the reward for the sobriety he has kept.

But to say still more about the wandering monk, he does not have the compunction of tears with which to weep for his sins; because his arid mind, which walks through the heat of earthly conversation, grows dry since it does not merit being sprinkled with the dew of the Holy Spirit: and full of the mire of earthly thoughts, because it does not conceive within the water of the head which grace bestows, it pours forth no tears outside itself. Sometimes perhaps he preaches to the listeners gathered around, but suddenly vainglory steals in, and coming forth as if from an ambush, it kills him who was healing others. But if, guarding against this as well, he constrains himself under the rule of silence, he is ashamed of being able to accomplish none of those things for which he had come. If he maintains an appearance of solemn gravity, as is fitting, he is greatly afraid lest here too, as a pretender, he incur the mark of hypocrisy. But if from the rigor of his mortification he relaxes himself ever so little into leniency, here he is even much less secure, lest, that is, he destroy others by his example. If at any time among those who are disagreeing he wishes as a mediator of peace to restore harmony, if he strictly pursues the truth, the unity of reconciliation is not forged between them; but if he acquiesces to using lies, he does not escape the snares of sin. When he wants to reprove sinners, he considers it no small fault to stir up the hatred of so many of his neighbors against himself. But to see and to be silent, what else does he judge it to be, than to consent to those who act wickedly? And

these things are said of those who are warmed by however small a spark of heavenly fervor. But as for the lukewarm, who, having scorned the camps of the divine warfare, are rolled back by an ill-omened return to the millstone of worldly giddiness—how judgmentally they act, how inconsiderately they live, let those who wish relate. To us it seems more advisable to weep for them with pious compassion than to write down the deeds of their execrable way of life, lest we be seen to disparage with censorious letters those for whom we ought to expend only tears of compassion.

CHAPTER XII.

What evils the unhappy soul of a monk suffers when it returns to lower things.

But we say this absolutely, that in this time that world has been so thickened with snares of treachery, that whoever desires to live innocently in this sacred order should most cautiously take care to abstain from its goings-on: namely, if he often travels its path, he does not escape the prepared snares of treachery; and like a tree stripped of the defense of its protecting bark, he will be able neither to bear the fruits of virtues nor to avoid the decay of vices springing forth as if from rubbing. But when he returns to the cloisters of his own dwelling, a certain crowded throng, as it were, of all that he had seen or heard, accompanies him at close quarters, so that he suffers the clamor of tumultuous affairs, which

he tolerated there in the body, much more pressingly and much more importunately here in the mind; especially if he begins to apply himself more earnestly to prayer, behold the phantoms of thoughts, behold the images of the things he had seen, so that, standing in any corner, he seems to himself to be present at theatrical plays, or to be sitting among those engaged in a legal dispute in the forum. And indeed the man struggles, and tries to drive away, as it were, flying flies from the mouth of his mind. But as soon as they depart, they immediately return; as soon as they are repelled, they are present: so that, as if pursuing their fugitive, they strive to capture him and call him back to the exercises of their own servitude. Then the unhappy soul learns how much it has cost it, that it has idly relaxed itself throughout the breadth of the world. For it wastes away, dry, dark, stony; for, hardened in the manner of a stone, it can neither burst forth into floods of tears, nor, being surrounded on all sides by darkness, can it see the light. It tries, indeed, to attend to the mysteries of the Psalms, but it is beaten back by the intolerable light as if with bleary eyes. It pants with what strength it has to strive for the highest things, but, weighed down by a certain weight of its own, it is forced, humiliated, to lie in the lowest places. To which that prophetic saying is not unfittingly applied: "He has set me in dark places, as those that are dead of old. He has built a wall around me, that I may not get out: he has made my fetter heavy. And when I have cried and shouted, he has shut out my

prayer (Lamentations 3)." It grieves, is anxious, it pants; and because it is not permitted to weep even for this its own misery, it is troubled, filled with a sharper bitterness of sorrow. If only it were given to it to pour forth this cry of weeping with the prophet, where it is said: "Therefore, he says, I am weeping, and my eye runs down with water: because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me (Lamentations 1)." But that unhappy soul, since it sees itself to be pitiable and yet cannot weep, perceives from afar, as if rolled down into a certain lake of misery, how far it is from salvation. For since weeping is the only way by which a sinner can attain to pardon, therefore, since that soul cannot bewail its guilt, it seems to itself that it has not yet even set foot on the path by which it might reach pardon.

Similar to this is what is said by the Prophet in the person of the imperfect: "My soul has coveted to long for your justifications at all times (Psalm 118)." For he who does not yet desire the law of God, which is without doubt His justification, at all times, but already covets to desire it, already indeed looks up to it from afar in some way, but by no means ascends the heights of perfection. Therefore, such a dark confusion comes upon the wretched mind that, wherever it turns, it sees itself engaged in the world, although it knows without a doubt that the world is without it. Thus, it is with that with which it is not; because, that is, it depicts in its mind through fantastical imaginations the world which it has deserted by its bodily departure. Indeed, this calamity in the

human mind is both a sin and the punishment for sin. For it is just that what each person has willingly admitted, he should suffer unwillingly. To wit, so that he who was unwilling to restrain himself within the secret of his order when he could, could by no means be without the world even when he left it.

The human mind, therefore, constrained by the necessity of such great want and poverty, grieves, groans, and draws a sigh from its inmost depths; because, that is, it has lost the purity of its retreat through the vice of wandering, and has rolled itself again in the mire of the world like a sow in the mud (Proverbs 26; 2 Peter 2). Then it sharply reproaches itself for its levity and inconstancy; it vehemently accuses itself of being wandering and deceitful, and truly proves that the judgment of God is right and holds to the laws of equity, saying with the prophet: "'The Lord is good to them that hope in him, to the soul that seeks him. It is good to wait with silence for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man when he has borne the yoke from his youth: he shall sit solitary, and shall keep silence, because he has lifted himself up above himself (Lamentations 3).'" For that which, if it loved secret things, would rejoice, having been lifted up above itself, now grieves because, going out into public, it sees itself lying prostrate beneath itself.

CHAPTER XIII.

That he who goes out is forced to associate with the excommunicated.

There is also another reason, which, even if impediments were lacking, could alone suffice to restrain monks from wandering in the world. For who in this age could find any gathering of secular people where there is not someone of this kind, who for the offense of his guilt ought to undergo the judgment of excommunication? For long ago all crimes have commonly emerged throughout the world, all the evils of wickedness now flourish, and they spread themselves more widely every day by multiplying, the nearer the end of the world approaches. Therefore, it is impossible for a monk who goes out into public not to be forced to associate either with the excommunicated or with those who are to be excommunicated, which is almost the same thing. For he speaks with murderers, with perjurers, with the incestuous, with arsonists, with adulterers: with whom, even if he shudders at them, he is nevertheless often joined by a kiss, and even dines with them at a common table, as necessity dictates, when on the contrary the Apostle proclaims: "If anyone who is called a brother is a fornicator, or unclean, or a drunkard, or a robber, with such a one do not even eat (I Cor. V)."

And it is certainly quite fearful, and exceedingly contrary, to have fellowship with those who are separated from God, especially for monks, who are so joined to God by a certain special and, so to speak, domestic familiarity, that having renounced the world, they are irrevocably deputed to divine services alone. For just as one must turn away from the head of the reprobate himself, so

also from his members, unless the cause of conversion demands it. Indeed, one and the same repulsion of abomination is owed here to those for whom one fire is prepared there, as the Truth attests, when it is said to those placed on the left: "Go, you cursed, into the eternal fire, which is prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. XXV)." Therefore, those whom we see heading to another homeland, we ought not to be bound to them on the way by the glue of a harmful association, lest the penalty of final vengeance also envelop those whom a disordered love joins together.

CHAPTER XIV.

That one must withdraw just as from the excommunicated, so also from those who are to be excommunicated.

Indeed, so that it may be more clearly evident how much the company of the wicked harms the good, we can gather this by this clear reasoning: namely, that some of them have recently been excommunicated by a priestly sentence, while others are only to be deprived of communion by the canonical judgment of the holy Fathers. But concerning those who have recently been excommunicated, there is no doubt to anyone that everyone who partakes with them receives a similar sentence of damnation. But concerning those who, for crimes committed, are indeed to be condemned by canonical authority, but have not yet been seen to be cut off from ecclesiastical unity by the living voices of priests, it is

debated by some whether their company may be safely admitted; but if we weigh the matter with more careful subtlety, we find there is almost no difference between them. For whether someone is justly condemned by modern or by ancient Fathers, it is the same: nor does the difference of times absolve him whom the same cause of a perpetrated crime binds, and the variety of ages does not prejudice the judicial reckoning, where a single rule of refined equity dictates the sentence.

But what we wish to prove, we will show better, if we set forth the very words of the excommunicating Fathers, both ancient and new. For the sacred canons say: "Whoever has done this, or that, let him be excommunicated." Modern pontiffs also, in casting the sentence of excommunication, bring forth almost the same words, saying: "He who has done these things, let him be excommunicated." Therefore, of those whose words are the same, the sentence must be understood to be no less the same; and since every judgment of the present holy pontiffs depends on the definitions of the ancient Fathers, these latter do not presume to condemn anyone except those whom they know to have already been condemned by the former. Therefore, these latter do not newly condemn anyone, but by following, they confirm the sentence already pronounced by their predecessors. It must be concluded, therefore (see the scholia at the end of the little work), that just as one must beware of those whom the modern councils of synods repel from ecclesiastical society, so also must one no less withdraw

from those whom the ancient Fathers decree are to be eliminated.

And so this is not the least cause which should draw a monk back from the runnings-about of the world and render him stable in the corner of his retreat; because it is very miserable to be restrained indeed from one's own excesses, but to be stained by the spots of another's guilt, while not sinning with others, and to endure the punishments of another's crime. For when we are incautiously joined in friendship with the wicked, we are bound by their faults. Wherefore Jehoshaphat, who is extolled with so many praises for his past life, was rebuked, being on the point of perishing, for his friendship with King Ahab, to whom it is said by the Lord through the prophet: "You give help to the impious, and you are joined in friendship with those who hate the Lord, and therefore you deserved the wrath of the Lord; but good works have been found in you, because you have taken away the groves out of the land of Judah (2 Chr. 19)." For our life, by the very fact that it agrees with the friendships of the perverse, already differs from Him who is supremely righteous. For whom would that apostolic voice not terrify, by which, testifying to us and calling us back from the company of the wicked, it cries out? "I charge you," it says, "in the name of the Lord Jesus, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which we delivered to you (2 Thess. 3)." If, therefore, we must cautiously withdraw ourselves from all those whom

we see not walking according to the apostolic tradition, how few remain in that secular order with whom we might be able to have familiar company without danger! Furthermore, he who, having scorned the apostolic tradition, strives to introduce another doctrine, whether by dogmatizing or by living, does not deserve to enjoy the fellowship of an orthodox and religious man, as the Apostle John also attests, who says: "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into the house, nor say 'Hail' to him; for he who says 'Hail' to him communicates with his evil works (2 John 1:10-11)." Instructed by these sentences of apostolic truth, we prove most evidently that those who carnally join in friendship with wicked men become participants in another's guilt; and are compelled to undergo the judgment of extreme vengeance together with them, with whom, however, they did not commit sin together in this life.

CHAPTER XV.

On monks who delight in precious clothing.

This vice also, which we have just now pursued, familiarly besieges the wandering monk, because, in truth, he is never able to so purely cast off from himself the leprosy of poisonous proprietorship that it does not seem necessary to him to retain some amount for himself on the occasion of a journey. From this also is born the love of precious garments, lest, that is, appearing in public, he should seem despicable. Yet while

the trappings of exterior clothing are sought, the entire composition of the interior man is dissipated. But this false madness, I know not how, so blinds the eyes of the perverse mind that it neither sees what is honorable among men, nor considers whence one might appear more glorious before God. And it is truly madness, and it is false. For it is insane to contemptuously disregard the judgment of the hidden arbiter through pride, and to capture the breeze of human favor with softer clothing. And it is false, because from that by which he offends the eyes of the heavenly Spectator, he nonetheless also falls in the judgment of human estimation; and from that by which he desires to appear more glorious to men, he in a way exposes himself to the teeth of public detraction; and while the splendor of his garment provokes eyes to look at him, it also arms tongues with the darts of derogation to criticize him who is so clothed. For who could see a monk clothed in soft garments and not immediately judge him to be empty of the divine spirit, aspiring to earthly rather than heavenly things? For the state of the mind is inferred from the clothing, and the nature of the intention is judged according to the exterior adornment. This certainly agrees with the authority of the Gospel, when it is said: "By their fruits you shall know them (Matt. 7)." Although these men do not come to us in sheep's clothing; since the clothing of sheep is the garment of humility and innocence, not of arrogance or rapine. But that garment is not undeservedly called a garment of rapine which is bought for the price

of two or even three garments. For he commits the crime of rapine who, devoted to vainglory, spends on his own body's clothing alone what he could have used to clothe his brother along with himself. Without a doubt, he perpetrates rapine who, inflamed with the ardor of vain honor, lavishes the expense of two garments on one, and leaves his neighbor, whom he ought to have loved as himself, in his nakedness.

But this is the difference between these "renewed" monks, so to speak, and those hypocrites whom the Gospel notes; because the latter, as Truth testifies, come to us in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves (Matt. 7); but these monks swell up within with the wind of vainglory rattling in their entrails, while outwardly they walk arrogantly in the garment of rapine, as has been proven, and thus in the clothing of wolves. Therefore, when the Lord says to the Jews concerning John: "What did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Behold, those who wear soft garments are in the houses of kings (Matt. 11);" surely the monk who affects the splendor of a precious garment carries the warfare not of the heavenly King, but of this world: and although he may seem on the surface to offer to God the gift of his supposed obedience, he is openly convicted of truly serving vainglory by capturing human favor. Furthermore, if it is permissible to be clothed in soft garments under the pretext of obedience, to whom could this remission have been granted with a more liberal dispensation than to the Blessed John, who, espe-

cially gifted with the office of service, had come to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children with a new preaching, and to prepare a perfect people for Christ the Lord (Luke 1)? Could not the Lord Himself, whose garments alone the treachery of the Gentiles divided among themselves, have provided sandals for Himself? For if He had not lacked sandals in the least, the course of sacred history would not have been silent about them.

CHAPTER XVI.

That just as a precious garment provokes God to anger, so a humble one provokes Him to forgiveness.

The king of Nineveh, clothed in purple, earned the destruction of his own city; covered in sackcloth, he placated the movement of divine fury with the humility of a contrite heart (Jonah III). Hezekiah also, adorned in royal attire, heard trembling the terrible threats of the king of the Assyrians; but as soon as he himself was covered in haircloth, and did not blush to send messengers covered in haircloth to the prophet, he brought back an oracle of imminent divine victory and desired prosperity (IV Kings XIX). Which promise, indeed, as Scripture testifies, quickly came to pass. For behold, the angel of the Lord struck down one hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrians in one night, and then both of his sons slew King Sennacherib himself with a parricidal, yet worthy, sword (ibid.).

You see, therefore, how much a flowing garment differs from a rough one in the eyes of

God. You perceive that a vile and abject garment placates the judge whom a delicate one had deserved to experience as wrathful; and this one commends as worthy of pardon him whom that one had rendered punishable. Moreover, of what importance the adornment of clothing is before God, that excellent prophet Isaiah clearly showed, who indeed, at the command of a divine order, laid aside his garments, and for the space of three years went about naked and barefoot. Let human pride therefore blush, let the wretched mind corrupted by the plague of vainglory be confounded, while he, namely an instrument of God, a temple of the Holy Spirit, a proclaimer of divine justice, did not hesitate to go about naked in public. And unhappy is the man who, having merited not even a single sign of divine familiarity, affects the superstitious adornment of a fringed garment; and while he puts on the false colors of a badly dyed garment, slippery to be looked upon by himself, he does not fear to be turned away from the eyes of the supernal Beholder. Thus, indeed, while that garment of arrogance is despised in the divine estimation, he who wears it is consequently judged abominable.

But let it be, namely that Isaiah went about naked; did he then, when he was accustomed to go clothed, indulge in wearing softer things? Let us therefore interrogate the history of the prophetic narrative itself, and let us hear what the divine voice commands him: "The Lord spoke," it says, "by the hand of Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying: Go, and loose the sackcloth from

thy loins, and take off thy shoes from thy feet (Isa. XX)." For he who is commanded to take off not some other kind of garment, but sackcloth from his loins, it is thereby clearly declared of what great value the plainness of his clothing was to him. Oh, how many gilded dining rooms of kings and princes of the earth there were then! how many purple-clad bedchambers surrounded by painted domes! how many ornaments of the very rich, marked with glittering gems! how many paneled ceilings constructed with seals of cedar and cypress! and yet, with all these things spurned and despicably contemned, almighty God deigned to build for Himself a rational temple of this man covered in the deformity of sackcloth, and through him, as through an instrument, to reveal the mysteries of His secret to mortals.

Let him learn, therefore, let the finely-clad monk learn, how bad a bargain he makes, because from that by which he desires to appear distinguished in human eyes, from this he undoubtedly becomes sordid in the estimation of the supernal Judge: from that for which he is more intensely honored by men, for that he is the more despised by God; and when he provokes the eyes of onlookers to admiration of himself, he, being darkened, removes himself from the gaze of divine grace.

But since the occasion has presented itself to speak of the vanity of garments, just as we have briefly touched upon those who delight in soft things, so also let us briefly discuss those who

labor under the same disease, but are carried away by a different madness. For there are some who, by the ugliness of their cheap clothes, purchase the favorable applause of the crowd; and they feed on this delight all the more pleasantly if, while they seem abject for their diligence in studied ugliness, they fly gloriously through the mouths of the praising populace. They rejoice when discussions are held about them; they rejoice to be pointed out with a finger, as if something to be marveled at; who, indeed, composed in their ugliness, conspicuous in their obscurity, contrive to seem exalted through their humility. Indeed, by the cunning craftiness of diabolical cleverness, they are brought low for this purpose, that they may appear sublime; for this they are made unsightly, that they may shine forth as spectacles in the eyes of beholders.

Furthermore, the sum which these men spend is indeed different from that of the former; but the wares which they concordantly buy are one and the same. Namely, vainglory (*vana gloria*) is set forth in the middle, as if it were a certain matter for trade, to which, evidently, different merchants approach. Some bring forth cheap garments from their purse as a price, others strive to offer precious ones. But while each one bustles about for their own part, those who bring cheap clothes are immediately preferred to the other buyers. For he who uses delicate garments, as was said above, often from the very source whence he expects to capture the breeze of favor, is more widely exposed to the bites of detractors;

but he who is content with the extremity of cheap clothing (I speak, moreover, of monks), with the zeal of whatever intention—that is, whether he does it wrongly or rightly—the opinion of sanctity generally commends him to those who behold him; and the more unsightly anyone is seen in his outward habit, the more he is often judged worthy of greater reverence.

CHAPTER XVIII.

On the true humility of David.

Nevertheless, whoever it is that hopes for the reward of a heavenly recompense from the lowliness of his own habit, it is necessary that he should not cease to trample all favor of human praise under the feet of his mind, as if it were filthy mud; and just as he presents himself to the gaze of onlookers, so should he judge himself within the secrets of his own conscience. Hence, when Michal, the daughter of Saul, rebuked David, saying: "How glorious was the king of Israel today, uncovering himself before the handmaids of his servants, and was naked, as if one of the buffoons were to be naked" (2 Samuel 6; 1 Chronicles 15); to show that the same humility which he displayed in his body thrived in his mind, he did not boil over with anger, nor did he respond with words of pride, but humbly said: "As the Lord lives, I will play, and I will make myself more vile than I have done, and I will be humble in my own eyes" (ibid.). In these words the form of true humility is set forth, since an

interior humility is demonstrated no less than an exterior one. For some, the more basely they abase themselves in their external appearance, the greater things they decree for themselves inwardly. These people indeed wish to be seen as one thing on the surface, and to be understood as another in secret: and from the same source whence they humbly abase themselves in public, they swell up more pridefully in secret. David, however, to show himself humble outwardly, says: "I will play, and I will make myself more vile than I have done." But to show the humility of his mind, he adds: "And I will be humble in my own eyes;" as if he were to say openly: I will be humbled externally, so that I may offer an example of salvation to others; and I will be humble internally, so that I myself may also persist in the root of this same salvific humility. He, therefore, who walks so simply that he desires to be in the opinion of onlookers just as he presents himself in the baseness of his habit, this man truly bears the reproach of Christ, and, dead to the world, carries the cross after Him; and he is rendered all the brighter in the divine sight, the more despicable he is judged in human eyes, and by a fruitful exchange, he whom his outer garment defiles, shines with inner grace.

CHAPTER XIX.

That the less perfect disdain soft garments, while the more perfect sometimes accept them indifferently.

There are also some who, through a zeal for right intention, having long been accustomed to cheap clothing, if it should ever happen that they are covered with garments however soft, disdain them with the disdainful pride of a self-conscious humility; and just as others blush to be clothed in foul garments, so these blush to be clothed in precious ones. They indeed endure delicate attire, but they delight in the harshness of contemptible things. All ornaments of the body become a disgrace to them, and deformity an honor. Esther had indeed shown the type of these people when she said: "You know, O Lord, my necessity, that I abominate the sign of my pride and glory, which is upon my head in the days of my public appearance, and I detest it as a menstruous rag, and do not wear it in the days of my silence (Esther 14)." These indeed burn with the ardor of holy desire, yet they still struggle against the temptations of their passions. Others, however, have arrived at such a height of mortification that, having become as it were insensible to both extremes, just as they customarily seek to be clothed in cheap things, so also, where the situation requires it, they in no way shrink from precious or fine things: that is, contemplating both with a single glance, whom, to be sure, soft things do not weaken, and harsh things do not afflict.

Of these, Judith was also a model, who, having used hairshirts up to that point, when necessity demanded, adorned herself with various emblems of bodily beauty, as Holy Scripture tes-

tifies, which says: "Judith took off the haircloth from herself, and put off the garments of her widowhood, and she washed her body, and anointed herself with the best myrrh, and parted the hair of her head, and put a mitre upon her head, and she put on her the garments of her gladness, and she put sandals on her feet, and took her bracelets, and lilies, and earrings, and rings, and adorned herself with all her ornaments (Judith 10)." With these ornaments, therefore, the holy woman both maintained the guard of true humility about herself and did not lose the spirit of poverty with which she had been enriched.

But while I am eager to strip the wandering monk, whom I had seized, of his precious garments, I lose him from the hand of my own discourse; and now I barely glimpse him moving far away, as I realize that only his clothes have remained in my hands. Therefore, casting aside the clothes, let us pursue him swiftly, and seizing him, if it be possible, let us labor to make him stand still. Let the monk, therefore, who is addicted to the vice of wandering (*vagatio*), know that unless he withdraws his foot from the world and diligently girds himself to serve God in a place of seclusion, he will be able neither to attain the summit of perfection nor to worthily keep the duties of his order. For Dinah, the daughter of Jacob, as long as she kept herself within her father's tents, preserved the rights of her unsullied virginity; but after she went out to see the women of that region and sought the public space, her virginity at once suffered an enemy,

and, shamefully prostituted, she served a foreign lust (Gen. XXXIV). The wife of the Levite from the hill country of Ephraim, as long as she remained in the inner rooms and occupied herself with domestic cares, guarded the chastity of the conjugal bed; but, led by affection for the kindred she had left behind, she revisited her homeland and parents. Then, upon returning, she fell prey to the many corruptions of a furious lust; and while in the flesh she suffered the shipwreck of her endangered modesty, she was tormented by ignominious mockery and even gave up her spirit (Judges XIX). Tamar, the sister of Absalom, as long as she lived simply in her brother's house, preserved the spirit of her inviolate virginity; but when she performed the duty of a sisterly visit to Amnon, son of David, she lamented having incurred the loss of her stolen virginity (II Samuel XIII); and at last, having learned that it was safer to remain than to go forth, though late, she preferred secret leisure to harmful wandering.

And you, therefore, if you wish your soul to persist in the integrity of its virginity, if you consider it abominable to be subjected to foul and violent corrupters, seek secrecy, inquire after the retreat of solitude, firmly block your ears and eyes from the vanity of worldly affairs, and despise the conversations of carnal men, which are more likely to lead to destruction than to edification. For according to Solomon: "He who touches pitch will be defiled by it (Ecclesiasticus XIII)." Therefore, gather yourself into the chamber of your conscience. Place the bars of censorial

discipline on all the doors of your house, that is, on all your senses, so that no one may enter. For a fountain that is enclosed on all sides lest it pour out, is raised up by its waters flowing to the heights; on the contrary, one that is drawn off hither and thither through many channels, as soon as a more fervent heat beats down upon it, is dried up. Finally, if closed doors had stood in the way of David as he walked on the roof of the royal house, he would in no way have been inflamed with desire for Bathsheba as she bathed (II Samuel XVII); but because he did not keep his eye under the custody of discipline, he too, after it, rushed headlong into the immense abyss of a gaping ruin. For with slippery steps, he experienced the fall of his whole self, when he relaxed the rein of his gaze alone; to which, indeed, that saying of Jeremiah most aptly corresponds: "My eye," he says, "has plundered my soul (Lamentations III)." If, therefore, so sublime a pillar of heaven fell so grievously on account of the mere wandering of the eyes, what is to be thought of us, weak and small ones, who, running about through the world, lead ourselves completely out of ourselves, and occupy our sight, and hearing, and all our senses in absorbing the vanities of the world?

CHAPTER XXI.

That wandering cast down Esau, while stability exalted Jacob.

Moreover, what a distance there is between monks who love the seclusion of a retreat and those who pour themselves out into external things, we are taught more clearly than light by the two sons of Isaac. For it is written: "That Esau became a man skilled in hunting, and a man of the field, but Jacob, a simple man, dwelt in tents" (Gen. XXV). But the latter [Jacob], prudently simple and a cautious executor of his own advancement, received his brother's birthright and his father's blessing; the former [Esau], skilled in his foolishness, heard that he would live by the sword and would serve his brother as a servant to a lord. Yet if the latter had not remained in the tents, he would doubtless have been without the first blessing; and if the former, as a wanderer, had not cast himself into external things, he would not have been deprived of the privilege of his birthright. The latter held to the leisure of domestic quiet and, by the bestowal of divine grace, leaped into the rights of another; the former, worn out by the labor of hunting, lost even that which by right belonged to him.

But so that those who, wandering through the world, boast that they serve the laws of obedience may cease to raise the shield of excuse, let them not be ignorant that Esau too, in going forth to hunt, obeyed his father's commands; and yet he deserved neither to offer food to his father nor to obtain the first fruits of the desired blessing. For whoever, led by custom, willingly carries out by the instinct of his own will a thing that pertains to vice, sins even if he seems to be

outwardly obeying the commands of others. For when it is said, "Because Isaac loved Esau, for he ate of his hunting" (Gen. XXVII), it is certainly clear that Esau, in acquiring food for his father through the pursuit of hunting, did not so much obey his father's command out of obedience as he, in a way, paid tribute to his ingrained habit. Therefore, let him who, by running about the world, satisfies his own desire, and yet asserts that he is obeying the commands of his superiors, know that God does not so much believe colorful verborosities as He judges the hidden things of men according to their conscience.

It should be noted, however, that some, as long as they are engaged in this wandering, do not fall gravely; but upon returning, as if drunk with some intoxicating drink of secular affairs, they are rolled down into a huge precipice. Indeed, they return with their eyes clouded by the smoke of secular actions, and therefore, having been returned to their own thresholds, they do not pay attention to where they ought to place the foot of their work. This, in fact, the same Esau clearly shows, who, while returning from the field and complaining that he was exceedingly weary, made a very damaging bargain with his brother; and while he allowed the immoderate rage of hunger to rage within him, he sold the great honor of the firstborn for a vile pottage of a few lentils (Gen. XXV). Thus indeed, thus he who, given over to external things, deserted himself, and afterwards, recalled to the interior in body but not in heart, lost what was his. It

also happens to those who labor under the vice of wandering that, with their interior eyes covered in dust, just as they do not take care lest they fall into the pit of guilt, so also afterwards they do not notice where they have fallen. And so, while they neglect to consider subtly each of their faults, whatever it is that they have done wrong, they esteem it lightly in a confused examination of mind, not even straining out a gnat, even while swallowing a camel. Of this blindness Esau also is known not to have been free, as is related by the testimony of sacred history, where, after it is said, 'Because Esau swore, and sold his birthright,' it then adds: 'And so, having received the bread and the pottage of lentils, he ate and drank, and went his way, esteeming it a small matter that he had sold his birthright.'

CHAPTER XXII.

In these two brothers, it is clear what difference there is between wandering and stable monks.

In these two brothers (Gen. XXVII), therefore, it is manifestly understood how great a distance is perceived to be between resident and wandering monks. For if the one had not poured himself out into external things, unstable and prodigal of himself, he would by no means have lost the mystery of the paternal blessing along with his birthright; and if the other had not confined himself within the enclosures of the domestic hearth, he, being younger, would have humbly remained below the prescribed limit of his succession. The

one, knowledgeable and skillful, slips from the right of his prerogative; the other, quiet and simple, with his brothers subdued, rules with a singular privilege. The one, exhausted by traversing forests and lairs, is cast down from the dignity of his primacy; the other, enjoying leisure in a pleasant chamber, is divinely exalted to take up monarchy over peoples and tribes.

Let the monk, whoever he may be, therefore cease to erupt frequently with Esau from the cloisters of his seclusion; let him cease to involve himself with him in secular causes under the guise of obedience, lest at some point he mourn with him, exiled from the divine blessing, he whom he takes as the author of his noxious wandering. With Jacob, therefore, let him show himself domestic; with Jacob let him live simply in tents, so that he may refresh God—who is truly the father of the elect, desiring to feast on the banquet of good works—not with the provision of wild beasts, but of the domestic flock, when he prepares a sweet meal for Him not from the surface of external holiness, but from the virtues of his own conscience. For God does not command the skins of victims to be offered to Himself in sacrifice, but rather He commands the inner parts of the viscera with the very marrow to be presented. Whence also, in showing the very rite of sacrifices, Moses commands, saying: “The skin having been removed, they shall cut the limbs of the victim into pieces (Levit. I)”; in which command a mystical understanding is also found to be present, if it is investigated more

subtly. For we remove the skin of the victim when we remove the surface of virtue from the eyes of our mind. We cut its limbs into pieces when, subtly distinguishing its intimate parts, we consider them member by member, so that what appears sincere and solid on the outside may not be found to be cavernous within with the vice of hidden vanity. David, however, promises as a great gift that he will offer sacrifices full of marrow to God, saying: "I will offer you holocausts full of marrow, with the incense of rams (Psal. LXVIII)."

Whoever, however, delightfully pours himself out through the exercises of secular affairs, removes the marrow of his holocaust with the viscera, and strives to burn for God only the skin of the victim, which is forbidden to be offered; but he who desires to offer a sweet sacrifice to God, let him seek retreats, pursue interior things, guard his soul whole and unstained in its own virginity; and let him not, by running through the brothels of the world, submit it to impure defilers in the manner of a prostitute. Therefore, that she may please the sight of the internal spouse, let her not paint her eyes with kohl like Jezebel (IV Kings IX), that is, let her not cover herself with the cosmetics of worldly pomp, but with Judith let her anoint her limbs with the best myrrh (Judith X): that is, let her smear all the senses of her mind with the ointment of immortal chastity, lest, falling into death through incontinence, she rot in the stench of luxury.

In the chamber of the Holy Church, therefore, let the chaste soul enclose herself, and so may she

rest continually in the bridal chamber of the eternal King. Let her not seek the affections of carnal relatives, nor of any accomplices, but let her delight in the embraces of the one true Spouse. For it is not written without cause: "Hear, O daughter, and see, and incline your ear; forget your people and your father's house, for the King has desired your beauty (Psal. XLIV)." In the chamber of this Spouse, therefore, the holy soul slumbers away from every whirlwind of secular noise; may she burn with the torches of chaste love for this author of her virginity, singing, to be sure, and saying: "The King has brought me into his chambers; we will exult and be glad in you (Cant. I)." And again: "A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me, he shall abide between my breasts (ibid.)." But if an occasion of any kind should arise, so that the necessity of going out seems imminent, let her not rush forth lightly to wander, let her not be enticed by conversation with relatives, let not her mind, fixed on the world, grow warm for the vanity of the age, but let her deliberate with herself slowly and gravely, saying: "I have put off my tunic, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I soil them (Cant. V)?"

CHAPTER XXIII. That divine disposition, just as it grants spiritual leisure to the good, so it permits the wicked to be dispersed into external things. If, therefore, that singular Spouse perceives this desire to be in the holy soul, since He is without doubt the prince of peace, He grants her the free repose of spiritual leisure, and He calms all the waves of emerging causes with a placid

tranquility around her. Hence it is that in the Song of Songs He says: "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you not stir up, nor awaken the beloved, until she herself wills it (Cant. II)." In contrast, to the reprobate mind, which is eager for secular business, it is said under the figure of Babylon through the prophet: "Come down, sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground, there is no throne for the daughter of the Chaldeans (Isa. XLVII)." For in this place the human mind is called virgin (*virgo*), not as incorrupt, I think, but as unfruitful. And because Babylon is interpreted as *confusion*, the unfruitful mind is rightly called the daughter of Babylon, which, in that it in no way brings forth good works, while it is not ordered by any rule of right life, is generated as if by confusion as its mother. But if she is called virgin not as unfruitful, but as incorrupt, after she has lost the state of salvation, she is called what she was, to the heaping up of her confusion. To her it is aptly said by the divine voice in rebuke: *Come down*. For the human soul stands on high when it yearns for supernal rewards. But it descends from this state when, shamefully conquered, it subjects itself to the fleeting desires of the world. To which is well added soon after: *Sit in the dust*. For one who descends sits in the dust, because, deserting heavenly things, being sprinkled with earthly thoughts, he becomes vile in the lowest things.

Where it is further added, by way of repetition: *Sit on the ground*. As if openly reproaching, it says: Because you were unwilling to govern

yourself by a heavenly conversation, prostrate beneath yourself, be humbled in earthly acts. Whence it is also necessarily added at once: *There is no throne for the daughter of the Chaldeans*. For Chaldeans are interpreted as *fierce ones* (*feroces*). And they are very fierce, because, following their own wills, they do not know how to spare their own customs. Fierce are earthly desires, which render the mind hard and insensible not only against the precepts of the Creator, but often even against the scourges of punishments. But the daughter of the fierce ones has no throne, because the mind, which is born to the love of the world from wicked desires, and is hardened by those same desires, in that it subjects itself to earthly concupiscences, loses the seat of judgment, and presides over no throne within itself, because it lacks the examination of discretion: it is as if repelled from the session of its own judgment, because it wanders through the concupiscence of external desire. For it is clear that the mind which has lost the seat of counsel within, scatters itself abroad innumera- bly through desires; and because it neglects to act on what it understands, it is also blinded so that it does not know what it does: and often by the just judgment of God it is left to its own will, and is given over to the laborious ministries of the world which it anxiously seeks. Whence it is aptly added there: "Because you shall no longer be called delicate and tender: take the millstone and grind meal (ibid.)." It is certain, of course,

that parents spare their tender daughter, and do not afflict her with hard and servile works.

Almighty God, therefore, calls the beloved soul of each person as if she were a tender daughter, when He calls her back from the laborious services of this world, lest while she is affected by external acts, she be hardened from internal desires. But the daughter of the Chaldeans is not called delicate and tender, because the mind given to wicked desires is left in the labor of this world which it anxiously seeks: so that it may serve the world outwardly as a handmaid, which inwardly does not love God as a daughter. Whence she is also commanded to take the millstone and grind meal. The millstone is turned in a circle, and flour is brought forth. Every action of this world, however, is a millstone, which, while it gathers many cares, turns human minds as if in a circle; and it casts forth flours, as it were, from itself, because to the seduced heart it always begets the most minute thoughts. Sometimes, indeed, one who was believed to be of some merit while at rest, is laid bare when placed in any action. Whence it is immediately inferred there: "Uncover your shame, bare your shoulder, reveal your legs, cross the rivers (*ibid.*)."

Indeed, in the administration of work, shame is laid bare, when the vile and abject mind is recognized in the display of action, which was previously thought great when at rest. The mind bares its shoulder when it shows its work, which was unknown. It reveals its legs, because it manifests by what passions of desires it yearns for the

profits of the world. It also crosses rivers, because it unceasingly seeks the actions of this world, which daily flow away to their end; and while it leaves some, it follows others, as if always tending from river to river.

We have said these things, however, to show in what state the mind lies that is cast down from the throne of holy intention and given over to the vice of wandering; because if it ceases to yearn for the things that are above, it also unceasingly rushes down beneath itself. But it is fixed on high if, deserting the love of temporal things, it is bound to the hope of immutable eternity. Nor by these words do we assert that a monk should with a stubborn purpose remain perpetually in his seclusion, and not consent to go forth sometimes when violent necessity demands; but rather we persuade this, that he should do it so much the more sparingly and so much the more rarely, the more he knows that by wandering through the world, he is not able to live spiritually, nor to arrive at the summit of perfection, even if he watches diligently.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Concerning hermits who are given to wandering.

But among all the types of men who deviate from their purpose, that one is not moderately displeasing, that even among the most holy hermits some seem to be mixed in, whom the same disease of pestiferous wandering agitates: and (if it may be said) vexes them like Vertumnus, that

is, a certain kind of demon. Indeed, among the ancients, Vertumni were said to be demons by whose instigation men, placed in a state of vertigo, were rendered unstable. To these, indeed, those men not undeservedly seem subject, who, dwelling in their cells only during the Lenten season, run hither and thither for almost the entire circle of the year, and thus consume their life by wandering in vain. Indeed, while these men, on the one hand superficially pursuing more remote things, and on the other more frequently going out into public, boast that they extend themselves into both lives, namely the contemplative and the active, they are proven to bring the full fruit of salvation in neither; and while they applaud themselves for being united, like Jacob, by a certain special bond to two wives, the verdict of their own opinion is found to be turned against them. For them, indeed, contrary to the usual account, Rachel is rendered bleary-eyed and Leah is rendered barren; the one is indeed dulled by a dimness of sight, the other is struck by the affliction of sterility; because, to be sure, men of this kind, running about in public and thus held in poor opinion among the people, can by no means beget spiritual sons for God, and, returning as if drunk from the world, they are unable to penetrate intimate things. For whoever desires to attain to that inaccessible light with the keenness of his mind, it is necessary for him, during long periods of wandering, to purge his inner eyes of every stain of worldly action; lest, while he raises his eyes to contemplate the highest things, the

dust of earthly conversation obstruct his view, and he see more of the darkness he has left behind than apprehend the light toward which he strives.

CHAPTER XXV.

That custom makes the cell sweet, wandering makes it horrible.

To this is added that, for those who alternate their life under this inconstancy of change, the life of removal becomes more austere the more they are drawn back by the ingrained habit of wandering; so that the eremitical discipline seems to them a most grave difficulty, and the cell itself a horror. For custom makes the cell sweet to the monk; wandering makes it seem horrible. To those who wander, the cell is a prison; to those who remain, a pleasant chamber. Silence makes the persevering monk vigilant; sleep oppresses him who comes from without. Sobriety strengthens a body accustomed to fasting; the flow of abundant feasts enervates it. A moderate vigil sharpens the edge of the human mind; the doubling of repeated sleep dulls it. Frequent conversation begets a hunger in the monk's mind; secret removal keeps the soul in the rigor of accustomed continence. The recounting of secular affairs makes the soul subject to the passions of desire; assiduous meditation on the sacred word renders it dead to the world. The poverty of the monk is the security of his mind; security is the mother of purity. On the contrary, an abundance of things

begets the stings of solicitude; solicitude is the root of anxiety. Unwashed feet, neglected hands, unkempt hair are, as it were, a certain anchor for the monk to remain continually in his cell; on the other hand, the careful arrangement of a delicate body is a bait and an occasion for going out in public.

Whoever, therefore, wishes the eremitical life to become sweet to him, it is surely necessary that he strive to persevere in it continually with a constant mind; nor should he alternate in turns, if he wishes to bear the sweet yoke of the Lord in peace. For the eremitical life, when continued, is indeed a refreshment; when interrupted, it seems to be a kind of torment. By continuous removal, too, the soul is illuminated, vices are detected, and whatever had been hidden from a man about himself is opened up. When the water is drained from a fishpond, with the barriers removed, the fish remaining on dry ground suffer human gazes: and for us, when the flood of earthly action recedes, whatever was accustomed to swim beneath in the depths of rising storms is laid bare. The hunter, too, having blocked the winding paths, surrounds the lairs of the forest with dense thickets, and artfully leaves one entrance instead of many for the fleeing beasts, and there he places himself in ambush, brandishing his drawn hunting-spears; and thus he gains for himself a shortcut in the laborious hunt, while he quietly waits with busy leisure in the sole entryway for the tracks of the swift beasts, which he had been unable to pursue through endless paths. And we,

when we block the passages of earthly action for the vices that strive to go forth to the liberty of wicked work, we, as it were, lay an ambush for them in one place, because we struggle continually with thoughts alone. And thus the bestial ferocity of our vices is easily captured, while the sole passage of human thought is singularly guarded. The bird-catcher also covers all the pools on every side with a density of branches, and by a prescribed necessity compels the birds to flock to one place to drink the sweet water; and while that one place for drinking is exposed, the surrounding contrivances of traps are enriched by the outcome of a successful fowling. Therefore, so that we may easily cast the snares of capture upon the diverse passions of the soul, having blocked the streams of secular affairs, let us strive to fight manfully against the impulses of thoughts alone, so that while our vices, deterred from action, fly to the fluctuations of thoughts alone, they may easily fall into the snares of holy prudence.

It should be noted, however, that the servant of God is often deceived by the members of this world, when he is importunately invited to settle the disputes of dissidents, or to carry out some tasks, namely those profitable for ecclesiastical uses; for they exaggerate the imminent peril and the common danger to many, unless he proceeds. And if he should go, they assert in many ways that all things will turn out according to his will and come to happy conclusions. For the ancient enemy, seeing the soldier of Christ placed in

readiness for the holy contest and that he cannot otherwise grow lukewarm from the fervor of his purpose, contrives to sketch out the superficially good appearance of some more abundant fruit, so that while a greater gain is considered, the good which is at hand may be postponed for a time, as if by dispensation. But he who has frequently experienced the custom of the deceitful world knows prudently both to reject the vain fictions of those who suggest them and to guard himself carefully from the exercise of fruitless labor.

For among some, the authority of an absent monk is weighty; but if he is present, he is judged to be of no importance. For often the honor of reverence is paid to the letters of some venerable man, which is shown more irreverently to his person, if he be present. Indeed, among secular people, every religious person is like a picture. For if a picture stands at a distance, it is gazed upon eagerly and with avidity; if it is near, it is judged contemptible. And so every spiritual person seems to carnal men an object of fear when absent, but of contempt when present. The Apostle also testifies that this happened to him, when he says: "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible (II Cor. 10)." For to those whom he had terrified by the strength and weight of his letters, he appeared despicable in his bodily presence.

But what wonder is it, if these things happen to any just men, when the evangelical narrative asserts something not dissimilar about the very head of the elect, namely our Redeemer? "Herod,"

it says, "seeing Jesus, was very glad; for he had been desirous for a long time to see him, because he had heard many things about him (Luke 23)." But let us see to what end this so great, so long-standing desire, which the Herodian falsehood had held for the absent Lord, finally concluded when the opportunity of seeing him was offered. This is indeed manifestly declared when a little below it is added: "But Herod with his army despised him, and mocked him, clothing him in a white garment, and sent him back to Pilate (ibid.)." Behold, he whom that malicious fox had desired, he despised; him whom he wished to see, he mocked; and because he did not seek the Life for the love of living, by sending him back to Pilate, he remained in the death of his own impiety.

CHAPTER XXVII.

That the monk should guard himself from worldly entanglement.

Whoever, therefore, being placed in the battle-array of the heavenly militia, hastens to the city of the supernal fatherland, let him strive to reject the promises of the wickedly flattering world, and let him abhor being ensnared in the traps of secular actions under any guise. He has a duty of his own servitude assigned to him: let him believe it to be sufficient for himself if he can fulfill the prescribed task of the obedience enjoined upon him. Let him recall to memory what is written: "Beware lest thy acts be in many things" (Ecclesiasticus 11). Let it be left to the secular to

settle secular affairs. Let it be enough for the servants of God to show themselves as dead to this perishable world. For just as it is absurd to prefer evil things to good, so also is it foolish to judge the best to be inferior to the good. Mary, because she chose the best part, believed it to be sufficient for herself; nor did she incline herself to the good things of Martha, namely, frequent service (Luke 10). Moses, because he was removed from human conversation and fasted twice for a number of forty days, twice also merited to receive the law of the Lord written by His finger (Exodus 24); Aaron, however, who was left behind to guard the people, is known to have fashioned idols (Exodus 32).

Thus indeed, thus it very often happens, that he who, not content with his own affairs, proceeds to look after the salvation of another, is forced rather to sustain danger to himself; and while he extends a hand to another who is, as it were, struggling amidst stormy shipwrecks, the devouring wave also envelops him headlong. It is safer, therefore, in the nocturnal darkness of this life, for us who are placed on the shore to bring a light to the shipwrecked, than to swim out to them for the sake of compassion with peril to our own life; so that they, by the indication of the right course given by us, may reach the bosom of a safe harbor, and the abyss of the foaming sea may not absorb us as we cross over to them. On the summit of the mountain at Rephidim Moses was praying, and with Joshua as leader, Israel was fighting in the valley. But if Moses had

descended to the plains to aid his people, Amalek without a doubt would have struck the backs of the Israelites as they were being cut down. If he were to put down his hands to take up arms, a slaughter of his own people having been made, he would have offered an easy victory to the triumphant adversaries. This is indeed clearly recognized if the very series of sacred history is subtly attended to, where it is said: "For when Moses lifted up his hands, Israel prevailed; but if he let them down a little, Amalek overcame" (Exodus 17). The hands of the one praying, therefore, strengthened the hands of those fighting; and because the former, unwarlike, were open to heaven, for that reason the latter, contending, obtained victory with the enemies slain. Theirs [the soldiers'] was the battle, but his [Moses'] was undoubtedly the victory; for so that they might be granted to conquer, he merited to obtain it from heaven. But on the contrary, Balaam son of Beor, who went forth to battle with the Midianites, was slain by the sword with those whom he had resolved to slaughter (Numbers 31). And rightly so, for he who is not content with his own office is rendered subject to the peril of another's. The unfortunate man deserved to fall among the wedges of warriors, pierced by hostile swords, who, being placed in peace, could have announced the outcome of that very war through the oracle of prophecy.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

On the liberty and discretion of Elisha.

Not so Elisha, who, to be sure, did not follow Joram, king of Israel, to the wars as he hastened against Moab, but believed it sufficient that he foretold to him the success of the war and the future victory over the slaughtered enemies (4 Kings 3). But why do we say that he by no means followed the royal camp into battle, when, even as Naaman came from the remote borders of Syria and stood humbly at the door of his house with his horses and chariots, he did not deem it worthy to cross the threshold, nor did he open the door for him to enter, but rather sent word by a messenger what was to be done? And certainly this Naaman had at his disposal a manifold abundance of worldly endowments, for which he might seem worthy of being honored. For as the history testifies: "He was the commander of the army, a great man also with his lord, and honorable" (ibid.). For by him the Lord had given deliverance to Syria. He was, moreover, as it is written, a mighty man and rich. Even while engaged in that expedition, he was by no means lacking in the means of substance. For he had brought with him, as we read, ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and likewise ten changes of garments, which, although Scripture does not say of what kind they were, who can doubt that they were precious, being counted with such heavy weights of gold and silver? How many are there today, counted among those who profess the monastic rule, who, if so powerful and famous a man were to deign to stand before their doors, would immediately hasten to meet

him reverently, humbly beseech him to enter, and utter words of flattery, not so much those that would be usefully fulfilled as those that would be gladly heard? Who also, if they were so earnestly entreated, would by no means refuse to accept the offerings, especially if a somewhat numerous community of brethren to be fed were present with them. But Elisha, a disciple of the Holy Spirit, rich in hope, wealthy with the treasure of faith, although he sustained a hundred sons of the prophets under the mastership of his discipline, scorned the money, rejected the gifts, and laudably refused to receive a return for the grace bestowed, lest, indeed, he should seem to sell what he had received for free, to the injury of the giver. However, he did not rise for the approaching Naaman, not out of pride, but out of prudence, lest, you see, he should show reverence to a foreigner who still presumed upon earthly glory: doubtless even then prefiguring the image of apostolic dignity, which Paul afterwards represented explicitly, saying: "Inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I will honor my ministry" (Rom. 11). For is he to be thought a minister of humility who proudly fixed Naaman before the doors, when he allowed himself to be drawn from Mount Carmel, where he dwelt, by a woman, and not only accompanied that Shunammite but even followed her? For when she said (4 Kings 4): "As the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you," Scripture immediately follows, saying: "He arose, and followed her." Did he also with the haughtiness of swollen pride reject

copious gifts, who did not disdain to charitably receive vile barley loaves from a certain man coming from Baal-shalishah?

But here, while we present an obstacle to the prophet's being accused of swollen pride, we open the way for a demanding question against ourselves. For against these things that we propose, a question of this kind can be raised: If so great a prophet both accepted bread from the hands of the one offering it and consented to leave the desert at a woman's supplication, for what reason should a monk not dare to frequent the world, or be more reluctant to acquiesce in receiving gifts? To which we, responding briefly, by no means completely cut off the license for a monk to receive anything, but we recommend that it be done more temperately and with discretion when fraternal devotion requires it: namely, that he should accept whatever is necessary, just as the prophet accepted the bread he needed, and not admit what he has judged to be superfluous, as that prophet did with the money.

But the fact that Elisha descended from his mountain seclusion to resuscitate the son of the Shunammite is something for the monks of this time to hold in veneration rather than to imitate. Let a monk, indeed, be permitted to return to the world at will, as often as he is able to raise a dead man to life. For that prophetic journey is known to be altogether full of power through the miracle of human resurrection, and typological through the mystery of its inner meaning. And it is believed not to be unprofitable to add briefly

what it signifies. For the boy sent by Elisha with the staff did not resuscitate the Shunammite's son; but Elisha himself, coming in person, and stretching himself over the dead body, and conforming himself to its limbs, walking to and fro, and breathing seven times into the mouth of the dead one, straightway animated him to renewed light through the mystery of compassion. Indeed, God, the author of the human race, grieved as for a dead child when He looked with pity upon us, extinguished by the sting of iniquity. And because He brought forth the terror of the Law through Moses, it was as if He sent a staff through a boy. For through the Law, God had held a rod, when He said: "If anyone does this or that, he shall surely die" (Exod. 20, 21).

Therefore, the Law was not able to raise us from the death of sin, but God mercifully raised us to the state of life by the breathed-in grace of gentleness. But the boy with the staff was not able to raise the dead, because, as Paul attests: "The Law brought nothing to perfection" (Heb. 7). But He, coming by Himself, and humbly stretching Himself over the corpse, gathered Himself to make the dead one's limbs equal to His own: "Who, being in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man" (Phil. 2). He walks to and fro, because He calls both Judea, which is near Him, and the nations that are far off. He breathes seven times upon the dead one, because

the grace of the sevenfold Spirit inflames those lying in the death of sin to receive the divine gift. And soon he is raised up living, because he whom the rod of terror could not raise, the boy returns to life through the spirit of love (4 Kings 4).

Who then would dare rightly to draw the prophet's running about as an example, when it is clear that he can equal neither its power nor its mystery? Let the warrior of Christ therefore keep watch assiduously, girded for battle in the heavenly militia, fortified with the breastplate of faith; let him always stand ready to fight for the camp of his emperor, lest perhaps the hostile sword find him wandering outside the camp and consume him. As long as Abner was in the camp of his fellow soldiers, he was terrible to the enemy's ranks; but after he laid down his arms, he paid the penalty for the recently slain Asahel by the sword of a still rougher soldier (2 Kings 2). If the hospitality of his own house had also pleased Uriah, he would without doubt have escaped the sentence of royal indignation and fraud. But because he preferred to sleep outside in others' quarters rather than in his own chamber, he carried back to the commander of the camp besieging the city the letters that were the authors of his own death (2 Kings 11).

CHAPTER XXIX.

That in this time, preaching is not as fruitful as it once was.

And indeed there was once a time when the world needed those who announced good things,

but those times have passed and evolved, times in which any religious person could fruitfully counsel the secular, and not uselessly sow spiritual things in the minds of the carnal. Now, all the wretched consider the words of life to be fables, and although they lend their ears to salutary warnings, they nevertheless decline to observe them. Furthermore, if we turn the eyes of faith back to the past, we find that the present age has degenerated from the past, like fruitful branches into sterile shoots.

For who would not marvel that Nineveh, a city exceedingly spacious and incomparable, was so easily converted from its wickedness at the voice of a single man; and that an innumerable people, not only with their little ones and women, but even with their beasts of burden, were called back to penance (Jonah 3)? Who in this time would presume to prescribe a three-day fast, not to mention for the weak of age or sex, but even for men themselves, such that they are not allowed to drink water or taste any food at all? Behold, among the gentiles, even the brute beasts at the prophet's voice forwent food for three days; whereas men themselves, under evangelical discipline, scorn to fast for more than a day. The former flock together unanimously to penance at the word of one preacher; the latter incessantly hear crowds of preachers, and in no way consent to obey. Who would not also be astounded that all the men of Judah and Benjamin, whoever had taken foreign wives, at the preaching of Ezra the priest not only dissolved their illicit unions, but

also cast off all the offspring that had been born from them (1 Ezra 10)? Who does not know how great is the love of men for their own wives, how great the devotion for their children that binds a father's heart? Who can be unaware of the sorrow, the bitterness, with which human hearts must have been shaken to dissolve this twofold bond of necessity? By what fire of most vehement grief was the paternal affection, the conjugal spirit, forced to burn? Yet, having true piety (*pietas*) towards God, they reduced the image of a false piety to nothing; and so that they might be truly pious in spirit, they became laudably rigid against flesh and blood. They armed themselves against the laws of nature, so that they might faithfully serve the Author of natures. They forgot towards their children that they had been fathers, so that they themselves might be inscribed as heirs of the true Father; and so that they might repair for themselves the covenants of heavenly peace, they severed the bond of the conjugal bed. They know not how to keep faith with marriages, where a better faith is rekindled towards its proper author. To them is certainly aptly applied what is said through Moses: "Who said to his father and to his mother, 'I do not know you'; and to his brothers, 'I do not know you,' and they knew not their own children, these have kept your word, and have observed your covenant (Deut. 33)."

Who, I ask, can now rescind incestuous marriages, however insistent the preaching? Who has the power, I will not say to provoke a people,

but even one man to the repudiation of an illicit marriage? The sacred canons cry out, human laws avenge so great a crime, the preachers of the Church stand against it: and all these things, to lost men, like old wives' tales, move them to laughter rather than pricking them to lament the sin that must be corrected. Behold, moreover, this year, as you know, a synodal council has been twice convened by the pontiff of the Roman see, where again all the incestuous, according to the decrees of the canons, have been deprived of ecclesiastical communion.

But who, out of so many thousands of men, has seen even one torn away from the abomination of an ill-omened union? Indeed, lest he be swallowed by the deeper abyss of the one justly crying out, which of them after this has ceased to frequent the threshold of the Church? Or who, moreover, considering these things, has removed himself from their company? And so the contagion of a lethal leprosy creeps into all, because, to be sure, the bond of apostolic excommunication binds all their accomplices. For indeed, whoever is distinguished by the titles of a conjugal lineage, whoever is charmed by the ancestral beauty of a wickedly flattering form, especially if he abounds in the dowries of a larger substance, or if the character of his growing offspring instills in him the hope of future posterity; he judges it more prudent to manifestly withdraw from God than to break apart the glue of so lucrative a marriage. But if the contrary should happen, and he is struck by the inconvenience of a calamitous ex-

travagance, the man himself weaves a false line of consanguinity, and invents unheard-of names of ancestors through many arguments, and calls upon certain old men as witnesses for this allegation, whom, however, he knows well have been removed from our midst by the end of their lives. And so, as his own accuser and defendant, he imputes the crime, exaggerates the wickedness, and seeks a means by which he might swim out from so dangerous a shipwreck.

Let the monk therefore go now, let him desert the salutary leisure of his life, and consume his life under the pretext of winning souls, by pursuing vanities. For what simoniac, at the prompting of our admonition, has ever voluntarily deposed himself? What violent invader of another's right has restored to their stolen patrimonies those driven from their paternal soil? Who, when surrounded on the field by warlike troops of armed men, if he could engage on equal terms, has ever returned to his own lands by the obstacle of a mediating peace, without bloodshed? What tax collector has forgiven a needy debtor the interest fixed by a written bond? What debtor has kept the laws of good faith with the heirs of his creditor? All things in the world are in confusion, all decrees of piety and faith are overturned. Justice is sold by judges. By legal experts, truth is obscured by the dark color of sophistical argumentation. For laws are for sale, and money justifies the delinquent. Gold now presides over the senators themselves in the tribunals and judges, and like some emperor, promulgates the

edicts of a pragmatic sanction. For just as a king in his secret chambers deliberates on the state of the kingdom, on the sum of things; in a way, so gold both lies hidden in secret and brings forth its sentence in public. It is enclosed in a narrow cloth, and having decided the business, it casts the judicial votes. For often, those whom the case condemns, deceitful money brazenly asserts to be worthy of a reward; on the contrary, those whom conscience attests to be innocent, it impiously establishes as guilty before the judges. Indeed, coin gives weight to the laws, and as a false interpreter, bends obscure sentences to its own understanding. Coin softens the hearts of judges towards the rich with the oil of impiety; but towards the poor, it impels them to exercise the vigor of rigid censure. Now, therefore, avarice, the root of all evils, sprouts more abundantly, and like the branches of a poisonous shoot, spreads the portents of deadly vices throughout the whole world.

CHAPTER XXX.

That now all monstrous vices flourish more savagely.

These are indeed the times announced by the apostolic oracle, when he foretold the future to Timothy: 'In the last days,' he says, 'perilous times will come, and men will be lovers of themselves, covetous, haughty, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, wicked, without affection, without peace, accusers, incontinent, cruel, without kindness, traitors, reckless,

swollen with pride, lovers of pleasures more than of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying the power thereof (II Tim. 3);' and having stated these things, he immediately adds: 'And avoid them' (ibid.). Was Timothy, then, going to reach the end of this world, that the Apostle, after enumerating the depravities of men that would be in the last days, immediately added that he should avoid them? Or rather, in the person of this one disciple, did he not give this command in common to those whom he foresaw would still be appointed to their office near the end of the age? Therefore, when he does not say, 'Preach to them, announce to them the words of life,' but 'avoid them,' he surely condemns the insolence of modern temerity and restrains the proud from fruitless preaching.

What shall we monks say to these things, we who exceed the limits of our measure and usurp for ourselves the right of another's office? If Paul forbade a disciple specially appointed for this very task from preaching to the incorrigible, by what mark of audacity are we seized, who, though the office of preaching has by no means been delegated to us, importunately thrust ourselves forward and, neglecting our own salvation, sweat in vain for the supposed progress of others?

Let it cease, therefore, let the sterile care for business cease. Let it be judged superfluous to indulge in fruitless labor. Let the mind, gathered into itself with all its strength, return, and let it gird itself vigilantly for the contest against

indefatigable adversaries. Let it indeed abound inwardly with the bowels of charity towards all, but let it consider it superfluous to extend itself to external matters for the sake of another's salvation. To those who come to it, let it offer admonitions of salvation; at no one's urging let it lightly postpone the gains of its own quiet. A page of an imperial edict is delivered by a running courier; sealed documents are sent to us from the author of the apostolic see; a synod is convened, the whole council's authority is committed to religious men. Let the monk immediately bow to the ground, let him reverently show honor to the sacred letters; yet let him consider the duty of this expedition irrevocably alien to himself, thinking within himself: 'What have I to do with the kings of the earth? What have I to do with a synodal assembly?' Let it be enough for me to persist in weeping for my sins; let it be sufficient for me to show myself dead to this world.

Do not, I beg you, monks, do not burst into the courts of kings under the guise of ecclesiastical compassion; do not strike the ears of princes with tiresome importunity, as if suggesting salutary things; believe one who has experience, believe one who is not lightly fatigued in the pursuit of this grace. For we have often expressed to the imperial majesty what seemed needful to suggest; invited by the supreme pontiffs, we have been present at synodal councils; but whoever pursues these things at this time seems as if he were entrusting seeds to sandy shores.

CHAPTER XXXI.

That in a synod a monk dare not speak freely for fear of the bishops' ill will.

For often, being present at synodal councils, we have seen certain men, fatally conscious of their own guilt, presiding among the number of priests, not only secure in their own position, but even impudently prepared to defend the crimes of others: who, indeed, as was reported, had both formerly bought with Simon (Acts 2), and afterwards sold the gifts of grace with Gehazi (4 Kings 5). Their power was so great in making excuses for sins, that among other evils, they seemed to be not merely defenders, but rather champions of the Simoniacal heresy. What monk would presume to mutter a word against the ill will of these men? Who would dare to claim for himself the right of freedom to denounce crimes or to declare justice? Immediately they would rage, immediately they would take up the weapons of harsh censure against us, and having first started a quarrel, they would command silence, complaining among themselves in this manner: We have gathered at this council to judge.

But, oh, what new presumption! We are subject to the opinions of the dead, and those who were legally established under their laws have become the judges of bishops. To whom it is sometimes answered: Venerable Fathers and lords, just as it is your special prerogative to judge, so also it is fitting for the lesser members of the Church to contribute in common what

they think; nor does any authority of the canons prohibit the younger members from bringing forth what they consider will be profitable to the Church, provided, however, that the matters discussed must be concluded by the clause of a pontifical judgment. Therefore, if at any time this, or anything of this kind, is suggested to them with humility, it is by no means patiently received: but whatever is said by us in the synod is, to our detriment, called by the proud name of "judgment."

I have briefly touched upon these things for this reason, so that any inexperienced person may learn from my example how diligently it is expedient for him to avoid such men. Indeed, from one who goes before, it is inferred whether trust may safely be placed in an unknown water by the army that follows. Sellers of wares immediately restrain themselves from the rush of their usual course when they see even one of their own return from the market empty-handed, his goods unsold. He whom a failed harvest has frequently disappointed while intent on rural cares has restrained many from cultivating a barren field. When the searcher of the waves, frustrated in his labor, wearily brings back empty nets, he easily calls back those now stripped of hope from exploring the boundaries of the poor water. Thus, indeed, let it be sufficient that I have attempted such things, not for myself alone, but also for all my brothers, so that while the labor of one is perceived to have been useless, caution may

be provided not to one, but to many, against the expense of superfluous labor.

CHAPTER XXXII.

That a monk should keep himself from the world, and always set the judgment of God before his eyes.

Therefore, whatever monk hastens to attain the summit of perfection, let him confine himself within the cloisters of his seclusion and cherish spiritual leisure; let him shrink in horror from running about through the world, as if from plunging himself into a lake of blood. For the world is polluted daily by the contamination of so many crimes, more and more, that any holy mind is defiled by the mere consideration of it. And while new crimes are ever added to the old, what else is being done but that, without a doubt, the way of the Antichrist is being paved, so that when he comes into the world beyond the end of the age, he may enter freely without obstacle? And since his way is, without doubt, nothing other than our scandals, the same cause that promises he will be able to tread with free steps ought to restrain our own footsteps.

Let every brother, therefore, be restrained now in the narrow prison of his seclusion, so that a house of infinite magnitude may be prepared for him in heaven. Jeremiah says: "O Israel, how great is the house of God, and how vast is the place of his possession! It is great and has no end, it is high and immense!" (Baruch 3). Let him now bind himself with the chain of divine fear, so that

he may afterwards obtain the right of true liberty. Resting in Christ, let him consider that he has nothing in common with the world, so that what John the Apostle commands, he may observe not only in heart, but also in his very body: "Do not love the world," he says, "nor the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2). Let it be clear that the servant of Christ does not love the world with any affection of the heart, and to prove this, let him disdain to frequent it even with his bodily steps. Furthermore, let this very bodily abstinence prove the pious mind's hatred for the world, so that the more one is alienated from the harmful knowledge of the world, the more closely he may be joined to God in intimacy. Now, weeping and sorrowful, let him keep his eyes fixed on the ground, which he may then joyfully lift up to see Him who is to come on the clouds of heaven with great power and majesty (Matthew 26), as it is written: "Look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is at hand" (Luke 21).

Oh, how very brief are the words to pronounce, yet how infinite is the meaning to be thoroughly pondered! Namely, when the reprobate, wailing with trembling hearts, will say: "O mountains, fall on us, and hills, cover us from the face of the One who sits on the throne" (Luke 23). When, finally, "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven" (Matthew 24). Then, indeed, when every eye will see him, even those who pierced

him, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him. But what human mind can conceive, what tongue can explain, how great will then be the joy of the elect, how ineffable the gladness of the blessed, when, as the world is in peril, they themselves cease to be subject to dangers henceforth, and dancing with lighted lamps, they run to meet the immortal Bridegroom as He comes! (Matthew 25). When the members of the world fall down to endure the torments of hellish fire, they themselves happily rise up to receive the rewards of inaccessible glory! When immortal death suddenly seizes their life, glorious incorruption consumes the mortality of these others, which has been absorbed by the power of the resurrection! Let the holy mind incessantly set before itself this singular spectacle, to be marveled at for all ages. Let it depict this tremendous image of the coming judgment before its eyes with assiduous meditation. Let the chosen man now consider himself snatched away to the tribunal of the Judge; let him now think of himself as placed under examination, being formidably pressed by divine questions to render an account. Let him make himself a stranger to the world, so that he may adhere intimately to God with the bounty of a more favorable grace. In this way, therefore, let him live as one dead; let him withdraw himself from earthly vexations and, as if already placed in a tomb, rest sweetly in the desire for his Creator alone. And so may his life be hidden in God, so that when Christ appears,

he himself may merit to appear with Him in glory (Colossians 3). Amen.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

In which the writer addresses the venerable monks Peter and Albizo.

Now therefore, most beloved brothers—one of you a polished model for cenobites, the other an example of the eremitical life to be imitated—I turn the point of this pen to you, so that this little work, which was directed to you at its beginning, might also fittingly find its conclusion in you upon its completion. You see, therefore, how swiftly this short life passes by; you see that this world proclaims its approaching end with ever more evident signs. For the earth, exhausted of its generative humors, endures the plow as if unwillingly, as it denies fruit to its cultivators; and like an aged womb, when the blood in the body grows cold and the uterus withers, even if the desire to procreate is not lacking, it does not rise to the task of bringing forth offspring. Water, likewise, suffers from sterility, so that the fisherman now denies his nets the expense, as the profit of a meager catch does not reward his hard labors through the liquid element. Nor shall I pass you by, O once-fertile air, who now, since you do not yield in the capture of birds by the various devices of snares, doubtless send the fowlers, frustrated in their vain labor, back to rural work; and those whom you once made intent on lofty things by capturing your gifts, you now render subject to

their nurse, the earth, so that they may remember to whom they should credit the support for sustaining life. And you who then, being generous, commanded all coarser foods to yield to your delicacies, now, withdrawing your hand, you cause vile vegetables to cram the tables of the rich, as if they were exquisite feasts.

The world, therefore, as has been said, as if now weary from a long old age, indicates with probability through all its members that it will not long extend the limits of its course. To this is added the fact that men now grow old in their youth, and while their youthful beauty is still flourishing, they sprinkle their heads with untimely gray hairs. Doubtless, those whom their own age dictates should still be green with the flower of immature beauty, the old world, by a certain command of violent authority, forces to appear decrepit along with itself. Whence it happens that just as the fruits of a hollow tree fall before they are ripe as soon as they are produced, so indeed do men die by a bitter end, so to speak, before they come to the fullness of age.

Since, therefore, the world threatens an imminent and precipitous end to its course, right before our eyes, and since men are also snatched away daily, overtaken by an untimely death, what remains but that in this brief moment in which we live, we should despise all perishable things as if they had already perished, and strive to hasten with the full desire of a fervent mind toward those things that are permanent? Behold, no light prizes are proposed for those who run,

and the stadium of our journey is shortened daily. Therefore, let no hindrances of the present life impede the path of our course; let no torpor of carnal allurements weave delays for us. Let each one now direct the eyes of perspicacious faith toward the promised rewards, and with the wing of robust hope, transcend all the opposing obstacles of earthly depravity from the brutish chains of sloth. For behold, He who called from afar now extends His hand to those who are approaching; and He strengthens them like tender children tottering on trembling knees, and gently and softly invites them into the bosom of His charity.

Let us therefore approach the throne of glory with confidence (Heb. 4), let us seize the emblems of such great piety; and let it be a matter of shame not to accept what is offered, when it would have been temerity to seek what was not promised. Let us now disdain to tread so often in body the mud of this miry world, whose love, by God's inspiration, we have learned to trample with the free foot of the mind. Therefore, let our bodily steps be restrained from that which the soul does not love; let us deem him unworthy of our frequent visits who rejoices in our ruin. Let our very bodily absence testify to the enmity of the mind, nor let him who is accustomed to defile our gazes merit our frequent wanderings; and let him alone fall into the pits of his own snares, who assiduously prepares the traps of deception for our steps. Thus, thus let the crafty plotter lament the frustrated watches of his deceits, while he

explores the path of our nocturnal journey as we rest in peace.

But let the field of divine eloquence suffice for our discourse. Through this field let us continually walk, in it let us delightfully stroll. There it is permitted to run with free steps through the level plain of the sacred histories. We can also, through the profundity of mystical intelligence, creep up the heights of the steep mountains there, as it were. There we shall enjoy the sweet conversation of faithful friends; there, a varied store and a perpetual banquet of celestial feasts. Yearning for these dishes, may the faithful soul, nourished by the food of assiduous reading, receive strength, and fattened by the richness of the purest prayer, may it grow plump. Let the hunger of the world be left to those who loathe the world's banquet. But we have learned to hunger for those feasts which are wont to give satiety with joy to the famished, and yet do not generate disgust in the satiated. These feasts, to be sure, both sweetly fill the stomach of our mind and yet owe nothing to the sewers' drains. For they leave nothing of themselves at all for excretion, but diffuse themselves through the pores of all the veins and deep into the interior of all the viscera to provide strength.

Therefore, let the attentive mind be insatiably devoted to these dishes of the celestial table; let the eye diligently keep watch over them; let the tongue run through the words of the articulated text; let the heart understand what is read and ponder the secrets of the hidden mystery.

Let the holy animals continually ruminate this fodder through the practice of assiduous reconsideration, so that it may flow back from the belly of knowledge to the throat of memory by oft-repeated meditation. These feasts, I say, let the fasting mind always hunger for, and from them may it never depart satiated; but the more it is filled, the more ardently may it be kindled again to the appetite for them. And so let us occupy all our senses with these vital feasts, so that, having become insensible to all the affairs of worldly causes, truly dead to the world, we may live for God alone; so that the Author and Instructor of this most blessed meal may deign to count us among His own guests, who will deserve to hear from the mouth of Truth: "I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom (Luke 22)."

May Almighty God, who is love (1 John 4), most beloved brothers, graciously inspire your holy hearts, that you may deign always to pray for me, a sinner.

SCHOLIA

It must be concluded, therefore, that just as one must beware of those whom the modern councils of the synods repel from ecclesiastical society, so too must one withdraw from those whom the ancient Fathers decreed should be eliminated. Here the blessed Damian seems to speak according to the custom of the Church that was observed in his age. For before the Council

of Constance, it was universally forbidden for the faithful to associate with the excommunicated, ch. **Cautum est** 11, q. 3, and ch. **Cum desideres**. And often elsewhere. But in the Council of Constance, through the Constitution of Martin V, which begins: **Ad evitanda multa scandala**, which Leo X also confirmed in the Lateran Council, session 11, and which Martinus Navarrus refers to in his **Summa**, ch. 27, no. 36, and which Didacus Covarrubias still mentions in ch. **Alma mater**, I par. **Relect.**, paragr. 2, it was decreed: "It is lawful for the faithful to communicate with the excommunicated, with two exceptions, namely, those who have been denounced by name, or notorious strikers of clerics." In accordance with this decree, we shall interpret the zeal and opinion of our doctor.

Blessed be the name of the Lord.