

SAINT AMBROSE OF MILAN

ON PENANCE

De Poenitentia

SABBATISMUS

Saint Ambrose of Milan (340–397)
De Poenitentia · On Penance

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[ON PENANCE.] ADMONITION ON THE BOOKS ON PENANCE.

Since these two books were written against the Novatians, so that the counsel of Ambrose, the order and series of the work, and the force and weight of the arguments may be perceived with less trouble, we thought it would not be unwelcome to the reader if we placed before his eyes whence that heresy arose, what progress it made, and in what state it was when these same books were being composed.

The Novatians were named after the authors of the sect, Novatus and Novatian, whom many of the ancients, and especially the Greeks, mistakenly confuse, though Ambrose never fails to distinguish them. The former of these was a presbyter of the Church of Carthage, but never reached the episcopal dignity; in which matter Baronius, Petavius, Labeo, and some others were in error. He was of a restless and wicked mind, and prepared for nothing more than for revolutions. The same man had joined himself to Felicissimus, who was raving that peace should be restored to those who had lapsed into idolatry without any penalty being imposed. To gain a little more authority for his heresy, he pushed him with every art and ambition to the diaconate, not only without the consent of his bishop, Cyprian, but even without consulting him. To this crime they added other deeds full of both unchastity and atrocious cruelty, for which a day was appointed for him by the brethren before Cyprian: but the persecution renewed at that

time prevented further inquiry into him. Using that opportunity, Novatus fled to Rome; and when he arrived there toward the beginning of the year 251, he found the clergy and people there disagreeing about choosing a pontiff in the place of Fabian, who had not long before suffered martyrdom.

The divided interests of the Romans had turned toward two presbyters, Cornelius and Novatian. The latter professed the decrees of the Stoic philosophers, a man of very sharp intellect, of varied learning, and of no common eloquence: but besides the fact that he had been subject to exorcisms, the bishop had not signed him with the sacred unction when he was baptized in bed on account of adverse health. Nevertheless, neglecting these defects, the same prelate deemed him worthy of the priestly honor; whence no small offense was excited in the minds of the people. Therefore, when more and more righteous votes had returned Cornelius as pontiff, a man of eminent virtue and practiced in every grade of the Church, Novatian, impatient of rejection, determined with himself to overturn that election. To accomplish this undertaking, he wrote a famous libel against Cornelius: and finally denied that his ordination was legitimate because he did not reject from his communion those Christians who had burned incense to idols during the raging persecution. He enticed not a few of the people into his faction: an opportunity which Novatus, thinking it opportune for his own affairs, handed himself over to Novatian. Therefore, to promote

his part as much as he could, he achieved by his tricks that he was ordained as pontiff by three bishops, whom he had summoned for this purpose as rude and simple men from a small and very cheap part of Italy; whence then for the first time the name of antipope, unknown from the established religion of Christ, began to be heard. He signaled his ordination by letters given and legates sent to the African and Eastern Church: but it was everywhere repudiated.

Meanwhile, to continue to stir up hatred against Cornelius, and to gain authority for himself by a certain pretense of discipline, he taught that the Church lacked that power by which the crime of the fallen—whom they distinguished into *Libellatici*, *Thurificatores*, and *Apostatas*—might be forgiven, although he by no means denied that the same should be exhorted to works of penance. At first indeed they kept themselves within these bounds. But when they were sharply pressed by Cyprian and other Fathers, who demonstrated that that which they granted as pardon for more atrocious sins, such as murder and adultery, was denied to the fallen alone not without the greatest injustice; they were finally driven to contend that all sins were equally irremissible. Yet their followers were ashamed of this madness; for afterward there were those who wished this opinion to be restricted to the more serious crimes only.

That appearance of severity pleased many, and in a short time a numerous sect coalescing from these, so that they might be distinguished

from the orthodox, arrogated to themselves the very vain name of Cathari, that is, the pure. Socrates wove a large catalog of bishops of the same sect with great praise (Lib. IV Hist. cap. 21). He also describes the struggles undertaken by the professors of the same for the divinity of Christ, and records that their constancy in punishments was so clear that the Catholics themselves, induced by it, desired to join their prayers with them in their temples. Which indeed we would have less suspected if they proceeded from a writer not so inclined to those parts. Various councils proscribed that heresy, and prescribed what should be observed in those who returned to the Church. Although the most learned of the Fathers drew their pen against it, it nevertheless persevered for a very long time, having been propagated through almost all regions of the Christian world.

Ambrose found it in this same state when he attacked it with these two books (Cap. 1). First, he very aptly begins with a commendation of moderation, which it was certain was lacking in the Novatians. Then he asserts the power committed to the Church of absolving any crimes (Cap. 2), demonstrating that God is more inclined to mercy than to severity (Cap. 3 and 4). But later, when he has satisfied the objection sought from divine immutability (Cap. 5), he in turn presses them sharply from various testimonies of Scripture, and especially from the fact that Christ promised the keys of heaven to Peter (Num. 32 and 33). To these he joins other

moments taken from their principles and morals (Cap. 8). Soon, making a step to other objections (Cap. 9), he dwells mostly on refuting what they were vending about the sin unto death (Cap. 10); and having shown that the orthodox doctrine is clearly asserted by John the Evangelist (Cap. 11), he utterly overturns their futile responses (Cap. 12). Finally, from the history of the Corinthian separated by Paul and then restored to the sacred things, he draws a very strong argument for confirming the Catholic dogma (Cap. 13 et seq.).

In the second book (Cap. 1), after he has taught that penance must be done solicitously and maturely, he attacks two principal defenses of the Novatians. First (Cap. 2 and 3), the words of the Apostle supplied them, asserting that those who had fallen could not be renewed to penance: and second (Cap. 4), they borrowed from the Gospel of John, where it is said that the sin against the Holy Spirit is to be forgiven neither in this nor in the future world. But he treats and dilutes both difficulties with such force of reasons that it has enlightened almost all later theologians in solving these, as we have observed in their places. Finally, he proves that sinners are induced by them to a repetition of baptism (Cap. 5, num. 36), so that by its benefit they might attain the pardon which they denied to the works of penance; while the apostles, on the contrary, nowhere fail to promise us the pardon of crimes. Taking an opportunity from this, he invites Christians (Cap. 6) to penance, and places before their eyes its individual parts and qualities. He adds that it will be

that Christ, moved by their tears as well as by the prayers of Mother Church, will approach them to work a spiritual resurrection, whose form he mentions existed in Lazarus (Cap. 7). He confirms his raising as well as the banquet at which he was present together with the Lord, proposed against the Novatians, the example of the pardon which Paul gave to the Corinthian being applied again. After this, reflecting upon himself (Cap. 8, num. 67 et seq.), so that absolution from his own committed sins and compassion in those of others may be given to him, he prays to God with the greatest possible submission of mind. At last, having shaken off the vices which are wont to creep in around penance (Cap. 9 et seq.), and having shown beforehand the caution that must be observed in choosing the time for public penance, he concludes the book.

Furthermore, as to the time of this work, we seem to be able to gather it not inconveniently from two places compared with each other, namely from those words: on Penance I wrote two books some time ago, which are found in the Exposition of Psalm XXXVII, which we have shown was written in the year 393 (Num. 1); and from what he says in Lib. II of this commentary: We seniors also sin (Cap. 8, num. 74), and especially from those superior words: I have undertaken some labor for your holy Church (Num. 73). For since in this last place there is no doubt that a public labor, known to everyone, is designated, it ought to be understood as being about the struggle undertaken either against Justina,

the leader of the Arians, or against Symmachus, the defender of idols. Therefore, it is established that some intermediate year must be assigned to this same work, perhaps 384; for in that way it happens that in the course of 393, the holy man could have said: I wrote some time ago.

These last words sufficiently reveal to which author that commentary is to be attributed: but as for what he says in Lib. II, that he was snatched from the tribunals and undertook labor for the Church, this is so Ambrosian that we are vehemently surprised that Peter Soto (Lib. Inst. Sacerd. de Necess. Confess. Lect. 9) wished to take that work away from our Doctor on account of those places, by which everyone ought to be persuaded to ascribe it to him. But we will discuss his reasons, if they are of such importance, in their own time. Here, however, we will add only this one thing, that the authority of Augustine citing the same books as truly by Ambrose again and a third time (Lib. de Peccat. orig. cap. 31, lib. II cont. Julian. cap. 3 and 9, and lib. IV contra duas Epist. Pelag. cap. 11) alone stands before all conjectures, of which an example exists in the mentioned theologian as to how much they are wont to impose even upon the learned. But Rivetus was undoubtedly in greater fault (Critic. sac. lib. III, cap. 16), who, having related Soto's arguments, malignantly kept silent about the opposite ones. It is not hard to see the cause of this silence in a work in which a censure of books of this kind is promised. For hardly anywhere else are the authority of forgiving sins handed down by

Christ to the Church, the necessity of confessing the same, and finally the merit of good works and castigations of the body manifested more clearly.

TWO BOOKS ON PENANCE BY SAINT AMBROSE, BISHOP OF MILAN. [BOOK ONE.]

CHAPTER ONE.

The praise of moderation. How necessary that virtue is for the leaders of the Church, demonstrated especially by the example of the Lord's charity and gentleness. Since the Novatians have departed from this, they are not to be held as Christ's disciples: whose pride and inclemency are chastised.

1. If that end of virtues is the greatest which looks to the progress of the most people, moderation is almost the most beautiful of all: which does not offend even those whom it condemns; and those whom it has condemned, it is wont to make worthy of absolution. Finally, it is the only one that has propagated the Church sought by the blood of the Lord, being an imitator of the celestial benefit, and tempering the redemption of all with a healthy end, which the ears of men can bear, and the minds not flee from, nor the souls fear.

2. For he who strives to emend the vices of human infirmity ought to sustain that same infirmity on his own shoulders, and in a certain way weigh it (Luke XV, 5), not cast it away. For that Evangelical shepherd is read to have carried the weary sheep, not to have cast it away. And Solomon says: Do not be too righteous (Eccl. VII,

17); for moderation ought to temper justice. For how can he offer himself to be cured by you, whom you hold in fastidiousness; who thinks he will be an object of contempt, not of compassion, to his physician?

3. Therefore the Lord Jesus had compassion on us, that he might call us to himself, not deter us. He came mild, he came humble. Finally he says: Come to me all who labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you (Matth. XI, 28). Therefore the Lord Jesus refreshes, he does not exclude nor cast away: and deservedly he chose such disciples who, as interpreters of the Lord's will, might collect the people of God, not repudiate them. Whence it is clear that those are not to be held among the disciples of Christ who think that harsh things are to be followed instead of mild ones, proud things instead of humble ones: and while they themselves seek the mercy of the Lord, they deny it to others; such as are the doctors of the Novatians, who call themselves pure.

4. What is prouder than these, when Scripture says: for no one is pure from sin, not even an infant of one day (Job XIV, 4); and David cries out: Cleanse me from my offense (Psal. L, 2)? Are these holier than David, from whose family Christ chose to be born in the mystery of the incarnation, whose posterity is the celestial hall, receiving the Redeemer of the world in a virginal womb? But what is harsher than that they should indicate a penance which they do not relax; when certainly by denying pardon, they take away the

incentive for penance? For no one can do penance well, except he who has hoped for indulgence.

CHAPTER II.

As for what the Novatians say, that they do not deny communion except to the fallen, this agrees neither with Scripture nor with their own doctrine: but as for the fact that they pretend reverence for divine power, they are by this very thing injurious to it; since he inflicts an injury who does not wish to exercise the office committed to him or a part of it: moreover, the right of binding and loosing, which cannot be attributed to heresy, is beautifully vindicated by the Church, since she received it from the Holy Spirit, against whom these act proudly.

5. But they deny that communion ought to be restored to those who have fallen by prevarication. If they excepted only one crime of sacrilege, to which they denied pardon, they would indeed seem harsh, yet would be refuted only by divine sentences, but would at least agree with their own assertions; for the Lord excepted no crime, who forgave all sins. But since they think that all sins are to be estimated by equal measures in a certain manner of the Stoics, and assert that he who has suffocated a barnyard cock, as they say, and he who has suffocated his father, are equally to be abdicated from the celestial mysteries; how do they object the guilty of one crime, when they themselves cannot deny that it is most unworthy that the punishment of a few should reach many?

6. [Alias cap. II.] But they say they defer reverence to the Lord, to whom alone they reserve the power of remitting crimes. Nay, they do no greater injury to anyone than those who wish to rescind his mandates, and to return the committed gift. For when the Lord Jesus himself said in his Gospel: Receive the Holy Spirit; whose sins you remit, they are remitted to them: and whose you retain, they shall be retained (John XX, 22, 23); who then is he who honors more, whether he who obeys the mandates, or he who resists?

7. The Church preserves obedience in both, so that she both binds and relaxes sin: heresy is unmerciful in the one, disobedient in the other; it wants to bind what it may not resolve: it does not want to solve what it has bound; in which it condemns itself by its own sentence. For the Lord willed there to be an equal right of both loosing and binding, who permitted both by an equal condition. Therefore he who does not have the right of loosing, does not have that of binding either. For just as according to the Lord's sentence, he who has the right of binding also has that of loosing: so the assertion of these strangles itself; so that because they deny themselves the right of loosing, they ought to deny that of binding also. How therefore can one be allowed, the other not be allowed? To whom both were given, it is manifest that either both are allowed, or it is certain that neither is allowed. Both are allowed to the Church, neither is allowed to heresy; for this right is permitted to priests alone. Rightly therefore does the Church vindicate this, she who

has true priests: heresy cannot vindicate it, she who does not have priests of God. By not vindicating it, however, she pronounces about herself, that since she does not have priests, she ought not to vindicate for herself a priestly right. Thus by impudent contumacy we perceive a shameful confession.

8. Behold also that, since he who received the Holy Spirit received the power of both loosing and binding sin. For so it is written: Receive the Holy Spirit; whose sins you remit, they are remitted: and whose you retain, they shall be retained (John XX, 22, 23). Therefore he who cannot loose sin does not have the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Holy Spirit is the office of the priest, but the right of the Holy Spirit is in loosing and binding crimes; how therefore do they vindicate his gift, about whose right and power they are distrustful?

9. What! that they are more insolent. For since the Spirit of God is more prompt to mercy than to severity; that which he says he wills, they do not will: that which he does not will, this they do; since to vindicate belongs to a judge, to remit to a merciful one. More tolerably therefore, Novatian, would you remit than bind; for you would usurp the one as if sparing of delinquent, the other you would pardon as if having compassion for distress.

CHAPTER III.

To the same Novatians opposing that pardon is denied by them only for the more serious crimes, the Saintly Doctor responds that by

this sentence the parent of their sect is again condemned, and God himself is offended, who made the power of remitting any sins: but that for greater offenses greater penance also must be applied. He adds, however, that they show themselves perverse in this, that this kind of distinction of faults leaves the matter of severity to God: whose mercy shining so wonderfully in the incarnation of Christ they refuse to imitate.

10. But they say that they, with the exception of the more serious crimes, relax pardon for the lighter ones. Not this indeed did your parent of error Novatian think, who thought that penance was to be given to no one; namely with that contemplation, that what he himself could not loose, he should not bind; lest by binding he should make solution to be hoped for from him. In that therefore you condemn your father by your own sentence, you who make a distinction of sins, which you think should be loosed by you, and which you judge to be without remedy: but God does not make a distinction, who promised his mercy to all, and conceded the license of relaxing to his priests without any exception. But he who has exaggerated the fault, let him also exaggerate the penance; for greater crimes are washed away by greater tears. Thus neither is Novatian approved, who closed pardon to all: nor you imitators and condemners of the same; because you diminish the studies of penance there, where they ought to be increased; because the mercy of Christ taught that more serious sins are to be sustained by greater supports.

11. But what perversity is this, that you vindicate for yourselves the things possible by grant: and for God, as you yourselves say, you reserve the impossible things? This is to choose for oneself the causes of forgiving, and to leave to God the matter of raging. And where is that: But let God be true, and every man a liar, as it is written: that you may be justified in your words, and overcome when you are judged (Rom. III, 4)? That we may know therefore that God is more indulgent of mercy than tenacious of severity, he himself says: I will mercy rather than sacrifice (Hos. VI, 6). How therefore can your sacrifice be accepted by God, you who deny mercy; when he himself says he does not want the death of the sinner, but his correction (Ezek. XVIII, 32)?

12. Of whom the interpreter the Apostle says: Because God sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh; that the justification of the Law might be fulfilled in us (Rom. VIII, 3, 4). He did not say in the likeness of flesh; because Christ took up the truth of human flesh, not the likeness: nor did he say in the likeness of sin; because he did not do sin, but was made sin for us: but he came in the likeness of sinful flesh (II Cor. V, 2), that is, he took up the likeness of sinful flesh; therefore the likeness, because it is written: And he is man, and who shall know him (Jer. XVII, 3)? He was man in the flesh according to man, who might be known: by power above man, who might not be known; so also here he has our flesh, but he does not have the vices of this flesh.

13. For he was not, as every man is, generated from male and female mixture: but born of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin (Matth. I, 18), he had taken up an immaculate body, which not only no vices had stained, but neither had the injurious concretion of generation or conception darkened (S. Aug. lib. II, cont. Jul. Pelag., in princ. et fin.; lib II de Pec. orig., c. 40; et l. IV, contra duas Epist. Pet. c. 11). For we all men are born under sin, whose very origin is in vice, as you have it read, David saying: For behold I was conceived in iniquities, and in offenses did my mother bear me (Psal. L, 5). Therefore Paul's flesh was a body of death, as he himself says: Who shall deliver me from the body of this death (Rom. VII, 24)? But Christ's flesh condemned sin, which it did not feel by being born, which it crucified by dying; so that in our flesh there might be justification through grace, where before there was pollution through fault.

14. What therefore shall we say to these things, except what the Apostle said: If God be for us, who is against us? He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him for us all; how has he not also with him given us all things? Who shall accuse against the elect of God? God who justifies, who is he who condemns? Christ who died, nay who also rose again, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us (Rom. VIII, 31 et seq.). For those therefore for whom Christ intercedes, Novatian accuses. Those whom Christ redeemed to salvation, Novatian condemns to death. To whom Christ says: Take my yoke upon

you, and learn of me because I am mild (Matth. XI, 29); Novatian says: I am unmild. To whom Christ says: You shall find rest for your souls; for my yoke is sweet, and my burden is light (Ibid., 30); on these Novatian imposes a heavy burden and a hard yoke.

CHAPTER IV.

He proceeds to prove divine mercy, and shows it to be greater than severity by an exposition of the Evangelical testimony. But as for those who denied Christ before men, he makes it plain by the example of athletes that they are not all to be held in the same manner.

15. How propense therefore to mercy the Lord Jesus is, although these things sufficiently instruct; nevertheless let him also teach you himself, who when he wished to instruct us against the impression of persecution, said: Do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul: but rather fear him who can send the soul and body into Gehenna (Matth. X, 28). And below: Every one therefore who shall have confessed me before men, I also will confess him before my Father, who is in heaven: but he who shall have denied me before men, I also will deny him before my Father, who is in heaven (Ibid., 32, 33).

16. Where he confesses, he confesses for all, he embraces all: where he denies, he does not deny all. For just as he has above: Every one who shall have confessed me, I also will confess him, that is, every one: it was consequent that below also he should thus render: Every one however who

shall have denied me. But lest he should seem to deny all, he thus subjoined: But he who shall have denied me before men, I also will deny him. He promises grace to all, he does not threaten injury to all. What is of mercy, he exaggerates: what is of vengeance, he extenuates.

17. And so it is written not only in that book which is written according to Matthew of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus: but also it is read in that which we find according to Luke (Luke XII, 8); so that you may know that neither placed it idly.

18. [Alias cap. III.] We have said what is written, let us collect the meaning: Every one, he says, who shall have confessed me (Matth. X, 32), that is, from whatever life, from whatever state he who shall have confessed me, shall have me as the remunerator of his confession. When it is said, Every one, no one who shall have been confessed is excluded from remuneration. Not similarly, every one who shall have denied, shall be denied; for it can happen that someone overcome by punishments, may deny God in speech, and adore in heart.

19. Is the cause of him who denies spontaneously the same as his whom torments have inclined to sacrilege, not will? How unworthy, however, when with men the grace of the struggle avails, that with God it should be asserted not to avail! For often in this secular struggle of athletes even the defeated whose struggles were approved, the common people have been accustomed to crown with the victors; especially those whom they saw perhaps excluded from victory

by trick or fraud. Will Christ therefore suffer his athletes, whom he saw to have yielded for a little while to grave punishments, to remain without pardon?

20. Will he not have a reason of labor, who even those whom he casts away, does not cast away forever? For David says: God will not cast away forever (Psal. LXXVI, 8); and against this shall we hear heresy saying: He casts away forever? Neither in the end, he says, will he cut off his mercy from generation to generation, or will God forget to have mercy (Ibid. 9, 10), the Prophet cries out: and are there some who induce certain oblivions of divine mercy?

CHAPTER V.

To the objection sought from the immutability of God it is responded, with testimonies of Scripture brought forward, by which God promises mercy to those emerging from their wallowing-place of sin: and it is added that a more propense indulgence is prepared for those who have delinquished in a certain way unwillingly, which is illustrated by the elegant example of those captured in war, and by the prosopopoeia of the devil himself.

21. But they say that they assert these things for this reason, lest they should seem to make God mutable; if he should forgive those with whom he had been angry. [Alias cap. IV.] What therefore? Shall we repudiate the divine oracles, and follow the opinions of these? But God is to be estimated not by the assertions of others, but

by his own voices. For what more prompt mark of his mercy can we give, than that he himself through the prophet Hosea, to whom he was threatening as if angry, immediately indulges as if reconciled? For he says: What shall I do to you, Ephraim, or what shall I do to you, Judah? Your mercy, etc. (Hos. VI, 4). And below: How shall I establish you? I will make you as Adama, and as Seboim (Hos. XI, 8). In that very indignation he clings as if with a certain paternal affection, how he may deliver over the erring one to punishment: although the Jew deserves it, God nevertheless still examines it within himself. But immediately who had said: As Adama I will make you, and as Seboim; which two cities from the vicinity of the Sodomites drew a partnership of similar destruction: My heart, he says, is turned within me, my repentance is disturbed: I will not do according to the wrath of my fury (Hos. XI, 8, 9).

22. Does it not appear that for this reason the Lord Jesus is indignant with us sinning, that he may convert us by the terror of his indignation? Therefore his indignation is not the execution of vengeance, but rather the operation of absolution; for so he said: If having turned you shall groan, you shall be saved (Isa. XXX, 15). He expects our groans, but temporal ones, that he may remit perpetual ones: he expects our tears, that he may pour forth his piety. So in the Gospel, having had compassion on the tears of the widow mother, he resuscitated her son (Luke VII, 13). He expects our conversion, that he himself also may

return to grace: which, if no fall crept upon us, would persevere in us: but because by our sins we contract offense, he is indignant, that we may be humbled: we are humbled, that we may be more worthy of misery than of punishment.

23. Let Jeremiah certainly teach you, saying: Because the Lord will not repel forever; since when he shall have humbled, he will have mercy according to the multitude of his mercy: who has not humbled from his whole heart, nor has he repelled the sons of men (Lam. III, 31, 32). This certainly we read in the Lamentations of Jeremiah, and from these, or the others which follow, we advert that for this reason he humbles under his feet all the bound of the earth, that we may decline his judgment. But neither does he from his whole heart humble the sinner even to the earth, who also from the earth raises the needy, and from the dunghill lifts up the poor; for he does not humble from his whole heart, who reserves himself for pardon.

24. But if he does not from his whole heart humble every sinner, how much more does he not from his whole heart humble him who has not sinned from his whole heart! For just as he said of the Jews: This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me (Isa. XXIX, 13; Matth. XV, 8); perhaps also of some fallen he may say: These denied me with their lips, but they are with me in heart. Punishment conquered them, perfidy did not turn them away. But without cause some deny pardon to these, whose faith the persecutor has confessed so far as to strive

to overcome it with torments. They denied once, but they confess daily: they denied in speech, but they confess with groans, they confess with wailings, they confess with tears, they confess with free, not coerced voices. They yielded indeed for a time to the temptation of the devil: but even the devil afterward receded from these, whom he could not vindicate for himself. He yielded to their tears, he yielded to penance: those whom he had invaded as others', he lost as his own.

25. Is this not just as if someone should lead away a captive people of a conquered city? He is led captive, but unwillingly: who may contend in foreign lands by necessity, yet in his inmost affection may not migrate, may carry his country with him in his mind, may seek an opportunity how he may return. What therefore? When one of this kind returns, is there anyone who would persuade that he should not be received? with less honor certainly, but with more propense study, lest the adversary have that in which he may insult. If you forgive an armed man, who was able to fight; do you not forgive him in whom faith alone was fighting?

26. If we should require the opinion of the devil himself about fallen of this kind, does he not seem to say: This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me? For how is he with me, who does not recede from Christ? But without cause they seem to worship me, who keep the doctrine of Jesus: but I thought that they were teaching mine. They condemn more, while they desert the things discovered. Certainly Jesus

glories more in these, while he receives those returning. All the angels exult; because there is greater joy in heaven over one sinner doing penance, than over ninety and nine just who do not need penance (Luke XV, 7). Concerning me in heaven, concerning me on earth a triumph is taken. Nothing perishes to Christ, when these who had come to me with weeping, return with desire to the Church: and by the example of these I also run a risk concerning mine, who have learned that there is nothing here, where men are provoked by present rewards; and very much there, where groans, tears, fasts are preferred to my feasts.

CHAPTER VI.

The Novatians, while they exclude sinners from the banquet of Christ, are imitators not of the pious Samaritan, but of the proud lawyer as well as of the priest and Levite who are reprehended in the Gospel, nay even more unmerciful than the same.

27. [Alias cap. V.] Do you therefore, Novatians, exclude these? For what else is it to exclude, except to deny the hope of pardon? But neither did the Samaritan pass by that half-dead man left by the robbers: and he cured his wounds with oil and wine, first pouring in oil by which he might cherish them: he placed the wounded man upon his own beast, in which he carried all his sins (Luke X, 33, 34); nor did the shepherd despise the erring sheep (Luke XV, 4).

28. But you say: Do not touch me. You say, wishing to justify yourselves: He is not our neighbor, being prouder than that lawyer who wished to tempt Christ; for he said: Who is my neighbor (Luke X, 29)? He interrogates, you deny; just as that priest descending, and just as the Levite passing by, whom you ought to have taken up to be cured, not receiving into your hospitality, for whom Christ paid out two coins, whose neighbor Christ commands you to become, that you may do mercy unto him. For he himself is the neighbor, whom not only a conformable nature has joined, but also mercy has coupled. From him you make yourself alien by pride, extolling yourself in vain, puffed up by the mind of your flesh, and not holding the head. For if you held the head, you would advert that he is not to be deserted by you, for whom Christ died. If you held the head, you would advert that the whole body by being compacted together rather than by being dissolved, grows into the increase of God through the coupling of charity and the redemption of the sinner.

Since therefore you take away all fruit of penance, what else do you say, except this: Let no one of the wounded enter our hospice: let no one be healed in our Church? With us the sick are not cured: we are healthy, we do not have a necessary physician; because he himself says: The healthy do not need a physician, but those who are ill (Matth. IX, 12).

CHAPTER VII.

Having beseeched Christ to invite all to his supper, he signifies that the Novatians neither enter it themselves nor permit others to enter, which the holy Church does not imitate. Then he makes it plain that the same heretics can have no part with Christ, who desires all to be saved.

30. Therefore, Lord Jesus, come wholly to your Church, since Novatian makes excuses. Novatian says: I have bought five yoke of oxen (Luke XIV, 19), he who does not take up the sweet yoke of Christ, and imposes a heavy burden on his own neck, which he cannot carry. Novatian held your servants by whom he was invited, and killed them after they were affected by contumely—those whom he defiled with the stain of repeated baptism. Send therefore to the exits of the ways, and collect the good and the bad (Luke XIV, 21): and bring into your Church the weak, and the blind, and the lame. Command that your house be filled: bring all into your supper; because whom you have called, you will make worthy, if he follows. That man is surely rejected who has not had a wedding garment, that is, the clothing of charity, the veil of grace. Send, I say, to all.

31. Your Church does not make excuse from your supper, Novatian makes excuse. Your family does not say: I am healthy, I do not require a physician; but it says: Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed: save me, and I shall be saved (Jerem. XVII, 14). Finally, the appearance of your Church is in her who came behind and touched the hem of your garment, saying within herself: For if I shall touch his garment, I shall be safe (Matth. IX,

21). This Church therefore confesses her wounds, this one desires to be cured.

32. And you indeed, Lord, desire to heal all, but not all wish to be cured. Novatian does not wish it, who thinks himself to be healthy. You, Lord, say that you are sick, and in the least of us you feel our infirmity, saying: I was sick, and you visited me (Matth. XXV, 36): Novatian does not know how to visit that least one, in whom you desire to be visited. You say to Peter, making excuse that you should not wash his feet: Unless I wash your feet, you shall have no part with me (John XIII, 8). What fellowship, therefore, can these have with you, who do not receive the keys of the kingdom, denying that they ought to forgive sins?

33. Which indeed they rightly confess of themselves; for they do not have the inheritance of Peter, who do not have the seat of Peter, which they tear asunder by impious division: but this they do wickedly, because they deny that sins can be forgiven even in the Church, when it was said to Peter: I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven (Matth. XVI, 19); since even the vessel of Divine election himself says: But if you have forgiven anything to anyone, I also; for what I also have forgiven, for your sakes in the person of Christ (II Cor. II, 10). Why therefore do they read Paul, if they thought him to have erred so impiously as to claim for himself the right of

his Lord? But he claimed what he had received, he did not usurp what was not due.

CHAPTER VIII.

How great things Christ conferred on his disciples. That the Novatians are refuted by themselves while they lay on hands and confer baptism; because forsooth by the same authority sins are remitted in penance as in baptism. At the end their swelling pride is especially chastised by the Lord's example.

34. The Lord wills that his disciples be able to do very much, he wills that those things be done by his servants in his name, which he himself did while placed on earth (John XIV, 12). Finally he says: And greater than these shall you do (Matth. X, 8). He gave that they should raise the dead. And when he himself could have restored the use of seeing to Saul, he nevertheless sent him to Ananias his disciple; that by his blessing eyes might be poured back into Saul, which he had lost (Acts IX, 7). He also commanded Peter to walk with him on the sea, and because he wavered, he rebuked him immediately, for the reason that he had diminished the grace of the gift by the littleness of his faith (Matth. XIV, 29). He gave also to the disciples that they should be the light of the world through grace (Matth. V, 14), who was himself the light of the world. And because he was about to descend from heaven, and was about to ascend into heaven, he lifted Elias to heaven (IV Kings II, 11), from thence to restore him to earth at a well-pleasing time. Also about to baptize in the Holy

Spirit and fire (Matth. III, 11), he sent before the sacraments of baptism through John.

35. Finally he gave all things to his disciples, of whom he says: In my name they shall cast out devils, they shall speak with new tongues, they shall take up serpents; and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them: they shall lay hands upon the sick, and they shall be well (Mark XVI, 17, 18). He gave all things therefore, but in these there is no power of man, where the grace of the divine gift flourishes.

36. Why therefore do you lay on hands, and believe it to be a work of blessing, if any sick person perchance should recover? Why do you presume that any can be cleansed from the defilement of the devil through you? Why do you baptize, if it is not permitted that sins be forgiven through man? In baptism surely there is remission of all sins: what difference does it make, whether priests claim this right given to them through penance, or through the font? The mystery in both is one.

37. But you say that in the font the grace of the mysteries works. What in penance? Does not the name of God work? What then? Where you wish, you claim for yourselves the grace of God: where you wish, you repudiate it? But this is of insolent arrogance, not of holy fear; that those who wish to perform penance are a loathing to you. You cannot, forsooth, endure the tears of those weeping. Your eyes do not bear the cheapness of their garments, the filth of the soiled ones, O my delicate ones with proud eye and swollen heart, each

saying with indignant voice: Do not touch me, because I am pure.

38. The Lord indeed says to Mary Magdalene: Do not touch me (John XX, 17); but he did not say, because I am pure, who was pure: do you dare, Novatian, to say that you are pure, who even if you were pure in works, would become impure by this word alone? Isaiah says: O wretched I, and pricked in heart; because whereas I am a man, and have impure lips, I dwell also in the midst of a people having impure lips (Isai. VI, 5)! and you say, I am pure, when even an infant of one day is not pure, as it is written (Job XIV, 4)? David says: And cleanse me from my sin (Psal. L, 4), whom surely the grace of the merciful Lord often justified: are you pure, when you are so unjust that you do not have mercy; that you see the mote in your brother's eye, but do not consider the beam which is in your own eye (Matth. VII, 3)? For every unjust man is impure before God. But what is more unjust, than that you should wish your sins to be forgiven you, when you do not think they should be forgiven to one asking? What is more unjust, than that you should justify yourself, in which you condemn another; when you commit more grievous things?

39. Finally when about to celebrate the remission of our sins, the Lord Jesus, to John saying to him: I ought to be baptized by you, and you come to me! answered: Suffer it now; for so it becomes us to fulfill all justice (Matth. III, 14, 15). And the Lord indeed came to a sinner, when he himself had no sin; and wished to be baptized, for whom

it was not necessary to be cleansed: who could endure you, who think that there is no need for you to be cleansed through penance; because you say that you have been cleansed through grace, as if it were now impossible for you to sin?

CHAPTER IX.

By the words of Scripture, "If however a man shall sin against the Lord, who shall pray for him?" it is shown by the collation of similar places that it is not signified that no one will ask, but that a worthy deprecator is to be sought, such as were Moses and Jeremiah, by whose prayers God is read to have spared the Israelitish people.

40. But you say: It is written: If a man shall sin against a man, they shall pray for him to the Lord: but if a man shall sin against the Lord, who shall pray for him (I Sam. II, 25)? First, as I have already said above, I would then suffer you to object those things, if you did not refuse penance to the prevaricators alone. Nevertheless what scruple does that question bring? For it is not written: No one shall pray for him: but, "Who shall pray," that is, it is asked who that one may be who can pray in such a cause, it is not excluded.

41. Finally you have in the fourteenth psalm: Lord, who shall dwell in your tabernacle, or who shall rest in his holy mountain (Psal. XIV, 1)? For not no one, but the approved shall dwell: nor does he say this because no one rests, but the elect rests. That you may know this to be true, not long after in the twenty-third psalm he says: Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord,

or who shall stand in his holy place (Psal. XXIII, 3)? that is, not anyone from the crowd, nor anyone of plebeian vileness; but of excellent life, and of singular merit. And that you may know that when "who" is said, no one is not understood, but someone is signified, when he had said: Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord? he added: Innocent in hands, and pure in heart, who does not receive his soul in vain (Ibid., 4). And elsewhere: Who is wise, and will understand these things (Hosea XIV, 10)? Does he say because no one will understand? And in the Gospel: Who is the faithful and prudent steward, whom the Lord shall set over his family, to give them in time their measure of wheat (Luke XII, 42)? And that you may comprehend that he spoke of him who surely is, not of him who is not, he added: Blessed is that slave, whom when the Lord comes, he shall find so doing (Ibid., 43). And that also I think was so said: O God, who is like you (Psal. LXXXII, 1)? surely not no one; because the Son is the image of the Father.

42. Similarly therefore it is to be accepted: "Who shall pray for him?" (I Sam. II, 25); that is, someone of singular life ought to pray for him who has sinned against the Lord. By how much the greater is the fault, by so much the greater are the suffrages to be sought. For not anyone from the crowd prayed for the people of the Jews, but Moses prayed, when unmindful of faith they adored the head of a calf (Exod. XXXII, 31). Did Moses err? And yet he did not err, who both merited and obtained what he asked. For

what would such an affection not obtain, when he offered himself for the people, saying: And now if you forgive them their sin, forgive; but if not, blot me out from the book of life (*Ibid.*, 32)? You see that not as a delicate intercessor, and full of loathing, does he consult for himself, lest he should contract an offense, which Novatian says he fears: but rather mindful of all, unmindful of himself, he did not fear to offend himself, that he might strip and free the people from the danger of offense.

43. Meritedly therefore it is written: "Who shall pray for him?" that is, such a one as Moses, who offers himself for those sinning: such a one as Jeremiah, to which prophet when it had been said by the Lord our God: Do not pray for this people (*Jerem.* VII, 16); nevertheless he prayed, and merited pardon. Finally, being bent by the prophetic intercession and the obsecration of so great a seer, the Lord says to Jerusalem; since she also had performed penance for her faults, saying: Lord almighty, God of Israel, the soul in anguish, and the anxious spirit cries to you: hear, Lord, and have mercy (*Baruch* III, 1, 2). And he commands the garments of mourning to be laid aside, and the groans of penance to be cast away; for so it is written at the end of the book: Put off, O Jerusalem, the robe of your mourning and vexation, and put on the beauty of that glory which is given to you by God for ever (*Baruch* V, 1).

CHAPTER X.

That John did not absolutely and simply forbid that prayer should be made for those guilty of "sin unto death"; since he was not ignorant that Moses, Jeremiah, and Stephen prayed for similar persons; and he himself also signified that pardon was not to be denied to the same.

44. Such deprecators, therefore, are to be sought in the greatest faults; for if anyone from the people should pray, they are not heard.

45. Whence neither will that question of yours be able to bring any weight, which you take from the epistle of John saying: He who knows his brother to sin a sin not unto death, let him ask, and God will give him life; because he does not sin unto death. There is a sin unto death, I do not say of that, that he should pray (I John V, 16); for he was not speaking to Moses and Jeremiah, but to the people, who ought to employ another intercessor for their sins: for whom it is enough if he prays to God for lighter faults, and should think that the pardon of more grievous ones is to be reserved for the prayers of the just. For how could John say that one should not pray for a more grievous fault, who had read that Moses asked and obtained; where there was voluntary prevarication: who knew also that Jeremiah asked (Jerem. XIV, 13)?

46. How could John say that one should not pray for a sin which was unto death, who himself in the Apocalypse wrote a command to the Angel of the Church of Pergamus (Apoc. II, 12)? You have there those holding the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balaac to cast a scandal before the

children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed, and to commit fornication; so also you have those holding the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, similarly perform penance: otherwise I come to you quickly. You see that God who requires penance, promises pardon! Finally even there he says: He who has ears, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches: To him who overcomes I will give to eat hidden manna (Apoc. II, 7).

47. Had not John himself known that Stephen prayed for his persecutors, who could not bear to hear the name of Christ; when he said of those by whom he was being stoned: Lord, do not lay this sin to their charge (Acts VII, 59)? The effect of which prayer we see in the Apostle; for Paul who kept the garments of those stoning Stephen (Acts IX, 15), was not long after made an apostle through the grace of Christ, who had been a persecutor before.

CHAPTER XI.

The former sentence of John is illustrated by another testimony of the same, by which salvation is promised to those believing in Christ. Whence the Novatians are argued as those who persuade the fallen to faith, to whom they deny pardon. It is added that many of the martyrs after a fall attained a double grace; and also by the example of the pious Samaritan it is declared that those in whom even the thinnest faith breathes are not to be deserted.

48. Therefore because there is speech concerning the general epistle of John, let us interro-

gate the things written by John himself in the Gospel, whether they agree with your interpretation. For he writes that the Lord said: For God so loved this world, that he gave his only-begotten Son; that every one who believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life (John III, 16). If therefore you desire to recall any fallen person; do you exhort him that he should believe, or that he should not believe? Surely that he should believe. But he who believes according to the Lord's sentence, shall have eternal life. How therefore will you forbid to pray for him, to whom eternal life is due? since faith is of divine grace, as the Apostle teaches in the divisions of graces, because to another is given faith in the same Spirit (I Cor. XII, 9); and the disciples say to the Lord: Increase our faith (Luke XVII, 5). He therefore who has faith, has life: he who has life, is surely not excluded from pardon. "Every one," he says, "who believes in him, should not perish." When "every one" is said, no one is excluded, no one is excepted; for he does not except him who has fallen, if nevertheless he afterwards believes well.

49. We have found very many who have reformed themselves anew after a fall, and have suffered for the name of God: can we deny to these the fellowship of the martyrs, to whom the Lord Jesus did not deny it? Do we dare therefore to say that life has not been restored to these, to whom Christ restored a crown? As therefore after a fall a crown is restored to most if they suffer; so if they believe, faith also is restored. Which faith is the gift of God; as you have it written: Because

it is given to you by God, not only that you should believe in him, but also that you should suffer for him (Philip. I, 29). Can he who has the gift of God not have indulgence?

50. But there is not one, but a double grace, that every one who believes should also suffer for the Lord Jesus. He therefore who believes has his own grace: but he has another, if his faith should be crowned by passions. For neither before he suffered was Peter without grace: but when he suffered, he acquired another. And most who did not have the grace that they should suffer for Jesus; nevertheless had the grace that they should believe in Jesus.

51. Therefore it is said: That every one who believes in him should not perish (John XX, 31). "Every one," he says, that is, from whatever state, from whatever fall, if he believes, let him not fear to perish. For it can happen that some one descending from Jerusalem into Jericho (Luke X, 33), that is, from the contest of martyrdom having relapsed into the desire of this life and secular grace, wounded by robbers, that is, by persecutors, and left half-dead, that evangelical Samaritan may find, who is the guardian of our souls (for Samaritan is called guardian), and may not pass him by, but cure and heal him.

52. Perhaps therefore he does not pass him by, because he recognizes something vital in him; whence he may be able to resume life. Does it not seem to you that he who has fallen is half-dead, if faith breathes anything vital? For he who entirely casts away God from his heart, he is

dead. He therefore who does not entirely cast him away, but through the impression of torments for a time denied him, is half-dead. Or if he is dead, why do you say to him that penance is to be performed, who can no longer be cured? If he is half-dead, pour in oil and wine, not wine without oil, namely that which may both cherish and sting. Take him upon your beast, deliver him to the innkeeper, expend two pence for his care, be a neighbor to him (*Ibid.*, 34, 35). But you cannot be a neighbor, unless you do mercy; for no one can be called a neighbor, except he who has cured, not killed. If however you wish to be called a neighbor, Christ says to you: Go, and do you likewise (*Ibid.*, 37).

CHAPTER XII.

To the places from John's Gospel already cited another from the same source is added. Then to those objecting the necessity of keeping God's mandates it is easily answered that life is promised not to him alone who always, but also to him who after a fall shall have kept them. Which where it has been proved from David, nevertheless it is declared that there is a certain difference between both.

53. Let us consider another similar thing: He who believes in the Son, has eternal life: but he who does not believe the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him (*John III, 16*). That which remains surely has already begun, and began from some fault; because before he did not believe. Where therefore anyone

believes, the wrath of God departs, but life approaches (Ibid., 36). To believe therefore in Christ is the gain of life; for he who believes in him is not judged.

54. But they report in this place that he who believes in Christ ought to keep his word; for so they say it is written, the Lord saying: I am come a light into this world, that every one who believes in me may not remain in darkness: and if any one shall hear my word, and shall keep it, I do not judge him (John XII, 46, 47). He does not judge, and do you judge? He says: That he who believes in me may not remain in darkness, that is, even if he should have been in darkness, he may not continue in them, he may amend his error, correct his fault, keep my mandates; for I said: I will not the death of the sinner, but his correction (Ezek. XXXIII, 11). I said above: That he who believes in me is not judged; and this I keep: For I came not to judge the world, but that the world may be saved through me (John III, 17). I willingly forgive, I promptly indulge: I will mercy rather than sacrifice (Hosea VI, 6); because through sacrifice the just man is commended, through mercy the sinner is redeemed. I came not to call the just, but sinners (Matth. IX, 13). In the Law there is sacrifice, in the Gospel there is mercy: The Law was given through Moses, grace through me (John I, 17). What is more evident than this?

55. Finally even below he says: He who despises me, and does not receive my words, has one that judges him (John XII, 48). Does it seem to you that he who has not corrected himself

receives the words of Christ? Certainly it does not seem so. He therefore who corrects himself, receives his word, for this is his word, that each one should recall himself from fault. Either therefore you must exclude this his sentence: or if you cannot deny it, you must acquiesce.

56. It behooves him also to keep the Lord's mandates, who ceases to sin, renounces his faults. You ought not therefore to interpret the saying of him who has always kept them; for if he had meant this, he would have added, always: but by not adding it, he pronounced concerning him who has kept what he heard: but he heard that he should correct his error: he kept therefore what he heard.

57. How hard truly it would be that he should be called to perpetual punishment who even afterwards keeps the Lord's mandates, let him himself teach you, who even to those not keeping his mandates did not deny pardon, as you have it in the body of the psalm: If they shall profane my justices, and shall not keep my mandates; I will visit their iniquities with a rod, and their sins with scourges: but my mercy I will not take away from them (Psal. LXXXVIII, 32, 33). To all therefore he promises mercy.

58. But lest you should think this mercy to be without judgment, there is a distinction between those who have rendered perpetual obedience to the heavenly mandates, and between those who at some time have fallen either by error or by necessity. And lest you should think yourself to be circumscribed by our argument, receive the

judgment of Christ; for indeed he says: If the slave knowing the will of his lord did not do it, he shall be beaten with many stripes: but if he did not know, he shall be beaten with few (Luke XII, 47, 48). Both therefore if they believe are received, because God chastises every son whom he receives (Hebr. XII, 6): and whom he chastises, he surely does not deliver to death; because it is written: Chastising the Lord has chastised me, and he has not delivered me to death (Psal. CXVII, 18).

CHAPTER XIII.

That those who have committed "sin unto death" are not to be deserted, but are to be subjected to penance, is taught from Paul. What it is to be "delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh," and how this is to be wished for. That Satan brings debilities upon the body, but they are converted to the utility of the spirit; whence the great power of God shines forth, by which he compels him, unwilling, to hurt himself and to profit us.

59. Finally Paul teaches that those are not to be deserted who have committed sin unto death, but rather are to be coerced by the breads of tears, and by a tearful drink; in such a manner, however, that the sadness itself should be moderate. For this he signifies: You shall give them to drink in tears in measure (Psal. LXXIX, 6); that the sorrow itself may have a measure, lest perchance he who performs penance should be swallowed up by more abundant sadness (II Cor. II, 5 et seq.), as

he wrote to the Corinthians: What do you wish? Shall I come to you in a rod, or in charity and the spirit of meekness (I Cor. IV, 21)? But neither is the rod heavy, because he had read: You indeed shall strike him with a rod, but you shall deliver his soul from death (Prov. XXIII, 14).

60. What it would be to come in a rod, the invective of fornication, the accusation of incest, the reprehension of swelling show, because they were puffed up, whom it rather behooved to mourn; finally the condemnation of the guilty one, that he should be taken away from the fellowship of communion, and be delivered to the adversary, not for the destruction of the soul, but of the flesh (I Cor. V, 1 et seq.). For as the Lord did not give power over the soul of holy Job, but permitted license against his flesh (Job II, 6); so also here he is delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the serpent might lick his earth, but should not hurt his soul (Micah VII, 17).

61. Let our flesh therefore die to desires, let it be captive, let it be subject, nor let it repugn the law of our mind, but being subject to a good servitude let it die; as in Paul who chastised his body (I Cor. IX, 27), that he might bring it into servitude; by which his preaching might become more approved, if the law of his flesh should agree and accord with the law of his mind. For the flesh perishes when its wisdom passes into the spirit; so that it may no longer savor the things which are of the flesh, but those which are of the spirit. Would that I might see my flesh weakened! would that I might not be drawn captive into

the law of sin! would that I might not live in the flesh, but in the faith of Christ (Rom. VII, 23)! And therefore there is greater grace in the infirmity of the body, than in health. Finally also Paul, whom he loved much (Galat. II, 20), he did not wish to free from the infirmity of the flesh, to whom asking that the infirmity should depart from him, he answered: My grace is sufficient for you; for virtue is perfected in infirmity (I Cor. XII, 8, 9). And Paul pleases himself more in infirmities, saying: When I am weak, then I am powerful (Ibid., 10); for the fortitude of the soul is consummated in the infirmities of the flesh.

62. We have explained Paul's sentence; now let us consider the words themselves, by what reason he said that he delivered him to Satan for the destruction of the flesh; because our tempter is the devil. For he brings debilities upon individual members, and is wont to move sicknesses to the whole body. Finally he struck holy Job with a sore ulcer from the feet even to the head, because he had received in power the destruction of his flesh, God saying: Behold I deliver him to you, only keep his soul (Job II, 6). This the Apostle translated in the same words; saying that he delivered such a man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be safe in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ (I Cor. V, 5).

63. Great power, great grace, which commands the devil, that he should destroy himself. For he destroys himself, when the man whom by tempting he strives to supplant, he makes stronger from weak; because while he weakens

the flesh, he corroborates his mind. For the sickness of the flesh repels sin: but the luxury of the flesh feeds fault.

64. The devil therefore is mocked, that he should wound himself with his own bite, and arm against himself him whom he thought should be weakened. So also he loved holy Job more after he wounded him: who being all poured over his body with dire ulcers, truly bore the bite of the devil, but did not feel the poisons. And therefore it was well said to him: You shall bring the dragon in a hook, you shall mock him as a bird: you shall bind him as a sparrow, O boy, laying your hand upon him (Job XL, 24).

65. You see how he is mocked by Paul, so that into his cavern, as that prophetic boy (Isai. XI, 8, 9), he may send his hand, and the serpent should not hurt him at all, should draw him from his lurking-places, should make from his poison a spiritual antidote; so that what is poison, may become a medicine: it is poison for the destruction of the flesh, it becomes a medicine for the salvation of the spirit. For that which hurts the body, helps the spirit.

66. Let the serpent therefore eat my earth, let him fix his tooth in my flesh, let him bruise my body, let the Lord say also of me: I deliver him to you, only keep his soul (Job II, 6). How great is the power of Christ, that the guardianship of man should be commanded even to the devil himself, who always wishes to hurt. Let us therefore make the Lord Jesus propitious to us: Christ commanding, even the devil himself becomes the guardian

of his prey, or even unwillingly complies with the heavenly mandates: and although cruel, nevertheless he obeys the mild commands.

67. But why do I commend his obedience? Let him always be evil, that God may always be good, who converts his malice into grace for us. He wishes to hurt, but he cannot, if Christ resists: he ulcers the flesh, but he keeps the soul: he devours the earth, but he reserves the spirit. Finally it is written: Then the wolves and the lambs shall feed together: the lion and the ox shall eat straw, but the serpent earth as bread: and they shall not hurt, nor shall they lay waste in my holy mountain, says the Lord (Isai. XI, 6 et seq.). For this is the sentence of the condemned serpent: Earth shall be meat to you (Gen. III, 14). Which earth? That surely of which it was said: Earth you are, and into earth you shall go (Ibid., 19).

CHAPTER XIV.

That what Ambrose said above, that the flesh delivered to the destruction of Satan is eaten by the serpent, he teaches to be done only if the soul is freed from carnal desires. Wherefore he prescribes many things necessary for the guardianship of the eyes and mind: which he confirms by the example of the most chaste Joseph: then having exhorted all to decline the nets by which we are drawn into the fire of pleasure; he persuades that we should not fear lest our flesh be eaten by the serpent.

68. The serpent eats this earth, if the Lord Jesus is propitious to us, so that the soul may

not compassionate the debility of the flesh, nor be kindled by the vapor of the flesh and the heat of the members. It is better to marry than to be burnt (I Cor. VII, 9); for there is a flame which burns within (Prov. VI, 27). Whence let us not bind this fire in the bosom of the mind, and the recess of the breast, lest we burn the spoils of our interior man, and the devouring flame of lust consume this forensic garment of our soul, and the carnal veil, but let us pass through the fire (Isai. XLIII, 2). And if any one has fallen into the fire of love, let him leap over, and pass through: let him not bind adulterous desire with the chains of thoughts, let him tighten no knots for himself by the connection of assiduous meditation; let him not intend too often upon the form of a harlot woman, nor let the young girl lift up her eyes to the face of a youth. And if by chance she looked, and was captured; how much more shall she be captured, if she looked curiously!

69. Or let custom teach us. Therefore a woman covers her head with a veil, that even in public her modesty may be safe: let not her face easily meet the eyes of a youth, let her be covered with a nuptial veil; lest even by fortuitous encounters she should lie open to a wound either of another, or her own: but both are her own wound. But if she veils her head with a covering (I Cor. XI, 5 et seq.), lest she should rashly either be seen, or see (for while the head is veiled, the face is hidden), how much more ought she to veil herself with the covering of shame, that even in public she may have her own secret!

70. But let it be, the eye has fallen upon it, but let the affection not intend. For it is not a crime to have seen, but one must beware lest it be the origin of a crime. The carnal eye sees, but let it press down the eyes of the heart, let the modesty of the mind remain. We have a moral and indulgent Lord; the prophet indeed said: I will not that you intend upon the form of a fornicating woman; but nevertheless the Lord said: He who shall look upon a woman to lust after her, has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Prov. V, 2). He did not say: If any one shall see, he has committed adultery; but: If any one shall see to lust after her, he did not bind the sight, but he sought the affection. Good nevertheless is shame, which has been accustomed so to press down the very eyes of the body, that often we do not see even what we see. For indeed in appearance we seem to look at whatever has occurred; but if the intention of the soul be not mixed, here also according to the office of the flesh our sight vanishes; thus we see more with the soul than with the body.

71. And if the flesh has seen fire, let us not bind fire in our bosom, that is, in the secret of the mind, and the mystery of the soul. Let us not entangle this fire in our bones, let us not ourselves cast knots upon us; let us not mix any speech with such a one, whence the adulterous fire may boil over. The speech of a young woman is a knot of youths: the words of a youth are chains of love.

72. Joseph saw this fire, when a woman desirous of adultery spoke to him (Gen. XXXIX, 7);

she wished to capture him with speech, she sent the snares of her lips, but she could not bind the chaste man. For the voice of shame, the speech of gravity, the rein of caution, the guardianship of faith, the discipline of chastity dissolved the chains of the woman. The unchaste woman therefore could not capture him with her nets: she sent her hand, and apprehended his garment, that she might strain it with a knot. The words of a petulant woman are the nets of desires, her hand is the knot of love (Prov. VII, 21): but neither with nets could the chaste mind be captured, nor with a knot: the garment being shaken off, the knot was dissolved; and therefore because he did not bind fire in the bosom of his mind, he did not burn his body.

73. Do you see therefore, that our mind is the author of fault? And so the flesh is innocent, but for the most part the minister of sin. Therefore let not the concupiscence of form overcome you. Many nets are stretched by the devil, many snares. The eye of a harlot is the snare of a lover. Our very eyes are nets to us; and therefore it is written: Neither be captured by your eyes (Prov. VI, 25). We ourselves therefore stretch nets for ourselves, in which we are involved and entangled. We ourselves bind chains for ourselves, as we read: Because every one is bound by the chains of his own sins (Prov. VI, 2).

74. And therefore let us pass over the fire of youth, and the heat of juvenile age: let us pass through the water, let us not remain in the water; lest the deep rivers enclose us. Let us rather pass

through, that we also may say: Our soul has passed through the torrent (Psal. CXXIII, 5); for he who passes through, is safe. Finally the Lord says thus: If you pass through the water, I am with you, the rivers shall not enclose you (Isai. XLIII, 2); and the Prophet says: I saw the impious highly exalted above the cedars of Libanus: and I passed by, and behold he was not (Psal. XXXVI, 35, 36). Pass through secular things, and you shall see the heights of the impious to have fallen. Moses also passing through the secular rivers, saw a great sight, and said: Passing I will see this sight (Exod. III, 3); for if he had been in the vices of the body and the slippery pleasures of this world, he would not have seen so great mysteries.

75. Let us therefore also pass through this fire of lust, which Paul fearing, but fearing for us, who by chastising his body, had brought it about that he no longer feared for himself, says to us: Fly fornication (I Cor. VI, 18). Let us fly therefore as from one following, which follows us not after us, but in us ourselves. Therefore let us see diligently, lest while we fly it, we carry it with us. For we wish for the most part to fly, but if we do not entirely shake it off from our mind, we carry it away rather than leave it. Let us therefore leap over it, lest it be said to us: Walk in the fire of your flame, which you have kindled for yourselves (Isai. L, 11). Since as he who binds fire in his bosom burns his garments (Prov. VI, 27); so he who walks upon fire, must necessarily burn his feet; since it is written: Shall anyone walk upon the coals of fire, and not burn his feet (Prov. VI, 28)?

76. The fire is heavy, and therefore let us not give to it the nourishments of luxury. Lust is fed by banquets, nourished by delights, kindled by wine, inflamed by ebriety. More grievous than these are the fomentations of words, which with a certain wine of the Sodomitish vine inebriate the mind. Let us beware however even of the abundance of this wine; for where the flesh is inebriated, the mind staggers, the soul wavers, the heart fluctuates. And therefore to both the precept is useful, by which Timothy is admonished: Use a little wine for your frequent infirmities (I Tim. V, 23). When the body is hot, it draws vapor: when the flesh is cold with the chill of disease, your soul is cooled: when your body aches, your mind is sad, but your sadness shall come into joy.

77. Do not therefore fear if your flesh be eaten, your soul is not devoured. Therefore David says that he does not fear; because the enemies were eating his flesh, not his soul, as we read: While the harmful approach upon me, to eat my flesh: my enemies who trouble me, themselves are weakened, and have fallen (Psal. XXVI, 2). The serpent therefore makes ruin only for himself; therefore he is delivered to the serpent, who was struck down by the serpent; that him whom he cast down, he may raise up: and the ruin of the serpent may become the resurrection of man. But the Scripture shows Satan to be the author of this corporal contrition and carnal debility, Paul saying: There was given to me a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan, to buffet me, lest I should be exalted (II Cor. XII, 7). Thus therefore Paul

learned to cure, in the same manner as he himself was healed.

CHAPTER XV.

Returning from a digression, he teaches what it is to come in a rod or in a spirit of meekness. One who has fallen gravely is to be sequestered, but by the example of the Apostle he is to be restored to the sacred rites, when he has been expiated by the prayer and tears of the pious people. The old leaven is purged out when the hardness of the letter is tempered by the flour of a softer explanation. How all ought to be sprinkled with the flour of the Church and fed with the food of charity; lest they turn out like that envious brother, whom the Novatians emulate, whose swelling pride is noted there.

78. A good teacher, therefore, while he promises one of two things, has granted both. He came in a rod, because he removed the convicted person from sacred communion. And it is well said that he is delivered to Satan, who is separated from the body of Christ. He came also in charity, and in the spirit of meekness, either because he so delivered him as to make his spirit safe, or because he afterwards restored to the sacraments him whom he had before sequestered.

79. For it is also necessary that one who has fallen gravely be sequestered, lest a little leaven corrupt the whole mass: and the old leaven must be purged out, either in individuals the old man, that is, the exterior man with his acts, or in

a people grown old in sins and thickened with vices. And he well said 'to be purged,' not 'to be cast away': for that which is purged is not judged to be entirely useless; for it is purged for this reason, that the useful may be separated from the useless: but that which is cast away is believed to have nothing useful in itself.

80. [Otherwise Chapter XV.] Already then, therefore, the Apostle judged that he should be restored to the celestial sacraments, if he himself wished to be purged. And he well says: Purge out; for as if by certain works of the whole people he is purged, and washed by the tears of the populace, who is redeemed from sin by the prayers and weepings of the people, and is cleansed in the interior man. For Christ granted to His Church, that she might redeem one through all, she who merited the advent of the Lord Jesus, so that through one all might be redeemed.

81. This is the sense of Paul, which his words make more obscure. Let us consider the very speech of the Apostle: Purge out, he says, the old leaven; that you may be a new paste, as you are unleavened (I Cor. V, 7). Either because the whole Church takes up the burden of the sinner, with whom she must compassionate both in weeping, and in prayer, and in grief: and as if with his leaven she sprinkles herself entirely; so that through all those things which are superfluous in anyone performing penance, by a certain collective admixture of manly mercy or compassion, they may be purged. Or as that woman in the Gospel teaches (Luke XIII, 21), who presents a

type of the Church, in that she hides leaven in her flour, until the whole is leavened; so that all may be taken as pure.

82. The Lord taught me in the Gospel what leaven is, saying: Do you not understand that I said it not of bread: Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt. XVI, 11)? Then, he says, they understood that he said not to beware of loaves, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees. This leaven, therefore, that is, the doctrine of the Pharisees, and the disputation of the Sadducees, the Church hides in her flour; when she has softened the harder letter of the law by spiritual interpretation, and as if by a certain mill of her disputation has broken it, bringing forth as if from the husks of the letters the internal secrets of the mysteries, and asserting the faith of the resurrection; by which the mercy of God is preached, by which the life of the dead is believed to be repaired.

83. Moreover, the assumption of this comparison does not seem absurd in this place. Since indeed the kingdom of heaven is the redemption of the sinner: and therefore let us all, good and bad, be sprinkled in the flour of the Church, that we may all be a new paste. But lest anyone should fear lest the admixture of a more vicious leaven should discolor the mass, therefore he said: That you may be a new paste, as you are unleavened (I Cor. V, 7); that is, such the paste shall render you, as was the pure sincerity of your innocence. Thus if we have mercy, we are not darkened by the sin of another: but we acquire his redemption for

our grace; so that such as was the purity, it may persevere. And therefore he added: For Christ our pasch is sacrificed (Ibid.), that is, the passion of the Lord profited all, and granted redemption to sinners, who repented of the crime committed.

84. And so let us feast on good food, performing penance, joyful in redemption; for no food is sweeter than benevolence and piety: let no envy of a saved sinner be mixed with our feasts and joy; lest one exclude himself from the house of the Father, like that envious brother described in the Gospel, who grieved for the brother received, whom he was rejoicing to have excluded forever (Luke XV, 28).

85. That you are like him, O Novatians, you cannot deny, who therefore, as you say, do not come together into the Church, because through penance the hope of returning had been granted to those who have fallen. But this is a pretext under a certain appearance. Otherwise, Novatian, kindled with grief for the loss of the bishopric, composed the schism.

86. But you do not understand that the Apostle also prophesied of you, and says to you: And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned; that he might be taken away from among you, who has done this work (I Cor. V, 2)? Certainly he is then entirely taken away, when his sin is abolished; for the Apostle does not say that he who persuades that he is to be purged is to be excluded from the Church.

The Novatians are compared with the Apostle. How beautifully the word of the Lord fits them: You know not of what spirit you are. The study of penance is extinguished by them, while they take away its fruit from the midst. In this way sinners are deprived of the promises of Christ; who, however, are not to be quickly admitted to the mysteries. Finally, examples of certain penitents are proposed.

87. Since therefore the Apostle remitted sin, by what authority do you deny that it is to be dismissed? Who is more reverent of Christ, Novatian, or Paul? But Paul knew the Lord to be merciful; he knew the Lord Jesus to be offended more by the severity of the disciples than by mercy (II Cor. II, 10).

88. Finally, Jesus rebuked James and John saying that they should seek fire from heaven, which should consume those who would not receive the Lord, saying: You know not of what spirit you are; for the Son of man came not to destroy men's souls, but to save them (Luke IX, 55, 56). And to them indeed he said: You know not of what spirit you are, who were of His own spirit; but to you he says: You are not of my spirit, who do not hold my clemency, who refuse my mercy; who exclude penance, which I willed to be preached in my name through my apostles.

89. For in vain do you say that you preach penance, who take away the fruit of penance (Luke XXIV, 47). For men are incited to any study either by rewards or by fruits: but every study grows torpid by delay. And therefore the

Lord, that the devotion of the disciples might be crowned with the fruit of present things, said that he who had dismissed all his own, and followed God, should receive sevenfold both here and in the future (Matt. XIX, 29). He promised first here, that he might take away the distastes of delay: he added also in the future, that you might learn here to believe that rewards are to be paid to you in the future also. The remuneration of present things, therefore, is the testimony of future things.

90. If any one therefore having hidden crimes, has nevertheless through Christ studiously performed penance; how does he receive these things, if communion is not restored to him? I wish the guilty one to hope for pardon, to seek it with tears, to seek it with groans, to seek it with the weepings of the whole people; that he may be forgiven, let him beseech: and when his communion shall have been delayed a second and a third time, let him believe that he has supplicated too remissly, let him increase his weepings, let him return more miserable afterwards, let him hold the feet with his arms, let him kiss them with kisses, let him wash them with weepings, and not let go; that the Lord Jesus may say of him: Many sins are forgiven her; because she loved much (Luke VII, 47).

I have known some who in penance have furrowed their countenance with tears, have plowed their cheeks with continuous weepings, have prostrated their body to be trodden upon by all; with a fasting mouth and always pale, they have

presented in their body the appearance of death as they breathed.

CHAPTER XVII.

Piety is to be added to severity, which the Apostle is shown to have performed in the case of the Corinthian. It is asserted that he was initiated by baptism against the cavils of the Novatians. To which is added that not destruction, but chastisement of the flesh, is signified by the word *interitus* (destruction), which is also confirmed by the similitude of the earth.

92. Why do we wait for the dead to merit pardon, who brought death upon themselves while they lived? Sufficient, he says, to such a one is this rebuke which is made by many; so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and console; lest perhaps he be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow (II Cor. II, 6). If a rebuke which is made by many is sufficient for condemnation, the supplication which is made by many is also sufficient for the remission of sin. A moral teacher and conscious of our fragility, and an interpreter of divine piety, he wishes sin to be forgiven, he wishes consolation to be applied; lest sorrow swallow up the penitent through the weariness of long delay.

93. Therefore for this reason the Apostle forgave, nor only did he forgive, but he also willed charity to be confirmed toward him. He who is dear has no hardness, but meekness. Nor only did he forgive himself, but he willed also all to forgive, and said that he had forgiven for the sake of others; lest many should be saddened too long

for the sake of one. To whom, he says, you have forgiven, I also; for I also for your sakes in the person of Christ, that we may not be circumvented by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his wiles (Ibid., 10). He can rightly beware of the serpent, who can be not ignorant of his wiles, which are many for doing harm. He wishes always to harm, always to circumvent; that he may bring in death: but we ought to beware lest our remedy become his triumph; for we are circumvented by him, if he who can be liberated through indulgence should perish through excessive sorrow.

94. And that we might know that he speaks of a baptized person, he added: I wrote to you in an epistle, not to be mixed with the fornicators of this world (I Cor. V, 9). And below he subjoined: But now I have written to you, not to be mixed, if any one is named a brother who is a fornicator, or covetous, or serving idols (Ibid., 11). Those whom he joined together for punishment, he willed also to pertain together to pardon. But if any one is such, he says, with such a one do not even take food (Ibid.). How severe toward the pertinacious, how indulgent toward those who ask! Against those the injury of Christ is armed, for these the invocation of Christ votes.

95. But lest anyone perhaps should be moved by this, that it is written: I have delivered such a man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh (Ibid., 5), and should say: How could he pertain to pardon, all whose flesh had perished; when it is manifest that in both the man is redeemed, and in both he is saved: neither the soul without

the flesh, nor the flesh without the soul, since they are coupled to each other by the associations of deeds performed, can be without the association of either punishment or reward? Let him have this answer for himself, that *interitus* (destruction) does not signify the consummate consumption of the flesh, but chastisement. For as he who is dead to sin, lives to God: so the allurements of the flesh perish, and the flesh dies to its desires: that it may live again to chastity and other good works.

96. And what more apt example can we take than from a mother? For she from whom we are taken, the earth, when exercise and cultivation are intermitted, seems deserted: and it either dies in the vineyards with which the field is planted, or in the olives; yet it does not lose its own juice as a certain soul of itself. Finally, when cultivation is repeated, and the seeds are entrusted to it, for which it is estimated to be fit, it rises up more fertile with fruits. It is not therefore foreign if our flesh also is said to perish thus; so that it is believed to be repressed rather than consumed.

BOOK SECOND.

CHAPTER I. Ambrose, about to subjoin new precepts to those of the former book, insinuates allegorically the necessity of performing penance maturely, which he also persuades should be done: then, having proposed the form of it in the Apostle for imitation, he briefly proposes its various fruits.

1. Although not a few things which may profit for the exhortation to penance were written in the former book; yet since many more may be added, lest we should seem to have left as it were half-eaten feasts of our words, let us pursue the banquet we have begun.

2. For penance is to be performed not only solicitously, but also maturely: lest perhaps that father of a family in the Gospel who planted a fig tree in his vineyard should come; and seeking fruit on it, if he should not find any, should say to the dresser of the vineyard: Cut it down. Why does it also occupy the ground (Luke XIII, 7)? And unless the dresser of the vineyard should intervene saying: Lord, let it alone this year also, until I shall dig about it; and I will put a basket of dung: and if indeed it shall bear fruit; but if not, let the fig tree be cut down (Ibid., 8, 9).

3. Let us therefore also manure this field which we possess, and let us imitate the industrious

husbandmen, who are not ashamed to saturate the earth with rich dung, and to sprinkle the field with unclean ashes, that they may gather more abundant fruits.

4. And how we should manure, the Apostle teaches saying: And I esteem all things as dung, that I may gain Christ (Philip. III, 8); who through infamy and good fame merited to please Christ. For he had read that Abraham, while he confesses himself to be dung and ashes, in the highest humility found the grace of God (Gen. XVIII, 3). He had read that Job sitting in the dung recovered all things which he had lost (Job XXIV). He had read, David prophesying, that God raises up the needy from the earth, and lifts up the poor from the dung (Psal. CXII, 7).

5. And shall we therefore not blush to confess our sins to the Lord? It is a shame that each one should betray his own crimes: but that shame plows his field, takes away perpetual thorns, cuts away briars, brings to maturity fruits, which he was believing to be among the dead. Follow him who, by plowing his field well, sought eternal fruits. We are cursed, he says, and we bless: we suffer persecution, and we endure: we are blasphemed, and we entreat: we are made as the refuse of this world (I Cor. IV, 12, 13). If you also shall have thus plowed, you shall sow spiritual things. Plow, that you may take away sin, and acquire fruit. He plowed, that he might eradicate the affection of a persecutor in himself. What more could Christ confer upon us for the study of

correction, than that He should convert, and give to us a teacher from a persecutor?

CHAPTER II.

He solves the apostolic place objected by heretics against penance, and shows that it is to be understood concerning the iteration of baptism, both by the exposition of its individual parts and by the mention of the legal baptisms premised there; although he subjoins that it can also be referred to this, that what is impossible to men, is by no means to be held impossible to God.

6. Since therefore they are refuted by such evident examples both of the Apostle himself and of his writings, yet they still wish to resist, and say that the authority of the Apostolic sentence supports them, alleging what is written to the Hebrews: For it is impossible for those who were once illuminated, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to be renewed again to penance, crucifying again to themselves the Son of God, and making him a mockery (Heb. VI, 4 et seq.).

7. Could Paul preach against his own deed? He forgave the Corinthian his sin through penance (II Cor. II, 10); how could he here reprehend his own sentence? Therefore because he could not destroy what he had built, we observe that he said not something contrary, but something different. For what is contrary, impugns itself: what is different, is wont to have a distinct reason.

Moreover it is so far from being contrary, that the one supports the other. For because he preached concerning penance to be remitted, he ought not to have been silent also concerning those who think baptism is to be iterated: and first it was necessary that anxiety should be taken away from us, that we might know that even after baptism, if any should sin, sin could be forgiven them; lest the vain opinion of iterating baptism should pervert those destitute of the hope of pardon: then it was to be persuaded by rational disputation that baptism is not to be iterated.

8. Moreover the very words declare that it was said concerning baptism, by which he signified that it is impossible for those who have fallen to be renewed to penance; for by the laver we are renewed, through which we are reborn, as Paul himself says: For we are buried together with him by baptism into death, that as Christ rose from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life (Rom. VI, 4). And elsewhere: Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, who is created according to God (Ephes. IV, 23, 24). And elsewhere: Your youth shall be renewed like the eagle's (Psal. CII, 3): because even the eagle, when it shall have been dead, is reborn from its own remains, as by the sacrament of baptism, when we shall have been dead to sin, we are reborn to God, and are reformed. Therefore he teaches one baptism, as elsewhere: One faith; one, he says, baptism (Ephes. IV, 5).

9. That also is evident, that in him who is baptized, the Son of God is crucified; because our flesh could not abolish sin, unless it had been crucified in Christ Jesus. Finally it is written, that as many of us as were baptized in Christ Jesus, were baptized into his death (Rom. VI, 3). And below: For if we have been planted together in the similitude of his death, we shall be also in the similitude of his resurrection, knowing that our old man is crucified together with him (Ibid., 5, 6). And to the Colossians he says: Buried together with him by baptism, in which also you rose again (Coloss. II, 12). Which is therefore written, that we may believe that he himself is crucified in us; that through him our sins may be cleansed, that he himself may affix our handwriting to the cross, who alone can forgive offenses. He himself triumphs in us over principalities and powers; since concerning him it is written: He made a show of principalities and powers, triumphing over them in himself (Coloss. II, 15).

10. Therefore, when he says in this epistle written to the Hebrews, that it is impossible for those who have fallen to be renewed to penance, crucifying again the Son of God and making a mockery of him (Heb. VI, 6), he points to this, that we should believe it was said concerning baptism, in which we crucify the Son of God in ourselves; so that through him the world may be crucified to us, we who triumph in a certain appearance while we assume the likeness of his death, who showed and triumphed over principalities and powers on his cross; so that in the

likeness of his death we also might triumph over the principalities whose yoke we lay aside. For Christ was crucified once, once he died to sin; and therefore there is one baptism, not many.

11. What of the fact that he also premised the doctrine of baptisms above? And because there were many baptisms in the law, he rightly rebuked those who would leave perfect things and seek the beginning of the word. He teaches us that we ought to know that all the baptisms of the law are destroyed, and that there is one baptism in the sacraments of the Church. Moreover, he exhorts us that, leaving the beginning of the word, we should stretch forward to what is perfect: "And this we will do," he says, "if indeed God permit" (Heb. VI, 3); for no one can be perfect without the favor of God.

12. I could indeed also say this to him who thinks this was said concerning penance: that the things which are impossible with men are possible with God; and God is powerful, when he wills, to forgive us even those sins which we think cannot be granted. And therefore, what seems to us impossible to obtain, is possible for God to give. For it also seemed impossible that water should wash away sin; finally, Naaman the Syrian did not believe his leprosy could be cleansed by water. But what was impossible, God made to be possible, who gave us so great a grace (IV Kings V, 11). Similarly, it seemed impossible for sins to be remitted through penance; Christ granted this to his apostles, which was transmitted from the apostles to the offices of the priests (John XX, 22).

Therefore, what seemed impossible was made possible. But nevertheless, he persuades by true reason that it was said concerning baptism, lest anyone should iterate it.

CHAPTER III.

He confirms the previous solution by the proposed parable of the prodigal son from the Gospel, and explaining its individual parts, he turns them against the Novatian assertions in such a way that he necessarily deduces from there that reconciliation is not to be denied even to one guilty of a most grave crime, if indeed he has worthily repented.

13. For the Apostle would not come against the evident doctrine of Christ, who concerning the sinner performing penance set a comparison in that he, having set out on a journey, consumed all the substance received from his father by living luxuriously, and afterwards desired the bread of his father when he was feeding on husks: and he merited the robe, the ring, the shoes, and also the immolation of the calf, which has the appearance of the Lord's passion, through which the heavenly sacrament is given to us (Luke XV, 13 et seq.).

14. It is well said that he "set out on a journey," who was separated from the sacred altars; for this is to be separated from that Jerusalem which is in heaven, from a certain civic and domestic dwelling of the saints. Whence also the Apostle says: "Therefore now you are no longer strangers

and foreigners, but fellow citizens of the saints and of the household of God" (Ephes. II, 19).

15. "And he consumed," he says, "his substance." Rightly he consumed it, whose faith was limping in works: "For faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. XI, 1). And faith is a good substance, in which is the patrimony of our hope.

16. Nor is it a wonder if he was perishing with hunger, who was in need of divine food; compelled by the desire of which: "I will arise," he says, "and go to my father, and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you" (Luke XV, 18). Do you not observe that this is evidently set forth to us, that for the sake of earning the sacrament we are impelled to pray; and do you wish to take this away, on account of which penance is performed? Take away from the pilot the hope of arriving, and he will wander uncertain in the midst of the waves. Take away from the wrestler the crown, and he will lie sluggish in the stadium. Take away from the fisherman the efficacy of catching, and he ceases to cast his nets. How therefore can he who suffers hunger in his soul pray to God more studiously, if he despairs of the sacred nourishment?

17. "I have sinned," he says, "against heaven and before you." He confesses surely a sin unto death, lest you should think that anyone performing penance for any crime whatsoever is rightly excluded; since he who sinned against heaven, or against the heavenly kingdom, or against his own soul, which is a sin unto death;

and he sinned before God, to whom alone it is said: "To you alone have I sinned, and have done evil before you" (Psal. L, 6).

18. So quickly he merits pardon, that the father runs to meet him while he is coming and still placed far off, gives him a kiss, which is the mark of sacred peace: commands the robe to be brought forth, which is the wedding garment, which if anyone has not, he is excluded from the wedding banquet: gives the ring on his hand, which is the pledge of faith and the seal of the Holy Spirit: commands shoes to be brought (Exod. XII, 11); for about to celebrate the Passover of the Lord, about to feast on the lamb, he ought to have his footstep covered against all incursions of spiritual beasts and the bites of the serpent: he commands the calf to be killed; because "Christ our Passover is sacrificed" (I Cor. V, 7). For as often as we receive the blood of the Lord, we announce the death of the Lord (I Cor. XI, 26). As therefore he was once sacrificed for all, so as often as sins are forgiven, we receive the sacrament of his body, that through his blood there may be remission of sins.

19. Therefore, by the Lord's preaching it is most evidently commanded that even to those guilty of a most grave crime, if with all their heart and with manifest confession of sin they perform penance, the grace of the heavenly sacrament is to be poured back. Whence it is certain that nothing has remained for you as an excuse.

CHAPTER IV.

He turns another objection sought from blasphemy against the Holy Spirit back upon the Novatians themselves; and he shows that by that blasphemy a non-right faith ought to be understood: which when he has confirmed by the sentence of Peter against Simon Magus, and also by Evangelical testimony, he exhorts the same heretics to return to the Church, and asserts that the clemency of the Lord is so great that he would not have denied pardon to the traitor Judas if he had repented before Christ.

20. It has been brought to us, however, that you also are wont to object that it is written: "Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to men: but the Spirit of blasphemy shall not be forgiven to men. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but he that shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in the future" (Matth. XII, 31 et seq.). By which example all your assertion is destroyed and absolved; for it is written: "Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to men." Why therefore do you not forgive? Why do you bind chains which you do not loose? Why do you tie knots which you do not relax? Forgive the others: act concerning those whom you think by Evangelical authority are bound forever for sinning against the Holy Spirit.

21. And yet let us consider whom it binds, repeating the earlier parts of the reading itself, that we may comprehend more evidently. The Jews said: "This man does not cast out demons

except in Beelzebub the prince of demons." Jesus answered: "Every kingdom divided against itself shall be destroyed, and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand; for if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself: how therefore shall his kingdom stand? But if I in Beelzebub cast out demons, in whom do your sons cast them out" (Matt. XII, 24 et seq.)?

22. Concerning these surely we see it expressed, who spoke that the Lord Jesus cast out demons in Beelzebub, to whom the Lord thus replied, because the inheritance of Satan was in those who would compare the Savior of all to Satan, and would constitute the grace of Christ in the kingdom of the devil. And that we might know that he spoke concerning this blasphemy, he added: "Generation of vipers, how can you speak good things, when you are evil?" These therefore who speak these things, he denies belong to pardon.

23. Finally Peter says to Simon, who, depraved by the custom of the magic art, had thought that he could purchase the grace of Christ through the imposition of the hand and the infusion of the Holy Spirit with money: "You have no part nor lot in this faith; for your heart is not right before God. Perform penance therefore from this your wickedness, and pray the Lord, if perhaps this thought of your heart may be forgiven you; for I see you are in the bond of iniquity and the bitterness of gall" (Acts VIII, 21 et seq.). Do you see that he condemns by Apostolic authority this man blaspheming in the Holy Spirit by magical

vanity; and the more so because he did not have a pure conscience of faith: and yet did he not shut out the hope of pardon from him, whom he invited to penance?

24. Therefore it was answered by the Lord to the blasphemy of the Pharisees; and therefore he denies the grace of his power, which is in the remission of sins, to these who would claim that his heavenly power was supported by diabolical suffrage. He also asserts that those use a diabolical spirit who would separate the Church of the Lord; so that he might include heretics and schismatics of all times, to whom he denies indulgence, because what every sin is concerning individuals, this is in the whole. For they alone are those who wish to loose the grace of Christ, who tear asunder the members of the Church, for which the Lord Jesus suffered, and the Holy Spirit was given to us.

25. Finally, that you may know that he speaks concerning scatterers, we have it thus written: "He who is not with me, is against me; and he who does not gather with me, scatters" (Matt. XII, 30). And that we might know it was said concerning these, he immediately subjoined: "Therefore I say to you: every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to men, but the Spirit of blasphemy shall not be forgiven to men" (Ibid., 31). When he says: "Therefore I say to you," did he not evidently wish this to be understood by us before others? And rightly he added: "A good tree brings forth good fruits, but a bad tree brings forth bad fruits" (Matth. VII, 17); for an evil congregation cannot

bring forth good fruit. Therefore the congregation is the tree, the fruits of the good tree are the sons of the Church.

26. And therefore return to the Church, if any of you have impiously separated yourselves. For he promises pardon to all who are converted; because it is written: "Every one whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Joel II, 32). Finally, even the people of the Jews who said of the Lord Jesus: "He has a demon" (John VIII, 48); who said: "He casts out demons in Beelzebub" (Luke XI, 15); who crucified the Lord Jesus, is called to baptism by the preaching of Peter, that it may lay aside the merits of so great a crime.

27. But what wonder if you deny salvation to others, who refuse your own, although those differ in nothing who seek penance from you. For I think that even Judas could have been not excluded from pardon by so great a mercy of God, if he had performed penance not before the Jews, but before Christ. "I have sinned," he says, "in that I have betrayed just blood" (Matth. XXVII, 4). They answered: "What is that to us? You see to it." What other voice is yours, when even one guilty of a lesser sin confesses his own deed to you? What else do you answer, except this: "What is that to us? You see to it." A snare follows this speech: by a more deadly punishment, the less the fault is.

28. But if they are not converted, at least do you return, who by various fall have fallen from the high summit of innocence and faith. We have

a good Lord, who wishes to forgive all, who called you through the prophet, saying: "I am he, I am he who blots out iniquities, and I will not remember them: but do you remember, and let us be judged" (Isaiah XLIII, 25).

CHAPTER V.

That they deny pardon was firmly promised by Peter to Simon Magus, is referred first to the fact that that apostle, on account of the known perfidy of that magician, could have used a doubtful speech: secondly, however, it is confirmed from many places of the Old Testament, from the use of profane authors, and finally from the evangelists themselves, that through the adverb "perhaps" an affirmation is also aptly signified to the cause. Then he adds that the apostles transmitted penance to us, the fruits of which are shown by David. Lastly, he brings forward the example of the Ephraimites, according to the likeness of whom he teaches our penance is to be performed, so that divine mercy and the sacraments may be granted to it.

29. They bring forward, however, a question concerning the words of the apostle Peter. Because he said: "Lest perhaps" (Acts VIII, 22), they think Peter did not confirm that sin would be remitted to one performing penance. But let them consider concerning whom he speaks, that is, concerning Simon, who did not believe out of faith, but was thinking of deceit. Finally, the Lord also said to him whose full sincerity he did not see: "I will follow you," and he replied: "Foxes

have holes" (Matth. VIII, 20). Him therefore whom the Lord before baptism prohibited from following, since he saw him to be fraudulent; do you wonder if after baptism the apostle did not absolve him when he was prevaricating, whom he pronounced to remain in the bond of iniquity?

30. But let this be the answer to those. I, however, say neither that Peter doubted, nor do I think so great a cause should be strangled by the prejudice of one word. For if they think Peter doubted, did God also doubt? who says to the Prophet Jeremiah: "Stand in the court of the house of the Lord, and you shall give an answer to all Judah, to those who come to worship in the house of the Lord, all the words which I have appointed you to answer them; do not take away a word: perhaps they will hear, and be turned" (Jerem. XXVI, 2, 3). Let them say therefore that God also was ignorant of what was to be.

31. But ignorance is not expressed by that word, but a custom of this kind is frequently observed in the divine Scriptures; because the elocution is simple. Since also the Lord says to Ezekiel: "Son of man, I will send you to the house of Israel, to those who have provoked me themselves, and their fathers even until today, and you shall say to them: Thus says the Lord, if perhaps they will hear and be terrified" (Ezek. II, 4, 5). Was he therefore ignorant whether they could or could not be converted? Therefore this elocution is not always that of one doubting.

32. Finally, the wise men of the age themselves, who place all their glory in the expression

of words, that which we say in Latin "perhaps" (*forte*), they have not everywhere placed for doubt in Greek (*tacha*). Thus they say that the first of their poets said: *E tacha chera esomai*, which is: "Soon I shall be a widow." And elsewhere: *tacha gar se kataktaneousin Achaioi pantes ephormethentes* (Homer. lib. III Iliad.). For he would not doubt that among all rushing on together, one could easily be overthrown by all.

33. But let us use ours rather than others'. Finally you have in the Gospel that the Son himself says of the Father (when he had sent servants to his vineyard and they had killed them), that the Father said: "I will send my most beloved Son, perhaps they will reverence him" (Matth. XXI, 37). And elsewhere from his own person the Son says: "You know neither me nor my Father. For if you knew me, perhaps you would know also my Father" (Joan. VIII, 19).

34. If therefore Peter used these words which God used without prejudice to his knowledge; why should we not accept that Peter also used these speeches without prejudice to his faith? For he could not doubt concerning the gift of Christ, who had given to him the power of loosing sins (Matth. XVI, 19); especially since he ought not to leave a place for the wiles of heretics, who therefore wish to destitute the hope of men, that they may more easily induce the persuasion of iterating baptism among those who despair.

35. But the apostles having this, according to the mastership of Christ taught penance; they

promised pardon, they relaxed the fault, just as David also taught, saying: "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord has not imputed sin" (Psal. XXXI, 1, 2). For he called both blessed, both him whose iniquity is remitted through the laver, and him whose sin is covered by good works. For he who performs penance ought not only to wash away his sin with tears, but also to cover and hide his previous offenses with more corrected deeds, so that sin may not be imputed to him.

36. Therefore let us cover our falls by later deeds, let us cleanse them with weepings; so that the Lord our God may hear us groaning, just as he heard Ephraim weeping, as it is written, God saying: "Hearing I have heard Ephraim weeping" (Jerem. XXXI, 18). And he expressed the very words of Ephraim lamenting, saying: "You have chastised me, and I was chastised, like a calf I am not untaught" (Ibid.). For a calf plays and deserts the stalls; and therefore Ephraim like a calf is not untaught, placed far from the stall, because he deserted the stall of the Lord, and following Jeroboam, worshipped the calves (Tob. I, 5), which the prophecy had indicated would happen through Aaron, that the people of the Jews would so fall. And therefore, performing penance he says: "Convert me, and I shall be converted; for you are the Lord my God. Because in the last of my captivity I performed penance: and after I knew, I groaned over the days of my confusion, and I am

subject to you; because I received reproach, and I demonstrated you" (Jerem. XXXI, 19).

37. We observe how penance is to be performed, with what speeches, with what weepings; so that the day of sin may be called the day of confusion; for there is confusion when Christ is denied.

38. And therefore let us subject ourselves to God, and let us not be subject to sin: and reviewing the memory of our offenses, let us blush as at a reproach; let us not preach them as if they were a certain glory, as some, having stormed modesty and oppressed justice, do glory: and let such a conversion take place, that we who did not acknowledge God, may now ourselves demonstrate him to others: and the Lord, moved by such a conversion of ours, may answer: "From my youth Ephraim is my beloved son, a child in delights; because in that my speeches are in him, with memory I will be mindful of him; therefore I have hastened over him, with mercy I will have mercy on him, says the Lord" (Jerem. XXXI, 20).

39. But what mercy he promises to us, he shows below, saying: "I have inebriated every thirsty soul, and every hungry soul I have satiated. Therefore I arose, and saw, and my sleep is sweet to me" (Ibid., 25, 26). We observe that the Lord promises his sacraments to those who sin; and therefore let us all be converted to the Lord.

CHAPTER VI.

About to exhort again to penance those who have fallen from faith or innocence, he teaches

from Isaiah what they ought to expect from God, or what they themselves ought to perform. Hence, having mentioned Christ's proverbial reproach against the Jews, censuring dances and choruses on its occasion, he translates the same proverb to a spiritual understanding. Then from Jeremiah undertaking penance for Jerusalem, he opens what conditions that virtue requires. Finally, that he may more clearly exhibit of how great efficacy is this medicine, he enumerates many who wished to use it either for themselves or for others.

40. But if those are not converted, at least do you return, who by various fall have fallen from the high summit of innocence and faith. We have a good Lord who wishes to give to all, who called you through the prophet, saying: "I am he, I am he who blots out your iniquities, and I will not be mindful: but do you be mindful, that we may be judged" (Isai. XLIII, 25). "I," he says, "will not be mindful: but do you be mindful," that is: I do not revoke those things, whatever offenses I have given to you, as if they were covered by a certain oblivion: "but do you be mindful." "I," he says, "will not be mindful because of grace, you be mindful because of correction: be mindful, that you may know that sin has been forgiven; lest you glory as if innocent, lest by justifying yourself, you become more burdened: but if you wish to be justified, confess your offense." For a modest confession of sins looses the bonds of crimes.

41. You see what your God exacts from you, that you be mindful of that grace which you have

received, and not glory as if you had not received it. You see with what promise of remission he provokes you to confess: see lest by struggling against celestial mandates, you fall into the ind devotion of the Jews, to whom the Lord Jesus says: "We have piped to you, and you have not danced: we have lamented, and you have not wept" (Luke VII, 32).

42. Vile speech, but not vile mystery. And therefore one must beware lest anyone, deceived by a certain common interpretation of this speech, think that the histrionic motions of a slippery dance and the ravings of the stage are commanded to us; these even in adolescent age are vicious: but he commanded the dance which David danced before the ark of the Lord. For everything is becoming which is deferred to religion; so that we may not blush at any service which may profit the worship and observance of Christ.

43. Therefore not that dance is preached which is the companion of delights and luxury, but that by which each one may lift up an unwearyed body, nor allow sluggish members to lie on the ground, or to grow numb with slow footsteps. Paul was dancing spiritually when he stretched himself for us, and forgetting the things behind, reaching for the things before, he pressed toward the prize of Christ. You also when you come to baptism, are admonished to lift up your hands, to have swifter feet by which you may ascend to eternal things (Phil. III, 13, 14). This dance is the associate of faith, the companion of grace.

44. This then is the mystery: "We have piped to you," surely the new song of the Testament: "and you have not danced," that is, you have not lifted up the soul to spiritual grace. "We have lamented, and you have not wept," that is, you have not performed penance. And therefore the people of the Jews was forsaken; because it neither performed penance, and refuted grace. Through John, penance; through Christ, grace. The latter as Lord he gives, the former as servant he announces. Both therefore the Church keeps, so that she may both obtain grace, and not cast away penance; for grace is the gift of the giver, penance the remedy of the offender.

45. Jeremiah knew that the remedy of penance was great, which he undertook in his Lamentations for Jerusalem, and he introduces Jerusalem herself performing it, saying: "Weeping she has wept in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks, nor is there anyone to comfort her from all who love her. The ways of Zion mourn" (Lam. I, 2). And he added: "In these therefore I weep, my eyes have grown dim from weeping, because he who comforted me has gone far from me" (Lam. I, 16). We observe that he thought this the most bitter heap of her evils, because there was lacking one who would comfort the mourner. How then do you take away that very consolation, who deny the hope of relaxing penance?

46. But let those who perform penance hear how they ought to perform it, with what study, with what affection, with what intention of mind, with what shaking of the innermost bow-

els, with what conversion of the heart: "See," he says, "O Lord, because I am troubled, my belly is disturbed by my weeping, my heart is turned within me" (Ibid., 20).

47. You have known the intention of the soul, know the faith of the mind and the habit of the body. "They sat," he says, "on the ground, the elders of the daughter of Zion were silent, and they placed earth upon their head, they girded themselves with haircloth, the princes brought down to the ground, the virgins of Jerusalem failed in tears, my eyes grew dim, my belly was disturbed, my glory was poured out on the earth" (Lam. II, 10, 11).

48. Thus also the people of Nineveh wept, and escaped the denounced destruction of the city (Jonah III, 5); for so great is the medicine of penance, that God seems to change his own sentence. It is in you therefore that you escape: the Lord wishes to be asked, he wishes to be hoped in, he wishes to be supplicated. You are a man, and you wish to be asked that you may forgive, and do you think that God forgives you who do not ask?

49. The Lord himself wept over Jerusalem (Luke XIX, 41), so that because she herself did not wish to weep, she might pertain to pardon through the Lord's tears. He wishes us to weep, that we may be able to escape, as you have it written in the Gospel: "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves" (Luke XXIII, 28).

50. David wept, and merited that divine mercy should remove the death of the perishing people

(II Sam. XXIV, 10); when three options were proposed to him, he nevertheless chose that in which he would experience the greater compassion of the Lord. Why do you blush to weep for your sins, when God even commanded prophets to weep for the peoples?

51. Finally, Ezekiel also was commanded to weep for Jerusalem, and he received a book, in the head of which was written: "Lamentation, and melody, and woe" (Ezek. II, 9), two sad things and one delectable; because he shall be safe in the future, who shall have wept more in this world: "For the heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, and the heart of fools in the house of feasting" (Eccl. VII, 5). And the Lord himself says: "Blessed are you who now weep; for you shall laugh" (Luke VI, 21).

CHAPTER VII.

He exhorts to weep for and confess sins, asserting that Christ is excited by the tears of the sinner and of the Church, so that he may justify him: which he wonderfully illustrates by the accommodated history of Lazarus raised. Where after he shows that the Novatians are successors of the Jews thinking about killing Lazarus, he teaches the perfect justification of any sin whatsoever expressed through the odor of the ointment poured by Mary on Christ's feet: and again he shows those same heretics signified in the person of Judas, envying while the others rejoiced.

52. Let us weep therefore for a time, that we may exult for eternity. Let us fear the Lord, let us prevent him by confessing our sins, let us correct our falls, let us amend error; lest it be said also of us: "Woe is me, my soul! for the reverent man has perished from the earth, and there is no one who corrects among men" (Micah VII, 2).

53. Why do you fear to confess your iniquities before a good Lord? "Tell," he says, "your iniquities, that you may be justified" (Isai. XLIII, 26). Still to the one guilty of fault the rewards of justification are proposed; for he is justified who shall have voluntarily acknowledged his own crime: finally, "the just man is his own accuser in the beginning of his speech" (Prov. XVIII, 17). The Lord knows all things, but he expects your voice; not that he may punish, but that he may forgive: he does not wish the devil to insult you, and to argue against you hiding your sins. Prevent your accuser: if you accuse yourself, you will fear no accuser: if you report yourself, even if you were dead, you will live again.

54. Christ will come to your tomb, and if he sees Martha, a woman of good ministry, weeping for you, and Mary, who was attentively hearing the word of God, weeping, just as the holy Church which has chosen the best part for herself; he will be moved with mercy when he sees in your death the tears of many, and will say: "Where have you laid him" (John XI, 34)? that is, in what state of the guilty is he, in what order of the penitents. Let me see whom you weep for; so that he himself

may move me by your tears. Let me see if he is already dead to that sin for which pardon is asked.

55. The people say to him: "Come and see" (Ibid.). What is "come"? This is: let the remission of sins come, let the life of the dead come, the resurrection of the departed, let your kingdom come also into this sinner.

56. He will come, and he will command the stone to be lifted, which the fall of the sinner has imposed upon his neck. He could have removed the stone by the command of his word; for even insensible nature is accustomed to obey the commanding Christ: he could have transferred the rock of the sepulcher by the silent force of an occult operation, at whose passion, stones being suddenly removed, many tombs of the dead were opened: but he commanded men to remove the stone; in truth indeed, that the incredulous might believe what they saw, and look upon the dead man rising: but in type, that he might give to us to lift the burdens of sins, certain masses of the guilty. It is ours to remove the burdens; it is his to raise, his to lead out from the tombs those divested of bonds.

57. Seeing therefore the heavy burden of the sinner, the Lord Jesus weeps; for he does not suffer the Church to weep alone. He suffers with his beloved, and says to the departed: "Come forth" (John XI, 43), that is: You who lie in the darkness of conscience, and in the filth of your offenses, in a certain prison of the guilty, come forth, bring forward your own offense, that you

may be justified: "For with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. X, 10).

58. If you shall have confessed, called by Christ, the barriers shall be broken, and all bonds shall be loosed, even if the stench of corporeal corruption be heavy. For he had four days, whose flesh was stinking in the tomb: but he whose flesh did not see corruption was for three days in the sepulcher; for he knew not the vices of the flesh, which consists of the substances of the four elements. Therefore, however great the stench of the dead may be, it is all abolished where the sacred ointment shall have smelled sweet: and the departed rises again, and his bonds are commanded to be loosed, who is still in sin: the veil is taken from his face, which was overshadowing the truth of the grace which he had received. But because he has been given pardon, he is commanded to reveal his face, to open his countenance: for he has nothing to blush at, to whom sin has been remitted.

59. But in so great grace of the Lord, and so great a miracle of the divine gift, when it behooved all to rejoice, the impious were moved, and gathered a council against Christ: they wished also to kill Lazarus (John XI, 47). Do you not rightly know that you shall be their successors, whose hardness you are heirs of (John XII, 10)? For you also are indignant, and gather a council against the Church; because you see the dead in the Church live again, and be raised by the granted pardon of sins. And so, as far as is in

you, through envy you wish to kill again those raised.

60. But Jesus does not revoke benefits, nay rather he amplifies them with a heap of liberality: he revisits the raised one solicitously, and joyful for the grace of the celebrated resurrection he comes to the supper, which his Church prepared for him, in which he who had been dead is found as one among those reclining with Christ.

61. Then all wonder who see with a pure gaze of the mind, who know not how to envy; for the Church has such sons. They wonder, as I said, how he who was lying in the tomb yesterday and the day before (*Ibid.*, 3), is one of those reclining with the Lord Jesus.

62. Mary herself puts ointment on the feet of the Lord Jesus. Therefore perhaps on the feet, because one from the lowest was snatched from death; for we are all the body of Christ, but others perhaps are the superior members (*I Cor. X, 17*). The mouth of Christ was the Apostle, who said: "Do you seek an experiment of him who speaks in me, Christ" (*II Cor. XIII, 3*). His mouth were the prophets, through whom he spoke future things: would that I also might merit to be his foot, and that Mary might send her precious ointment upon me, and anoint, and wipe away sin!

63. [Otherwise Chapter VIII.] What therefore we read concerning Lazarus, we ought to believe in every converted sinner: who although he may have a stench, yet is cleansed by the precious ointment of faith: for faith has so much grace,

that where before the day the dead man stank, there the whole house is filled with a good odor.

64. The Corinthian house stank when it was written of it: "Fornication is heard among you, and such fornication as is not even among the Gentiles" (I Cor. V, 1). There was a stench because a little leaven had corrupted the whole mass. It began to smell well when it is said: "If you have forgiven anything to anyone, I also. For what I also have forgiven, for your sake in the person of Christ" (II Cor. II, 10). And so, the sinner being liberated, great joy was made in it, and the whole house smelled sweet with the sweetness of grace. Whence the Apostle, well conscious that he had perfumed all with the ointment of Apostolic remission, says: "We are the good odor of Christ to God in those who are being saved" (Ibid., 15).

65. Therefore at the pouring out of this ointment all rejoice, only Judas contradicts (John XII, 4). Therefore also now he who is a prevaricator contradicts; he reprehends, who is a traitor: but he himself is reprehended by Christ, who is ignorant of the remedy of the Lord's death, and does not understand the mystery of so great a burial. For therefore the Lord both suffered and died, that he might redeem us from death. This indicate the most excellent price of his death, by which the sinner is absolved and assumed into new grace; that all may come and wonder how he reclines with Christ, and praising God, may say: "Let us eat and feast; for this one was dead, and has lived again: he was lost, and is found" (Luke XV, 24). But if any infidel shall have objected why

he eats with publicans and sinners; it is answered to him: "There is no need of a physician for the healthy, but for those who are ill" (Matth. IX, 12).

CHAPTER VIII.

Proceeding to urge to confession and tears, he turns the speech to himself. And where he signified the desire of cleansing the Lord's feet after the likeness of the evangelical woman, in whose action he says the form of penance is delivered; yet if anyone should not attain the perfection of this exemplar, nevertheless Christ will approach to his tomb. He asks with most humble mind that he may visit and raise him in his own; but especially that he may give to him to suffer with sinners, whose offenses he is persuaded are lighter than his own. Therefore those for whom Christ died are not to be insulted, by whom he desires that he himself also be gathered among the stubble which he does not neglect.

66. Show therefore your wound to the physician, that you may be able to be healed. Although you shall not have shown it, he knows: but he expects from you to hear your voice. Wipe away your scars with tears. Thus that woman in the Gospel (Matth. IX, 22) wiped away the stench of her error, thus she washed away her fault; when she washes Jesus' feet with tears.

67. Would that you would reserve for me also the mud of your feet, O Jesus, which you have soiled while you walk in me! Would that you would offer to me the filth of your footsteps to be wiped away, which I by my act have fixed to

your steps! But whence have I living water, by which I might be able to wash your feet? If I have not water, I have tears, with which while I wash your feet, would that I might wash away myself! Whence to me, that you should say of me: "Many sins are forgiven her, because she loved much" (Luke VII, 47)? I confess that I have owed more, and more has been forgiven to me who was called to the priesthood from the noise of forensic brawls and from the terror of public administration; and therefore I fear lest I be found ungrateful, if I love less, to whom more has been forgiven (*Ibid.*, 44).

68. But not all are able to equal that woman, who was deservedly preferred even to Simon, who gave a dinner to the Lord: who provided a mastership to all who wish to merit pardon by kissing Christ's feet, washing them with tears, wiping them with her hair, anointing them with ointment.

69. In a kiss there is a sign of charity; and therefore the Lord Jesus says: "Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth" (*Cant.* I, 1). What do the hairs signify, unless that you may know, all the dignity of secular fillets being bowed down, that indulgence is to be entreated; that weeping you may prostrate yourself to the earth, that lying on the ground you may move mercy? In the ointment also the odor of good conversion is expressed. David surely was a king, and he was saying: "I will wash my bed every night, I will water my couch with my tears" (*Psal.* VI, 7). And therefore he merited so great grace, that from his family a

virgin should be chosen, who should bring forth Christ for us by her own birth. Therefore also that woman in the Gospel is preached.

70. Nevertheless if we are not able to equal this one, the Lord Jesus knows how to succor also the weak, where there is not she who can prepare a banquet, who can bring ointment (John XII, 7), who can carry a fountain of living water with her. He himself came to the tomb.

71. Would therefore that you would deign to approach this my monument (John XI, 34), Lord Jesus, and wash me with your tears; because with harder eyes I have not such great tears that I might be able to wash away my offenses! If you shall have wept for me, I shall be safe: if I shall be worthy of your tears, I wipe away the stench of all offenses: if I shall be worthy that for a little while you should weep, you will call me from the monument of this body, and you will say: "Come forth" (Ibid., 43), so that my thoughts may not be held included within the narrows of this body: but may go out to Christ, may be conversant in the light; so that I may not think the works of darkness, but the works of light. For he who thinks sin, studies to include himself within his own conscience.

72. Call your servant therefore forth. Although bound by the bonds of my sins, having my feet bound, my hands entwined, and already buried in dead thoughts and works; at your calling, I shall go out free, and be found one of those reclining at your banquet, and your house shall be filled with precious ointment; since indeed you have

deigned to redeem, you will guard. For it shall be said: Behold him, not nourished in the bosom of the Church, not tamed from a boy, but snatched from the tribunals, led away from the vanities of this age, from the voice of the herald accustomed to the song of the psalmist, he remains in the priesthood not by his own virtue, but by the grace of Christ, and reclines among the guests of the celestial table.

73. Keep, O Lord, your gift, guard the gift which you have conferred even upon one fleeing. For I knew that I was not worthy to be called a bishop; because I had given myself to this age: but by your grace I am what I am. And I am indeed the least of all bishops and the lowest in merit; nevertheless because I also have undertaken some labor for your holy Church, protect this fruit; lest him whom you called lost to the priesthood, you allow to perish as a priest. And first grant that I may know how to suffer with those who sin with intimate affection; for this is the highest virtue, because it is written: "And you shall not rejoice over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction, and do not speak great things in the day of their tribulation" (Obad. 12): but as often as the sin of any fallen person is exposed, let me suffer with him: nor let me proudly rebuke, but mourn and bewail; so that while I weep for another, I may bewail myself, saying: "Tamar is justified more than I" (Gen. XXXVIII, 26).

74. Perhaps a young girl has fallen, deceived and precipitated by occasions which are the fuel of sins; we elders also sin. The law of this flesh

fight in us against the law of our mind, and leads us captive into sin, so that we do what we do not wish (Rom. VII, 23). To her age supplies an excuse, to me now none; for she ought to learn, we to teach. Therefore Tamar is justified more than I (I Tim. VI, 10).

75. We accuse someone's avarice, let us remember if we ourselves have done anything avariciously: and if we have done it, since avarice is the root of evils, and just as under the earth it creeps occultly in our body, let us say each one: "Tamar is justified more than I."

76. If we shall have been moved gravely against anyone, a layman has a lighter cause than a bishop, in that having been moved he did something; let us retract with ourselves, and say: "This one, who is argued of commotion, is justified more than I." For if we say these things, we guard ourselves; lest the Lord Jesus say to us, or any of his disciples: "You see the mote in your brother's eye; but the beam which is in your own eye, you do not see. Hypocrite, cast out first the beam from your own eye, and then you will see to cast out the mote from your brother's eye" (Matth. VII, 4, 5).

77. Therefore let us not blush to say that our fault is heavier than his whom we think is to be argued; because Judah said this who was arguing Tamar; and having remembered his own fault, he said: "Tamar is justified more than I" (Gen. XXXVIII, 26). In which there is both a depth of mystery and a moral precept: and therefore it was not imputed to his fault; because he himself accused himself before he was accused by others.

78. Therefore let us not rejoice over anyone's sin, but rather let us mourn; because it is written: "Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; because I have fallen: but I shall rise again; because if I shall sit in darkness, the Lord will illuminate me. I will sustain the wrath of the Lord, because I have sinned against him; until he justifies my cause, and makes my judgment, and leads me out to the light, and I shall see his justice: and my enemy shall see, and shall be covered with confusion, who says to me: Where is the Lord your God? My eyes shall see her, and she shall be for a treading down like mud in the way" (Micah VII, 8 et seq.). Nor undeservedly, since he who rejoices in another's fall, rejoices in the victory of the devil. And therefore let us rather mourn when we hear that a man has perished, for whom Christ died, who does not neglect even the stubble in the harvest.

79. And would that He might not cast away this stubble in the harvest, that is, the empty oats of my fruit, but gather it, as a certain one says: "Woe is me, for I have become as one who gathers stubble in the harvest, and a cluster in the vintage" (Micah VII, 1); so that He may eat at least the firstfruits of His grace in me, even if He does not approve of the later things.

CHAPTER IX.

In what way is faith necessary for penance? Also, how many aids for repayment are available to each? That prayer, tears, and fasts are more powerful than money. When he has confirmed

this with examples, and added that liberality is very effective for pardon, but only when joined with faith, he recounts some vices of the same liberality. To these he joins certain other defects of penance, namely of those who either seek to be reconciled immediately, remitting nothing of their usual luxury, or who place penance only in abstinence from the sacraments, or finally who, in the hope of penance, pour themselves into lusts.

80. Therefore it is fitting that we believe both that penance is to be performed and that pardon is to be granted; so that we may hope for pardon as if from faith, not as if from debt; for it is one thing to merit, another to presume. Faith obtains as if from a contract: but presumption is closer to the arrogant than to the petitioner. First pay what is owed; that you may deserve to obtain what you have hoped for. Pay the affection of a good debtor, that you may not make a loan, but by the wealth of your faith, clear the interest of the name contracted.

81. He who owes to God has more aids for repayment than he who owes to man. Man demands back money for money, which is not always ready for the debtor: God demands affection, which is in your power. No one is poor who owes to God, unless he has made himself poor. And if he has nothing to sell, he has what he may pay. Prayer, tears, fasts, are the wealth of a good debtor, and much more abundant than if someone should bring money without faith from the prices of estates.

82. Finally, Ananias was poor when, having sold his field, he brought the money to the apostles; wherefore he could not even pay his debt, but entangled himself (Acts V, 1, 2). Rich was that widow who put two small brass coins into the treasury, of whom it was said: "This poor widow has put in more than all" (Luke XXI, 2). For God does not seek money, but faith.

83. I do not deny that sin can be diminished by liberalities made to the poor; but only if faith commends the expenses. For what does the collection of a patrimony profit without the grace of charity?

84. There are those who affect the beauty of largesse for boasting alone; so that they may wish to seem approved by the common people in that they have left nothing for themselves: but while they seek the reward of the present world, they do not store up for the future; and because they have received their reward here, they cannot hope for it there.

85. There are those who, by a sudden impulse of the mind, not by perpetual judgment, when they have contributed their wealth to the Church, thought it later to be revoked: to whom neither the first reward is valid, nor the second; because the first did not have judgment, and the second had sacrilege.

86. There are those whom it has repented to have divided their wealth among the poor: but those who perform penance, this alone should not repent them, lest they perform penance for the penance itself. For many, conscious of

their sins from fear of future punishment, seek penance, and when they have received it, are recalled by the shame of public supplication. These seem to have sought to perform penance for evils, but to perform it for good things.

87. Some ask for penance for this reason, that they wish communion to be restored to them immediately. These do not so much desire to loose themselves as to bind the priest; for they do not strip their own conscience of guilt, and they clothe the priest's, to whom it is commanded: "Do not give what is holy to dogs, nor cast your pearls before swine"; that is, the consortia of sacred communion are not to be imparted to unclean impurities.

88. Therefore you may see them walking about in changed clothing, whom it behooved to mourn and groan; because they have defiled that garment of washing and grace: and women to burden their ears with pearls, to bend their necks, which they would well incline to Christ, not to gold: who ought to have wept for themselves, because they have lost the pearl which is from heaven.

89. There are also those who think this to be penance, if they abstain from the heavenly sacraments. These are more cruel judges against themselves, who prescribe punishment for themselves, and avoid the remedy, whom it behooved to grieve even for their punishment; because they would be defrauded of heavenly grace (*De Poenit.*, dist. I, cap. *Sunt qui arbitrentur*).

90. Others, having set before them the hope of performing penance, think that a license for sinning has been extended to them; whereas penance is a remedy for sin, not an incentive for sinning. For a medicine is necessary for a wound, not a wound for a medicine; because a medicine is sought on account of a wound, not a wound desired on account of a medicine. Then that hope is weak which is committed to time; since all time is uncertain, all hope may not survive time.

CAPUT X.

That the shame by which the guilty are recalled from public penance may be driven away, having proposed the manner of acting of the profane, he brings forth the utility of prayers sent forth by the whole Church at once, and the examples of the mourning saints. Then, having rebuked those who think that the same penance is to be repeated often, he explains how difficult it is to be done well, or in what way it is to be followed.

91. Will anyone endure that you should blush to ask God, who do not blush to ask man? and should it shame you to supplicate God, from whom you are not hidden; when it does not shame you to confess your sins to man, from whom you may be hidden? Or do you flee from the witnesses and those conscious of your prayer, when if satisfaction is to be made to man, it is necessary that you should go around to many, and beseech them, that they may deign to intervene; you prostrate yourself at their knees, kiss

their footsteps, offer your children still ignorant of the fault, as petitioners even for paternal pardon? Therefore you are fastidious to do this in the Church, that you may supplicate God, that you may seek the patronage of the holy people for beseeching; where there is nothing that ought to be a cause for shame, except not to confess, since we are all sinners: where he is more laudable, who is more humble; he more just, who is more abject to himself.

92. Let Mother Church weep for you, and wash your fault with her tears, let Christ see you mourning, that He may say: "Blessed are those who are sad, for you shall rejoice" (Luke VI, 21). He loves that many should ask for one. Finally, in the Gospel, moved by the tears of the widow, because very many were weeping for her, He raised her son (Luke VII, 13). Therefore He more quickly heard Peter, that Dorcas might rise again (Acts IX, 36); because the poor were groaning over the death of the woman. Therefore He immediately remitted it to Peter himself, because he wept most bitterly. And you, if you weep most bitterly, Christ will look back at you, and the fault will depart (Luke XXII, 62). For the practice of grief banishes the luxury of crime, the delights of error. So while we grieve for what has been admitted, we exclude what is to be admitted, and there becomes a certain discipline of innocence from the condemnation of the fault.

93. Therefore let nothing recall you from penance, this is common to you with the saints: and would that such a deploration of the saints

were to be imitated. David ate ashes like bread, and tempered his drink with tears (Psalm CI, 10); therefore now he rejoices more, because he wept more: "My eyes have gone down," he says, "through the outgoings of waters" (Psalm CXVIII, 136).

94. John wept much, and he says the mysteries of Christ were revealed to him (Apoc. V, 4). But truly that woman, who when she was in sins, and ought to have wept, rejoiced, and was covered with a purple and scarlet garment, and adorned herself with much gold and precious stones, now mourns the misery of eternal weeping (Apoc. XVII, 4).

95. Deservedly are those rebuked who think that penance is to be performed often; because they grow wanton in Christ. For if they truly performed penance, they would not think it later to be repeated; because just as there is one baptism, so there is one penance, which however is performed publicly; for it behooves us to repent of daily sin: but this for lighter offenses, that for heavier ones.

96. But I have more easily found those who have preserved innocence, than those who have congruously performed penance. Does anyone think that to be penance, where there is the ambition of acquiring dignity, where there is the pouring out of wine, where there is the use of the conjugal union itself? The world must be renounced: less indulgence must be given to sleep itself than nature demands; it must be interrupted by groans, it must be broken by sighs,

it must be set apart by prayers: one must live in such a way that we die to this vital use, a man should deny himself to himself, and be totally changed: just as the fables tell of a certain young man who had set out abroad on account of meretricious loves, and having returned with his love abolished, later met his old beloved, who when he did not address her, wondering, thought she was not recognized, meeting him again she said: "It is I"; he answered: "But I am not I."

97. Wherefore the Lord well says: "He who wishes to come after me, let him deny himself to himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matth. XVI, 24). For those who are dead and buried in Christ, ought not again as if living to decide concerning this world. "Do not touch," he says, "nor handle what things are all for corruption by the use itself" (Coloss. II, 20), for the reason that the use of this life itself is the corruption of integrity.

CAPUT XI.

Where he first premised that baptism should not be rejected even until death, that penance is the cause; he urges those by whom it is procrastinated, bringing forth testimonies of Scripture. He subjoins however that it is not then to be performed, when lusts are still fervent, but as long as the same have subsided, it is to be waited for.

98. Therefore penance is good, which if it were not, all would defer the grace of washing until old age. To whom it is sufficient for an answer because it is better that I should have what I

may patch, than not have what I may be clothed with: but just as things once sewn together are integrated, so things frequently sewn are loosed.

99. But the Lord Himself has sufficiently admonished those who defer penance, saying: "Perform penance; for the kingdom of heaven has approached" (Matth. IV, 17). For we do not know at what hour the thief will come, we do not know whether on the next night our soul may be required from us. God ejected Adam from paradise immediately after the fault, He did not defer it: but immediately separated him from delights, that he might perform penance: immediately he clothed him in a leather tunic, not a silken one (Gen. III, 21).

100. For what is it that you should defer? Is it that you may commit more sins? Therefore because God is good, you are therefore evil, and you despise the riches of His goodness and patience (Rom. II, 4)? But the goodness of the Lord ought rather to lead you to penance. Therefore holy David says to all: "Come let us adore, and let us fall down before him, and let us weep before our Lord, who made us" (Psalm XCIV, 6). But concerning a sinner dead without penance, because nothing else remains except to mourn heavily, except to weep, you have him weeping himself and saying: "My son Absalom, my son Absalom" (II Sam. XVIII, 33). For he who is inwardly dead, is bewailed without any exception.

101. But concerning those who, as exiles and pilgrims from the paternal boundaries which the holy law of Moses prescribed, are entangled in

worldly errors, you hear the one singing: "Upon the rivers of Babylon there we sat and wept, while we remembered Zion" (Psalm CXXXVI, 1). For he introduces the groans of the fallen, that while still placed in the state of the present times and of slipping things, they ought to come to their senses; namely by the example of those who, on account of the price of sin, had been led into the misery of captivity.

102. But there is nothing which is for such great grief, than that each one placed under the captivity of sin, should remember from where he has fallen, and from where he has fallen down; for the reason that he has turned away to corporeal and earthly things from [?] spesious and beautiful intention of divine cognition.

103. Thus you have Adam hiding himself, when he knew God to be present, and being sought wished to be hidden, and called by the Lord by that voice which would bite the affection of the one hiding, that is: "Adam, where are you" (Gen. III, 9)? That is, why do you hide yourself? why do you lie hidden? why do you flee Him, whom you desired to see? Thus heavy is the fault of the conscience, that without a judge it punishes itself, and desires to veil itself; and yet before God it is naked.

104. And therefore no one placed in sin ought to arrogant to himself authority or the usurpation of the sacraments; because it is written: "You have sinned, be quiet" (Gen. IV, 10). What in the present psalm David says: "In the willows," he says, "in the midst of it we hung our instru-

ments"; and below: "How shall we sing the song of the Lord in a foreign land" (Psalm CXXXVI, 1, 2)? For if the flesh fights against the mind, and is not subject to the rudder of the soul, and to the empire of the mind, foreign is the land which is not tamed by the exercise of the cultivator, and therefore cannot bring forth the fruits of charity, patience, and peace. It is better therefore then to be quiet, when you cannot exercise the works of penance; lest in the penance itself that should be done, which later may need penance. Which if it shall have been once usurped, and not rightfully celebrated, it neither obtains the fruit of the former, and will take away the use of the latter (De Poenit., dist. III, cap. Si quis, § Poenitentia).

105. Surely even when the flesh fights against us, the mind ought to be intent upon God: and if works do not follow, let faith not desert us: and if either the enticements of the flesh, or the adversary powers attack us, let the mind remain dedicated to God (Rom. VII, 23). For then we are most urged, when the flesh yields: and there are those who vehemently lean upon the wretched soul, seeking to take away every aid. Whence that is: "Empty it out, empty it out even to the foundation in it" (Psalm CXXXVI, 7).

106. Of whom David, having pitied, says: "Wretched daughter of Babylon" (Ibid., 8). Wretched certainly, because she is a daughter of Babylon, who has ceased to be a daughter of God. To whom however he invites a physician, saying: "Blessed is he who shall hold, and shall dash your little ones against the rock" (Ibid., 9), that is, who

may dash the weak and slippery thoughts against Christ, who may crush all irrational motions by the reverence and discussion of Him; so that if anyone is snatched by adulterous love, he may exclude the fire, and the union of the harlot, and may abdicate himself from his own study, that he may acquire Christ.

107. We have learned therefore that penance is to be performed, and to be performed at that time when the luxury of the fault subsides: and that we, placed in the captivity of sin, ought to be more reverent, not usurpers. For if to Moses desiring to approach nearer, that he might draw the cognition of the heavenly mystery, it is said: "Loose the shoe of your feet" (Exod. III, 5); how much more ought we to strip the feet of our soul from corporeal bonds, and to absolve all our steps from the connection of this world?