

THE FOUR HUNDRED CHAPTERS ON
LOVE

Maximus Confessor

PROLOGUE

Here, Father Elpidius,¹ besides the discourse on the *Ascetic Life*,² I have sent this discourse on love to your Grace, arranged in four centuries³ in equal number to the four Gospels. While it is perhaps not at all worthy of your expectation, it is yet the best I could do. Your Grace should know that these are not the fruit of my own meditation. Instead, I went through the writings of the holy Fathers and selected from them whatever had reference to my subject, summarizing many things in few words so that they can be seen at a glance to be easily memorized. These I have sent to your Grace requesting that you read them with indulgence and look for only what is of profit in them, overlooking a style which lacks charm, and to pray for my modest ability which is bereft of any spiritual profit. I further request that you not be annoyed by anything that is said; I have simply fulfilled an obligation. I say this because there are many of us who give annoyance today by words while those who instruct or receive instruction by deeds are very few.

Rather, please pay careful attention to each chapter. For not all, I believe, are easily understandable by everyone, but the majority will require much scrutiny by many people even though they appear to be very simply expressed. Perhaps it might happen that something useful to the soul will be revealed out of them. This will happen completely from God's grace to the one who reads with an uncomplicated mind, with the fear of God, and with love. But if someone reads this or any other book whatever not for the sake of spiritual profit but to hunt for phrases to reproach the author so that he might then set himself up in his own opinion as wiser than he, such a person will never receive any profit of any kind.

FIRST CENTURY

1. Love⁴ is a good disposition of the soul by which one prefers no being to the knowledge⁵ of God. It is impossible to reach the habit of this love if one has any attachment to earthly things.

2. Love is begotten of detachment,⁶ detachment of hope in God, hope of patient endurance and long-suffering, these of general self-mastery, self-mastery of fear of God, and fear of faith in the Lord.

3. The one who believes the Lord fears punishment; the one who fears punishment becomes master of his passions; the one who becomes master of his passions patiently endures tribulations; the one who patiently endures tribulations will have hope in God; hope in God separates from every earthly attachment; and when the mind is separated from this it will have love for God.⁷

4. The one who loves God prefers knowledge of him to all things made by him and is constantly devoted to it by desire.

5. If all things have been made by God and for his sake, then God is better than what has been made by him. The one who forsakes the better and is engrossed in inferior things shows that he prefers the things made by God to God himself.

6. The one who has his mind fixed on the love of God disdains all visible things and even his own body as alien.⁸

7. If the soul is better than the body and God incomparably better than the world which he created, the one who prefers the body to the soul and the world to the God who created it is no different from idolaters.

8. The one who separates his mind from love and devotedness toward God and keeps it tied to any sensible thing is the one who prefers the body to the soul and things that are made to God their Creator.

9. If the life of the mind is the illumination of knowledge and this is born of love for God, then it is well said that there is nothing greater than love.⁹

10. When in the full ardor of its love¹⁰ for God the mind goes out of itself, then it has no perception at all either of itself or of any creatures. For once illumined by the divine and infinite light, it remains insensible to anything that is made by him, just as the physical eye has no sensation of the stars when the sun has risen.

11. All the virtues assist the mind in the pursuit of divine love, but above all does pure prayer. By it the mind is given wings to go ahead to God and becomes alien to all things.

12. When through love the mind is ravished by divine knowledge and in going outside of creatures has a perception of divine transcendence,¹¹ then, according to the divine Isaiah, it comes in consternation to a realization of its own lowliness and says with conviction the words of the prophet:

*Woe is me for I am stricken at heart; because being a man having unclean lips, I dwell in the midst of a people with unclean lips and I have seen with my eyes the King, the Lord of hosts.*¹²

13. The one who loves God cannot help but love also every man as himself even though he is displeased by the passions of those who are not yet purified. Thus when he sees their conversion and amendment, he rejoices with an unbounded and unspeakable joy.

14. The passionate soul is impure, filled with thoughts of lust and hatred.

15. The one who sees a trace of hatred in his own heart through any fault at all toward any man whoever he may be makes himself completely foreign to the love for God, because love for God in no way admits of hatred for man.

16. "The one who loves me," says the Lord, "will keep my commandments" and "this is my commandment, that you love one another."¹³ Therefore the one who does not love his neighbor is not keeping the commandment, and the one who does not keep the commandment is not able to love the Lord.

17. Blessed is the man who has learnt to love all men equally.¹⁴

18. Blessed is the man who is not attached to any corruptible or transitory thing.

19. Blessed is the mind which has gone beyond all beings and takes unceasing delight in the divine beauty.

20. The one who makes provision for the desires of the flesh¹⁵ and bears a grudge against his neighbor for transitory things—such a man serves the creature rather than the Creator.¹⁶

21. The one who keeps his body away from pleasure and sickness keeps it as a fellow worker in the service of better things.

22. The one who flees all the world's desires puts himself beyond every worldly grief.

23. The one who loves God surely loves his neighbor as well. Such a person cannot hold on to money but rather gives it out in God's fashion to each one who has need.¹⁷

24. The one who imitates God by giving alms knows no difference between evil and good or just and unjust in regard to the needs of the body, but distributes to all without distinction according to their need even if he prefers the virtuous person over the wicked because of his good intention.¹⁸

25. Just as God who is by nature good and free of passion loves all in an equal way as his creatures but glorifies the virtuous man for having become his friend through his intention and has mercy on the wicked out of his goodness and converts him by chastening him in this life, so also does the one who is good and without passion through his intention love equally all men—the virtuous because of his nature and good will and likewise the wicked because of his nature and compassion by which he pities one who is foolish and makes his way in darkness.

26. The disposition of love is made manifest not only in the sharing of money but much more in sharing the word of God and physical service.

27. The one who has genuinely renounced worldly matters and serves his neighbor without pretense through love soon frees himself of all passion and is rendered a sharer of divine love and knowledge.

28. The one who has acquired divine love in himself does not grow weary of closely following after the Lord his God, as the divine Jeremiah¹⁹ says; rather he endures nobly every reproachful hardship and outrage without thinking any evil of anyone.

29. When you are insulted by someone or offended in any matter, then beware of angry thoughts, lest by distress they sever you from charity and place you in the region of hatred.

30. Whenever you are suffering intensely from insult or disgrace, realize that this can be of great benefit to you, for disgrace is God's way of driving vainglory out of you.

31. As the memory of fire does not warm the body, so faith without love does not bring about the illumination of knowledge in the soul.

32. As the light of the sun attracts the healthy eye, so does the knowledge of God draw the pure mind to itself naturally through love.

33. The mind is pure when it is removed from ignorance and illuminated by divine light.

34. The soul is pure when it has been freed from the passions²⁰ and rejoices unceasingly in divine love.

35. A blameworthy passion is a movement of the soul contrary to nature.²¹

36. Detachment is a peaceful state of the soul in which it becomes resistant to vice.

37. The one who has zealously acquired the fruits of love does not change from it even though he experiences countless ills. And let Stephen, Christ's disciple, and those like him, persuade you, as well as Christ himself who prays for his murderers and asks forgiveness of his Father as for those acting in ignorance.²²

38. If it is a mark of love to be patient and kind,²³ the one who acts contentiously or wickedly clearly makes himself a stranger to love, and the one who is a stranger to love is a stranger to God, since "God is love."²⁴

39. Do not say, as the divine Jeremiah tells us, that you are the Lord's temple.²⁵ And do not say that "mere faith in our Lord Jesus Christ can save me." For this is impossible unless you acquire love for him through works. For in what concerns mere believing, "even the devils believe and tremble."²⁶

40. The work of love is the deliberate doing of good to one's neighbor as well as long-suffering and patience and the use of all things in the proper way.

41. The one who loves God is not sad nor does he grieve anyone because of any passing thing. Only one salutary sadness makes him sad and grieves others, the one which the blessed Paul had and with which he grieved the Corinthians.²⁷

42. The one who loves God leads an angelic life on earth, fasting and being watchful and singing psalms and praying and always thinking good of everyone.²⁸

43. If anyone desires anything, he naturally strives to obtain it. Now the divine is incomparably better and more desirable than all good and desirable things. What great zeal, then, should we show to obtain what is good and desirable by nature!²⁹

44. Do not stain your flesh with indecent actions; do not defile your soul with evil thoughts; and God's peace will come upon you and bring love.

45. Afflict your flesh with fasting and vigils. Devote yourself diligently to psalmody and prayer, and holiness in chastity will come upon you and bring love.

46. The one who is deemed worthy of divine knowledge and who through love has attained its illumination will never be blown about by the spirit of vainglory. But the one who is not yet deemed worthy of di-

vine knowledge is easily carried to and fro by it. If such a one, then, should look to God in everything that he does, as doing everything for his sake, he will easily escape it with God.

47. The one who has not yet obtained divine knowledge activated by love makes a lot of the religious works he performs. But the one who has been deemed worthy to obtain this says with conviction the words which the patriarch Abraham spoke when he was graced with the divine appearance, "I am but earth and ashes."³⁰

48. The one who fears the Lord always has humility as his companion and through its promptings is led to divine love and thanksgiving. For he recalls his former worldly life and different transgressions and the temptations bedeviling him from his youth, and how the Lord delivered him from all these things and made him pass from this life of passion to a divine life. And so with fear he receives love as well, ever thankful with deep humility to the benefactor and pilot of our life.

49. Do not soil your mind by holding on to thoughts of concupiscence and anger, lest by falling from pure prayer you fall in with the spirit of discouragement.³¹

50. The mind falls from familiarity³² with God whenever it consorts with wicked and foul thoughts.

51. When the senseless man who is driven by his passions is moved by anger and becomes troubled, he will be eager to flee foolishly from the brethren. But when again he is aroused by concupiscence, he regrets this and runs back to them. The sensible man does the opposite in both situations. In time of anger he cuts off the causes of disorder and frees himself from grief toward the brethren; in time of concupiscence he controls any irrational impulse and relationship.³³

52. In a period of temptations do not abandon your monastery but bear courageously the waves of thoughts, especially those of sadness and discouragement. Being thus tested with tribulations by divine dispensation, you will have a firm hope in God. But if you leave you will be accounted reprobate, unmanly, and unstable.

53. If you desire not to fall away from divine love, do not let your brother go to bed with anger against you, nor should you go to bed angry against him. Rather, "go, be reconciled with your brother, and come offer" to Christ with a clear conscience the gift of love in fervent prayer.³⁴

54. If one has all the gifts of the Spirit, but not love, it profits him nothing, as the divine Apostle says.³⁵ How great a zeal should we show to acquire it!

55. If "love works no evil to one's neighbor,"³⁶ the one who envies his brother and is unhappy over his good name and smears his reputation with scoffing or in any way maliciously contrives against him, how does he not render himself a stranger to love and liable to eternal judgment?

56. If "love is the fullness of the law,"³⁷ how can the one who keeps a grudge against his brother and sets a trap for him and curses him and rejoices over his misfortune be anything but a transgressor and liable to eternal punishment?

57. If "the one who slanders his brother and judges his brother slanders and judges the law,"³⁸ and the law of Christ is love, how does the slanderer do anything but fall away from the love of Christ and become the cause of his own eternal punishment?

58. Do not lend your ear to the slanderer's tongue nor your tongue to the fault-finder's ear by readily speaking or listening to anything against your neighbor. Otherwise you will fall away from divine love and be found excluded from eternal life.

59. Do not allow any abuse of your father or encourage anyone who dishonors him, lest the Lord become angry at your deeds and destroy you utterly from the land of the living.

60. Silence the one who is slandering in your hearing lest you commit a double sin with him: by accustoming yourself to this deadly vice and by not restraining him from foolish talk against his neighbor.

61. "But I say to you," the Lord says, "love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who persecute you."³⁹ Why did he command these things? So that he might free you from hate, sadness, anger, and grudges, and might grant you the greatest possession of all, perfect love, which is impossible to possess except by the one who loves all men equally in imitation of God, who loves all men equally and "wills that they be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth."⁴⁰

62. "But I tell you to resist evil, but should anyone strike you on the right cheek turn the other to him as well. And if anyone wants to go to court with you and take your tunic, offer him your coat as well; and if one forces you to go one mile, go two with him."⁴¹ Why is this? To keep you free from anger and sadness and to instruct him through your forbearance and to bring you both in his goodness, under the yoke of his love.

63. We carry along with us the voluptuous images of the things we once experienced. Now the one who overcomes these voluptuous images completely disdains the realities of which they are images. In fact,

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the battle against memories⁴² is more difficult than the battle against deeds, as sinning in thought is easier than sinning in deed.

64. Some of the passions are of the body, some of the soul. Those of the body take their origin in the body; those of the soul from exterior things. Love and self-control cut away both of them, the former those of the soul, the latter those of the body.⁴³

65. Some of the passions belong to the irascible, some to the concupiscible part of the soul. Both are moved by means of the senses; and they are moved whenever the soul is found outside of love and self-control.

66. It happens that the passions of the irascible part of the soul are harder to combat than those of the concupiscible. Thus it is that a better remedy for it was given by the Lord: the commandment of love.⁴⁴

67. All the other passions lay hold of either the irascible or the concupiscible part of the soul only, or even of the rational part, as forgetfulness or ignorance. But sloth, by grasping onto all the soul's powers, excites nearly all of them together. In this way it is the most troublesome of all the passions. Well, then, did the Lord tell us in giving the remedy against it, "In your patience possess your souls."⁴⁵

68. Never strike any of the brothers, especially not without reason, lest sometime he not endure the trial and go away. For then you will never escape the reproof of your conscience, always bringing you sadness in the time of prayer and excluding your mind from familiarity with God.

69. Do not tolerate suspicions or people that would be occasions of scandal for you against anyone. For those who take scandal in any way from things which happen, intentionally or unintentionally, do not know the way of peace, which through love brings those who long for it to the knowledge of God.

70. The one who is still affected by human judgments does not yet have perfect love, as for example when he loves one and hates another for one reason or another; or even when he loves and then hates the same person for the same reasons.

71. Perfect love does not split up the one nature of men on the basis of their various dispositions but ever looking steadfastly at it, it loves all men equally, those who are zealous as friends, those who are negligent as enemies. It is good to them and forbearing and puts up with what they do. It does not think evil at all but rather suffers for them, if occasion requires, in order that it may even make them friends if possible. If not, it does not fall away from its own intentions as it ever manifests

the fruits of love equally for all men. In this way also our Lord and God Jesus Christ, manifesting his love for us, suffered for all mankind and granted to all equally the hope of resurrection, though each one renders himself worthy either of glory or of punishment.

72. The one who does not disdain glory and dishonor, riches and poverty, pleasure and pain, does not yet possess perfect love. For perfect love disdains not only these things but also this very transitory life and death.

73. Listen to what those who have been rendered worthy of divine love have to say: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or the sword? As it is written, 'for your sake are we put to death the whole day long.' We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. But in all these things we more than overcome through the one who has loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."⁴⁶ All who say and do this concerning the love of God are saints.

74. And concerning love of neighbor, listen again to what they say: "I speak the truth in Christ; I do not lie, and my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit. I have great sadness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I would wish to be anathema myself from Christ for my brethren who are my kinsmen according to the flesh and Israelites."⁴⁷ And similarly Moses⁴⁸ and other saints.

75. The one who does not disdain glory and pleasure and greed which increases them and which is in turn produced by them cannot cut away the occasions of anger. And the one who does not cut them away cannot attain perfect love.

76. Humility and distress free man from every sin, the former by cutting out the passions of the soul, the latter those of the body. The blessed David shows that he did this in one of his prayers to God, "Look upon my humility and my trouble and forgive all my sins."⁴⁹

77. By means of the commandments the Lord renders detached those who carry them out; by means of the divine doctrines he bestows on them the enlightenment of knowledge.⁵⁰

78. All doctrines are concerned either with God or with visible and invisible things or with Providence and judgment about them.⁵¹

79. Almsgiving heals the irascible part of the soul; fasting extinguishes the concupiscible part,⁵² and prayer purifies the mind and pre-

pare it for the contemplation of reality.⁵³ For the powers of the soul the Lord has granted us the commandments as well.

80. "Learn of me," he says, "because I am meek and humble of heart."⁵⁴ Meekness⁵⁵ keeps the temper steady, and humility frees the mind from conceit and vainglory.

81. The fear of the Lord is twofold. The first type is produced in us from threats of punishment, and from it arise in proper order self-control, patience, hope in God, and detachment, from which comes love. The second is coupled with love itself and constantly produces reverence in the soul, lest through the familiarity of love it become presumptuous of God.⁵⁶

82. Perfect love casts out the first fear from the soul which by possessing it no longer fears punishment. The second fear it has always joined to it, as was said. The following passages apply to the first fear: "By the fear of the Lord everyone turns away from evil";⁵⁷ and, "The beginning of wisdom is fear of the Lord."⁵⁸ And to the second fear: "The fear of the Lord is pure and remains forever and ever,"⁵⁹ and, "There is no want in those who fear him."⁶⁰

83. "Put to death your members which are on earth: fornication, uncleanness, lust, evil concupiscence, and greed."⁶¹ He names the care of the flesh "earth"; he speaks of actual sinning as "fornication"; consent he calls "uncleanness"; passionate thoughts he names "lust"; the mere acceptance of a lustful thought is "evil concupiscence"; the matter which gives life and growth to passion he calls "greed." All of these things as members of the wisdom of the flesh the divine Apostle ordered us to put to death.⁶²

84. First the memory brings up a simple thought to the mind, and when it lingers about it arouses passion. When it is not removed it sways the mind to consent, and when this happens the actual sinning finally takes place. Thus the all-wise Apostle, in writing to Gentile converts, bids them to remove first of all the effect of the sin, then to backtrack in order to end up at the cause. As previously mentioned, the cause is greed which gives life and growth to passion. And I think that here it signifies gluttony, which is the mother and nurse of fornication. Now greed is evil not only in regard to possessions but also in regard to food, in the same way that self-control is good not only in regard to food but also in regard to possessions.

85. As a little sparrow whose foot is tied tries to fly but is pulled to earth by the cord to which it is bound, so does the mind which does not

yet possess detachment get pulled down and dragged to earth when it flies to the knowledge of heavenly things.

86. When the mind is completely freed from the passions, it journeys straight ahead to the contemplation of created things and makes its way to the knowledge of the Holy Trinity.

87. When the mind is pure and takes on ideas of things it is moved to a spiritual contemplation. But when it has become impure by carelessness, it imagines mere ideas of other things, so that receiving human ideas it turns back to shameful and evil thoughts.

88. When in time of prayer no ideas of the world ever disturb the mind, then know that you are not outside the limits of detachment.

89. When the soul begins to feel its own good health, then does it regard as simple and undisturbing the imaginings which take place in dreams.

90. Just as the beauty of visible things attracts the eye of sense, so also the knowledge of invisible things attracts the pure mind to itself; by invisible things I mean those without a body.

91. It is a great thing not to be affected by things; but it is much greater to remain detached from the thought of them. Therefore, the demons' battle against us through thoughts is more severe than that through deeds.

92. The one who has had success with the virtues and has become rich in knowledge as at last discerning things by their nature does and considers everything according to right reason and is in no way misled. For it is on the basis of whether we make use of things rationally or irrationally that we become either virtuous or wicked.

93. A sign of lofty detachment is that the ideas of the things which are always arising in the heart are just mere thoughts, whether the body is awake or asleep.⁶³

94. Through the working out of the commandments the mind puts off the passions. Through the spiritual contemplation of visible realities it puts off impassioned thoughts of things. Through the knowledge of invisible realities it puts off contemplation of visible things. And finally this it puts off through the knowledge of the Holy Trinity.

95. Just as the sun in rising and lighting up the world manifests both itself and the things which it lights up, so the sun of justice in rising on a pure mind manifests both itself and the principles which have been and will be brought to existence by it.⁶⁴

96. We do not know God from his being but from his magnificent

works and his Providence for beings. Through these as through mirrors we perceive his infinite goodness and wisdom and power.⁶⁵

97. The pure mind is found either in simple ideas of human things or in the natural contemplation of visible realities, or in that of invisible realities, or in the light of the Holy Trinity.

98. The mind which is settled in the contemplation of visible realities searches out either the natural reasons of things or those which are signified by them, or else it seeks the cause itself.

99. Dwelling in the contemplation of the invisible it seeks both the natural reasons of these things, the cause of their production, and whatever is consequent upon them, and also what is the Providence and judgment concerning them.

100. Once it is in God, it is inflamed with desire and seeks first of all the principles of his being but finds no satisfaction in what is proper to himself, for that is impossible and forbidden to every created nature alike. But it does receive encouragement from his attributes, that is, from what concerns his eternity, infinity, and immensity, as well as from his goodness, wisdom, and power by which he creates, governs, and judges beings. "And this alone is thoroughly understandable in him, infinity"; and the very fact of knowing nothing about him is to know beyond the mind's power, as the theologians Gregory and Dionysius have both said somewhere.⁶⁶

SECOND CENTURY

1. The one who truly loves God also prays completely undistracted, and the one who prays completely undistracted also truly loves God. But the one who has his mind fixed on any earthly thing does not pray undistracted; therefore the one who has his mind tied to any earthly thing does not love God.

2. The mind which dallies on a thing of sense certainly has some passion about it, such as desire or sorrow or anger or resentment; and unless he disdains the thing he cannot be freed from that passion.

3. When the passions hold sway over a mind they bind it together with material things, and separating it from God make it to be all-engrossed in them. But when love of God is in control, it releases it from the bonds and persuades it to think beyond not only things of sense but even this transient life of ours.

4. The purpose of the commandments is to make simple the thoughts of things; the purpose of reading and contemplation is to ren-

der the mind clear of any matter or form; from this ensues undistracted prayer.

5. The active⁶⁷ way does not suffice by itself for the perfect liberation of the mind from the passions to allow it to pray undistracted unless various spiritual contemplations also relieve it. The former frees the mind only from incontinence and hatred while the latter rid it also of forgetfulness and ignorance, and in this way it will be able to pray as it ought.

6. There are two supreme states of pure prayer, one corresponding to those of the active life, the other to the contemplatives. The first arises in the soul from the fear of God and an upright hope, the second from divine desire and total purification. The marks of the first type are the drawing of one's mind away from all the world's considerations, and as God is present to one, as indeed he is, he makes his prayers without distraction or disturbance. The marks of the second type are that at the very onset of prayer the mind is taken hold of by the divine and infinite light and is conscious neither of itself nor of any other being whatever except of him who through love brings about such brightness in it. Then, when it is concerned with the properties of God, it receives impressions of him which are clear and distinct.⁶⁸

7. What anyone loves he surely holds on to, and looks down on everything that hinders his way to it so as not to be deprived of it. And the one who loves God cultivates pure prayer and throws off from himself every passion which hinders him.

8. The one who throws off self-love, the mother of the passions, will very easily with God's help put aside the others, such as anger, grief, grudges, and so on. But whoever is under the control of the former is wounded, even though unwillingly, by the latter. Self-love is the passion for the body.⁶⁹

9. On account of these five reasons men love one another whether to their praise or blame: for God's sake, as when the virtuous person loves everyone and the one not yet virtuous loves the virtuous person; or for natural reasons, as parents love their children and vice versa; or out of vainglory, as the one who is honored loves the one who honors him; or for greed, as the one who loves a rich man for what he can get; or for the love of pleasure, as the one who is a servant of his belly or genitals. The first of these is praiseworthy, the second is neutral, and the rest belong to the passions.

10. If you hate some people and some you neither love nor hate, while others you love only moderately and still others you love very

not grieve when they are deprived of them, as those who accepted with joy the seizure of their goods.¹¹⁸ But others possess with attachment and become filled with grief when about to be deprived, like the one in the Gospel who went away sad;¹¹⁹ and if they are deprived, they grieve until death. So it is that deprivation attests the condition of whether one is detached or attached.

90. The demons make war on those who are at the summit of prayer to prevent them from receiving simple representations of material things. They war on contemplatives to cause passionate thoughts to linger in their minds, and on those who are struggling in the active life to persuade them to sin by action. In every way these accursed beings struggle against everyone in order to separate men from God.

91. Those whose piety undergoes trial in this life by divine Providence are proved by these three temptations: by the gift of pleasant things, such as health, beauty, fine children, wealth, reputation, and the like. Or by the inflicting of sorrowful things, such as the loss of children, wealth, and reputation; or by painful afflictions of the body, such as sickness, disease, and so forth. To the first the Lord says, "If anyone does not renounce all he possesses, he cannot be my disciple."¹²⁰ To the second and third he says, "In your patience you shall possess your souls."¹²¹

92. These four things are said to modify the bodily temperament and thereby to give thoughts to the mind whether passionate or without passion: angels, demons, the weather, and life-style. The angels are said to modify it by reason, the demons by touch, the weather by its variations, the life-style by the quality and quantity of food and drink, whether too much or too little. In addition to these there are the modifications which come to it from the memory, from hearing and sight since it is the soul which is first affected by things which give it grief or joy.¹²² And when the soul approves of these, it modifies the temperament of the body; and when this is thus modified, it supplies thoughts to the mind.

93. Death is, properly speaking, separation from God, and "the sting of death is sin."¹²³ In taking it on, Adam was banished at once from the tree of life, from Paradise, and from God, whereupon there followed of necessity the death of the body. On the other hand life is, properly speaking, the one who says, "I am the life."¹²⁴ By his death he brought back to life again the one who had died.

94. The written word is taken down either for one's own memory or

for the profit of others, or both, or to harm certain people, or for ostentation, or out of necessity.

95. The active life is "a place of pasture"; knowledge of created things is "water of refreshment."¹²⁵

96. Human life is a "shadow of death." Thus if anyone is with God and God is with him he clearly can say, "For though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil because you are with me."¹²⁶

97. A pure mind sees things rightly, a straightforward speech brings what it sees into view, and a keen hearing hearkens to it. But, the one who is deprived of these three things abuses the speaker.

98. The one who knows the Trinity and its creation and Providence and who keeps the emotional part of his soul unattached is with God.

99. The rod is said to signify God's judgment and his staff his Providence. Thus the one who has obtained knowledge of these things can say, "Your rod and staff have given me comfort."¹²⁷

100. When the mind has become stripped of passions and enlightened in the contemplation of beings, then it can be in God and pray as it ought.

THIRD CENTURY

1. The reasonable use of thoughts and things is productive of moderation, love, and knowledge; the unreasonable use, of excess, hate, and ignorance.

2. "You have prepared a table for me, etc."¹²⁸ *Table* here signifies practical virtue, for this has been prepared by Christ "against those who afflict us." The *oil* which anoints the mind is the contemplation of creatures, the *cup* of God is the knowledge of God itself; his *mercy* is his Word and God. For through his incarnation he pursues us *all days* until he gets hold of those who are to be saved, as he did with Paul.¹²⁹ The *house* is the kingdom in which all the saints will be restored. The *length of days* means eternal life.

3. The vices, whether of the concupiscible, the irascible, or the rational element, come upon us with the misuse of the faculties of the soul. Misuse of the rational faculty is ignorance and folly, of the irascible and concupiscible faculty, hate and intemperance. Their right use is knowledge and prudence. If this is so, nothing created and given existence by God is evil.¹³⁰

4. It is not food which is evil but gluttony, not the begetting of children but fornication, not possessions but greed, not reputation but vainglory. And if this is so, there is nothing evil in creatures except misuse, which stems from the mind's negligence in its natural cultivation.

5. The blessed Dionysius says that among the demons this is what evil is: irrational anger, senseless lust, reckless imagination. But among rational beings unreasonableness, recklessness, and rashness are privations of reason, sense, and circumspection.¹³¹ Now privations follow upon habits; so then the demons once had reason, sense, and religious circumspection. If this is correct, then neither are the demons evil by nature; rather they have become evil through the misuse of their natural faculties.

6. Some passions are productive of intemperance, others of hate, and still others of both intemperance and hate.

7. Excessive and sumptuous eating are causes of intemperance; greed and vainglory cause hatred of neighbor. But their mother, self-love, is the cause of both.

8. Self-love is the passionate and irrational affection for the body, to which is opposed love and self-mastery. The one who has self-love has all the passions.

9. "No one," says the Apostle, "hates his own flesh," of course, "but mortifies it and makes it his slave,"¹³² allowing it no more than "food and clothing" and these only as they are necessary for life.¹³³ So in this way one loves it without passion and rears it as an associate in divine things and takes care of it only with those things which satisfy its needs.

10. When a person loves someone, he is naturally eager to be of service. So if one loves God, he is naturally eager to do what is pleasing to him. But if he loves his flesh, he is eager to accomplish what delights it.

11. What pleases God is love, temperance, contemplation, and prayer. What pleases the flesh is gluttony, intemperance, and what contributes to them. Therefore, "those who are in the flesh cannot please God. And those who are Christ's have crucified their flesh with its passions and lusts."¹³⁴

12. When the mind inclines toward God, it keeps the body as a servant and allows it nothing more than what is necessary for life. But when it inclines toward the flesh, it becomes a servant of the passions and always makes provision for its lusts.¹³⁵

13. If you want to prevail over your thoughts, take care of your pas-

sions and you will easily drive them from your mind. Thus for fornication, fast, keep vigil, work hard, keep to yourself. For anger and hurt, disdain reputation and dishonor and material things. For grudges, pray for the one who has hurt you and you will be rid of them.

14. Do not compare yourself to weaker men, but rather reach out to the commandment of love. For by comparing yourself to these you fall into the pit of conceit; in reaching out for the latter you advance to the heights of humility.

15. If you are really observing the commandment of love of neighbor, for what reason do you bear him the bitterness of resentment? Is it not clearly because in preferring transient things to love and in holding on to them you are making war on your brother?

16. Not so much out of necessity has gold become enviable by men as that with it most of them can provide for their pleasures.

17. There are three reasons for the love of money: pleasure-seeking, vainglory, and lack of faith. And more serious than the other two is lack of faith.

18. The hedonist loves money because with it he lives in luxury; the vain person because with it he can be praised; the person who lacks faith because he can hide it and keep it while in fear of hunger, or old age, or illness, or exile. He lays his hope on it rather than on God the maker and provider of the whole creation, even of the last and least of living things.

19. There are four kinds of people who acquire money, the three just mentioned and the financial administrator. Obviously only he acquires it for the right reason: so that he might never run short in relieving each one's need.

20. All passionate thoughts either excite the concupiscible, disturb the irascible, or darken the rational element of the soul. From this it comes about that the mind is hampered in its spiritual contemplation and in the flight of prayer. And because of this the monk, and especially the solitary,¹³⁶ should give serious heed to his thoughts and both know and eliminate their causes. Thus, for instance, he should know that passionate memories of women arouse the concupiscible element of the soul and are caused by incontinence in eating and drinking, as well as by frequent and unreasonable association with these same women. Hunger, thirst, vigils, and solitude eliminate them. Again, passionate memories of those who have hurt us stir up the temper; their causes are pleasure-seeking, vainglory, and attachment to material things, for the aroused person is saddened because he has either lost

these things or not attained them. Disdain and contempt of these things for the love of God eliminates them.¹³⁷

21. God knows himself and the things created by him. The holy angels also know God and they know, too, the things created by him. But the holy angels do not know God and the things created by him as God knows himself and the things created by him.¹³⁸

22. God knows himself of his own sacred essence, and the things created by him from his wisdom, through which and in which he made all things. The holy angels, however, know God by participation, though he is beyond participation, and they know things created by him by a perception of what is contemplated in them.

23. Created things are indeed outside the mind, but it receives their contemplation inside it. This is not so with the eternal, infinite, and immense God, who freely bestows being, well-being, and eternal being on his creatures.¹³⁹

24. A nature endowed with reason and understanding participates in the holy God by its very being, by its aptitude for well-being (that is, for goodness and wisdom), and by the free gift of eternal being. In this way it knows God; and things created by him, as was said, it knows by a perception of the ordered wisdom to be observed in creation. This wisdom exists in the mind as simple and without substance of its own.

25. In bringing into existence a rational and intelligent nature, God in his supreme goodness has communicated to it four of the divine attributes by which he maintains, guards, and preserves creatures: being, eternal being, goodness, and wisdom. The first two of these he grants to the essence, the second two to its faculty of will; that is, to the essence he gives being and eternal being, and to the volitive faculty he gives goodness and wisdom in order that what he is by essence the creature might become by participation. For this reason he is said to be made "to the image and likeness of God":¹⁴⁰ to the image of his being by our being, to the image of his eternal being by our eternal being (even though not without a beginning, it is yet without end); to the likeness of his goodness by our goodness, to the image of his wisdom by our wisdom. The first is by nature, the second by grace. Every rational nature indeed is made to the image of God; but only those who are good and wise are made to his likeness.¹⁴¹

26. All national and intelligent nature is divided into two, namely, angelic and human nature. And all angelic nature is again divided into two general sides or groupings, holy or accursed, that is, into holy

powers and impure demons. All human nature is divided as well into only two general sides, religious and irreligious.¹⁴²

27. God as absolute existence, goodness, and wisdom (or rather, to speak more properly, as transcending all these things) has no contrary quality whatever. But creatures, because they all have existence, and rational and intelligent ones their aptitude for goodness and wisdom by participation and grace, do have contrary qualities. To existence is opposed nonexistence, to the aptitude for goodness and wisdom is opposed vice and ignorance. For them to exist forever or not to exist is in the power of their maker. To share in his goodness and wisdom or not to share depends on the will of rational beings.¹⁴³

28. When the Greek philosophers affirm that the substance of beings coexisted eternally with God and that they received only their individual qualities from him, they say that there is nothing contrary to substance but that opposition is found only in the qualities. We maintain, however, that the divine substance alone has no contrary because it is eternal and infinite and bestows eternity on the other substances; furthermore that nonbeing is the contrary of the substance of beings and that their eternal being or nonbeing lies in the power of the one who properly is being, "and his gifts are not subject to revision."¹⁴⁴ And therefore it both always is and will be sustained by his all-powerful might even though it has nonbeing as its opposite, as was said, since it was brought into being from nonbeing by God and whether it has being or nonbeing depends on his will.¹⁴⁵

29. Just as evil is the privation of good and ignorance that of knowledge, so is nonbeing the privation of being—but not of being properly so called, for it has no contrary—but of true being by participation. Privations of the former depend on the will of creatures; privation of the latter depends on the will of the Creator, who out of goodness ever wills his creatures to exist and to receive benefits from him.

30. Of all creatures, some are rational and intelligent and admit of opposites such as virtue and vice, knowledge and ignorance. Others are various bodies composed of opposites such as earth, air, fire, and water. And there are some completely without body or matter, though some of these are united to bodies, and others have their makeup only of matter and form.

31. All bodies are by nature without movement. They are moved by a soul, whether rational, irrational, or insensitive.¹⁴⁶

32. The soul's powers are for nourishment and growth, for imagina-