

On the Sermon on the Mount, Book I

Augustine of Hippo

Patristic · Nicene & Post-Nicene · Commentary

STROMATA 278

Downloaded from The Stromata (thestromata.com). Free for personal, educational, and ministry use.

INTRODUCTION

Delivered as a series of homilies in the 390s, shortly after Augustine's ordination as priest at Hippo, these expositions represent his first sustained attempt to read the Beatitudes and the Matthean discourse as a coherent moral architecture rather than a collection of hard sayings. Book I covers Matthew 5, mapping the beatitudes onto the gifts of the Spirit and treating the mount itself as a figure for the higher righteousness that fulfills rather than abolishes the Law. The reading here shaped virtually every Latin commentary on the Sermon that followed, from Bede to Aquinas, and established the framework Luther would later contest. Expect close, patient verse-by-verse exegesis in a pastoral register — argumentative when Augustine parries the Manichees, but more often quietly instructive, working out the interior logic of Christ's demands.

On the Sermon on the Mount, Book I

MATTHEW 5

Chapter 1

1\ If any one will piously and soberly consider the sermon which our Lord Jesus Christ spoke on the mount, as we read it in the Gospel according to Matthew, I think that he will find in it, so far as regards the highest morals, a perfect standard of the Christian life: and this we do not rashly venture to promise, but gather it from the very words of the Lord Himself. For the sermon itself is brought to a close in such a way, that it is clear there are in it all the precepts which go to mould the life. For thus He speaks: Therefore, whosoever hears these words of mine, and does them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that hears these words of mine, and does them not, I will liken unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. Since, therefore, He has not simply said, Whosoever hears my words, but has made an addition, saying, Whosoever hears these words of mine, He has sufficiently indicated, as I think, that these sayings which He uttered on the mount so perfectly guide the life of those who may

be willing to live according to them, that they may justly be compared to one building upon a rock. I have said this merely that it may be clear that the sermon before us is perfect in all the precepts by which the Christian life is moulded; for as regards this particular section a more careful treatment will be given in its own place.

2\ The beginning, then, of this sermon is introduced as follows: And when He saw the great multitudes, He went up into a mountain: and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him: and He opened His mouth, and taught them, saying. If it is asked what the mountain means, it may well be understood as meaning the greater precepts of righteousness; for there were lesser ones which were given to the Jews. Yet it is one God who, through His holy prophets and servants, according to a thoroughly arranged distribution of times, gave the lesser precepts to a people who as yet required to be bound by fear; and who, through His Son, gave the greater ones to a people whom it had now become suitable to set free by love. Moreover, when the lesser are given to the lesser, and the greater to the greater, they are given by Him who alone knows how to present to the human race the medicine suited to the occasion. Nor is it surprising that the greater precepts are given for the kingdom of heaven, and the lesser for an earthly kingdom, by that one and the same God, who made heaven and earth. With respect, therefore, to that righteousness which is the greater, it is said through the prophet, Your righteousness is like the mountains of God: and this may well mean that the one Master alone fit to teach matters of so great importance teaches on a mountain. Then He teaches sitting, as behooves the dignity of the instructor's office; and His disciples come to Him, in order that they might be nearer in body for hearing His words, as they also approached in spirit to fulfil His precepts. And He opened His mouth, and taught them, saying. The circumlocution before us, which runs, And He opened His mouth, perhaps gracefully intimates by the mere pause that the sermon will be somewhat longer than usual, unless, perchance, it should not be without meaning, that now He is said to have opened His own mouth, whereas under the old law He was accustomed to open the mouths of the prophets.

3\ What, then, does He say? Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. We read in Scripture concerning the striving after temporal things, All is vanity and presumption of spirit; but presumption of spirit means audacity and pride: usually also the proud are said to have great spirits; and rightly, inasmuch as the wind also is called spirit. And hence it is written, Fire, hail, snow, ice, spirit of tempest. But, indeed, who does not know that the proud are spoken of as puffed up, as if swelled out with wind? And hence also that expression of the apostle, Knowledge puffs up, but charity edifies. And the poor in spirit are rightly understood here, as meaning the humble and God-fearing, _i.e._ those who have not the spirit which puffs up. Nor ought blessedness to begin at any other point whatever, if indeed it is to attain unto the highest wisdom; but the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; for, on the other hand also, pride is entitled the beginning of all sin. Let the proud, therefore, seek after and love the kingdoms of the earth; but blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Chapter 2

4\ Blessed are the meek, for they shall by inheritance possess the earth: that earth, I suppose, of which it is said in the Psalm, You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living. For it signifies a certain firmness and stability of the perpetual inheritance, where the soul, by means of a good disposition,

rests, as it were, in its own place, just as the body rests on the earth, and is nourished from it with its own food, as the body from the earth. This is the very rest and life of the saints. Then, the meek are those who yield to acts of wickedness, and do not resist evil, but overcome evil with good. Let those, then, who are not meek quarrel and fight for earthly and temporal things; but blessed are the meek, for they shall by inheritance possess the earth, from which they cannot be driven out.

5\ Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Mourning is sorrow arising from the loss of things held dear; but those who are converted to God lose those things which they were accustomed to embrace as dear in this world: for they do not rejoice in those things in which they formerly rejoiced; and until the love of eternal things be in them, they are wounded by some measure of grief. Therefore they will be comforted by the Holy Spirit, who on this account chiefly is called the Paraclete, *_i.e._* the Comforter, in order that, while losing the temporal joy, they may enjoy to the full that which is eternal.

6\ Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Now He calls those parties, lovers of a true and indestructible good. They will therefore be filled with that food of which the Lord Himself says, My meat is to do the will of my Father, which is righteousness; and with that water, of which whosoever drinks, as he also says, it shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.

7\ Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. He says that they are blessed who relieve the miserable, for it is paid back to them in such a way that they are freed from misery.

8\ Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. How foolish, therefore, are those who seek God with these outward eyes, since He is seen with the heart! As it is written elsewhere, And in singleness of heart seek Him. For that is a pure heart which is a single heart: and just as this light cannot be seen, except with pure eyes; so neither is God seen, unless that is pure by which He can be seen.

9\ Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. It is the perfection of peace, where nothing offers opposition; and the children of God are peacemakers, because nothing resists God, and surely children ought to have the likeness of their father. Now, they are peacemakers in themselves who, by bringing in order all the motions of their soul, and subjecting them to reason — *_i.e._* to the mind and spirit — and by having their carnal lusts thoroughly subdued, become a kingdom of God: in which all things are so arranged, that that which is chief and pre-eminent in man rules without resistance over the other elements, which are common to us with the beasts; and that very element which is pre-eminent in man, *_i.e._* mind and reason, is brought under subjection to something better still, which is the truth itself, the only-begotten Son of God. For a man is not able to rule over things which are inferior, unless he subjects himself to what is superior. And this is the peace which is given on earth to men of goodwill; this the life of the fully developed and perfect wise man. From a kingdom of this sort brought to a condition of thorough peace and order, the prince of this world is cast out, who rules where there is perversity and disorder. When this peace has been inwardly established and confirmed, whatever persecutions he who has been cast out shall stir up from without, he only increases the glory which is according to God; being unable to shake anything in that edifice, but by the failure of his machinations making it to be known with how great strength it has been built from

within outwardly. Hence there follows: Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Chapter 3

10\ . There are in all, then, these eight sentences. For now in what remains He speaks in the way of direct address to those who were present, saying: Blessed shall you be when men shall revile you and persecute you. But the former sentences He addressed in a general way: for He did not say, Blessed are you poor in spirit, for yours is the kingdom of heaven; but He says, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven: nor, Blessed are you meek, for you shall inherit the earth; but, Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. And so the others up to the eighth sentence, where He says: Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. After that He now begins to speak in the way of direct address to those present, although what has been said before referred also to His present audience; and that which follows, and which seems to be spoken specially to those present, refers also to those who were absent, or who would afterwards come into existence.

For this reason the number of sentences before us is to be carefully considered. For the beatitudes begin with humility: Blessed are the poor in spirit, *_i.e._* those not puffed up, while the soul submits itself to divine authority, fearing lest after this life it go away to punishment, although perhaps in this life it might seem to itself to be happy. Then it (the soul) comes to the knowledge of the divine Scriptures, where it must show itself meek in its piety, lest it should venture to condemn that which seems absurd to the unlearned, and should itself be rendered unteachable by obstinate disputations. After that, it now begins to know in what entanglements of this world it is held by reason of carnal custom and sins: and so in this third stage, in which there is knowledge, the loss of the highest good is mourned over, because it sticks fast in what is lowest. Then, in the fourth stage there is labour, where vehement exertion is put forth, in order that the mind may wrench itself away from those things in which, by reason of their pestilential sweetness, it is entangled: here therefore righteousness is hungered and thirsted after, and fortitude is very necessary; because what is retained with delight is not abandoned without pain. Then, at the fifth stage, to those persevering in labour, counsel for getting rid of it is given; for unless each one is assisted by a superior, in no way is he fit in his own case to extricate himself from so great entanglements of miseries. But it is a just counsel, that he who wishes to be assisted by a stronger should assist him who is weaker in that in which he himself is stronger: therefore blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. At the sixth stage there is purity of heart, able from a good conscience of good works to contemplate that highest good, which can be discerned by the pure and tranquil intellect alone. Lastly is the seventh, wisdom itself — *_i.e._* the contemplation of the truth, tranquillizing the whole man, and assuming the likeness of God, which is thus summed up: Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God. The eighth, as it were, returns to the starting-point, because it shows and commends what is complete and perfect: therefore in the first and in the eighth the kingdom of heaven is named, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven; and, Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven: as it is now said, Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Seven in number, therefore, are the things which bring perfection: for the eighth brings into light and shows what is perfect, so that starting, as it were, from the beginning again, the others also are perfected by means of these stages.

Chapter 4

11\). Hence also the sevenfold operation of the Holy Ghost, of which Isaiah speaks, seems to me to correspond to these stages and sentences. But there is a difference of order: for there the enumeration begins with the more excellent, but here with the inferior. For there it begins with wisdom, and closes with the fear of God: but the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. And therefore, if we reckon as it were in a gradually ascending series, there the fear of God is first, piety second, knowledge third, fortitude fourth, counsel fifth, understanding sixth, wisdom seventh. The fear of God corresponds to the humble, of whom it is here said, Blessed are the poor in spirit, *_i.e._* those not puffed up, not proud: to whom the apostle says, Be not high-minded, but fear; *_i.e._* be not lifted up. Piety corresponds to the meek: for he who inquires piously honours Holy Scripture, and does not censure what he does not yet understand, and on this account does not offer resistance; and this is to be meek: whence it is here said, Blessed are the meek. Knowledge corresponds to those that mourn who already have found out

in the Scriptures by what evils they are held chained which they ignorantly have coveted as though they were good and useful. Fortitude corresponds to those hungering and thirsting: for they labour in earnestly desiring joy from things that are truly good, and in eagerly seeking to turn away their love from earthly and corporeal things: and of them it is here said, Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness. Counsel corresponds to the merciful: for this is the one remedy for escaping from so great evils, that we forgive, as we wish to be ourselves forgiven; and that we assist others so far as we are able, as we ourselves desire to be assisted where we are not able: and of them it is here said, Blessed are the merciful. Understanding corresponds to the pure in heart, the eye being as it were purged, by which that may be beheld which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, and what has not entered into the heart of man: and of them it is here said, Blessed are the pure in heart. Wisdom corresponds to the peacemakers, in whom all things are now brought into order, and no passion is in a state of rebellion against reason, but all things together obey the spirit of man, while he himself also obeys God: and of them it is here said, Blessed are the peacemakers.

12\ Moreover, the one reward, which is the kingdom of heaven, is variously named according to these stages. In the first, just as ought to be the case, is placed the kingdom of heaven, which is the perfect and highest wisdom of the rational soul. Thus, therefore, it is said, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven: as if it were said, The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. To the meek an inheritance is given, as it were the testament of a father to those dutifully seeking it: Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. To the mourners comfort, as to those who know what they have lost, and in what evils they are sunk: Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. To those hungering and thirsting, a full supply, as it were a refreshment to those labouring and bravely contending for salvation: Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. To the merciful mercy, as to those following a true and excellent counsel, so that this same treatment is extended toward them by one who is stronger, which they extend toward the weaker: Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. To the pure in heart is given the power of seeing God, as to those bearing about with them a pure eye for discerning eternal things: Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. To the peacemakers the likeness of God is given, as being perfectly wise, and formed after the image of God by means of the regeneration of the renewed man: Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God. And those promises can indeed be fulfilled in this life, as we believe them to have been fulfilled in the case of the apostles. For that all-embracing change into the angelic form, which is promised after this life, cannot be explained in any words. Blessed, therefore, are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. This eighth sentence, which goes back to the starting-point, and makes manifest the perfect man, is perhaps set forth in its meaning both by the circumcision on the eighth day in the Old Testament, and by the resurrection of the Lord after the Sabbath, the day which is certainly the eighth, and at the same time the first day; and by the celebration of the eight festival days which we celebrate in the case of the regeneration of the new man; and by the very number of Pentecost. For to the number seven, seven times multiplied, by which we make forty-nine, as it were an eighth is added, so that fifty may be made up, and we, as it were, return to the starting-point: on which day the Holy Spirit was sent, by whom we are led into the kingdom of heaven, and receive the inheritance, and are

comforted; and are fed, and obtain mercy, and are purified, and are made peacemakers; and being thus perfect, we bear all troubles brought upon us from without for the sake of truth and righteousness.

Chapter 5

13\ Blessed are you, says He, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven. Let any one who is seeking after the delights of this world and the riches of temporal things under the Christian name, consider that our blessedness is within; as it is said of the soul of the Church by the mouth of the prophet, All the beauty of the king's daughter is within; for outwardly revilings, and persecutions, and disparagements are promised; and yet, from these things there is a great reward in heaven, which is felt in the heart of those who endure, those who can now say, We glory in tribulations: knowing that tribulation works patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope makes not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. For it is not simply the enduring of such things that is advantageous, but the bearing of such things for the name of Christ not only with tranquil mind, but even with exultation. For many heretics, deceiving souls under the Christian name, endure many such things; but they are excluded from that reward on this account, that it is not said merely, Blessed are they which endure persecution; but it is added, for righteousness' sake. Now, where there is no sound faith, there can be no righteousness, for the just \[righteous\] man lives by faith. Neither let schismatics promise themselves anything of that reward; for similarly, where there is no love, there cannot be righteousness, for love works no ill to his neighbour; and if they had it, they would not tear in pieces Christ's body, which is the Church.

14\ But it may be asked, What is the difference when He says, when men shall revile you, and when they shall say all manner of evil against you, since to revile is just this, to say evil against? But it is one thing when the reviling word is hurled with contumely in presence of him who is reviled, as it was said to our Lord, Say we not the truth that you are a Samaritan, and hast a devil? and another thing, when our reputation is injured in our absence, as it is also written of Him, Some said, He is a prophet; others said, Nay, but He deceives the people. Then, further, to persecute is to inflict violence, or to assail with snares, as was done by him who betrayed Him, and by them who crucified Him. Certainly, as for the fact that this also is not put in a bare form, so that it should be said, and shall say all manner of evil against you, but there is added the word falsely, and also the expression for my sake; I think that the addition is made for the sake of those who wish to glory in persecutions, and in the baseness of their reputation; and to say that Christ belongs to them for this reason, that many bad things are said about them; while, on the one hand, the things said are true, when they are said respecting their error; and, on the other hand, if sometimes also some false charges are thrown out, which frequently happens from the rashness of men, yet they do not suffer such things for Christ's sake. For he is not a follower of Christ who is not called a Christian according to the true faith and the catholic discipline.

15\ Rejoice, says He, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven. I do not think that it is the higher parts of this visible world that are here called heaven. For our reward, which ought to be immoveable and eternal, is not to be placed in things fleeting and temporal. But I think the expression in heaven means in the spiritual firmament, where dwells everlasting righteousness: in comparison with which a wicked soul is called earth, to which it is said when it sins, Earth you are, and unto earth you shall return. Of this heaven the apostle says, For our conversation is in heaven. Hence they who rejoice in spiritual good are conscious of that reward now; but then it will be perfected in every part, when this mortal also shall have put on immortality. For, says He, so persecuted they the prophets also which were before you. In the present case He has used persecution in a general sense, as applying alike to abusive words and to the tearing in pieces of one's reputation; and has well encouraged them by an example, because they who speak true things are wont to suffer persecution: nevertheless did not the ancient prophets on this account, through fear of persecution, give over the preaching of the truth.

Chapter 6

16\ Hence there follows most justly the statement, You are the salt of the earth; showing that those parties are to be judged insipid, who, either in the eager pursuit after abundance of earthly blessings, or through the dread of want, lose the eternal things which can neither be given nor taken away by men. But if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? i.e., If you, by means of whom the nations in a measure are to be preserved \[from corruption\], through the dread of temporal persecutions shall lose the kingdom of heaven, where will be the men through whom error may be removed from you, since God has chosen you, in order that through you He might remove the error of others? Hence the savourless salt is good for nothing, but to be cast out, and trodden under foot of men. It is not therefore he who suffers persecution, but he who is rendered savourless by the fear of persecution, that is trodden under foot of men. For it is only one who is undermost that can be trodden under foot; but he is not undermost, who, however many things he may suffer in his body on the earth, yet has his heart fixed in heaven.

17\ You are the light of the world. In the same way as He said above, the salt of the earth, so now He says, the light of the world. For in the former case that earth is not to be understood which we tread with our bodily feet, but the men who dwell upon the earth, or even the sinners, for the preserving of whom and for the extinguishing of whose corruptions the Lord sent the apostolic salt. And here, by the world must be understood not the heavens and the earth, but the men who are in the world or love the world, for the enlightening of whom the apostles were sent. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid, i.e. \[a city\] founded upon great and distinguished righteousness, which is also the meaning of the mountain itself on which our Lord is discoursing. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel measure. What view are we to take? That the expression under a bushel measure is so used that only the concealment of the candle is to be understood, as if He were saying, No one lights a candle and conceals it? Or does the bushel measure also mean something, so that to place a candle under a bushel is this, to place the comforts of the body higher than the preaching of the truth; so that one does not preach the truth so long as he is afraid of suffering any annoyance in corporeal and temporal things? And it is well said a bushel measure, whether on account of the recompense of measure, for each one

receives the things done in his body —that every one, says the apostle, may there receive the things done in his body; and it is said in another place, as if of this bushel measure of the body, For with what measure you measure, it shall be measured to you again: — or because temporal good things, which are carried to completion in the body, are both begun and come to an end in a certain definite number of days, which is perhaps meant by the bushel measure; while eternal and spiritual things are confined within no such limit, for God gives not the Spirit by measure. Every one, therefore, who obscures and covers up the light of good doctrine by means of temporal comforts, places his candle under a bushel measure. But on a candlestick. Now it is placed on a candlestick by him who subordinates his body to the service of God, so that the preaching of the truth is the higher, and the serving of the body the lower; yet by means even of the service of the body the doctrine shines more conspicuously, inasmuch as it is insinuated into those who learn by means of bodily functions, *_i.e._* by means of the voice and tongue, and the other movements of the body in good works. The apostle therefore puts his candle on a candlestick, when he says, So fight I, not as one that beats the air; but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I preach to others, I myself should be found a castaway. When He says, however, that it may give light to all who are in the house, I am of opinion that it is the abode of men which is called a house, *_i.e._* the world itself, on account of what He says before, You are the light of the world; or if any one chooses to understand the house as being the Church, this, too, is not out of place.

Chapter 7

18\ Let your light, says He, so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. If He had merely said, Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, He would seem to have fixed an end in the praises of men, which hypocrites seek, and those who canvass for honours and covet glory of the emptiest kind. Against such parties it is said, If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ; and, by the prophet, They who please men are put to shame, because God has despised them; and again, God has broken the bones of those who please men; and again the apostle, Let us not be desirous of vainglory; and still another time, But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. Hence our Lord has not said merely, that they may see your good works, but has added, and glorify your Father who is in heaven: so that the mere fact that a man by means of good works pleases men, does not there set it up as an end that he should please men; but let him subordinate this to the praise of God, and for this reason please men, that God may be glorified in him. For this is expedient for them who offer praise, that they should honour, not man, but God; as our Lord showed in the case of the man who was carried, where, on the paralytic being healed, the multitude, marvelling at His powers, as it is written in the Gospel, feared and glorified God, which had given such power unto men. And His imitator, the Apostle Paul, says, But they had heard only, that he which persecuted us in times past now preaches the faith which once he destroyed; and they glorified God in me.

19\ And therefore, after He has exhorted His hearers that they should prepare themselves to bear all things for truth and righteousness, and that they should not hide the good which they were about to receive, but should learn with such benevolence as to teach others, aiming in their good works not at

their own praise, but at the glory of God, He begins now to inform and to teach them what they are to teach; as if they were asking Him, saying: Lo, we are willing both to bear all things for Your name, and not to hide Your doctrine; but what precisely is this which Thou forbiddest us to hide, and for which You command us to bear all things? Are You about to mention other things contrary to those which are written in the law? No, says He; for think not that I have come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

Chapter 8

20\ In this sentence the meaning is twofold. We must deal with it in both ways. For He who says, I am not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil, means it either in the way of adding what is wanting, or of doing what is in it. Let us then consider that first which I have put first: for he who adds what is wanting does not surely destroy what he finds, but rather confirms it by perfecting it; and accordingly He follows up with the statement, Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one iota or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. For, if even those things which are added for completion are fulfilled, much more are those things fulfilled which are sent in advance as a commencement. Then, as to what He says, One iota or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law, nothing else can be understood but a strong expression of perfection, since it is pointed out by means of single letters, among which letters iota is smaller than the others, for it is made by a single stroke; while a tittle is but a particle of some sort at the top of even that. And by these words He shows that in the law all the smallest particulars even are to be carried into effect. After that He subjoins: Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. Hence it is the least commandments that are meant by one iota and one tittle. And therefore, whosoever shall break and shall teach \[men\] so,— _i.e._ in accordance with what he breaks, not in accordance with what he finds and reads —shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; and therefore, perhaps, he will not be in the kingdom of heaven at all, where only the great can be. But whosoever shall do and teach \[men\] so, — _i.e._ who shall not break, and shall teach men so, in accordance with what he does not break —shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. But in regard to him who shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven, it follows that he is also in the kingdom of heaven, into which the great are admitted: for to this what follows refers.

Chapter 9

21\ For I say unto you, that unless your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven; i.e., unless you shall fulfil not only those least precepts of the law which begin the man, but also those which are added by me, who am not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil it, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. But you say to me: If, when He was speaking above of those least commandments, He said that whosoever shall break one of them, and shall teach in accordance with his transgression, is called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but that whosoever shall do them, and shall teach \[men\] so, is called great, and hence will be already in the kingdom of heaven, because he is great: what need is there for additions to the least precepts of the law, if he can be already in the kingdom of heaven, because whosoever shall do them, and shall so teach, is great? For this reason that sentence is to be understood thus: But whosoever shall do and teach men so, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven,— i.e. not in accordance with those least commandments, but in accordance with those which I am about to mention. Now what are they? That your righteousness, says He, may exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees; for unless it shall exceed theirs, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall break those least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called the least; but whosoever shall do those least commandments, and shall teach men so, is not necessarily to be reckoned great and meet for the kingdom of heaven; but yet he is not so much the least as the man who breaks them. But in order that he may be great and fit for that kingdom, he ought to do and teach as Christ now teaches, i.e. in order that his righteousness may exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. The righteousness of the Pharisees is, that they shall not kill; the righteousness of those who are destined to enter into the kingdom of God, that they be not angry without a cause. The least commandment, therefore, is not to kill; and whosoever shall break that, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall fulfil that commandment not to kill, will not, as a necessary consequence, be great and meet for the kingdom of heaven, but yet he ascends a certain step. He will be perfected, however, if he be not angry without a cause; and if he shall do this, he will be much further removed from murder. For this reason he who teaches that we should not be angry, does not break the law not to kill, but rather fulfils it; so that we preserve our innocence both outwardly when we do not kill, and in heart when we are not angry.

22\ You have heard therefore, says He, that it was said to them of old time, You shall not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, You fool, shall be in danger of the gehenna of fire. What is the difference between being in danger of the judgment, and being in danger of the council, and being in danger of the gehenna of fire? For this last sounds most weighty, and reminds us that certain stages were passed over from lighter to more weighty, until the gehenna of fire was reached. And, therefore, if it is a lighter thing to be in danger of the judgment than to be in danger of the council, and if it is also a lighter thing to be in danger of the council than to be in danger of the gehenna of fire, we must understand it to be a lighter thing to be angry with a brother without a cause than to say Raca; and again, to be a lighter thing to say Raca than to say Thou fool. For the danger would not have gradations, unless the sins also were mentioned in gradation.

23\ But here one obscure word has found a place, for Raca is neither Latin nor Greek. The others, however, are current in our language. Now, some have wished to derive the interpretation of this expression from the Greek, supposing that a ragged person is called Raca, because a rag is called in Greek ῥακα. When one asks them what a ragged person is called in Greek, they do not answer Raca; and further, the Latin translator might have put the word _ragged_ where he has placed Raca, and not have used a word which, on the one hand, has no existence in the Latin language, and, on the other, is rare in the Greek. Hence the view is more probable which I heard from a certain Hebrew whom I had asked about it; for he said that the word does not mean anything, but merely expresses the emotion of an angry mind. Grammarians call those particles of speech which express an affection of an agitated mind _interjections_; as when it is said by one who is grieved, Alas, or by one who is angry, Hah. And these words in all languages are proper names, and are not easily translated into another language; and this cause certainly compelled alike the Greek and the Latin translators to put the word itself, inasmuch as they could find no way of translating it.

24\ There is therefore a gradation in the sins referred to, so that first one is angry, and keeps that feeling as a conception in his heart; but if now that emotion shall draw forth an expression of anger not having any definite meaning, but giving evidence of that feeling of the mind by the very fact of the outbreak wherewith he is assailed with whom one is angry, this is certainly more than if the rising anger were restrained by silence; but if there is heard not merely an expression of anger, but also a word by which the party using it now indicates and signifies a distinct censure of him against whom it is directed, who doubts but that this is something more than if merely an exclamation of anger were uttered? Hence in the first there is one thing, _i.e._ anger alone; in the second two things, both anger and a word that expresses anger; in the third three things, anger and a word that expresses anger, and in that word the utterance of distinct censure. Look now also at the three degrees of liability — the judgment, the council, the gehenna of fire. For in the judgment an opportunity is still given for defense; in the council, however, although there is also wont to be a judgment, yet because the very distinction compels us to acknowledge that there is a certain difference in this place, the production of the sentence seems to belong to the council, inasmuch as it is not now the case of the accused himself that is in question, whether he is to be condemned or not, but they who judge confer with one another to what punishment they ought to condemn him, who, it is clear, is to be condemned; but the gehenna of fire does not treat as a doubtful matter either the condemnation, like the judgment, or the punishment of him who is condemned, like the council; for in the gehenna of fire both the condemnation and the punishment of him who is condemned are certain. Thus there are seen certain degrees in the sins and in the liability to punishment; but who can tell in what ways they are invisibly shown in the punishments of souls? We are therefore to learn how great the difference is between the righteousness of the Pharisees and that greater righteousness which introduces into the kingdom of heaven, because while it is a more serious crime to kill than to inflict reproach by means of a word, in the one case killing exposes one to the judgment, but in the other anger exposes one to the judgment, which is the least of those three sins; for in the former case they were discussing the question of murder among men, but in the latter all things are disposed of by means of a divine judgment, where the end of the condemned is the gehenna of fire. But whoever shall say that murder is punished by a more severe penalty under the greater righteousness

if a reproach is punished by the gehenna of fire, compels us to understand that there are differences of gehennas.

25\ Indeed, in the three statements before us, we must observe that some words are understood. For the first statement has all the words that are necessary. Whosoever, says He, is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment. But in the second, when He says, and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, there is understood the expression _without cause_, and thus there is subjoined, shall be in danger of the council. In the third, now, where He says, but whosoever shall say, You fool, two things are understood, both _to his brother_ and _without cause_. And in this way we defend the apostle when he calls the Galatians fools, to whom he also gives the name of brethren; for he does not do it without cause. And here the word brother is to be understood for this reason, that the case of an enemy is spoken of afterwards, and how he also is to be treated under the greater righteousness.

Chapter 10

26\ Next there follows here: Therefore, if you have brought your gift to the altar, and there rememberest that your brother has anything against you; leave there your gift before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. From this surely it is clear that what is said above is said of a brother: inasmuch as the sentence which follows is connected by such a conjunction that it confirms the preceding one; for He does not say, But if you bring your gift to the altar; but He says, Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar. For if it is not lawful to be angry with one's brother without a cause, or to say Raca, or to say You fool, much less is it lawful so to retain anything in one's mind, as that indignation may be turned into hatred. And to this belongs also what is said in another passage: Let not the sun go down upon your wrath. We are therefore commanded, when about to bring our gift to the altar, if we remember that our brother has ought against us, to leave the gift before the altar, and to go and be reconciled to our brother, and then to come and offer the gift. But if this is to be understood literally, one might perhaps suppose that such a thing ought to be done if the brother is present; for it cannot be delayed too long, since you are commanded to leave your gift before the altar. If, therefore, such a thing should come into your mind respecting one who is absent, and, as may happen, even settled down beyond the sea, it is absurd to suppose that your gift is to be left before the altar until you may offer it to God after having traversed both lands and seas. And therefore we are compelled to have recourse to an altogether internal and spiritual interpretation, in order that what has been said may be understood without absurdity.

27\ And so we may interpret the altar spiritually, as being faith itself in the inner temple of God, whose emblem is the visible altar. For whatever offering we present to God, whether prophecy, or teaching, or prayer, or a psalm, or a hymn, and whatever other such like spiritual gift occurs to the mind, it cannot be acceptable to God, unless it be sustained by sincerity of faith, and, as it were, placed on that fixedly and immoveably, so that what we utter may remain whole and uninjured. For many heretics, not having the altar, *_i.e._* true faith, have spoken blasphemies for praise; being weighed down, to wit, with earthly opinions, and thus, as it were, throwing down their offering on the ground. But there ought also to be purity of intention on the part of the offerer. And therefore, when we are about to present any such offering in our heart, *_i.e._* in the inner temple of God (For, as it is said, the temple of God is holy, which temple you are; and, That Christ may dwell in the inner man by faith in your hearts) if it occur to our mind that a brother has ought against us, *_i.e._* if we have injured him in anything (for then he has something against us whereas we have something against him if he has injured us, and in that case it is not necessary to proceed to reconciliation: for you will not ask pardon of one who has done you an injury, but merely forgive him, as you desire to be forgiven by the Lord what you have committed against Him), we are therefore to proceed to reconciliation, when it has occurred to our mind that we have perhaps injured our brother in something; but this is to be done not with the bodily feet, but with the emotions of the mind, so that you are to prostrate yourself with humble disposition before your brother, to whom you have hastened in affectionate thought, in the presence of Him to whom you are about to present your offering. For thus, even if he should be present, you will be able to soften him by a mind free from dissimulation, and to recall him to goodwill by asking pardon, if first you have done this before God, going to him not with the slow movement of the body, but with the very swift impulse of love; and then coming, *_i.e._* recalling your attention to that which you were beginning to do, you will offer your gift.

28\ But who acts in a way that he is neither angry with his brother without a cause, nor says Raca without a cause, nor calls him a fool without a cause, all of which are most proudly committed; or so, that, if perchance he has fallen into any of these, he asks pardon with suppliant mind, which is the only remedy; who but just the man that is not puffed up with the spirit of empty boasting? Blessed therefore are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Let us look now at what follows.

Chapter 11

29\ Be kindly disposed, says he, toward your adversary quickly, whiles you are in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver you to the judge, and the judge deliver you to the officer, and you be cast into prison. Verily I say unto you, you shall by no means come out thence, till you have paid the uttermost farthing. I understand who the judge is: For the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son. I understand who the officer is: And angels, it is said, ministered unto Him: and we believe that He will come with His angels to judge the quick and the dead. I understand what is meant by the prison: evidently the punishments of darkness, which He calls in another passage the outer darkness: for this reason, I believe, that the joy of the divine rewards is something internal in the mind itself, or even if anything more hidden can be thought of, that joy of which it is said to the servant

who deserved well, Enter into the joy of your Lord; just as also, under this republican government, one who is thrust into prison is sent out from the council chamber, or from the palace of the judge.

30\ . But now, with respect to paying the uttermost farthing, it may be understood without absurdity either as standing for this, that nothing is left unpunished; just as in common speech we also say to the very dregs, when we wish to express that something is so drained out that nothing is left: or by the expression the uttermost farthing earthly sins may be meant. For as a fourth part of the separate component parts of this world, and in fact as the last, the earth is found; so that you begin with the heavens, you reckon the air the second, water the third, the earth the fourth. It may therefore seem to be suitably said, till you have paid the last fourth, in the sense of till you have expiated your earthly sins: for this the sinner also heard, Earth you are, and unto earth shall you return. Then, as to the expression till you have paid, I wonder if it does not mean that punishment which is called eternal. For whence is that debt paid where there is now no opportunity given of repenting and of leading a more correct life? For perhaps the expression till you have paid stands here in the same sense as in that passage where it is said, Sit at my right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool; for not even when the enemies have been put under His feet, will He cease to sit at the right hand: or that statement of the apostle, For He must reign, till He has put all enemies under His feet; for not even when they have been put under His feet, will He cease to reign. Hence, as it is there understood of Him respecting whom it is said, He must reign, till He has put His enemies under His feet, that He will reign for ever, inasmuch as they will be for ever under His feet: so here it may be understood of him respecting whom it is said, You shall by no means come out thence, till you have paid the uttermost farthing, that he will never come out; for he is always paying the uttermost farthing, so long as he is suffering the everlasting punishment of his earthly sins. Nor would I say this in such a way as that I should seem to prevent a more careful discussion respecting the punishment of sins, as to how in the Scriptures it is called eternal; although in all possible ways it is to be avoided rather than known.

31\ . But let us now see who the adversary himself is, with whom we are enjoined to agree quickly, whiles we are in the way with him. For he is either the devil, or a man, or the flesh, or God, or His commandment. But I do not see how we should be enjoined to be on terms of goodwill, _i.e._ to be of one heart or of one mind, with the devil. For some have rendered the Greek word which is found here of one heart, others of one mind: but neither are we enjoined to show goodwill to the devil (for where there is goodwill there is friendship: and no one would say that we are to make friends with the devil); nor is it expedient to come to an agreement with him, against whom we have declared war by once for all renouncing him, and on conquering whom we shall be crowned; nor ought we now to yield to him, for if we had never yielded to him, we should never have fallen into such miseries. Again, as to the adversary being a man, although we are enjoined to live peaceably with all men, as far as lies in us, where certainly goodwill, and concord, and consent may be understood; yet I do not see how I can accept the view, that we are delivered to the judge by a man, in a case where I understand Christ to be the judge, before whose judgment-seat we must all appear, as the apostle says: how then is he to deliver me to the judge, who will appear equally with me before the judge? Or if any one is delivered to the judge because he has injured a man, although the party who has been injured does not deliver him, it is a much more suitable view, that the guilty party is delivered to the judge by that law against

which he acted when he injured the man. And this for the additional reason, that if any one has injured a man by killing him, there will be no time now in which to agree with him; for he is not now in the way with him, _i.e._ in this life: and yet a remedy will not on that account be excluded, if one repents and flees for refuge with the sacrifice of a broken heart to the mercy of Him who forgives the sins of those who turn to Him, and who rejoices more over one penitent than over ninety-nine just persons. But much less do I see how we are enjoined to bear goodwill towards, or to agree with, or to yield to, the flesh. For it is sinners rather who love their flesh, and agree with it, and yield to it; but those who bring it into subjection are not the parties who yield to it, but rather they compel it to yield to them.

32\ Perhaps, therefore, we are enjoined to yield to God, and to be well-disposed towards Him, in order that we may be reconciled to Him, from whom by sinning we have turned away, so that He can be called our adversary. For He is rightly called the adversary of those whom He resists, for God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble; and pride is the beginning of all sin, but the beginning of man's pride is to become apostate from God; and the apostle says, For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And from this it may be perceived that no nature \[as being\] bad is an enemy to God, inasmuch as the very parties who were enemies are being reconciled. Whoever, therefore, while in this way, i.e. in this life, shall not have been reconciled to God by the death of His Son, will be delivered to the judge by Him, for the Father judges no man, but has delivered all judgment to the Son; and so the other things which are described in this section follow, which we have already discussed. There is only one thing which creates a difficulty as regards this interpretation, viz. how it can be rightly said that we are in the way with God, if in this passage He Himself is to be understood as the adversary of the wicked, with whom we are enjoined to be reconciled quickly; unless, perchance, because He is everywhere, we also, while we are in this way, are certainly with Him. For as it is said, If I ascend up into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Your hand lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me. Or if the view is not accepted, that the wicked are said to be with God, although there is nowhere where God is not present — just as we do not say that the blind are with the light, although the light surrounds their eyes — there is one resource remaining: that we should understand the adversary here as being the commandment of God. For what is so much an adversary to those who wish to sin as the commandment of God, i.e. His law and divine Scripture, which has been given us for this life, that it may be with us in the way, which we must not contradict, lest it deliver us to the judge, but which we ought to submit to quickly? For no one knows when he may depart out of this life. Now, who is it that submits to divine Scripture, save he who reads or hears it piously, deferring to it as of supreme authority; so that what he understands he does not hate on this account, that he feels it to be opposed to his sins, but rather loves being reproved by it, and rejoices that his maladies are not spared until they are healed; and so that even in respect to what seems to him obscure or absurd, he does not therefore raise contentious contradictions, but prays that he may understand, yet remembering that goodwill and reverence are to be manifested towards so great an authority? But who does this, unless just the man who has come, not harshly threatening, but in the meekness of piety, for the purpose of opening and ascertaining the contents of his father's will? Blessed, therefore, are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Let us see what follows.

Chapter 12

33\). You have heard that it was said to them of old time, You shall not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her, has committed adultery with her already in his heart. The lesser righteousness, therefore, is not to commit adultery by carnal connection; but the greater righteousness of the kingdom of God is not to commit adultery in the heart. Now, the man who does not commit adultery in the heart, much more easily guards against committing adultery in actual fact. Hence He who gave the later precept confirmed the earlier; for He came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it. It is well worthy of consideration that He did not say, Whosoever lusts after a woman, but, Whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her, i.e. turns toward her with this aim and this intent, that he may lust after her; which, in fact, is not merely to be tickled by fleshly delight, but fully to consent to lust; so that the forbidden appetite is not restrained, but satisfied if opportunity should be given.

34\). For there are three things which go to complete sin: the suggestion of, the taking pleasure in, and the consenting to. Suggestion takes place either by means of memory, or by means of the bodily senses, when we see, or hear, or smell, or taste, or touch anything. And if it give us pleasure to enjoy this, this pleasure, if illicit, must be restrained. Just as when we are fasting, and on seeing food the appetite of the palate is stirred up, this does not happen without pleasure; but we do not consent to this liking, and we repress it by the right of reason, which has the supremacy. But if consent shall take place, the sin will be complete, known to God in our heart, although it may not become known to men by deed. There are, then, these steps: the suggestion is made, as it were, by a serpent, that is to say, by a fleeting and rapid, i.e. a temporary, movement of bodies: for if there are also any such images moving about in the soul, they have been derived from without from the body; and if any hidden sensation of the body besides those five senses touches the soul, that also is temporary and fleeting; and therefore the more clandestinely it glides in, so as to affect the process of thinking, the more aptly is it compared to a serpent. Hence these three stages, as I was beginning to say, resemble that transaction which is described in Genesis, so that the suggestion and a certain measure of suasion is put forth, as it were, by the serpent; but the taking pleasure in it lies in the carnal appetite, as it were in Eve; and the consent lies in the reason, as it were in the man: and these things having been acted through, the man is driven forth, as it were, from paradise, i.e. from the most blessed light of righteousness, into death — in all respects most righteously. For he who puts forth suasion does not compel. And all natures are beautiful in their order, according to their gradations; but we must not descend from the higher, among which the rational mind has its place assigned, to the lower. Nor is any one compelled to do this; and therefore, if he does it, he is punished by the just law of God, for he is not guilty of this unwillingly. But yet, previous to habit, either there is no pleasure, or it is so slight that there is hardly any; and to yield to it is a great sin, as such pleasure is unlawful. Now, when any one does yield, he commits sin in the heart. If, however, he also proceeds to action, the desire seems to be satisfied and extinguished; but afterwards, when the suggestion is repeated, a greater pleasure is kindled, which, however, is as yet much less than that which by continuous practice is converted into habit. For it is very difficult to overcome this; and yet even habit itself, if one does not prove untrue to himself, and does not shrink back in dread from the Christian warfare, he will get the better of under His (i.e. Christ's) leadership and assistance; and thus, in accordance with primitive peace and order, both the man is subject to Christ, and the woman is subject to the man.

35\ Hence, just as we arrive at sin by three steps — suggestion, pleasure, consent, — so of sin itself there are three varieties — in heart, in deed, in habit — as it were, three deaths: one, as it were, in the house, *_i.e._* when we consent to lust in the heart; a second now, as it were, brought forth outside the gate, when assent goes forward into action; a third, when the mind is pressed down by the force of bad habit, as if by a mound of earth, and is now, as it were, rotting in the sepulchre. And whoever reads the Gospel perceives that our Lord raised to life these three varieties of the dead. And perhaps he reflects what differences may be found in the very word of Him who raises them, when He says on one occasion, Damsel, arise; on another, Young man, I say unto you, Arise; and when on another occasion He groaned in the spirit, and wept, and again groaned, and then afterwards cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

36\ And therefore, under the category of the adultery mentioned in this section, we must understand all fleshly and sensual lust. For when Scripture so constantly speaks of idolatry as fornication, and the Apostle Paul calls avarice by the name of idolatry, who doubts but that every evil lust is rightly called fornication, since the soul, neglecting the higher law by which it is ruled, and prostituting itself for the base pleasure of the lower nature as its reward (so to speak), is thereby corrupted? And therefore let every one who feels carnal pleasure rebelling against right inclination in his own case through the habit of sinning, by whose unsubdued violence he is dragged into captivity, recall to mind as much as he can what kind of peace he has lost by sinning, and let him cry out, O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ. For in this way, when he cries out that he is wretched, in the act of bewailing he implores the help of a comforter. Nor is it a small approach to blessedness, when he has come to know his wretchedness; and therefore blessed also are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Chapter 13

37\ In the next place, He goes on to say: And if your right eye offend you, pluck it out, and cast it from you: for it is profitable for you that one of your members should perish, and not that your whole body should go into hell. Here, certainly, there is need of great courage in order to cut off one's members. For whatever it is that is meant by the eye, undoubtedly it is such a thing as is ardently loved. For those who wish to express their affection strongly are wont to speak thus: I love him as my own eyes, or even more than my own eyes. Then, when the word right is added, it is meant perhaps to intensify the strength of the affection. For although these bodily eyes of ours are turned in a common direction for the purpose of seeing, and if both are turned they have equal power, yet men are more afraid of losing the right one. So that the sense in this case is: Whatever it is which you so love that you reckon it as a right eye, if it offends you, *_i.e._* if it proves a hindrance to you on the way to true happiness, pluck it out and cast it from you. For it is profitable for you, that one of these which you so love that they cleave to you as if they were members, should perish, rather than that your whole body should be cast into hell.

38\ But since He follows it up with a similar statement respecting the right hand, If your right hand offend you, cut it off, and cast it from you: for it is profitable for you that one of your members should perish, and not that your whole body should go into hell, He compels us to inquire more carefully

what He has spoken of as an eye. And as regards this inquiry, nothing occurs to me as a more suitable explanation than a greatly beloved friend: for this, certainly, is something which we may rightly call a member which we ardently love; and this friend a counsellor, for it is an eye, as it were, pointing out the road; and that in divine things, for it is the right eye: so that the left is indeed a beloved counsellor, but in earthly matters, pertaining to the necessities of the body; concerning which as a cause of stumbling it was superfluous to speak, inasmuch as not even the right was to be spared. Now, a counsellor in divine things is a cause of stumbling, if he endeavours to lead one into any dangerous heresy under the guise of religion and doctrine. Hence also let the right hand be taken in the sense of a beloved helper and assistant in divine works: for in like manner as contemplation is rightly understood as having its seat in the eye, so action in the right hand; so that the left hand may be understood in reference to works which are necessary for this life, and for the body.

Chapter 14

39\). It has been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement. This is the lesser righteousness of the Pharisees, which is not opposed by what our Lord says: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causes her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is loosed from her husband commits adultery. For He who gave the commandment that a writing of divorcement should be given, did not give the commandment that a wife should be put away; but whosoever shall put away, says He, let him give her a writing of divorcement, in order that the thought of such a writing might moderate the rash anger of him who was getting rid of his wife. And, therefore, He who sought to interpose a delay in putting away, indicated as far as He could to hard-hearted men that He did not wish separation. And accordingly the Lord Himself in another passage, when a question was asked Him as to this matter, gave this reply: Moses did so because of the hardness of your hearts. For however hard-hearted a man may be who wishes to put away his wife, when he reflects that, on a writing of divorcement being given her, she could then without risk marry another, he would be easily appeased. Our Lord, therefore, in order to confirm that principle, that a wife should not lightly be put away, made the single exception of fornication; but enjoins that all other annoyances, if any such should happen to spring up, be borne with fortitude for the sake of conjugal fidelity and for the sake of chastity; and he also calls that man an adulterer who should marry her that has been divorced by her husband. And the Apostle Paul shows the limit of this state of affairs, for he says it is to be observed as long as her husband lives; but on the husband's death he gives permission to marry. For he himself also held by this rule, and therein brings forward not his own advice, as in the case of some of his admonitions, but a command by the Lord when he says: And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: but and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife. I believe that, according to a similar rule, if he shall put her away, he is to remain unmarried, or be reconciled to his wife. For it may happen that he puts away his wife for the cause of fornication, which our Lord wished to make an exception of. But now, if she is not allowed to marry while the husband is living from whom she has departed, nor he to take another while the wife is living whom he has put away, much less is it right to commit unlawful acts of fornication with any parties whomsoever. More blessed indeed are those marriages to be reckoned, where the parties concerned, whether after the procreation of children, or even through contempt of such an earthly progeny, have been able with common consent to practise self-restraint toward each other: both because nothing is done contrary to that precept whereby the Lord forbids a spouse to be put away (for he does not put her away who lives with her not carnally, but spiritually), and because that principle is observed to which the apostle gives expression, It remains, that they that have wives be as though they had none.

Chapter 15

40\). But it is rather that statement which the Lord Himself makes in another passage which is wont to disturb the minds of the little ones, who nevertheless earnestly desire to live now according to the precepts of Christ: If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. For it may seem a contradiction to the less intelligent, that here He forbids the putting away of a wife saving for the cause of fornication, but that elsewhere He affirms that no one can be a disciple of His who does not

hate his wife. But if He were speaking with reference to sexual intercourse, He would not place father, and mother, and brothers in the same category. But how true it is, that the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and they that use violence take it by force! For how great violence is necessary, in order that a man may love his enemies, and hate his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers! For He commands both things who calls us to the kingdom of heaven. And how these things do not contradict each other, it is easy to show under His guidance; but after they have been understood, it is difficult to carry them out, although this too is very easy when He Himself assists us. For in that eternal kingdom to which He has vouchsafed to call His disciples, to whom He also gives the name of brothers, there are no temporal relationships of this sort. For there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; but Christ is all, and in all. And the Lord Himself says: For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. Hence it is necessary that whoever wishes here and now to aim after the life of that kingdom, should hate not the persons themselves, but those temporal relationships by which this life of ours, which is transitory and is comprised in being born and dying, is upheld; because he who does not hate them, does not yet love that life where there is no condition of being born and dying, which unites parties in earthly wedlock.

41\). Therefore, if I were to ask any good Christian who has a wife, and even though he may still be having children by her, whether he would like to have his wife in that kingdom; mindful in any case of the promises of God, and of that life where this incorruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality; though at present hesitating from the greatness, or at least from a certain degree of love, he would reply with execration that he is strongly averse to it. Were I to ask him again, whether he would like his wife to live with him there, after the resurrection, when she had undergone that angelic change which is promised to the saints, he would reply that he desired this as strongly as he reprobated the other. Thus a good Christian is found in one and the same woman to love the creature of God, whom he desires to be transformed and renewed; but to hate the corruptible and mortal conjugal connection and sexual intercourse: i.e. to love in her what is characteristic of a human being, to hate what belongs to her as a wife. So also he loves his enemy, not in as far as he is an enemy, but in as far as he is a man; so that he wishes the same prosperity to come to him as to himself, viz. that he may reach the kingdom of heaven rectified and renewed. This is to be understood both of father and mother and the other ties of blood, that we hate in them what has fallen to the lot of the human race in being born and dying, but that we love what can be carried along with us to those realms where no one says, My Father; but all say to the one God, Our Father: and no one says, My mother; but all say to that other Jerusalem, Our mother: and no one says, My brother; but each says respecting every other, Our brother. But in fact there will be a marriage on our part as of one spouse (when we have been brought together into unity), with Him who has delivered us from the pollution of this world by the shedding of His own blood. It is necessary, therefore, that the disciple of Christ should hate these things which pass away, in those whom he desires along with himself to reach those things which shall for ever remain; and that he should the more hate these things in them, the more he loves themselves.

42\). A Christian may therefore live in concord with his wife, whether with her providing for a fleshly craving, a thing which the apostle speaks by permission, not by commandment; or providing for the

procreation of children, which may be at present in some degree praiseworthy; or providing for a brotherly and sisterly fellowship, without any corporeal connection, having his wife as though he had her not, as is most excellent and sublime in the marriage of Christians: yet so that in her he hates the name of temporal relationship, and loves the hope of everlasting blessedness. For we hate, without doubt, that respecting which we wish at least, that at some time hereafter it should not exist; as, for instance, this same life of ours in the present world, which if we were not to hate as being temporal, we would not long for the future life, which is not conditioned by time. For as a substitute for this life the soul is put, respecting which it is said in that passage, If a man hate not his own soul also, he cannot be my disciple. For that corruptible meat is necessary for this life, of which the Lord Himself says, Is not the soul more than meat? _i.e._ this life to which meat is necessary. And when He says that He would lay down His soul for His sheep, He undoubtedly means this life, as He is declaring that He is going to die for us.

Chapter 16

43\ Here there arises a second question, when the Lord allows a wife to be put away for the cause of fornication, in what latitude of meaning fornication is to be understood in this passage — whether in the sense understood by all, viz. that we are to understand that fornication to be meant which is committed in acts of uncleanness; or whether, in accordance with the usage of Scripture in speaking of fornication (as has been mentioned above), as meaning all unlawful corruption, such as idolatry or covetousness, and therefore, of course, every transgression of the law on account of the unlawful lust \[involved in it\]. But let us consult the apostle, that we may not say rashly. And unto the married I command, says he, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: but and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband. For it may happen that she departs for that cause for which the Lord gives permission to do so. Or, if a woman is at liberty to put away her husband for other causes besides that of fornication, and the husband is not at liberty, what answer shall we give respecting this statement which he has made afterwards, And let not the husband put away his wife? Wherefore did he not add, saving for the cause of fornication, which the Lord permits, unless because he wishes a similar rule to be understood, that if he shall put away his wife (which he is permitted to do for the cause of fornication), he is to remain without a wife, or be reconciled to his wife? For it would not be a bad thing for a husband to be reconciled to such a woman as that to whom, when nobody had dared to stone her, the Lord said, Go, and sin no more. And for this reason also, because He who says, It is not lawful to put away one's wife saving for the cause of fornication, forces him to retain his wife, if there should be no cause of fornication: but if there should be, He does not force him to put her away, but permits him, just as when it is said, Let it not be lawful for a woman to marry another, unless her husband be dead; if she shall marry before the death of her husband, she is guilty; if she shall not marry after the death of her husband, she is not guilty, for she is not commanded to marry, but merely permitted. If, therefore, there is a like rule in the said law of marriage between man and woman, to such an extent that not merely of the woman has the same apostle said, The wife has not power of her own body, but the husband; but he has not been silent respecting him, saying, And likewise also the husband has not power of his own body, but the wife;— if, then, the rule is similar, there is no necessity for understanding that it is lawful

for a woman to put away her husband, saving for the cause of fornication, as is the case also with the husband.

44\). It is therefore to be considered in what latitude of meaning we ought to understand the word fornication, and the apostle is to be consulted, as we were beginning to do. For he goes on to say, But to the rest speak I, not the Lord. Here, first, we must see who are the rest, for he was speaking before on the part of the Lord to those who are married, but now, as from himself, he speaks to the rest: hence perhaps to the unmarried, but this does not follow. For thus he continues: If any brother has a wife that believes not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. Hence, even now he is speaking to those who are married. What, then, is his object in saying to the rest, unless that he was speaking before to those who were so united, that they were alike as to their faith in Christ; but that now he is speaking to the rest, *_i.e._* to those who are so united, that they are not both believers? But what does he say to them? If any brother has a wife that believes not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which has an husband that believes not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not put him away. If, therefore, he does not give a command as from the Lord, but advises as from himself, then this good result springs from it, that if any one act otherwise, he is not a transgressor of a command, just as he says a little after respecting virgins, that he has no command of the Lord, but that he gives his advice; and he so praises virginity, that whoever will may avail himself of it; yet if he shall not do so, he may not be judged to have acted contrary to a command. For there is one thing which is commanded, another respecting which advice is given, another still which is allowed. A wife is commanded not to depart from her husband; and if she depart, to remain unmarried, or to be reconciled to her husband: therefore it is not allowable for her to act otherwise. But a believing husband is advised, if he has an unbelieving wife who is pleased to dwell with him, not to put her away: therefore it is allowable also to put her away, because it is no command of the Lord that he should not put her away, but an advice of the apostle: just as a virgin is advised not to marry; but if she shall marry, she will not indeed adhere to the advice, but she will not act in opposition to a command. Allowance is given when it is said, But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment. And therefore, if it is allowable that an unbelieving wife should be put away, although it is better not to put her away, and yet not allowable, according to the commandment of the Lord, that a wife should be put away, saving for the cause of fornication, \[then\] unbelief itself also is fornication.

45\). For what do you say, O apostle? Surely, that a believing husband who has an unbelieving wife pleased to dwell with him is not to put her away? Just so, says he. When, therefore, the Lord also gives this command, that a man should not put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, why do you say here, I speak, not the Lord? For this reason, viz. that the idolatry which unbelievers follow, and every other noxious superstition, is fornication. Now, the Lord permitted a wife to be put away for the cause of fornication; but in permitting, He did not command it: He gave opportunity to the apostle for advising that whoever wished should not put away an unbelieving wife, in order that, perchance, in this way she might become a believer. For, says he, the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the brother. I suppose it had already occurred that some wives were embracing the faith by means of their believing husbands, and husbands by means of their believing wives; and although not mentioning names, he yet urged his case by examples, in order to strengthen his counsel. Then he goes on to say, Else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. For now the children were Christians, who were sanctified at the instance of one of the parents, or with the consent of both; which would not take place unless the marriage were broken up by one of the

parties becoming a believer, and unless the unbelief of the spouse were borne with so far as to give an opportunity of believing. This, therefore, is the counsel of Him whom I regard as having spoken the words, Whatsoever you spend more, when I come again, I will repay you.

46\ Moreover, if unbelief is fornication, and idolatry unbelief, and covetousness idolatry, it is not to be doubted that covetousness also is fornication. Who, then, in that case can rightly separate any unlawful lust whatever from the category of fornication, if covetousness is fornication? And from this we perceive, that because of unlawful lusts, not only those of which one is guilty in acts of uncleanness with another's husband or wife, but any unlawful lusts whatever, which cause the soul making a bad use of the body to wander from the law of God, and to be ruinously and basely corrupted, a man may, without crime, put away his wife, and a wife her husband, because the Lord makes the cause of fornication an exception; which fornication, in accordance with the above considerations, we are compelled to understand as being general and universal.

47\ But when He says, saving for the cause of fornication, He has not said of which of them, whether the man or the woman. For not only is it allowed to put away a wife who commits fornication; but whoever puts away that wife even by whom he is himself compelled to commit fornication, puts her away undoubtedly for the cause of fornication. As, for instance, if a wife should compel one to sacrifice to idols, the man who puts away such an one puts her away for the cause of fornication, not only on her part, but on his own also: on her part, because she commits fornication; on his own, that he may not commit fornication. Nothing, however, is more unjust than for a man to put away his wife because of fornication, if he himself also is convicted of committing fornication. For that passage occurs to one: For wherein you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you that judge do the same things. And for this reason, whosoever wishes to put away his wife because of fornication, ought first to be cleared of fornication; and a like remark I would make respecting the woman also.

48\ But in reference to what He says, Whosoever shall marry her that is divorced commits adultery, it may be asked whether she also who is married commits adultery in the same way as he does who marries her. For she also is commanded to remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband; but this in the case of her departing from her husband. There is, however, a great difference whether she put away or be put away. For if she put away her husband, and marry another, she seems to have left her former husband from a desire of changing her marriage connection, which is, without doubt, an adulterous thought. But if she be put away by the husband, with whom she desired to be, he indeed who marries her commits adultery, according to the Lord's declaration; but whether she also be involved in a like crime is uncertain — although it is much less easy to discover how, when a man and woman have intercourse one with another with equal consent, one of them should be an adulterer, and the other not. To this is to be added the consideration, that if he commits adultery by marrying her who is divorced from her husband (although she does not put away, but is put away), she causes him to commit adultery, which nevertheless the Lord forbids. And hence we infer that, whether she has been put away, or has put away her husband, it is necessary for her to remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband.

49\ Again, it is asked whether, if, with a wife's permission, either a barren one, or one who does not wish to submit to intercourse, a man shall take to himself another woman, not another man's wife,

nor one separated from her husband, he can do so without being chargeable with fornication? And an example is found in the Old Testament history; but now there are greater precepts which the human race has reached after having passed that stage; and those matters are to be investigated for the purpose of distinguishing the ages of the dispensation of that divine providence which assists the human race in the most orderly way; but not for the purpose of making use of the rules of living. But yet it may be asked whether what the apostle says, The wife has not power of her own body, but the husband; and likewise also the husband has not power of his own body, but the wife, can be carried so far, that, with the permission of a wife, who possesses the power over her husband's body, a man can have intercourse with another woman, who is neither another man's wife nor divorced from her husband; but such an opinion is not to be entertained, lest it should seem that a woman also, with her husband's permission, could do such a thing, which the instinctive feeling of every one prevents.

50\ And yet some occasions may arise, where a wife also, with the consent of her husband, may seem under obligation to do this for the sake of that husband himself; as, for instance, is said to have happened at Antioch about fifty years ago, in the times of Constantius. For Acyndinus, at that time prefect and at one time also consul, when he demanded of a certain public debtor the payment of a poundweight of gold, impelled by I know not what motive, did a thing which is often dangerous in the case of those magistrates to whom anything whatever is lawful, or rather is thought to be lawful, viz. threatened with an oath and with a vehement affirmation, that if he did not pay the foresaid gold on a certain day which he had fixed, he would be put to death. Accordingly, while he was being kept in cruel confinement, and was unable to rid himself of that debt, the dread day began to impend and to draw near. He happened, however, to have a very beautiful wife, but one who had no money wherewith to come to the relief of her husband; and when a certain rich man had had his desires inflamed by the beauty of this woman, and had learned that her husband was placed in that critical situation, he sent to her, promising in return for a single night, if she would consent to hold intercourse with him, that he would give her the pound of gold. Then she, knowing that she herself had not power over her body, but her husband, conveyed the intelligence to him, telling him that she was prepared to do it for the sake of her husband, but only if he himself, the lord by marriage of her body, to whom all that chastity was due, should wish it to be done, as if disposing of his own property for the sake of his life. He thanked her, and commanded that it should be done, in no wise judging that it was an adulterous embrace, because it was no lust, but great love for her husband, that demanded it, at his own bidding and will. The woman came to the villa of that rich man, did what the lewd man wished; but she gave her body only to her husband, who desired not, as was usual, his marriage rights, but life. She received the gold; but he who gave it took away stealthily what he had given, and substituted a similar bag with earth in it. When the woman, however, on reaching her home, discovered it, she rushed forth in public in order to proclaim the deed she had done, animated by the same tender affection for her husband by which she had been forced to do it; she goes to the prefect, confesses everything, shows the fraud that had been practised upon her. Then indeed the prefect first pronounces himself guilty, because the matter had come to this by means of his threats, and, as if pronouncing sentence upon another, decided that a pound of gold should be brought into the treasury from the property of Acyndinus; but that she (the woman) be installed as mistress of that piece of land whence she had received the earth instead of the gold. I offer no opinion either way from this story: let each one form a judgment as he pleases, for the history is not drawn from divinely authoritative sources; but yet, when the story is related, man's instinctive sense does not so revolt against what was done in the case of this woman, at her husband's bidding, as we formerly shuddered when the thing itself was set forth without any example. But in this section of the Gospel nothing is to be more steadily kept in view, than that so great is the evil of fornication, that, while married people are bound to one another by so strong a bond, this one cause of divorce is excepted; but as to what fornication is, that we have already discussed.

Chapter 17

51\ Again, says He, you have heard that it has been said to them of old time, You shall not forswear yourself, but shall perform unto the Lord your oath: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the

city of the great King. Neither shall you swear by your head, because you can not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these comes of evil. The righteousness of the Pharisees is not to forswear oneself; and this is confirmed by Him who gives the command not to swear, so far as relates to the righteousness of the kingdom of heaven. For just as he who does not speak at all cannot speak falsely, so he who does not swear at all cannot swear falsely. But yet, since he who takes God to witness swears, this section must be carefully considered, lest the apostle should seem to have acted contrary to the Lord's precept, who often swore in this way, when he says, Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God I lie not; and again, The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knows that I lie not. Of like nature also is that asseveration, For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers. Unless, perchance, one were to say that it is to be reckoned swearing only when something is spoken of by which one swears; so that he has not used an oath, because he has not said, by God; but has said, God is witness. It is ridiculous to think so; yet because of the contentious, or those very slow of apprehension, lest any one should think there is a difference, let him know that the apostle has used an oath in this way also, saying, By your rejoicing, I die daily. And let no one think that this is so expressed as if it were said, Your rejoicing makes me die daily; just as it is said, By his teaching he became learned, i.e. by his teaching it came about that he was perfectly instructed: the Greek copies decide the matter, where we find it written, **ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ αὐτοῦ** *En tē didaskaliā autou* which is used only by one taking an oath. Thus, then, it is understood that the Lord gave the command not to swear in this sense, lest any one should eagerly seek after an oath as a good thing, and by the constant use of oaths sink down through force of habit into perjury. And therefore let him who understands that swearing is to be reckoned not among things that are good, but among things that are necessary, refrain as far as he can from indulging in it, unless by necessity, when he sees men slow to believe what it is useful for them to believe, except they be assured by an oath. To this, accordingly, reference is made when it is said, Let your speech be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; this is good, and what is to be desired. For whatsoever is more than these comes of evil; i.e., if you are compelled to swear, know that it comes of a necessity arising from the infirmity of those whom you are trying to persuade of something; which infirmity is certainly an evil, from which we daily pray to be delivered, when we say, Deliver us from evil. Hence He has not said, Whatsoever is more than these is evil; for you are not doing what is evil when you make a good use of an oath, which, although not in itself good, is yet necessary in order to persuade another that you are trying to move him for some useful end; but it comes of evil on his part by whose infirmity you are compelled to swear. But no one learns, unless he has had experience, how difficult it is both to get rid of a habit of swearing, and never to do rashly what necessity sometimes compels him to do.

52\.. But it may be asked why, when it was said, But I say unto you, Swear not at all, it was added, neither by heaven, for it is God's throne, etc., up to neither by your head. I suppose it was for this reason, that the Jews did not think they were bound by the oath, if they had sworn by such things: and since they had heard it said, You shall perform unto the Lord your oath, they did not think an oath brought them under obligation to the Lord, if they swore by heaven, or earth, or by Jerusalem, or by their head; and this happened not from the fault of Him who gave the command, but because they did not rightly understand it. Hence the Lord teaches that there is nothing so worthless among the creatures of God, as

that any one should think that he may swear falsely by it; since created things, from the highest down to the lowest, beginning with the throne of God and going down to a white or black hair, are ruled by divine providence. Neither by heaven, says He, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool: *_i.e._*, when you swear by heaven or the earth, do not imagine that your oath does not bring you under obligation to the Lord; for you are convicted of swearing by Him who has heaven for His throne, and the earth for His footstool. Neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King; a better expression than if He had said, My *\[city\]*; although, however, we understand Him to have meant this. And, because He is undoubtedly the Lord, the man who swears by Jerusalem is bound by his oath to the Lord. Neither shall you swear by your head. Now, what could any one suppose to belong more to himself than his own head? But how is it ours, when we have not the power of making one hair white or black? Hence, whoever should wish to swear even by his own head, is bound by his oath to God, who in an ineffable way keeps all things in His power, and is everywhere present. And here also all other things are understood, which could not of course be enumerated; just as that saying of the apostle we have mentioned, *By your rejoicing, I die daily*. And to show that he was bound by this oath to the Lord, he has added, *which I have in Christ Jesus*.

53\ But yet (I make the remark for the sake of the carnal) we must not think that heaven is called God's throne, and the earth His footstool, because God has members placed in heaven and in earth, in some such way as we have when we sit down; but that seat means judgment. And since, in this organic whole of the universe, heaven has the greatest appearance, and earth the least — as if the divine power were more present where the beauty excels, but still were regulating the least degree of it in the most distant and in the lowest regions — He is said to sit in heaven, and to tread upon the earth. But spiritually the expression heaven means holy souls, and earth sinful ones: and since the spiritual man judges all things, yet he himself is judged of no man, he is suitably spoken of as the seat of God; but the sinner to whom it is said, *Earth you are, and unto earth shall you return*, because, in accordance with that justice which assigns what is suitable to men's deserts, he is placed among things that are lowest, and he who would not remain in the law is punished under the law, is suitably taken as His footstool.

Chapter 18

54\ But now, to conclude by summing up this passage, what can be named or thought of more laborious and toilsome, where the believing soul is straining every nerve of its industry, than the subduing of vicious habit? Let such an one cut off the members which obstruct the kingdom of heaven, and not be overwhelmed by the pain: in conjugal fidelity let him bear with everything which, however grievously annoying it may be, is still free from the guilt of unlawful corruption, _i.e._ of fornication: as, for instance, if any one should have a wife either barren, or misshapen in body, or faulty in her members — either blind, or deaf, or lame, or having any other defect — or worn out by diseases and pains and weaknesses, and whatever else may be thought of exceeding horrible, fornication excepted, let him endure it for the sake of his plighted love and conjugal union; and let him not only not put away such a wife, but even if he have her not, let him not marry one who has been divorced by her husband, though beautiful, healthy, rich, fruitful. And if it is not lawful to do such things, much less is it to be deemed lawful for him to come near any other unlawful embrace; and let him so flee from fornication, as to withdraw himself from base corruption of every sort. Let him speak the truth, and let him commend it not by frequent oaths, but by the probity of his morals; and with respect to the innumerable crowds of all bad habits rising up in rebellion against him, of which, in order that all may be understood, a few have been mentioned, let him betake himself to the citadel of Christian warfare, and let him lay them prostrate, as if from a higher ground. But who would venture to enter upon labours so great, unless one who is so inflamed with the love of righteousness, that, as it were utterly consumed with hunger and thirst, and thinking there is no life for him till that is satisfied, he puts forth violence to obtain the kingdom of heaven? For otherwise he will not be able bravely to endure all those things which the lovers of this world reckon toilsome and arduous, and altogether difficult in getting rid of bad habits. Blessed, therefore, are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

55\ But yet, when any one encounters difficulty in these toils, and advancing through hardships and roughnesses surrounded with various temptations, and perceiving the troubles of his past life rise up on this side and on that, becomes afraid lest he should not be able to carry through what he has undertaken, let him eagerly avail himself of the counsel that he may obtain assistance. But what other counsel is there than this, that he who desires to have divine help for his own infirmity should bear that of others, and should assist it as much as possible? And so, therefore, let us look at the precepts of mercy. The meek and the merciful man, however, seem to be one and the same: but there is this difference, that the meek man, of whom we have spoken above, from piety does not gainsay the divine sentences which are brought forward against his sins, nor those statements of God which he does not yet understand; but he confers no benefit on him whom he does not gainsay or resist. But the merciful man in such a way offers no resistance, that he does it for the purpose of correcting him whom he would render worse by resisting.

Chapter 19

56\ Hence the Lord goes on to say: You have heard that it has been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, that you resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue you at the law, and take away your coat \[tunic, undergarment\], let him have your cloak also. And whosoever shall compel you to go a mile,

go with him two. Give to him that asks you, and from him that would borrow of you turn not away. It is the lesser righteousness of the Pharisees not to go beyond measure in revenge, that no one should give back more than he has received: and this is a great step. For it is not easy to find any one who, when he has received a blow, wishes merely to return the blow; and who, on hearing one word from a man who reviles him, is content to return only one, and that just an equivalent; but he avenges it more immoderately, either under the disturbing influence of anger, or because he thinks it just, that he who first inflicted injury should suffer more severe injury than he suffered who had not inflicted injury. Such a spirit was in great measure restrained by the law, where it was written, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; by which expressions a certain measure is intended, so that the vengeance should not exceed the injury. And this is the beginning of peace: but perfect peace is to have no wish at all for such vengeance.

57\ Hence, between that first course which goes beyond the law, that a greater evil should be inflicted in return for a lesser, and this to which the Lord has given expression for the purpose of perfecting the disciples, that no evil at all should be inflicted in return for evil, a middle course holds a certain place, viz. that as much be paid back as has been received; by means of which enactment the transition is made from the highest discord to the highest concord, according to the distribution of times. See, therefore, at how great a distance any one who is the first to do harm to another, with the desire of injuring and hurting him, stands from him who, even when injured, does not pay back the injury. That man, however, who is not the first to do harm to any one, but who yet, when injured, inflicts a greater injury in return, either in will or in deed, has so far withdrawn himself from the highest injustice, and made so far an advance to the highest righteousness; but still he does not yet hold by what the law given by Moses commanded. And therefore he who pays back just as much as he has received already forgives something: for the party who injures does not deserve merely as much punishment as the man who was injured by him has innocently suffered. And accordingly this incomplete, by no means severe, but \[rather\] merciful justice, is carried to perfection by Him who came to fulfil the law, not to destroy it. Hence there are still two intervening steps which He has left to be understood, while He has chosen rather to speak of the very highest development of mercy. For there is still what one may do who does not come fully up to that magnitude of the precept which belongs to the kingdom of heaven; acting in such a way that he does not pay back as much, but less; as, for instance, one blow instead of two, or that he cuts off an ear for an eye that has been plucked out. He who, rising above this, pays back nothing at all, approaches the Lord's precept, but yet he does not reach it. For still it seems to the Lord not enough, if, for the evil which you may have received, you should inflict no evil in return, unless you be prepared to receive even more. And therefore He does not say, But I say unto you, that you are not to return evil for evil; although even this would be a great precept: but He says, that you resist not evil; so that not only are you not to pay back what may have been inflicted on you, but you are not even to resist other inflictions. For this is what He also goes on to explain: But whosoever shall smite you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also: for He does not say, If any man smite you, do not wish to smite him; but, Offer yourself further to him if he should go on to smite you. As regards compassion, they feel it most who minister to those whom they greatly love as if they were their children, or some very dear friends in sickness, or little children, or insane persons, at whose hands they often endure many things; and if their welfare demand it, they even show themselves ready to endure more, until the

weakness either of age or of disease pass away. And so, as regards those whom the Lord, the Physician of souls, was instructing to take care of their neighbours, what else could He teach them, than that they endure quietly the infirmities of those whose welfare they wish to consult? For all wickedness arises from infirmity of mind: because nothing is more harmless than the man who is perfect in virtue.

58\.

But it may be asked what the right cheek means. For this is the reading we find in the Greek copies, which are most worthy of confidence; though many Latin ones have only the word cheek, without the addition of right. Now the face is that by which any one is recognised; and we read in the apostle's writings, For you suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face: then immediately he adds, I speak as concerning reproach; so that he explains what striking on the face is, viz. to be contemned and despised. Nor is this indeed said by the apostle for this reason, that they should not bear with those parties; but that they should bear with himself rather, who so loved them, that he was willing that he himself should be spent for them. But since the face cannot be called right and left, and yet there may be a worth according to the estimate of God and according to the estimate of this world, it is so distributed as it were into the right and left cheek that whatever disciple of Christ might have to bear reproach for being a Christian, he should be much more ready to bear reproach in himself, if he possesses any of the honours of this world. Thus this same apostle, if he had kept silence respecting the dignity which he had in the world, when men were persecuting in him the Christian name, would not have presented the other cheek to those that were smiting the right one. For when he said, I am a Roman citizen, he was not unprepared to submit to be despised, in that which he reckoned as least, by those who had despised in him so precious and life-giving a name. For did he at all the less on that account afterwards submit to the chains, which it was not lawful to put on Roman citizens, or did he wish to accuse any one of this injury? And if any spared him on account of the name of Roman citizenship, yet he did not on that account refrain from offering an object they might strike at, since he wished by his patience to cure of so great perversity those whom he saw honouring in him what belonged to the left members rather than the right. For that point only is to be attended to, in what spirit he did everything, how benevolently and mildly he acted toward those from whom he was suffering such things. For when he was smitten with the hand by order of the high priest, what he seemed to say contumeliously when he affirms, God shall smite you, you whited wall, sounds like an insult to those who do not understand it; but to those who do, it is a prophecy. For a whited wall is hypocrisy, *_i.e._* pretence holding forth the sacerdotal dignity before itself, and under this name, as under a white covering, concealing an inner and as it were sordid baseness. For what belonged to humility he wonderfully preserved, when, on its being said to him, Do you revile the high priest? he replied, I knew not, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, You shall not speak evil of the ruler of your people. And here he showed with what calmness he had spoken that which he seemed to have spoken in anger, because he answered so quickly and so mildly, which cannot be done by those who are indignant and thrown into confusion. And in that very statement he spoke the truth to those who understood him, I knew not that he was the high priest: as if he said, I know another High Priest, for whose name I bear such things, whom it is not lawful to revile, and whom you revile, since in me it is nothing else but His name that you hate. Thus, therefore, it is necessary for one not to boast of such things in a hypocritical way, but to be prepared in the heart itself for all things, so that he can sing that prophetic word, My heart is prepared, O God, my heart is prepared. For many have learned how to offer the other cheek, but do not know how to love him by whom they are struck. But in truth, the Lord Himself, who certainly was the first to fulfil the precepts which He taught, did not offer the other cheek to the servant of the high priest when smiting Him thereon; but, so far from that, said, If I have spoken evil, hear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you smite me? Yet was He

not on that account unprepared in heart, for the salvation of all, not merely to be smitten on the other cheek, but even to have His whole body crucified.

59\ Hence also what follows, And if any man will sue you at the law, and take away your coat, let him have your cloak also, is rightly understood as a precept having reference to the preparation of heart, not to a vain show of outward deed. But what is said with respect to the coat and cloak is to be carried out not merely in such things, but in the case of everything which on any ground of right we speak of as being ours for time. For if this command is given with respect to what is necessary, how much more does it become us to condemn what is superfluous! But still, those things which I have called ours are to be included in that category under which the Lord Himself gives the precept, when He says, If any man will sue you at the law, and take away your coat. Let all these things therefore be understood for which we may be sued at the law, so that the right to them may pass from us to him who sues, or for whom he sues; such, for instance, as clothing, a house, an estate, a beast of burden, and in general all kinds of property. But whether it is to be understood of slaves also is a great question. For a Christian ought not to possess a slave in the same way as a horse or money: although it may happen that a horse is valued at a greater price than a slave, and some article of gold or silver at much more. But with respect to that slave, if he is being educated and ruled by time as his master, in a way more upright, and more honourable, and more conducing to the fear of God, than can be done by him who desires to take him away, I do not know whether any one would dare to say that he ought to be despised like a garment. For a man ought to love a fellow-man as himself, inasmuch as he is commanded by the Lord of all (as is shown by what follows) even to love his enemies.

60\ It is carefully to be observed that every tunic is a garment, but that every garment is not a tunic. Hence the word garment means more than the word tunic. And therefore I think it is so expressed, And if any one will sue you at the law, and take away your tunic, let him have your garment also, as if He had said, Whoever wishes to take away your tunic, give over to him whatever other clothing you have. And so some have interpreted the word *_pallium_*, which in the Greek as used here is $1\frac{1}{4}\alpha\epsilon^1\epsilon^{\frac{1}{2}}$

61\ And whosoever, says He, shall compel you to go a mile, go with him other two. And this, certainly, not so much in the sense that you should do it on foot, as that you should be prepared in mind to do it. For in the Christian history itself, which is authoritative, you will find no such thing done by the saints, or by the Lord Himself when in His human nature, which He condescended to assume, He was showing us an example of how to live; while at the same time, in almost all places, you will find them prepared to bear with equanimity whatever may have been wickedly forced upon them. But are we to suppose it is said for the sake of the mere expression, Go with him other two; or did He rather wish that three should be completed — the number which has the meaning of perfection; so that every one should remember when he does this, that he is fulfilling perfect righteousness by compassionately bearing the infirmities of those whom he wishes to be made whole? It may seem for this reason also that He has recommended these precepts by three examples: of which the first is, if any one shall smite you on the cheek; the second, if any one shall wish to take away your coat; the third, if any one shall compel you to go a mile: in which third example twice as much is added to the original unit, so that in this way the triplet is completed. And if this number in the passage before us does not, as has been said, mean perfection, let this be understood, that in laying down His precepts, as it were beginning with what

is more tolerable, He has gradually gone on, until He has reached as far as the enduring of twice as much more. For, in the first place, He wished the other cheek to be presented when the right had been smitten, so that you may be prepared to bear less than you have borne. For whatever the right means, it is at least something more dear than that which is meant by the left; and if one who has borne with something in what is more dear, bears with it in what is less dear, it is something less. Then, secondly, in the case of one who wishes to take away a coat, He enjoins that the garment also should be given up to him: which is either just as much, or not much more; not, however, twice as much. In the third place, with respect to the mile, to which He says that two miles are to be added, He enjoins that you should bear with even twice as much more: thus signifying that whether it be somewhat less than the original demand, or just as much, or more, that any wicked man shall wish to take from you, it is to be borne with tranquil mind.

Chapter 20

62\ And, indeed, in these three classes of examples, I see that no class of injury is passed over. For all matters in which we suffer any injustice are divided into two classes: of which the one is, where restitution cannot be made; the other, where it can. But in that case where restitution cannot be made, a compensation in revenge is usually sought. For what does it profit, that on being struck you strike in return? Is that part of the body which was injured for that reason restored to its original condition? But an excited mind desires such alleviations. Things of that sort, however, afford no pleasure to a healthy and firm one; nay, such an one judges rather that the other's infirmity is to be compassionately borne with, than that his own (which has no existence) should be soothed by the punishment of another.

63\). Nor are we thus precluded from inflicting such punishment \[requital\] as avails for correction, and as compassion itself dictates; nor does it stand in the way of that course proposed, where one is prepared to endure more at the hand of him whom he wishes to set right. But no one is fit for inflicting this punishment except the man who, by the greatness of his love, has overcome that hatred wherewith those are wont to be inflamed who wish to avenge themselves. For it is not to be feared that parents would seem to hate a little son when, on committing an offense, he is beaten by them that he may not go on offending. And certainly the perfection of love is set before us by the imitation of God the Father Himself when it is said in what follows: Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which persecute you; and yet it is said of Him by the prophet, For whom the Lord loves He corrects; yea, He scourges every son whom He receives. The Lord also says, The servant that knows not his Lord's will, and does things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes; but the servant that knows his Lord's will, and does things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with many stripes. No more, therefore, is sought for, except that he should punish to whom, in the natural order of things, the power is given; and that he should punish with the same goodwill which a father has towards his little son, whom by reason of his youth he cannot yet hate. For from this source the most suitable example is drawn, in order that it may be sufficiently manifest that sin can be punished in love rather than be left unpunished; so that one may wish him on whom he inflicts it not to be miserable by means of punishment, but to be happy by means of correction, yet be prepared, if need be, to endure with equanimity more injuries inflicted by him whom he wishes to be corrected, whether he may have the power of putting restraint upon him or not.

64\). But great and holy men, although they at the time knew excellently well that that death which separates the soul from the body is not to be dreaded, yet, in accordance with the sentiment of those who might fear it, punished some sins with death, both because the living were struck with a salutary fear, and because it was not death itself that would injure those who were being punished with death, but sin, which might be increased if they continued to live. They did not judge rashly on whom God had bestowed such a power of judging. Hence it is that Elijah inflicted death on many, both with his own hand and by calling down fire from heaven; as was done also without rashness by many other great and godlike men, in the same spirit of concern for the good of humanity. And when the disciples had quoted an example from this Elias, mentioning to the Lord what had been done by him, in order that He might give to themselves also the power of calling down fire from heaven to consume those who would not show Him hospitality, the Lord reproveth in them, not the example of the holy prophet, but their ignorance in respect to taking vengeance, their knowledge being as yet elementary; perceiving that they did not in love desire correction, but in hate desired revenge. Accordingly, after He had taught them what it was to love one's neighbour as oneself, and when the Holy Spirit had been poured out, whom, at the end of ten days after His ascension, He sent from above, as He had promised, there were not wanting such acts of vengeance, although much more rarely than in the Old Testament. For there, for the most part, as servants they were kept down by fear; but here mostly as free they were nourished by love. For at the words of the Apostle Peter also, Ananias and his wife, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, fell down dead, and were not raised to life again, but buried.

65\ But if the heretics who are opposed to the Old Testament will not credit this book, let them contemplate the Apostle Paul, whose writings they read along with us, saying with respect to a certain sinner whom he delivered over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved. And if they will not here understand death (for perhaps it is uncertain), let them acknowledge that punishment \[requital\] of some kind or other was inflicted by the apostle through the instrumentality of Satan; and that he did this not in hatred, but in love, is made plain by that addition, that the spirit may be saved. Or let them notice what we say in those books to which they themselves attribute great authority, where it is written that the Apostle Thomas imprecated on a certain man, by whom he had been struck with the palm of the hand, the punishment of death in a very cruel form, while yet commending his soul to God, that it might be spared in the world to come — whose hand, torn from the rest of his body after he had been killed by a lion, a dog brought to the table at which the apostle was feasting. It is allowable for us not to credit this writing, for it is not in the catholic canon; yet they both read it, and honour it as being thoroughly uncorrupted and thoroughly truthful, who rage very fiercely (with I know not what blindness) against the corporeal punishments which are in the Old Testament, being altogether ignorant in what spirit and at what stage in the orderly distribution of times they were inflicted.

66\ Hence, in this class of injuries which is atoned for by punishment, such a measure will be preserved by Christians, that, on an injury being received, the mind will not mount up into hatred, but will be ready, in compassion for the infirmity, to endure even more; nor will it neglect the correction, which it can employ either by advice, or by authority, or by \[the exercise of\] power. There is another class of injuries, where complete restitution is possible, of which there are two species: the one referring to money, the other to labour. And therefore examples are subjoined: of the former in the case of the coat and cloak, of the latter in the case of the compulsory service of one and two miles; for a garment may be given back, and he whom you have assisted by labour may also assist you, if it should be necessary. Unless, perhaps, the distinction should rather be drawn in this way: that the first case which is supposed, in reference to the cheek being struck, means all injuries that are inflicted by the wicked in such a way that restitution cannot be made except by punishment; and that the second case which is supposed, in reference to the garment, means all injuries where restitution can be made without punishment; and therefore, perhaps, it is added, if any man will sue you at the law, because what is taken away by means of a judicial sentence is not supposed to be taken away with such a degree of violence as that punishment is due; but that the third case is composed of both, so that restitution may be made both without punishment and with it. For the man who violently exacts labour to which he has no claim, without any judicial process, as he does who wickedly compels a man to go with him, and forces in an unlawful way assistance to be rendered to himself by one who is unwilling, is able both to pay the penalty of his wickedness and to repay the labour, if he who endured the wrong should ask it again. In all these classes of injuries, therefore, the Lord teaches that the disposition of a Christian ought to be most patient and compassionate, and thoroughly prepared to endure more.

67\ But since it is a small matter merely to abstain from injuring, unless you also confer a benefit as far as you can, He therefore goes on to say, Give to every one that asks you, and from him that would borrow of you turn not away. To every one that asks, says He; not, Everything to him that asks: so that you are to give that which you can honestly and justly give. For what if he should ask money, wherewith

he may endeavour to oppress an innocent man? What if, in short, he should ask something unchaste? But not to recount many examples, which are in fact innumerable, that certainly is to be given which may hurt neither yourself nor the other party, as far as can be known or supposed by man; and in the case of him to whom you have justly denied what he asks, justice itself is to be made known, so that you may not send him away empty. Thus you will give to every one that asks you, although you will not always give what he asks; and you will sometimes give something better, when you have set him right who was making unjust requests.

68\ Then, as to what He says, From him that would borrow of you turn not away, it is to be referred to the mind; for God loves a cheerful giver. Moreover, every one who accepts anything borrows, even if he himself is not going to pay it; for inasmuch as God pays back more to the merciful, whosoever does a kindness lends at interest. Or if it does not seem good to understand the borrower in any other sense than of him who accepts of anything with the intention of repaying it, we must understand the Lord to have included those two methods of doing a favour. For we either give in a present what we give in the exercise of benevolence, or we lend to one who will repay us. And frequently men who, setting before them the divine reward, are prepared to give away in a present, become slow to give what is asked in loan, as if they were destined to get nothing in return from God, inasmuch as he who receives pays back the thing which is given him. Rightly, therefore, does the divine authority exhort us to this mode of bestowing a favour, saying, And from him that would borrow of you turn not away: i.e., do not alienate your goodwill from him who asks it, both because your money will be useless, and because God will not pay you back, inasmuch as the man has done so; but when you do that from a regard to God's precept, it cannot be unfruitful with Him who gives these commands.

Chapter 21

69\ In the next place, He goes on to say, You have heard that it has been said, You shall love your neighbour, and hate your enemy: But I say unto you, Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which persecute you; that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He commands His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love them which love you, what reward will you have? Do not even the publicans the same? And if you salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the Gentiles the very same? Be therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect. For without this love, wherewith we are commanded to love even our enemies and persecutors, who can fully carry out those things which are mentioned above? Moreover, the perfection of that mercy, wherewith most of all the soul that is in distress is cared for, cannot be stretched beyond the love of an enemy; and therefore the closing words are: Be therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect. Yet in such a way that God is understood to be perfect as God, and the soul to be perfect as a soul.

70\ That there is, however, a certain step \[in advance\] in the righteousness of the Pharisees, which belongs to the old law, is perceived from this consideration, that many men hate even those by whom they are loved; as, for instance, luxurious children hate their parents for restraining them in their luxury. That man therefore rises a certain step, who loves his neighbour, although as yet he hates his enemy. But in the kingdom of Him who came to fulfil the law, not to destroy it, he will bring benevolence and kindness to perfection, when he has carried it out so far as to love an enemy. For the former stage, although it is something, is yet so little that it may be reached even by the publicans as well. And as to what is said in the law, You shall hate your enemy, it is not to be understood as the voice of command addressed to a righteous man, but rather as the voice of permission to a weak man.

71\ Here indeed arises a question in no way to be blinked, that to this precept of the Lord, wherein He exhorts us to love our enemies, and to do good to those who hate us, and to pray for those who persecute us, many other parts of Scripture seem to those who consider them less diligently and soberly to stand opposed; for in the prophets there are found many imprecations against enemies, which are thought to be curses: as, for instance, that one, Let their table become a snare, and the other things which are said there; and that one, Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow, and the other statements which are made either before or afterwards in the same Psalm by the prophet, as bearing on the case of Judas. Many other statements are found in all parts of Scripture, which may seem contrary both to this precept of the Lord, and to that apostolic one, where it is said, Bless; and curse not; while it is both written of the Lord, that He cursed the cities which received not His word; and the above-mentioned apostle thus spoke respecting a certain man, The Lord will reward him according to his works.

72\ But these difficulties are easily solved, for the prophet predicted by means of imprecation what was about to happen, not as praying for what he wished, but in the spirit of one who saw it beforehand. So also the Lord, so also the apostle; although even in the words of these we do not find what they have wished, but what they have foretold. For when the Lord says, Woe unto you, Capernaum, He does not utter anything else than that some evil will happen to her as a punishment of her unbelief; and that this would happen the Lord did not malevolently wish, but saw by means of His divinity. And the apostle does not say, May \[the Lord\] reward; but, The Lord will reward him according to his work; which is the word of one who foretells, not of one uttering an imprecation. Just as also, in regard to that hypocrisy of the Jews of which we have already spoken, whose destruction he saw to be impending, he said, God shall smite you, you whited wall. But the prophets especially are accustomed to predict future events under the figure of one uttering an imprecation, just as they have often foretold those things which were to come under the figure of past time: as is the case, for example, in that passage, Why have the nations raged, and the peoples imagined vain things? For he has not said, Why will the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? Although he was not mentioning those things as if they were already past, but was looking forward to them as yet to come. Such also is that passage, They have parted my garments among them, and have cast lots upon my vesture: for here also he has not said, They will part my garments among them, and will cast lots upon my vesture. And yet no one finds fault with these words, except the man who does not perceive that variety of figures in speaking in no degree lessens the truth of facts, and adds very much to the impressions on our minds.

Chapter 22

73\). But the question before us is rendered more urgent by what the Apostle John says: If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and the Lord shall give him life for him who sins not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. For he manifestly shows that there are certain brethren for whom we are not commanded to pray, although the Lord bids us pray even for our persecutors. Nor can the question in hand be solved, unless we acknowledge that there are certain sins in brethren which are more heinous than the persecution of enemies. Moreover, that brethren mean Christians can be proved by many examples from the divine Scriptures. Yet that one is plainest which the apostle thus states: For the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the brother. For he has not added the word *_our_*; but has thought it plain, as he wished a Christian who had an unbelieving wife to be understood by the expression *_brother_*. And therefore he says a little after, But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart: a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. Hence I am of opinion that the sin of a brother is unto death, when any one, after coming to the knowledge of God through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, makes an assault on the brotherhood, and is impelled by the fires of envy to oppose that grace itself by which he is reconciled to God. But the sin is not unto death, if any one has not withdrawn his love from a brother, but through some infirmity of disposition has failed to perform the incumbent duties of brotherhood. And on this account our Lord also on the cross says, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do: for, not yet having become partakers of the grace of the Holy Spirit, they had not yet entered the fellowship of the holy brotherhood. And the blessed Stephen in the Acts of the Apostles prays for those by whom he is being stoned, because they had not yet believed on Christ, and were not fighting against that common grace. And the Apostle Paul on this account, I believe, does not pray for Alexander, because he was already a brother, and had sinned unto death, viz. by making an assault on the brotherhood through envy. But for those who had not broken off their love, but had given way through fear, he prays that they may be pardoned. For thus he expresses it: Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord will reward him according to his works. Of whom also beware; for he has greatly withstood our words. Then he adds for whom he prays, thus expressing it: At my first defense no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.

74\). It is this difference in their sins which separates Judas the betrayer from Peter the denier: not that a penitent is not to be pardoned, for we must not come into collision with that declaration of our Lord, where He enjoins that a brother is to be pardoned, when he asks his brother to pardon him; but that the ruin connected with that sin is so great, that he cannot endure the humiliation of asking for it, even if he should be compelled by a bad conscience both to acknowledge and divulge his sin. For when Judas had said, I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood, yet it was easier for him in despair to run and hang himself, than in humility to ask for pardon. And therefore it is of much consequence to know what sort of repentance God pardons. For many much more readily confess that they have sinned, and are so angry with themselves that they vehemently wish they had not sinned; but yet they do not condescend to humble the heart and to make it contrite, and to implore pardon: and this disposition of mind we must suppose them to have, as feeling themselves already condemned because of the greatness of their sin.

75\). And this is perhaps the sin against the Holy Ghost, _i.e._ through malice and envy to act in opposition to brotherly love after receiving the grace of the Holy Ghost — a sin which our Lord says is not forgiven either in this world or in the world to come. And hence it may be asked whether the Jews sinned against the Holy Ghost, when they said that our Lord was casting out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils: whether we are to understand this as said against our Lord Himself, because He says of Himself in another passage, If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of His household! or whether, inasmuch as they had spoken from great envy, being ungrateful for so manifest benefits, although they were not yet Christians, they are, from the very greatness of their envy, to be supposed to have sinned against the Holy Ghost? This latter is certainly not to be gathered from our Lord's words. For although He has said in the same passage, And whosoever speaks a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaks a word against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come; yet it may seem that He admonished them for this purpose, that they should come to His grace, and after accepting of it should not so sin as they have now sinned. For now they have spoken a word against the Son of man, and it may be forgiven them, if they be converted, and believe in Him, and receive the Holy Ghost; but if, after receiving Him, they should choose to envy the brotherhood, and to assail the grace they have received, it cannot be forgiven them, neither in this world nor in the world to come. For if He reckoned them so condemned, that there was no hope left for them, He would not judge that they ought still to be admonished, as He did by adding the statement, Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt.

76\). Let it be understood, therefore, that we are to love our enemies, and to do good to those who hate us, and to pray for those who persecute us, in such a way, that it is at the same time understood that there are certain sins of brethren for which we are not commanded to pray; lest, through unskilfulness on our part, divine Scripture should seem to contradict itself (a thing which cannot happen). But whether, as we are not to pray for certain parties, so we are also to pray against some, has not yet become sufficiently evident. For it is said in general, Bless, and curse not; and again, Recompense to no man evil for evil. Moreover, while you do not pray for one, you do not therefore pray against him: for you may see that his punishment is certain, and his salvation altogether hopeless; and you do not pray for him, not because you hate him, but because you feel you can profit him nothing, and you do not wish your prayer to be rejected by the most righteous Judge. But what are we to think respecting those parties against whom we have it revealed that prayers were offered by the saints, not that they might be turned from their error (for in this way prayer is offered rather for them), but that final condemnation might come upon them: not as it was offered against the betrayer of our Lord by the prophet; for that, as has been said, was a prediction of things to come, not a wish for punishment: nor as it was offered by the apostle against Alexander; for respecting that also enough has been already said: but as we read in the Apocalypse of John of the martyrs praying that they may be avenged; while the well-known first martyr prayed that those who stoned him should be pardoned.

77\.. But we need not be moved by this circumstance. For who would venture to affirm, in regard to those white-robed saints, when they pleaded that they should be avenged, whether they pleaded against the men themselves or against the dominion of sin? For of itself it is a genuine avenging of the martyrs, and one full of righteousness and mercy, that the dominion of sin should be overthrown, under which dominion they were subjected to so great sufferings. And for its overthrow the apostle strives, saying, Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body. But the dominion of sin is destroyed and overthrown, partly by the amendment of men, so that the flesh is brought under subjection to the spirit; partly by the condemnation of those who persevere in sin, so that they are righteously disposed of in such a way that they cannot be troublesome to the righteous who reign with Christ. Look at the Apostle Paul; does it not seem to you that he avenges the martyr Stephen in his own person, when he says: So fight I, not as one that beats the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection? For he was certainly laying prostrate, and weakening, and bringing into subjection, and regulating that principle in himself whence he had persecuted Stephen and the other Christians. Who then can demonstrate that the holy martyrs were not asking from the Lord such an avenging of themselves, when at the same time, in order to their being avenged, they might lawfully wish for the end of this world, in which they had endured such martyrdoms? And they who pray for this, on the one hand pray for their enemies who are curable, and on the other hand do not pray against those who have chosen to be incurable: because God also, in punishing them, is not a malevolent Torturer, but a most righteous Disposer. Without any hesitation, therefore, let us love our enemies, let us do good to those that hate us, and let us pray for those who persecute us.

Chapter 23

78\.. Then, as to the statement which follows, that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, it is to be understood according to that rule in virtue of which John also says, He gave them power to become the sons of God. For one is a Son by nature, who knows nothing at all of sin; but we, by receiving power, are made sons, in as far as we perform those things which are commanded us by Him. And hence the apostolic teaching gives the name of adoption to that by which we are called to an eternal inheritance, that we may be joint-heirs with Christ. We are therefore made sons by a spiritual regeneration, and we are adopted into the kingdom of God, not as aliens, but as being made and created by Him: so that it is one benefit, His having brought us into being through His omnipotence, when before we were nothing; another, His having adopted us, so that, as being sons, we might enjoy along with Him eternal life for our participation. Therefore He does not say, Do those things, because you are sons; but, Do those things, that you may be sons.

79\.. But when He calls us to this by the Only-begotten Himself, He calls us to His own likeness. For He, as is said in what follows, makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. Whether you are to understand His sun as being not that which is visible to the fleshly eyes, but that wisdom of which it is said, She is the brightness of the everlasting light; of which it is also said, The Sun of righteousness has arisen upon me; and again, But unto you that fear the name of the Lord shall the Sun of righteousness arise: so that you would also understand the rain as being the watering with the doctrine of truth, because Christ has appeared to the good and the evil,

and is preached to the good and the evil. Or whether you choose rather to understand that sun which is set forth before the bodily eyes not only of men, but also of cattle; and that rain by which the fruits are brought forth, which have been given for the refreshment of the body, which I think is the more probable interpretation: so that that spiritual sun does not rise except on the good and holy; for it is this very thing which the wicked bewail in that book which is called the Wisdom of Solomon, And the sun rose not upon us: and that spiritual rain does not water any except the good; for the wicked were meant by the vineyard of which it is said, I will also command my clouds that they rain no rain upon it. But whether you understand the one or the other, it takes place by the great goodness of God, which we are commanded to imitate, if we wish to be the children of God. For who is there so ungrateful as not to feel how great the comfort, so far as this life is concerned, which that visible light and the material rain bring? And this comfort we see bestowed in this life alike upon the righteous and upon sinners in common. But He does not say, who makes the sun to rise on the evil and on the good; but He has added the word His, *_i.e._* which He Himself made and established, and for the making of which He took nothing from any one, as it is written in Genesis respecting all the luminaries; and He can properly say that all the things which He has created out of nothing are His own: so that we are hence admonished with how great liberality we ought, according to His precept, to give to our enemies those things which we have not created, but have received from His gifts.

80\ But who can either be prepared to bear injuries from the weak, in as far as it is profitable for their salvation; and to choose rather to suffer more injustice from another than to repay what he has suffered; to give to every one that asks anything from him, either what he asks, if it is in his possession, and if it can rightly be given, or good advice, or to manifest a benevolent disposition, and not to turn away from him who desires to borrow; to love his enemies, to do good to those who hate him, to pray for those who persecute him — who, I say, does these things, but the man who is fully and perfectly merciful? And with that counsel misery is avoided, by the assistance of Him who says, I desire mercy, and not sacrifice. Blessed, therefore, are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. But now I think it will be more convenient, that at this point the reader, fatigued with so long a volume, should breathe a little, and recruit himself for considering what remains in another book.

Source: Translated by William Findlay (NPNF, Series I, Vol. VI).

Text sourced from New Advent (newadvent.org). Accessed September 2026.

Translation: NPNF1 vol. 6 translation by William Findlay, pre-1900 public domain. Author d. 430. — copyright pre-verified (author pre-1900; PD English translation identified).

<https://www.thestromata.com/texts/on-the-sermon-on-the-mount-book-i>