Conferences of John Cassian - Part I

John Cassian (c. AD 360–435)

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Chapter I.

Of our stay in Scete, and that which we proposed to Abbot Moses. When I was in the desert of Scete, where are the most excellent monastic fathers and where all perfection flourishes, in company with the holy father Germanus (who had since the earliest days and commencement of our spiritual service been my closest companion both in the coenobium and in the desert, so that to show the harmony of our friendship and aims, everybody would say that a single heart and soul existed in our two bodies), I sought out Abbot Moses, who was eminent amid those splendid flowers, not only in practical but also in contemplative excellence, in my anxiety to be grounded by his instruction: and together we implored him to give us a discourse for our edification; not without tears, for we knew full well his determination never to consent to open the gate of perfection, except to those who desired it with all faithfulness, and sought it with all sorrow of heart; for fear lest if he showed it at random to those who cared nothing for it, or only desired it in a half-hearted way, by opening what is necessary, and what ought only to be discovered to those seeking perfection, to unworthy persons, and such as accepted it with scorn, he might appear to lay himself open either to the charge of bragging, or to the sin of betraying his trust; and at last being overcome by our prayers he thus began.

Chapter II.

Of the question of Abbot Moses, who asked what was the goaland what the end of the monk.

All the arts and sciences, said he, have some goal or mark; and end or aim of their own, on which the diligent pursuer of each art has his eye, and so endures all sorts of toils and dangers and losses, cheerfully and with equanimity, e.g., the farmer, shunning neither at one time the scorching heat of the sun, nor at another the frost and cold, cleaves the earth unweariedly, and again and again subjects the clods of his field to his ploughshare, while he keeps before him his goal; viz., by diligent labour to break it up small like fine sand, and to clear it of all briers, and free it from all weeds, as he believes that in no other way can he gain his ultimate end, which is to secure a good harvest, and a large crop; on which he can either live himself free from care, or can increase his possessions. Again, when his barn is well stocked he is quite ready to empty it, and with incessant labour to commit the seed to the crumbling furrow, thinking nothing of the present lessening of his stores in view of the future harvest. Those men too who are engaged in mercantile pursuits, have no dread of the uncertainties and chances of the ocean, and fear no risks, while an eager hope urges them forward to their aim of gain.

Moreover those who are inflamed with the ambition of military life, while they look forward to their aim of honours and power take no notice of danger and destruction in their wanderings, and are not crushed by present losses and wars, while they are eager to obtain the end of some honour held out to them. And our profession too has its own goal and end, for which we undergo all sorts of toils not merely without weariness but actually with delight; on account of which the want of food in fasting is no trial to us, the weariness of our vigils becomes a delight; reading and constant meditation on the Scriptures does not pall upon us; and further incessant toil, and self-denial, and the privation of all things, and the horrors also of this vast desert have no terrors for us. And doubtless for this it was that you yourselves despised the love of kinsfolk, and scorned your fatherland, and the delights of this world, and passed through so many countries, in order that you might come to us, plain and simple folk as we are, living in this wretched state in the desert. Wherefore, said he, answer and tell me what is the goal and end, which incite you to endure all these things so cheerfully.

Chapter III.

Of our reply. And when he insisted on eliciting an opinion from us on this question, we replied that we endured all this for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.

Chapter IV.

Of Abbot Moses' question on the aforesaid statement.

TO which he replied: Good, you have spoken cleverly of the (ultimate) end. But what should be our (immediate) goal or mark, by constantly sticking close to which we can gain our end, you ought first to know. And when we frankly confessed our ignorance, he proceeded: The first thing, as I said, in all the arts and sciences is to have some goal, i.e., a mark for the mind, mad constant mental purpose, for unless a man keeps this before him with all diligence and persistence, he will never succeed in arriving at the ultimate aim and the gain which he desires. For, as I said, the farmer who has for his aim to live free from care and with plenty, while his crops are springing has this as his immediate object and goal; viz., to keep his field clear from all brambles, and weeds, and does not fancy that he can otherwise ensure wealth and a peaceful end, unless he first secures by some plan of work and hope that which he is anxious to obtain. The business man too does not lay aside the desire of procuring wares, by means of which he may more profitably amass riches, because he would desire gain to no purpose, unless he chose the road which leads to it:

and those men who are anxious to be decorated with the honours of this world, first make up their minds to what duties and conditions they must devote themselves, that in the regular course of hope they may succeed in gaining the honours they desire. And so the end of our way of life is indeed the kingdom of God. But what is the (immediate) goal you must earnestly ask, for if it is not in the same way discovered by us, we shall strive and wear ourselves out to no purpose, because a man who is travelling in a wrong direction, has all the trouble and gets none of the good of his journey. And when we stood gaping at this remark, the old man proceeded: The end of our profession indeed, as I said, is the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven: but the immediate aim or goal, is purity of heart, without which no one can gain that end: fixing our gaze then steadily on this goal, as if on a definite mark, let us direct our course as straight towards it as possible, and if our thoughts wander somewhat from this, let us revert to our gaze upon it, and check them accurately as by a sure standard, which will always bring back all our efforts to this one mark, and will show at once if our mind has wandered ever so little from the direction marked out for it.

Chapter V.

A comparison with a man who is trying to hit a mark.

AS those, whose business it is to use weapons of war, whenever they want to show their skill in their art before a king of this world, try to shoot their arrows or darts into certain small targets which have the prizes painted on them; for they know that they cannot in any other way than by the line of their aim secure the end and the prize they hope for, which they will only then enjoy when they have been able to hit the mark set before them; but if it happens to be withdrawn from their sight, however much in their want of skill their aim may vainly deviate from the straight path, yet they cannot perceive that they have strayed from the direction of the intended straight line because they have no distinct mark to prove the skilfulness of their aim, or to show up its badness: and therefore while they shoot their missiles idly into space, they cannot see how they have gone wrong or how utterly at fault they are, since no mark is their accuser, showing how far they have gone astray from the right direction; nor can an unsteady, look help them to correct and restore the straight line enjoined on them. So then the end indeed which we have set before us is, as the Apostle says, eternal life, as he declares, ”having indeed your fruit unto holiness, and the end eternal life;

but the immediate goal is purity of heart, which he not unfairly terms ”sanctification,” without which the afore-mentioned end cannot be gained; as if he had said in other words, having your immediate goal in purity of heart, but the end life eternal. Of which goal the same blessed Apostle teaches us, and significantly uses the very term, i.e., skopo/j, saying as follows, ”Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward tothose that are before, I press toward the mark, lot the prize of the high calling of the Lord: which is more clearly put in Greek kata\ skopo\n diw/kw, i.e., ”I press toward the mark, as if he said, ”With this aim, with which I forget those things that are behind, i.e., the faults of earlier life, I strive to reach as the end the heavenly prize. Whatever then can help to guide us to this object; viz., purity of heart, we must follow with all our might, but whatever hinders us from it, we must shun as a dangerous and hurtful thing. For, for this we do and endure all things, for this we make light of our kinsfolk, our country, honours, riches, the delights of this world, and all kinds of pleasures, namely in order that we may retain a lasting purity of heart. And so when this object is set before us, we shall always direct our actions and thoughts straight towards the attainment of it; for if it be not constantly:

fixed before our eyes, it will not only make all our toils vain and useless, and force them: to be endured to no purpose and without any reward, but it will also excite all kinds of thoughts opposed to one another. For the mind, which has no fixed point to which it may return, and on which it may chiefly fasten, is sure to rove about from hour to hour and minute to minute in all sorts of wandering: thoughts, and from those things which come to it from outside, to be constantly changed into that state which first offers itself to it.

Chapter VI.

Of those who in renouncing the world, aim at perfection without love.

For hence it arises that in the case of some who have despised the greatest possessions of this world, and not only large sums of gold and silver, but also large properties, we have seen them afterwards disturbed and excited over a knife, or pencil, or pin, or pen. Whereas if they kept their gaze steadily fixed out of a pure heart they would certainly never allow such a thing to happen for trifles, while in order that they might not suffer it in the case of great and precious riches they chose rather to renounce them altogether. For often too some guard their books so jealously that they will not allow them to be even slightly moved or touched by any one else, and from this fact they meet with occasions of impatience and death, which give them warning of the need of acquiring the requisite patience and love; and when they have given up all their wealth for the love of Christ, yet as they preserve their former disposition in the matter of trifles, and are sometimes quickly upset about them, they become in all points barren and unfruitful, as those who are without the charity of which the Apostle speaks: and this the blessed Apostle foresaw in spirit, and ”though,” says he, ”I give all my goods to feed the poor, and give my body to be burned, but have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

And from this it clearly follows that perfection is not arrived at simply by self-denial, and the giving up of all our goods, and the casting away of honours, unless there is that charity, the details of which the Apostle describes, which consists in purity of heart alone. For ”not to be envious,” ”not to be puffed up, not to be angry, not to do any wrong, not to seek one’s own, not to rejoice in iniquity, not to think evil” etc. what is all this except ever to offer to God a perfect and clean heart, and to keep it free from all disturbances?

Chapter VII.

How peace of mind should be sought.

Everything should be done and sought after by us for the sake of this. For this we must seek for solitude, for this we know that we ought to submit to fastings, vigils, toils, bodily [nakedness, reading, and all other virtues that through them we may be enabled to prepare our heart and to keep it unharmed by all evil passions, and resting on these steps to mount to the perfection of charity, and with regard to these observances, if by accident we have been employed in some good and useful occupation and have been unable to carry out our customary discipline, we should not be overcome by vexation or anger, or passion, with the object of overcoming which, we were going to do that which we have omitted. For the gain from fasting will not balance the loss from anger, nor is the profit from reading so great as the harm which results from despising a brother. Those things which are of secondary importance, such as fastings, vigils, withdrawal from the world, meditation on Scripture, we ought to practise with a view to our main object, i.e., purity of heart, which is charity, and we ought not on their account to drive away this main virtue, for as long as it is still found in us intact and unharmed, we shall not be hurt if any of the things which are of secondary importance are necessarily omitted;

since it will not be of the slightest use to have done everything, if this main reason of which we have spoken be removed, for the sake of which everything is to be done. For on this account one is anxious to secure and provide for one's self the implements for any branch of work, not simply to possess them to no purpose, nor as if one made the profit and advantage, which is looked for from them, to consist in the bare fact of possession but that by using them, one may effectually secure practical knowledge and the end of that particular art of which they are auxiliaries. Therefore fastings, vigils, meditation on the Scriptures, self-denial, and the abnegation of all possesions are not perfection, but aids to perfection: because the end of that science does not lie in these, but by means of these we arrive at the end. He then will practise these exercises to no purpose, who is contented with these as if they were the highest good, and has fixed the purpose of his heart simply on them, and does not extend his efforts towards reaching the end, on account of which these should be sought: for he possesses indeed the implements of his art, but is ignorant of the end, in which all that is valuable resides.

Whatever then can disturb that purity and peace of mind-even though it may seem useful and valuable-should be shunned as really hurtful, for by this rule we shall succeed in escaping harm from mistakes and vagaries, and make straight for the desired end and reach it.

Chapter VIII.

Of the main effort towards the contemplation of things and an illustration from the case of Martha and Mary.

This then should be our main effort: and this steadfast purpose of heart we should constantly aspire after; viz., that the soul may ever cleave to God and to heavenly things. Whatever is alien to this, however great it may be, should be given the second place, or even treated as of no consequence, or perhaps as hurtful. We have an excellent illustration of this state of mind and condition in the gospel in the case of Martha and Mary: for when Martha was performing a service that was certainly a sacred one, since she was ministering to the Lord and His disciples, and Mary being intent only on spiritual instruction was clinging close to the feet of Jesus which she kissed and anointed with the ointment of a good confession, she is shown by the Lord to have chosen the better part, and one which should not be taken away from her: for when Martha was toiling with pious care, and was cumbered about her service, seeing that of herself alone she was insufficient for such service she asks for the help of her sister from the Lord, saying: ”Carest Thou not that my sister has left me to serve alone: bid her therefore that she help me”-certainly it was to no unworthy work, but to a praiseworthy service that she summoned her: and yet what does she hear from the Lord? ”Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things: but few things are needful, or only one.

Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her. You see then that the Lord makes the chief good consist in meditation; i.e., in divine contemplation: whence we see that all other virtues should be put in the second place, even though we admit that they are necessary, and useful, and excellent, because they are all performed for the sake of this one thing. For when the Lord says: ”Thou art careful and troubled about many things, but few things are needful or only one,” He makes the chief good consist not in practical work however praiseworthy and rich in fruits it may be, but in contemplation of Him, which indeed is simple and ”but one”; declaring that ”few things” are needful for perfect bliss, i.e., that contemplation which is first secured by reflecting on a few saints: from the contemplation of whom, he who has made some progress rises and attains by God’s help to that which is termed ”one thing,” i.e., the consideration of God alone, so as to get beyond those actions and services of Saints, and feed on the beauty and knowledge of

God alone. ”Mary” therefore ”chose the good, part, which shall not be taken away from her. And this must be more carefully considered. For when He says that Mary chose the good part, although He says nothing of Martha, and certainly does not appear to blame her, yet in praising the one, He implies that the other is inferior.

Again when He says ”which shall not be taken away from her” He shows that from the other her portion can be taken away (for a bodily ministry cannot last forever with a man), but teaches that this one’s desire can never have an end.

Chapter IX.

A question how it is that the practice of virtue with a man. To which we, being deeply moved, replied what then? will the effort of fasting, dili- gence in reading, works of mercy, justice, piety, and kindness, be taken away from us, and not continue with the doers of them, especially since the Lord Himself promises the reward of the kingdom of heaven to these works, when He says: ”Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave Me to eat; I was thirsty and ye gave Me to drink:” etc. How then shall these works be taken away, which admit the doers of them into the kingdom of heaven?

Chapter X.

The answer that not the reward, but the doing of them willcome to an end.

Moses. I did not say that the reward for a good work would be taken away, as the Lord Himself says: ”Whosoever shall give to one of the least of these, a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward: but I maintain that the doing of a thing, which either bodily necessity, or the onslaught of the flesh, or the inequalities of this world, compel to be done, will be taken away. For diligence in reading, and self-denial in fasting, are usefully practised for purifying the heart and chastening the flesh in this life only, as long as ”the flesh lusteth against the spirit,” and sometimes we see that even in this life they are taken away from those men who are worn out with excessive toil, or bodily infirmity or old age, and cannot be practised by them. How much more then will they come to an end hereafter, when ”this corruptible shall have put on incorruption,” and the body which is now ”a natural body” shall have risen ”a spiritual body” and the flesh shall have begun to be such that it no longer lusts against the spirit? And of this the blessed Apostle also clearly speaks, when he says that ”bodily exercise is profitable for a little: but godliness (by which he certainly means love) ”is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.

This clearly shows that what is said to be useful for a little, is not to be practised for all time, and cannot possibly by itself alone confer the highest state of perfection on the man who slaves at it. For the term ”for a little” may mean either of the two things, i.e., it may refer to the shortness of the time, because bodily exercise cannot possibly last on with man both in this life and in the world to come: or it may refer to the smallness of the profit which results from exercising the flesh, because bodily austerities produce some sort of beginnings of progress, but not the actual perfection of love, which has the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come: and therefore we deem that the practice of the aforesaid works is needful, because without them we cannot climb the heights of love. For what you call works of religion and mercy are needful in this life while these inequalities and differences of conditions still prevail; but even here we should not look for them to be performed, unless such a large proportion of poor, needy, and sick folk abounded, which is brought about by the wickedness of men; viz., of those who have grasped and kept for their own use (without however using them) those things which were granted to all by the Creator of all alike.

As long then as this inequality lasts in this world, this sort of work will be needful and useful to the man that practises it, as it brings to a good purpose and pious will the reward of an eternal inheritance: but it will come to an end in the life to come, where equality will reign, when there will be no longer inequality, on account of which these things must be done, but all men will pass from these manifold practical works to the love of God, and contemplation of heavenly things in continual purity of heart: to which those men who are urgent in devoting themselves to knowledge and purifying the heart, have chosen to give themselves up with all their might and main, betaking themselves, while they are still in the flesh, to that duty, in which they are to continue, when they have laid aside corruption, and when they come to that promise of the Lord the Saviour, which says ”Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.”

Chapter XI.

On the abiding character of love. And why do you wonder that those duties enumerated above will cease, when the holy Apostle tells us that even the higher gifts of the Holy Spirit will pass away: and points out that charity alone will abide without end, saying ”whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease: whether there be knowledge, it will Come to an end,” but of this he says ”Charity never faileth.” For all gifts are given for a time as use and need require, but when the dispensation is ended they will without doubt presently pass away: but love will never be destroyed. For not only does it work usefully in us in this world; but also in that to come, when the burden of bodily needs is cast off, it will continue in far greater vigour and excellence, and will never be weakened by any defect, but by means of its perpetual incorruption will cling to God more intently and earnestly.

Chapter XII.

A question on perseverance in spiritual contemplation. Germanus. Who then, while he is burdened with our frail flesh, can be always so intent on this contemplation, as never to think about the arrival of a brother, or visiting the sick, or manual labour, or at least about showing kindness to strangers and visitors? And lastly, who is not interrupted by providing for the body, and looking after it? Or how and in what way can the mind cling to the invisible and incomprehensible God, this we should like to learn.

Chapter XIII.

The answer concerning the direction of the heart towardsand concerning the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the devil.

Moses. To cling to God continually, and as you say inseparably to hold fast to meditation on Him, is impossible for a man while still in this weak flesh of ours. But we ought to be aware on what we should have the purpose of our mind fixed, and to what goal we should ever recall the gaze of our soul: and when the mind can secure this it may rejoice; and grieve and sigh when it is withdrawn from this, and as often as it discovers itself to have fallen away from gazing on Him, it should admit that it has lapsed from the highest good, considering that even a momentary departure from gazing on Christ is fornication. And when our gaze has wandered ever so little from Him, let us turn the eyes of the soul back to Him, and recall our mental gaze as in a perfectly straight direction. For everything depends on the inward frame of mind, and when the devil has been expelled. from this, and sins no longer reign in it, it follows that the kingdom of God as founded in us, as the Evangelist says ”The kingdom of God cometh not with observation, nor shall men say Lo here, or lo there: for verily I say unto you that the kingdom of God is within you. But nothing else can be ”within you,” but knowledge or ignorance of truth, and delight either in vice or in virtue, through which we prepare a kingdom for the devil or for Christ in our heart:

and of this kingdom the Apostle describes the character, when he says ”For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. And so if the kingdom of God is within us, and the actual kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy, then the man who abides in these is most certainly in the kingdom of God, and on the contrary those who live in unrighteousness, and discord, and the sorrow that worketh death, have their place in the kingdom of the devil, and in hell and death. For by these tokens the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the devil are distinguished: and in truth if lifting up our mental gaze on high we would consider that state in which the heavenly powers live on high, who are truly in the kingdom of God, what should we imagine it to be except perpetual and lasting joy? For what is so specially peculiar and appropriate to true blessedness as constant calm and eternal joy? And that you may be quite sure that this, which we say, is really so, not on my own authority but on that of the Lord, hear how very clearly He describes the character and condition of that world: ”Behold,” says He, ”I create

new beavers and a new earth: and the former things shall not be remembered nor come into mind. But ye shall be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create.

And again ”joy and gladness shall be found therein: thanksgiving and the voice of praise, and there shall be month after month, and Sabbath after Sabbath. And again: ”they shall obtain joy and gladness; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. And if you want to know more definitely about that life and the city of the saints, hear what the voice of the Lord proclaims to the heavenly Jerusalem herself: ”I will make,” says He, ”thine officers peace and thine overseers righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, desolation nor destruction within thy borders. And salvation shall take possession of thy walls, and praise of thy gates. The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither shall the brightness of the moon give light to thee: but the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: but the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended: and therefore the holy Apostle does not say generally or without qualification that every joy is the kingdom of God, but markedly and emphatically that joy alone which is ”in the Holy Ghost. For he was perfectly aware of another detestable joy, of which we hear ”the world shall rejoice,” and ”woe unto you that laugh, for ye shall mourn.

In fact the kingdom of heaven must be taken in a threefold sense, either that the heavens shall reign, i.e., the saints over other things subdued, according to this text, ”Be thou over five cities, and thou over ten; and this which is said to the disciples: ”Ye shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel: or that the heavens themselves shall begin to be reigned over by Christ, when ”all things are subdued unto Him,” and God begins to be ”all in all: or else that the saints shall reign in heaven with the Lord.

Chapter XIV.

Of the continuance of the soul.Wherefore every one while still existing in this body should already be aware that he must be committed to that state and office, of which he made himself a sharer and an adherent while in this life, nor should he doubt that in that eternal world he will be partner of him, whose servant and minister he chose to make himself here: according to that saying of our Lord which says ”If any man serve Me, let him follow Me, and where I am, there shall My servant also be. For as the kingdom of the devil is gained by consenting to sin, so the kingdom of God is attained by the practice of virtue in purity of heart and spiritual knowledge. But where the kingdom of God is, there most certainly eternal life is enjoyed, and where the kingdom of the devil is, there without doubt is death and the grave. And the man who is in this condition, cannot praise the Lord, according to the saying of the prophet which tells us: ”The dead cannot praise Thee, O Lord; neither all they that go down into the grave (doubtless of sin). But we,” says he, ”who live(not forsooth to sin nor I to this world but to God) will bless the Lord, from this time forth for evermore: for in death no man remembereth God: but in the grave (of sin) who will confess to the Lord? i.e., no one will.

For no man even though he were to call himself a Christian a thousand times over, or a monk, confesses God when he is sinning: no man who allows those things which the Lord hates, remembereth God, nor calls himself with any truth the servant of Him, whose commands he scorns with obstinate rashness: in which death the blessed Apostle declares that the widow is involved, who gives herself to pleasure, saying ”a widow who giveth herself to pleasure is dead while she liveth. There are then many who while still living in this body are dead, and lying in the grave cannot praise God; and on the contrary there are many who though they are dead in the body yet bless God in the spirit, and praise Him, according to this: ”O ye spirits and souls of the righteous, bless ye the Lord: and ”every spirit shall praise the Lord. And in the Apocalypse the souls of them that are slain are not only said to praise God but to address Him also. In the gospel too the Lord says with still greater clearness to the Sadducees: ”Have ye not read that which was spoken by God, when He said to you: I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. He is not the God of the dead but of the living: for all do live unto Him. Of whom also the Apostle says: ”wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God:

for He hath prepared for them a city. For that they are not idle after the separation from this body, and are not incapable of feeling, the parable in the gospel shows, which tells us of the beggar Lazarus and Dives clothed in purple, one of whom obtained a position of bliss, i.e., Abraham's bosom, the other is consumed with the dreadful heat of eternal fire. But if you care too to understand the words spoken to the thief "To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise," what do they clearly show but that not only does their former intelligence continue with the souls, but also that in their changed condition they partake of some state which corresponds to their actions and deserts? For the Lord would certainly never have promised him this, if He had known that his soul after being separated from the flesh would either have been deprived of perception or have been resolved into nothing. For it was not his flesh but his soul which was to enter Paradise with Christ. At least we must avoid, and shunwith the utmost horror, that wicked punctuation of the heretics, who, as they do not believe that Christ could be found in Paradise on the same day on which He descended into hell, thus punctuate "Verily, I say unto you to-day," and making a stop apply "thou shall be with.

Me in Paradise, in such a way that they imagine that this promise was not fulfilled at once after he departed from this life, but that it will be fulfilled after the resurrection, as they do not understand what before the time of His resurrection He declared to the Jews, who fancied that He was hampered by human difficulties and weakness of the flesh as they were: "No man hath ascended into heaven, but He who came down from heaven, even the Son of man who is in heaven: by which He clearly shows that the souls of the departed are not only not deprived of their reason, but that they are not even without such feelings as hope and sorrow, joy and fear, and that they already are beginning to taste beforehand something of what is reserved for them at the last judgment, and that they are not as some unbelievers hold resolved into nothing after their departure from this life: but that they live a more real life, and are still more earnest in waiting on the praises of God.

And indeed to put aside for a little Scripture proofs, and to discuss, as far as our ability permits us, a little about the nature of the soul itself, is it not beyond the bounds of I will not say the folly, but the madness of all stupidity, even to have the slightest suspicion that the nobler part of man, in which as the blessed Apostle shows, the image and likeness of God consists, will, when the burden of the body with which it is oppressed in this world is laid aside, become insensible, when, as it contains in itself all the power of reason, it makes the dumb and senseless material flesh sensible, by participation with it: especially when it follows, and the order of reason itself demands that when the mind has put off the grossness of the flesh with which it is now weighed down, it will restore its intellectual powers better than ever, and receive them in a purer and finer condition than it lost them. But so far did the blessed Apostle recognize that what we say is true, that he actually wished to depart from this flesh; that by separation from it, he might be able to be joined more earnestly to the Lord; saying: "I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, which is far better, for while we are in the body we are absent from the Lord: and therefore "we are bold and have our desire always to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord.

Wherefore also we strive, whether absent or present, to be pleasing to Him; and he declares indeed that the continuance of the soul which is in the flesh is distance from the Lord, and absence from Christ, and trusts with entire faith that its separation and departure from this flesh involves presence with Christ. And again still more clearly the same Apostle speaks of this state of the souls as one that is very full of life: "But ye are come to Mount Sion, and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, and the church of the first born, who are written in heaven, and the spirits of just men made perfect. Of which spirits he speaks in another passage, "Furthermore we have had instructors of our flesh, and we reverenced them: shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live?"

Chapter XV.

How we must meditate on God.

But the contemplation of God is gained in a variety of ways. For we not only discover God by admiring His incomprehensible essence, a thing which still lies hid in the hope of the promise, but we see Him through the greatness of His creation, and the consideration of His justice, and the aid of His daily providence: when with pure minds we contemplate what He has done with His saints in every generation, when with trembling heart we admire His power with which He governs, directs, and rules all things, or the vastness of His knowledge, and that eye of His from which no secrets of the heart can lie hid, when we consider the sand of the sea, and the number of the waves measured by Him and known to Him, when in our wonder we think that the drops of rain, the days and hours of the ages, and all things past and future are present to His knowledge; when we gaze in unbounded admiration on that ineffable mercy of His, which with unwearied patience endures countless sins which are every moment being committed under His very eyes, or the call with which from no antecedent merits of ours, but by the free grace of His pity He receives us;

or again the numberless opportunities of salvation which He grants to those whom He is going to adopt-that He made us be born in such a way as that from our very cradles His grace and the knowledge of His law might be given to us, that He Himself, overcoming our enemy in us simply for the pleasure of His good will, rewards us with eternal bliss and everlasting rewards, when lastly He undertook the dispensation of His Incarnation for our salvation, and extended the marvels of His sacraments to all nations. But there are numberless other considerations of this sort, which arise in our minds according to the character of our life and the purity of our heart, by which God is either seen by pure eyes or embraced: which considerations certainly no one will preserve lastingly, if anything of carnal affections still survives in him, because ”thou canst not,” saith the Lord, ”see My face: for no man shall see Me and live; viz., to this world and to earthly affections.

Chapter XVI.

A question on the changing character of the thoughts. Germanus. How is it then, that even against our will, aye and without our knowledge idle thoughts steal upon us so subtilely and secretly that it is fearfully hard not merely to drive them away, but even to grasp and seize them? Can then a mind sometimes be found free from them, and never attacked by illusions of this kind?

Chapter XVII.

The answer what the mind can and what it cannot do with regard to the state of its thoughts. Moses. It is impossible for the mind not to be approached by thoughts, but it is in the power of every earnest man either to admit them or to reject them. As then their rising up does not entirely depend on ourselves, so the rejection or admission of them lies in our own power. But because we said that it is impossible for the mind not to be approached by thoughts, you must not lay everything to the charge of the assault, or to those spirits who strive to instil them into us, else there would not remain any free will in man, nor would efforts for our improvement be in our power: but it is, I say, to a great extent in our power to improve the character of our thoughts and to let either holy and spiritual thoughts or earthly ones grow up in our hearts. For for this purpose frequent reading and continual meditation on the Scriptures is employed that from thence an opportunity for spiritual recollection may be given to us, therefore the frequent singing of Psalms is used, that thence constant feelings of compunction may be provided, and earnest vigils and fasts and prayers, that the mind may be brought low and not mind earthly things, but contemplate things celestial, for if these things are dropped and carelessness creeps on us, the mind being hardened with the foulness of sin is sure to incline in a carnal direction and fall away.

Chapter XVIII.

Comparison of a soul and a millstone. And this movement of the heart is not unsuitably illustrated by the comparison of a mill wheel, which the headlong rush of water whirls round, with revolving impetus, and which can never stop its work so long as it is driven round by the action of the water: but it is in the power of the man who directs it, to decide whether he will have wheat or barley or darnel ground by it. That certainly must be crushed by it which is put into it by the man who has charge of that business. So then the mind also through the trials of the present life is driven about by the torrents of temptations pouring in upon it from all sides, and cannot be free from the flow of thoughts: but the character of the thoughts which it should either throw off or admit for itself, it will provide by the efforts of its own earnestness and diligence: for if, as we said, we constantly recur to meditation on the Holy Scriptures and raise our memory towards the recollection of spiritual things and the desire of perfection and the hope of future bliss, spiritual thoughts are sure to rise from this, and cause the mind to dwell on those things on which we have been meditating. But if we are overcome by sloth or carelessness and spend our time in idle gossip, or are entangled in the cares of this world and unnecessary anxieties, the result will be that a sort of species of tares will spring up, and afford an injurious occupation for our hearts, and as our Lord and Saviour says, wherever the treasure of our works or purpose may be, there also our heart is sure to continue.

Chapter XIX.

Of the three origins of our thoughts.

Above all we ought at least to know that there are three origins of our thoughts, i.e., from God, from the devil, and from ourselves. They come from God when He vouchsafes to visit us with the illumination of the Holy Ghost, lifting us up to a higher state of progress, and where we have made but little progress, or through acting slothfully have been overcome, He chastens us with most salutary compunction, or when He discloses to us heavenly mysteries, or turns our purpose and will to better actions, as in the case where the king Ahasuerus, being chastened by the Lord, was prompted to ask for the books of the annals, by which he was reminded of the good deeds of Mordecai, and promoted him to a position of the highest honour and at once recalled his most cruel sentence concerning the slaughter of the Jews. Or when the prophet says: ”will hearken what the Lord God will say in me. Another too tells us ”And an angel spoke, and said in me,” or when the Son of God promised that He would come with His Father, and make His abode in us, and ”It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. And the chosen vessel: Ye seek a proof of Christ that speaketh in me.

But a whole range of thoughts springs from the devil, when he endeavours to destroy us either by the pleasures of sin or by secret attacks, in his crafty wiles deceitfully showing us evil as good, and transforming himself into an angel of light to us: as when the evangelist tells us: ”And when supper was ended, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray” the Lord: and again also ”after the sop,” he says, ”Satan entered into him. Peter also says to Ananias: ”Why hath Satan tempted thine heart, to lie to the Holy Ghost? And that which we read in the gospel much earlier as predicted by Ecclesiastes: ”If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place. That too which is said to God against Ahab in the third book of Kings, in the character of an unclean spirit: ”I will go forth and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. But they arise from ourselves, when in the course of nature we recollect what we are doing or have done or have heard. Of which the blessed David speaks: ”I thought upon the ancient days, and had in mind the years from of old, and I meditated, by night I exercised myself with my heart, and searched out my spirit. And again: ”the Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vain: and ”the thoughts of the righteous are judgments.

In the gospel too the Lord says to the Pharisees: ”why do ye think evil in your hearts?”

Chapter XX.

About discerning the thoughts, with an illustration from agood money-changer.

WE ought then carefully to notice this threefold order, and with a wise discretion to analyse the thoughts which arise in our hearts, tracking out their origin and cause and author in the first instance, that we may be able to consider how we ought to yield ourselves to them in accordance with the of those who suggest them so that we may, desert as the Lord's command bids us, become good money-changers, whose highest skill and whose training is to test what is perfectly pure gold and what is commonly termed tested, or what is not sufficiently purified in the fire; and also with unerring skill not to be taken in by a common brass denarius, if by being coloured with bright gold it is made like some coin of great value; and not only shrewdly to recognize coins stamped with the heads of usurpers, but with a still shrewder skill to detect those which have the image of the right king, but are not properly made, and lastly to be careful by the test of the balance to see that they are not under proper weight. All of which things the gospel saying, which uses this figure, shows us that we ought also to observe spiritually;

first that whatever has found an entrance into our hearts, and whatever doctrine has been received by us, should be most carefully examined to see whether it has been purified by the divine and heavenly fire of the Holy Ghost, or whether it belongs to Jewish superstition, or whether it comes from the pride of a worldly philosophy and only externally makes a show of religion. And this we can do, if we carry out the Apostle's advice, "Believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits whether they are of God. But by this kind those men also are deceived, who after having been professed as monks are enticed by the grace of style, and certain doctrines of philosophers, which at the first blush, owing to some pious meanings not out of harmony with religion, deceive as with the glitter of gold their hearers, whom they have superficially attracted, but render them poor and miserable for ever, like men deceived by false money made of copper: either bringing them back to the bustle of this world, or enticing them into the errors of heretics, and bombastic conceits: a thing which we read of as happening to Achan in the book of Joshua the son of Nun, when he coveted a golden weight from the camp of the Philistines, and stole it, and was smitten with a curse and condemned to eternal death.

In the second place we should be careful to see that no wrong interpretation fixed on to the pure gold of Scripture deceives us as to the value of the metal: by which means the devil in his craft tried to impose upon our Lord and Saviour as if He was a mere man, when by his malevolent interpretation he perverted what ought to be understood generally of all good men, and tried to fasten it specially on to Him, who had no need of the care of the angels: saying, "For He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee, to keep Thee in all Thy ways: and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone," by a skilful assumption on his part giving a turn to the precious sayings of Scripture and twisting them into a dangerous sense, the very opposite of their true meaning, so as to offer to us the image and face of an usurper under cover of the gold colour which may deceive us. Or whether he tries to cheat us with counterfeits, for instance by urging that some work of piety should be taken up which as it does come from the true minds of the fathers, leads under the form of virtue to vice; and, deceiving us either by immoderate or impossible fasts, or by too long vigils, or inordinate prayers, or unsuitable reading, brings us to a bad end.

Or, when he persuades us to give ourselves up to mixing in the affairs of others, and to pious visits, by which he may drive us away from the spiritual cloisters of the monastery, and the secrecy of its friendly peacefulness, and suggests that we take on our shoulders the anxieties and cares of religious women who are in want, that when a monk is inextricably entangled in snares of this sort he may distract him with most injurious occupations and cares. Or else when he incites a man to desire the holy office of the clergy under the pretext of edifying many people, and the love of spiritual gain, by which to draw us away from the humility and strictness of our life. All of which things, although they are opposed to our salvation and to our profession, yet when covered with a sort of veil of compassion and religion, easily deceive those who are lacking in skill and care. For they imitate the coins of the true king, because they seem at first full of piety, but are not stamped by those who have the right to coin, i.e., the approved Catholic fathers, nor do they proceed from the head public office for receiving them, but are made by stealth and by the fraud of the devil, and palmed off upon the unskilful and ignorant not without serious harm.

And even although they seem to be useful and needful at first, yet if afterwards they begin to interfere with the soundness of our profession, and as it were to weaken in some sense the whole body of our purpose, it is well that they should be cut off and cast away from us like a member which may be necessary, but yet offends us and which seems to perform the office of the right hand or foot. For it is better, without one member of a command, i.e., its working or result, to continue safe and sound in other parts, and to enter as weak into the kingdom of heaven rather than with the whole mass of commands to fall into some error which by an evil custom separates us from our strict rule and the system purposed and entered upon, and leads to such loss, that it will never outweigh the harm that will follow, but will cause all our past fruits and the whole body of our work to be burnt in hell fire. Of which kind of illusions it is well said in the Proverbs: "There are ways which seem to be right to a man, but their latter end will come into the depths of hell," and again "An evil

man is harmful when he attaches himself to a good man," i.e., the devil deceives when he is covered with an appearance of sanctity:

"but he hates the sound of the watchman," i.e., the power of discretion which comes from the words and warnings of the fathers.

Chapter XXI.

Of the illusion of Abbot John.

IN this manner we have heard that Abbot John who lived at Lycon, was recently deceived. For when his body was exhausted and failing as he had put off taking food during a fast of two days, on the third day while he was on his way to take some refreshment the devil came in the shape of a filthy Ethiopian, and falling at his feet, cried ”Pardon me because I appointed this labour for you. And so that great man, who was so perfect in the matter of discretion, understood that under pretence of an abstinence! practised unsuitably, he was deceived by the craft of the devil, and engaged in a fast of such a character as to affect his worn out body with a weariness that was unnecessary, indeed that was harmful to the spirit; as he was deceived by a counterfeit coin, and, while he paid respect to the image of the true king upon it, was not sufficiently alive to the question whether it was rightly cut and stamped. But the last duty of this ”good money-changer,” which, as we mentioned before, concerns the examination of the weight, will be fulfilled, if whenever our thoughts suggest that anything is to be done, we scrupulously think it over, and, laying it in the scales of our breast, weigh it with the most exact balance, whether it be full of good for all, or heavy with the fear of God: or entire and sound in meaning;

or whether it be light with human display or some conceit of novelty, or whether the pride of foolish vain glory has not diminished or lessened the weight of its merit. And so straightway weighing them in the public balance, i.e., testing them by the acts and proofs of the Apostles and Prophets let us hold them as it were entire and perfect and of full weight, or else with all care and diligence reject them as imperfect and counterfeit, and of insufficient weight.

Chapter XXII.

Of the fourfold method of discrimination.

This power of discriminating will then be necessary for us in the fourfold manner of which we have spoken; viz., first that the material does not escape our notice whether it be of true or of painted gold: secondly, that those thoughts which falsely promise works of religion should be rejected by us as forged and counterfeit coins, as they are those which are not rightly stamped, and which bear an untrue image of the king; and that we may be able in the same way to detect those which in the case of the precious gold of Scripture, by means of a false and heretical meaning, show the image not of the true king but of an usurper; and that we refuse those whose weight and value the rust of vanity has depreciated and not allowed to pass in the scales of the fathers, as coins that are too light, and are false and weigh too little; so that we may not incur that which we are warned by the Lord's command to avoid with all our power, and lose the value and reward of all our labour. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on the earth, where rust and moth corrupt and where thieves break through and steal.

For whenever we do anything with a view to human glory we know that we are, as the Lord says, laying up for ourselves treasure on earth, and that consequently being as it were hidden in the ground and buried in the earth it must be destroyed by sundry demons or consumed by the biting rust of vain glory, or devoured by the moths of pride so as to contribute nothing to the use and profits of the man who has hidden it. We should then constantly searchall the inner chambers of our hearts, and trace out the footsteps of whatever enters into them with the closest investigation lest haply some beast, if I may say so, relating to the understanding, either lion or dragon, passing through has furtively left the dangerous marks of his track, which will show to others the way of access into the secret recesses of the heart, owing to a carelessness about our thoughts. And so daily and hourly turning up the ground of our heart with the gospel plough, i.e., the constant recollection of the Lord's cross, we shall manage to stamp out or extirpate from our hearts the lairs of noxious beasts and the lurking places of poisonous serpents.

Chapter XXIII.

Of the discourse of the teacher in regard to the merits of his

AT this the old man seeing that we were astonished, and inflamed at the words of his discourse with an insatiable desire, stopped his speech for a little in consequence of our admiration and earnestness, and presently added: Since your zeal, my sons, has led to so long a discussion, and a sort of fire supplies keener zest to our conference in proportion to your earnestness, as from this very thing I can clearly see that you are truly thirsting after teaching about perfection, I want still to say something to you on the excellence of discrimination and grace which rules and holds the field among all virtues, and not merely to prove its value and usefulness by daily instances of it, but also from former deliberations and opinions of the fathers. For I remember that frequently when men were asking me with sighs and tears for a discourse of this kind, and I myself was anxious to give them some teaching I could not possibly manage it, and not merely my thoughts but even my very power of speech failed me so that I could not find how to send them away with even some slight consolation. And by these signs we clearly see that the grace of the Lord inspires the speakers with words according to the deserts and zeal of the hearers.

And because the very short night which is before us does not allow me to finish the discourse, let us the rather give it up to bodily rest, in which the whole of it will have to be spent, if a reasonable portion is refused, and let us reserve the complete scheme of the discourse for unbroken consideration on a future day or night. For it is right for the best counsellors on discretion to show the diligence of their minds in the first place in this, and to prove whether they are or can be possessors of it by this evidence and patience, so that in treating of that virtue which is the mother of moderation they may by no means fall into the vice which is opposite to it; viz., that of undue length, by their actions and deeds destroying the force of the system and nature which they recommend in word. In regard then to this most excellent discretion, on which we still propose to inquire, so far as the Lord gives us power, it may in the first instance be a good thing, when we are disputing about its excellence and the moderation which we knew exists in it as the first of virtues, not to allow ourselves to exceed the due limit of the discussion and of our time.

And so with this the blessed Moses put a stop to our talk, and urged us, eager though we were and hanging on his lips, to go off to bed for a little, advising us to lie down on the

same mats on which we were sitting, and to put our bundles under our heads instead of pillows, as these being tied evenly to thicker leaves of papyrus collected in long and slender bundles, six feet apart, at one time provide the brethren when sitting at service with a very low seat instead of a footstool, at another time being put under their necks when they go to bed furnish a support for their heads, that is not too hard, but comfortable and just right. For which uses of the monks these things are considered especially fit and suitable not only because they are somewhat soft, and prepared at little cost of money and labour, as the papyrus grows everywhere along the banks of the Nile, but also because they are of a convenient stuff and light enough to be removed or fetched as need may require. And so at last at the bidding of the old man we settled ourselves down to sleep in deep stillness, both excited with delight at the conference we had held, and also buoyed up with hope of the promised discussion.

Chapter I.

Abbot Moses' introduction on the grace of discretion.

And so when we had enjoyed our morning sleep, when to our delight the dawn of light again shone upon us, and we had begun to ask once more for his promised talk, the blessed Moses thus began: As I see you inflamed with such an eager desire, that I do not believe that that very short interval of quiet which I wanted to subtract from our spiritual conference and devote to bodily rest, has been of any use for the repose of your bodies, on me too a greater anxiety presses when I take note of your zeal. For I must give the greater care and devotion in paying my debt, in pro portion as I see that you ask for it the more earnestly, according to that saying: "When thou sittest to eat with a ruler consider diligently what is put before thee, and put forth thine hand, knowing that thou oughtest to prepare such things.

Wherefore as we are going to speak of the excellent quality of discretion and the virtue of it, on which subject our discourse of last night had entered at the termination of our discussion, we think it desirable first to establish its excellence by the opinions of the fathers, that when it has been shown what our predecessors thought and said about it, then we may bring forward some ancient and modern shipwrecks and mischances of various people, who were destroyed and hopelessly ruined because they paid but little attention to it, and then as well as we can we must treat of its advantages and uses: after a discussion of which we shall know better how we ought to seek after it and practise it, by the consideration of the importance of its value and grace. For it is no ordinary virtue nor one which can be freely gained by merely human efforts, unless they are aided by the Divine blessing, for we read that this is also reckoned among the noblest gifts of the Spirit by the Apostle: "To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another the gift of healing by the same Spirit," and shortly after, "to another the discerning of spirits. Then after the complete catalogue of spiritual gifts he subjoins: "But all these worketh one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will.

You see then that the gift of discretion is no earthly thing and no slight matter, but the greatest prize of divine grace. And unless a monk has pursued it with all zeal, and secured a power of discerning with unerring judgment the spirits that rise up in him, he is sure to go wrong, as if in the darkness of night and dense blackness, and not merely to fall down

dangerous pits and precipices, but also to make frequent mistakes in matters that are plain and straightforward.

Chapter II.

What discretion alone can give a monk; and a discourse of theblessed Antony on this subject.

And so I remember that while I was still a boy, in the region of Thebaid, where the blessed Antony lived, the elders came to him to inquire about perfection: and though the conference lasted from evening till morning, the greatest part of the night was taken up with this question. For it was discussed at great length what virtue or observance could preserve a monk always unharmed by the snares and deceits of the devil, and carry him forward on a sure and right path, and with firm step to the heights of perfection. And when each one gave his opinion according to the bent of his own mind, and some made it consist in zeal in fasting and vigils, because a soul that has been brought low by these, and so obtained purity of heart and body will be the more easily united to God, others in despising all things, as, if the mind were utterly deprived of them, it would come the more freely to God, as if henceforth there were no snares to entangle it: others thought that withdrawal from the world was the thing needful, i.e., solitude and the secrecy of the hermit's life; living in which a man may more readily commune with God, and cling more especially to Him; others laid down that the duties of charity, i.e., of kindness should be practised, because the Lord in the gospel promised more especially to give the kingdom to these;

when He said "Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred and ye gave Me to eat, I was thirsty and ye gave Me to drink, etc.: and when in this fashion they declared that by means of different virtues a more certain approach to God could be secured, and the greater part of the night had been spent in this discussion, then at last the blessed Antony spoke and said: All these things which you have mentioned are indeed needful, and helpful to those who are thirsting for God, and desirous to approach Him. But countless accidents and the experience of many people will not allow us to make the most important of gifts consist in them. For often when men are most strict in fasting or in vigils, and nobly withdraw into solitude, and aim at depriving themselves of all their goods so absolutely that they do not suffer even a day's allowance of food or a single penny to remain to them, and when they fulfil all the duties of kindness with the utmost devotion, yet still we have seen them suddenly deceived, so that they could not bring the work they had entered upon to a suitable close, but brought their exalted fervour and praiseworthy manner of life to a terrible end.

Wherefore we shall be able clearly to recognize what it is which mainly leads to God, if we trace out with greater care the reason of their downfall and deception. For when the works of the above mentioned virtues were abounding in them, discretion alone was wanting, and allowed them not to continue even to the end. Nor can any other reason for their falling off be discovered except that as they were not sufficiently instructed by their elders they could not obtain judgment and discretion, which passing by excess on either side, teaches a monk always to walk along the royal road, and does not suffer him to be puffed up on the right hand of virtue, i.e., from excess of zeal to transgress the bounds of due moderation in foolish presumption, nor allows him to be enamoured of slackness and turn aside to the vices on the left hand, i.e., under pretext of controlling the body, to grow slack with the opposite spirit of luke-warmness. For this is discretion, which is termed in the gospel the ”eye,” ”and light of the body,” according to the Saviour’s saying: ”The light of thy body is thine eye: but if thine eye be single, thy whole body will be full of light, but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body will be full of darkness: because as it discerns all the thoughts and actions of men, it sees and overlooks all things which should be done.

But if in any man this is ”evil,” i.e., not fortified by sound judgment and knowledge, or deceived by some error and presumption, it will mike our whole body ”full of darkness,” i.e., it will darken all our mental vision and our actions, as they will be involved in the darkness of vices and the gloom of disturbances. For, says He, ”if the light which is in thee be darkness, how great will that darkness be! For no one can doubt that when the judgment of our heart goes wrong, and is overwhelmed by the night of ignorance, our thoughts and deeds, which are the result of deliberation and discretion, must be involved in the darkness of still greater sins.

Chapter III.

Of the error of Saul and of Ahab, by which they were deceivedthrough Jack of discretion. Lastly, the man who in the judgment of God was the first to be worthy of the kingdom of His people Israel, because he was lacking in this ”eye” of discretion, was, as if his whole body were full of darkness, actually cast down from the kingdom while, being deceived by the darkness of this ”light,” and in error, he imagined that his own offerings were more acceptable to God than obedience to the command of Samuel, and met with an occasion of falling in that very matter in which he had hoped to propitiate the Divine Majesty. And ignorance, I say, of this discretion led Ahab the king of Israel after a triumph and splendid victory which had been granted to him by the favour of God to fancy that mercy on his part was better than the stem execution of the divine command, and, as it seemed to him, a cruel rule: and moved by this consideration, while he desired to temper a bloody victory with mercy, he was on account of his indiscriminating clemency rendered full of darkness in his whole body, and condemned irreversibly to death. Chapter. IV.What is said of the value of discretion in Holy Scripture.

Such is discretion, which is not only the ”light of the body,” but also called the sun by the Apostle, as it said ”Let not the sun go down upon your wrath. It is also called the guidance of our life: as it said ”Those who have no guidance, fall like leaves. It is most truly named counsel, without which the authority of Scripture allows us to do nothing, so that we are not even permitted to take that spiritual ”wine which maketh glad the heart of man” without its regulating control: as it is said ”Do everything with counsel, drink thy wine with counsel,” and again ”like a city that has its walls destroyed and is not fenced in, so is a man who does anything without counsel. And how injurious the absence of this is to a monk, the illustration and figure in the passage quoted shows, by comparing it to a city that is destroyed and without walls. Heroin lies wisdom, herein lies intelligence and understanding without which our inward house cannot be built, nor can spiritual riches be gathered together, as it is said: ”A house is built with wisdom, and again it is set up with intelligence. With understanding the storehouses are filled with all precious riches and good things. This I say is ”solid food,” which can only be taken by those who are full grown and strong, as it is said: ”But solid food is for full grown men, who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil.

And it is shown to be useful and necessary for us, only in so far as it is in accordance with the word of God and its powers, as is said ”For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and reaching even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and a dis- cerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart: and by this it is clearly shown that no virtue can possibly be perfectly acquired or continue without the grace of discretion. And so by the judgment of the blessed Antony as well as of all others it has been laid down that it is discretion which leads a fearless monk by fixed stages to God, and preserves the virtues mentioned above continually intact, by means of which one may ascend with less weariness to the extreme summit of perfection, and without which even those who toil most willingly cannot reach the heights of perfection. For discretion is the mother of all virtues, as well as their guardian and regulator.

Chapter V.

Of the death of the old man Heron.

And to support this judgment delivered of old by the blessed Antony and the other fathers by a modern instance, as we promised to do, remember what you lately saw happen before your very eyes, I mean, how the old man Heron, only a very few days ago was cast down by an illusion of the devil from the heights to the depths, a man whom we remember to have lived for fifty years in this desert and to have preserved a strict continence with especial severity, and who aimed at the secrecy of solitude with marvellous fervour beyond all those who dwell here. By what device then or by what method was he deluded by the deceiver after so many labours, and falling by a most grievous downfall struck with profound grief all those who live in this desert? Was it not because, having too little of the virtue of discretion he preferred to be guided by his own judgment rather than to obey the counsels and conference of the brethren and the regulations of the elders? Since he ever practised incessant abstinence and fasting with such severity, and persisted in the secrecy of solitude and a monastic cell so constantly that not even the observance of the Easter festival could ever persuade him to join in the feast with the brethren:

when in accordance with the annual observance, all the brethren remained in the church and he alone would not join them for fear lest he might seem to relax in some degree from his purpose by taking only a little pulse. And deceived by this presumption he received with the utmost reverence an angel of Satan asan angel of light and with blind slavishness obeyed his commands and cast himself down a well, so deep that the eye could not pierce its depths, nothing doubting of the promise of the angel who had assured him that the merits of his virtues and labours were such that he could not possibly run any risk. And that he might prove the truth of this most certainly by experimenting on his own safety, in the dead of night he was deluded enough to cast himself into the above mentioned well, to prove indeed the great merit of his virtue if he should come out thence unhurt. And when by great efforts on the part of the brethren he had been got out already almost dead, on the third day afterward he expired, and what was still worse, persisted in his obstinate delusion so that not even the experience of his death could persuade him that he had been deceived by the craft of devils.

Wherefore in spite of the merits of his great labours and the number of years which he had spent in the desert those who with compassion and the greatest kindness pitied his end, could hardly obtain from Abbot Paphnutius that he should not be reckoned among suicides, and be deemed unworthy of the memorial and oblation for those at rest.

Chapter VI.

Of the destruction of two brethren for lack of discretion. What shall I say of those two brethren who lived beyond that desert of the Thebaiid where once the blessed Antony dwelt, and, not being sufficiently influenced by careful discrimination, when they were going through the vast and extended waste determined not to take any food with them, except such as the Lord Himself might provide for them. And when as they wandered through the deserts and were already fainting from hunger they were spied at a distance by the Mazices (a race which is even more savage and ferocious than almost all wild tribes, for they are not driven to shed blood, as other tribes are, from desire of spoil but from simple ferocity of mind), and when these acting contrary to their natural ferocity, met them with bread, one of the two as discretion came to his aid, received it with delight and thankfulness as if it were offered to him by the Lord, thinking that the food had been divinely provided for him, and that it was God's doing that those who always delighted in bloodshed had offered the staff of life to men who were already fainting and dying; but the other refused the food because it was offered to him by men and died of starvation. And though this sprang in the first instance from a persuasion that was blame-worthy yet one of them by the help of discretion got the better of the idea which he had rashly and carelessly conceived, but the other persisting in his obstinate folly, and being utterly lacking in discretion, brought upon himself that death which the Lord would have averted, as he would not believe that it was owing to a Divine impulse that the fierce barbarians forgot their natural ferocity and offered them bread instead of a sword.

Chapter VII.

Of an illusion into which another fell for lack of discretion. Why also should I speak of one (whose name we had rather not mention as he is still alive), who for a long while received a devil in the brightness of an angelic form, and was often deceived by countless revelations from him and believed that he was a messenger of righteousness: for when these were granted, every night he provided a light in his cell without the need of any lamp. At last he was ordered by the devil to offer up to God his own son who was living with him in the monastery, in order that his merits might by this sacrifice be made equal to those of the patriarch Abraham. And he was so far seduced by his persuasion that he would really have committed the murder unless his son had seen him getting ready the knife and sharpening it with unusual care, and looking for the chains with which he meant to tie him up for the sacrifice when he was going to offer him up; and had fled away in terror with a presentiment of the coming crime.

Chapter VIII.

Of the fall and deception of a monk of Mesopotamia. IT is a long business too to tell the story of the deception of that monk of Mesopotamia, who observed an abstinence that could be imitated by but few in that country, which he had practised for many years concealed in his cell, and at last was so deceived by revelations and dreams that came from the devil that after so many labours and good deeds, in which he had surpassed all those who dwelt in the same parts, he actually relapsed miserably into Judaism and circumcision of the flesh. For when the devil by accustoming him to visions through the wish to entice him to believe a falsehood in the end, had like a messenger of truth revealed to him for a long while what was perfectly true, at length he showed him Christian folk together with the leaders of our religion and creed; viz. Apostles and Martyrs, in darkness and filth, and foul and disfigured with all squalor, and on the other hand the Jewish people with Moses, the patriarchs and prophets, dancing with all joy and shining with dazzling light; and so persuaded him that if he wanted to share their reward and bliss, he must at once submit to circumcision. And so none of these would have been so miserably deceived, if they had endeavoured to obtain a power of discretion. Thus the mischances and trials of many show how dangerous it is to be without the grace of discretion.

Chapter IX.

A question about the acquirement of true discretion. To this Germanus: It has been fully and completely shown both by recent instances and by the decisions of the ancients how discretion is in some sense the fountain head and the root of all virtues. We want then to learn how it ought to be gained, or how we can tell whether it is genuine and from God, or whether it is spurious and from the devil: so that (to use the figure of that gospel parable which you discussed on a former occasion, in which we are bidden to become good money changers) we may be able to see the figure of the true king stamped on the coin and to detect what is not stamped on coin that is current, and that, as you said in yesterday's talk using an ordinary expression, we may reject it as counterfeit, under the teaching of that skill which you treated of with sufficient fulness and detail, and showed ought to belong to the man who is spiritually a good money changer of the gospel. For of what good will it be to have recognized the value of that virtue and grace if we do not know how to seek for it and to gain it?

Chapter X.

The answer how true discretion may be gained. Then Moses: True discretion, said he, is only secured by true humility. And of this humility the first proof is given by reserving everything (not only what you do but also what you think), for the scrutiny of the elders, so as not to trust at all in your own judgment but to acquiesce in their decisions in all points, and to acknowledge what ought to be considered good or bad by their traditions. And this habit will not only teach a young man to walk in the right path through the true way of discretion, but will also keep him unhurt by all the crafts and deceits of the enemy. For a man cannot possibly be deceived, who lives not by his own judgment but according to the example of the elders, nor will our crafty foe be able to abuse the ignorance of one who is not accustomed from false modesty to conceal all the thoughts which rise in his heart, but either checks them or suffers them to remain, in accordance with the ripened judgment of the elders. For a wrong thought is enfeebled at the moment that it is discovered: and even before the sentence of discretion has been given, the foul serpent is by the power of confession dragged out, so to speak, from his dark under-ground cavern, and in some sense shown up. and sent away in disgrace. For evil thoughts will hold sway in us just so long as they are hidden in the heart: and that you may gather still more effectually the power of this judgment I will tell you what Abbot Serapion did, and what he used often to tell to the younger brethren for their edification.

Chapter XI.

The words of Abbot Serapion on the decline of thoughts that are exposed to others, and also on the danger of self-confidence.

While, said he, I was still a lad, and stopping with Abbot Theonas, this habit was forced upon me by the assaults of the enemy, that after I had supped with the old man at the ninth hour, I used every day secretly to hide a biscuit in my dress, which I would eat on the sly later on without his knowing it. And though I was constantly guilty of the theft with the consent of my will, and the want of restraint that springs from desire that has grown inveterate, yet when my unlawful desire was gratified I would come to myself and torment myself over the theft committed in a way that overbalanced the pleasure I had enjoyed in the eating. And when I was forced not without grief of heart to fulfil day after day this most heavy task required of me, so to speak, by Pharaoh's taskmasters, instead of bricks, and could not escape from this cruel tyranny, and yet was ashamed to disclose the secret theft to the old man, it chanced by the will of God that I was delivered from the yoke of this voluntary captivity, when certain brethren had sought the old man's cell with the object of being instructed by him.

And when after supper the spiritual conference had begun to be held, and the old man in answer to the questions which they had propounded was speaking about the sin of gluttony and the dominion of secret thoughts, and showing their nature and the awful power which they have so long as they are kept secret, I was overcome by the power of the discourse and was conscience stricken and terrified, as I thought that these things were mentioned by him because the Lord had revealed to the old man my bosom secrets; and first I was moved to secret sighs, and then my heart's compunction increased and I openly burst into sobs and tears, and produced from the folds of my dress which shared my theft and received it, the biscuit which I had carried off in my bad habit to eat on the sly; and I laid it in the midst and lying on the ground an begging for forgiveness confessed how I used to eat one every day in secret, and with copious tears implored them to intreat the Lord to free me from this dreadful slavery. Then the old man: "Have faith, my child," said he, "Without any words of mine, your confession frees you from this slavery.

For you have today triumphed over your victorious adversary, by laying him low by your confession in a manner which more than makes up for the way in which you were overthrown

by him through your former silence, as when, never confuting him with your own answer or that of another, you had allowed him to lord it over you, according to that saying of Solomon's: 'Because sentence is not speedily pronounced against the evil, the heart of the children of men is full within them to do evil:' and therefore after this exposure of him that evil spirit will no longer be able to vex you, nor will that foul serpent henceforth make his lurking place in you, as he has been dragged out into light from the darkness by your life-giving confession. The old man had not finished speaking when lo! a burning lamp proceeding from the folds of my dress filled the cell with a sulphureous smell so that the pungency of the odour scarcely allowed us to stay there: and the old man resuming his admonition said Lo! the Lord has visibly confirmed to you the truth of my words, so that you can see with your eyes how he who was the author of His Passion has been driven out from your heart by your life-giving confession, and know that the enemy who has been exposed will certainly no longer find a home in you, as his expulsion is made manifest.

And so, as the old man declared, said he, the sway of that diabolical tyranny over me has been destroyed by the power of this confession and stilled for ever so that the enemy has never even tried to force upon me any more the recollection of this desire, nor have I ever felt myself seized with the passion of that furtive longing. And this meaning we see is neatly expressed in a figure in Ecclesiastes. "If" says he "a serpent bite without hissing there is no sufficiency for the charmer," showing that the bite of a serpent in silence is dangerous, i.e., if a suggestion or thought springing from the devil is not by means of confession shown to some charmer, I mean some spiritually minded person who knows how to heal the wound at once by charms from the Scripture, and to extract the deadly poison of the serpent from the heart, it will be impossible to help the sufferer who is already in danger and must soon die. In this way therefore we shall easily arrive at the knowledge of true discretion, so as by following the steps of the Elders never to do anything novel nor to decide anything by or on our own responsibility, but to walk in all things as we are taught by their tradition and upright life. And the man who is strengthened by this system will not only arrive at the perfect method of discretion, but also will remain perfectly safe from all the wiles of the enemy:

for by no other fault does the devil drag down a monk so precipitately and lead him away to death, as when he persuades him to despise the counsel of the Elders and to rely on his own opinion and judgment: for if all the arts and contrivances discovered by man's ingenuity and those which are only useful for the conveniences of this temporary life, though they can be felt with the hand and seen with the eye, can yet not be understood by anyone, without lessons from a teacher, how foolish it is to fancy that there is no need of an instructor in this one alone which is invisible and secret and can only be seen by the purest heart, a mistake in which brings about no mere temporary loss or one that can easily be repaired, but the destruction of the soul and everlasting death: for it is concerned with a daily and nightly conflict against no visible foes, but invisible and cruel ones, and a spiritual combat not against one or two only, but against countless hosts, failure in which is the more dangerous to all, in proportion as the foe is the fiercer and the attack the more secret. And therefore

we should always follow the footsteps of the Elders with the utmost care, and bring to them everything which rises in our hearts, by removing the veil of shame.

Chapter XII.

A confession of the modesty which made us ashamed to revealour thoughts to the elders. Germanus: The ground of that hurtful modesty, through which we endeavour to hide bad thoughts, is especially owing to this reason; viz., that we have heard of a superior of the Elders in the region of Syria, as it was believed, who, when one of the brethren had laid bare his thoughts to him in a genuine confession, was afterwards extremely indignant and severely chid him for them. Whence it results that while we press them upon our selves and are ashamed to make them known to the Elders, we cannot obtain the remedies that would heal them.

Chapter XIII.

The answer concerning the trampling down of shame, and thedanger of one without contrition.

Moses: Just as all young men are not alike in fervour of spirit nor equally instructed in learning and good morals, so too we cannot find that all old men are equally perfect and excellent. For the true riches of old men are not to be measured by grey hairs but by their diligence in youth and the rewards of their past labours. ”For,” says one, ”the things that thou hast not gathered in thy youth, how shall thou find them in thy old age? ”For venerable old age is not that of long time, nor counted by the number of years: but the understanding of a man is grey hairs, and a spotless life is old age. And therefore we are not to follow in the steps or embrace the traditions and advice of every old man whose head is covered with grey hairs, and whose age is his sole claim to respect, but only of those whom we find to have distinguished themselves in youth in an approved and praiseworthy manner, and to have been trained up not on self-assurance but on the traditions of the Elders. For there are some, and unhappily they form the majority, who pass their old age in a lukewarmness which they contracted in youth, and in sloth, and so obtain authority not from the ripeness of their character but simply from the number of their years. Against whom that reproof of the Lord is specially aimed by the prophet: ”Strangers have devoured his strength and he knew it not:

yea, grey hairs also are spread about upon him, and he is ignorant of it. These men, I say, are not pointed out as examples to youth from the uprightness of their lives, nor from the strictness of their profession, which would be worthy of praise and imitation, but simply from the number of their years; and so the subtle enemy uses their grey hairs to deceive the younger men, by a wrongful appeal to their authority, and endeavours in his cunning craftiness to upset and deceive by their example those who might have been urged into the way of perfection by their advice or that of others; and drags them down by means of their teaching and practice either into a baneful indifference, or into deadly despair. And as I want to give you an instance of this, I will tell you a fact which may supply us with some wholesome teaching, without giving the name of the actor, lest we might be guilty of something of the same kind as the man who published abroad the sins of the brother which had been disclosed to him.

When this one, who was not the laziest of young men, had gone to an old man, whom we know very well, for the sake of the profit and health of his soul, and had candidly confessed that he was troubled by carnal appetites and the spirit of fornication, fancying that he would receive from the old man's words consolation for his efforts, and a cure for the wounds inflicted on him, the old man attacked him with the bitterest reproaches, and called him a miserable and disgraceful creature, and unworthy of the name of monk, while he could be affected by a sin and lust of this character, and instead of helping him so injured him by his reproaches that he dismissed him from his cell in a state of hopeless despair and deadly despondency. And when he, oppressed with such a sorrow, was plunged in deep thought, no longer how to cure his passion, but how to gratify his lust, the Abbot Apollos, the most skilful of the Eiders, met him, and seeing by his looks and gloominess his trouble and the violence of the assault which he was secretly revolving in his heart, asked him the reason of this upset;

and when he could not possibly answer the old man's gentle inquiry, the latter perceived more and more clearly that it was not without reason that he wanted to hide in silence the cause of a gloom so deep that he could not conceal it by his looks, and so began to ask him still more earnestly the reasons for his hidden grief. And by this he was forced to confess that he was on his way to a village to take a wife, and leave the monastery and return to the world, since, as the old man had told him, he could not be a monk, if he was unable to control the desires of the flesh and to cure his passion. And then the old man smoothed him down with kindly consolation, and told him that he himself was daily tried by the same pricks of desire and lust, and that therefore he ought not to give way to despair, nor be surprised at the violence of the attack of which he would get the better not so much by zealous efforts, as by the mercy and grace of the Lord;

and he begged him to put off his intention just for one day, and having implored him to return to his cell, went as fast as he could to the monastery of the above mentioned old man-and when he had drawn near to him he stretched forth his hands and prayed with tears, and said "O Lord, who alone art the righteous judge and unseen Physician of secret strength and human weakness, turn the assault from the young man upon the old one, that he may learn to condescend to the weakness of sufferers, and to sympathize even in old age with the frailties of youth. And when he had ended his prayer with tears, he sees a filthy Ethiopian standing over against his cell and aiming fiery darts at him, with which he was straightway wounded, and came out of his cell and ran about hither and thither like a lunatic or a drunken man, and going in and out could no longer restrain himself in it, but began to hurry off in the same direction in which the young man had gone. And when Abbot Apollos saw him like a madman driven wild by the furies, he knew that the fiery dart of the devil which he had seen, had been fixed in his heart, and had by its intolerable heat wrought in him this mental aberration and confusion of the understanding;

and so he came up to him and asked "Whither are you hurrying, or what has made you forget the gravity of years and disturbed you in this childish way, and made you hurry about so rapidly"?

And when he owing to his guilty conscience and confused by this disgraceful excitement fancied that the lust of his heart was discovered, and, as the secrets of his heart were known to the old man, did not venture to return any answer to his inquiries, ”Return,” said he, ”to your cell, and at last recognize the fact that till now you have been ignored or despised by the devil, and not counted in the number of those with whom he is daily roused to fight and struggle against their efforts and earnestness,-you who could not-I will not say ward off, but not even postpone for one day, a single dart of his aimed at you after so many years spent in this profession of yours. And with this the Lord has suffered you to be wounded that you may at least learn in your old age to sympathize with infirmities to which you are a stranger, and may know from your own case and experience how to condescend to the frailties of the young, though when you received a young man troubled by an attack from the devil, you did not encourage him with any consolation, but gave him up in dejection and destructive despair into the hands of the enemy, to be, as far as you were concerned, miserably destroyed by him.

But the enemy would certainly never have attacked him with so fierce an onslaught, with which he has up till now scorned to attack you, unless in his jealousy at the progress he was to make, he had endeavoured to get the better of that virtue which he saw lay in his disposition, and to destroy it with his fiery darts, as he knew without the shadow of a doubt that he was the stronger, since he deemed t worth his while to attack him with such vehemence. And so learn from your own experience to sympathize with those in trouble, and never to terrify with destructive despair those who are in danger, nor harden them with severe speeches, but rather restore them with gentle and kindly consolations, and as the wise Solomon says, ”Spare not to deliver those who are led forth to death, and to redeem those who are to be slain,” and after the example of our Saviour, break not the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, and ask of the Lord that grace, by means of which you yourself may faithfully learn both in deed and power to sing: ”the Lord hath given me a learned tongue that I should know how to uphold by word him that is weary: for no one could bear the devices of the enemy, or extinguish or repress those carnal fires which burn with a sort of natural flame, unless God’s grace assisted our weakness, or protected and supported it.

And therefore, as the reason for this salutary incident is over, by which the Lord meant to set that young man free from dangerous desires and to teach you something of the violence of their attack, and of the feeling of compassion, let us together implore Him in prayer, that He may be pleased to remove that scourge, which the Lord thought good to lay upon you for your good (for ”He maketh sorry and cureth: he striketh and his hands heal. He humbleth and exalteth, he killeth and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up”) , and may extinguish with the abundant dew of His Spirit the fiery darts of the devil, which at my desire He allowed to wound you. And although the Lord removed this temptation at a single prayer of the old man with the same speed with which He had suffered it to come upon him, yet He showed by a clear proof that a man’s faults when laid bare were not merely not to be scolded, but that the grief of one in trouble ought not to be lightly despised. And therefore never let the clumsiness or shallowness of one old man or of a few deter you and

keep you back from that life-giving way, of which we spoke earlier, or from the tradition of the Elders, if our crafty enemy makes a wrongful use of their grey hairs in order to deceive younger men:

but without any cloak of shame everything should be disclosed to the Elders, and remedies for wounds be faithfully received from them together with examples of life and conversation: from which we shall find like help and the same sort of result, if we try to do nothing at all on our own responsibility and judgment.

Chapter XIV.

Of the call of Samuel. Lastly SO far has this opinion been shown to be pleasing to God that we see that this system not without reason finds a place in holy Scripture, so that the Lord would not of Himself instruct by the method of a Divine colloquy the lad Samuel, when chosen for judgment, but suffered him to run once or twice to the old man, and willed that one whom He was calling to converse with Him should be taught even by one who had offended God, as he was an old man, and preferred that he whom He had deemed worthy to be called by Him should be trained by the Elder in order to test the humility of him who was called to a Divine office, and to set an example to the younger men by the manner of his subjection.

Chapter XV.

Of the call of the Apostle Paul.

And when Christ in His own Person called and addressed Paul, although He might have opened out to him at once the way of perfection, yet He chose rather to direct him to Ananias and commanded him to learn the way of truth from him, saying: ”Arise and go into the city and there it shall be told thee what thou oughtest to do. So He sends him to an older man, and thinks good to have him instructed by his teaching rather than His own, lest what might have been rightly done in the case of Paul might set a bad example of self-sufficiency, if each one were to persuade himself that he also ought in like manner to be trained by the government and teaching of God alone rather than by the instruction of the Elders. And this self-sufficiency the apostle himself teaches, not only by his letters but by his acts and deeds, ought to be shunned with all possible care, as he says that he went up to Jerusalem solely for this reason; viz., to communicate in a private and informal conference with his co-apostles and those who were before him that Gospel which he preached to the Gentiles, the grace of the Holy Spirit accompanying him with powerful signs and wonders: as he says ”And I communicated with them the Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles lest perhaps I had run or should run in vain.

Who then is so self-sufficient and blind as to dare to trust in his own judgment and discretion when the chosen vessel confesses that he had need of conference with his fellow apostles. Whence we clearly see that the Lord does not Himself show the way of perfection to anyone who having the opportunity of learning depises the teaching and training of the Elders, paying no heed to that saying which ought most carefully to be observed: ”Ask thy father and he will show it to thee: thine Elders and they will tell thee. ”

Chapter XVI.

How to seek for discretion. We ought then with all our might to strive for the virtue of discretion by the power of humility, as it will keep us uninjured by either extreme, for there is an old saying a0kro/thtej i0so/thtej, i.e., extremes meet. For excess of fasting and gluttony come to the same thing, and an unlimited continuance of vigils is equally injurious to a monk as the torpor of a deep sleep: for when a man is weakened by excessive abstinence he is sure to return to that condition in which a man is kept through carelessness and negligence, so that we have often seen those who could not be deceived by gluttony, destroyed by excessive fasting and by reason of weakness liable to that passion which they had before overcome. Unreasonable vigils and nightly watchings have also been the ruin of some whom sleep could not get the better of: wherefore as the apostle says "with the arms of righteousness on the right hand and on the left," we pass on with due moderation, and walk between the two extremes, under the guidance of discretion, that we may not consent to be led away from the path of continence marked out for us, nor fall by undue carelessness into the pleasures of the palate and belly.

Chapter XVII.

On excessive fasts and vigils. For I remember that I had so often resisted the desire for food, that having abstained from taking any for two or three days, my mind was not troubled even by the recollection of any eatables and also that sleep was by the assaults of the devil so far removed from my eyes, that for several days and nights I used to pray the Lord to grant a little sleep to my eyes; and then I felt that I was in greater peril from the want of food and sleep than from struggling against sloth and gluttony. And so as we ought to be careful not to fall into dangerous effeminacy through desire for bodily gratification, nor indulge ourselves with eating before the right time nor take too much, so also we ought to refresh ourselves with food and sleep at the proper time even if we dislike it. For the struggle in each case is caused by the devices of the enemy; and excessive abstinence is still more injurious to us than careless satiety: for from this latter the intervention of a healthy compunction will raise us to the right measure of strictness, and not from the former.

Chapter XVIII.

A question on the right measure of abstinence and refreshment. Germanus: What then is the measure of abstinence by keeping which with even balance we shah succeed in passing unharmed between the two extremes?

Chapter XIX.

Of the best plan for our daily food. Moses: On this matter we are aware that there have been frequent discussions among our Elders. For in discussing the abstinence of some who supported their lives continually on nothing but beans or only on vegetables and fruits, they proposed to all of them to partake of bread alone, the right measure of which they fixed at two biscuits, so small that they assuredly scarcely weighed a pound.

Chapter XX.

An objection on the ease of that abstinence in which a man issustained by two biscuits. And this we gladly embraced, and answered that we should scarcely consider this limit as abstinence, as we couId not possibly reach it entirely.

Chapter XXI.

The answer concerning the value and measure of well-provedabstinence. Moses: If you want to test the force of this rule, keep to this limit continually, never departing from it by taking any cooked food even on Sunday or Saturday, or on the occasions of the arrival of any of the brethren; for the flesh, refreshed by these exceptions, is able not only to support itself through the rest of the week on a smaller quantity, but can also postpone all refreshment without difficulty, as it is sustained by the addition of that food which it has taken beyond the limit; while the man who has always been satisfied with the full amount of the above-mentioned measure will never be able to do this, nor to put off breaking his fast till the morrow. For I remember that our Elders (and I recollect that we ourselves also often had the same experience) found it so hard and difficult to practise this abstinence, and observed the rule laid down with such pain and hunger that it was almost against their will and with tears and lamentation that they set this limit to their meals.

Chapter XXII.

What is the usual limit both of abstinence and of partakingfood. But this is the usual limit of abstinence; viz., for everyone to allow himself food according to the requirements of his strength or bodily frame or age, in such quantity as is required for the support of the flesh, and not for the satisfactory feeling of repletion. For on both sides a man will suffer the greatest injury, if having no fixed rule at one time he pinches his stomach with meagre food and fasts, and at another stuffs it by over-eating himself; for as the mind which is enfeebled for lack of food loses vigour in praying, while it is worn out with excessive weakness of the flesh and forced to doze, so again when weighed down with over-eating it cannot pour forth to God pure and free prayers: nor will it succeed in preserving uninterruptedly the purity of its chastity, while even on those days on which it seems to chastise the flesh with severer abstinence, it feeds the fire of carnal desire with the fuel of the food that it has already taken.

Chapter XXIII.

Quemadmodum abundantia umorum genitalium castigetur. Nam quod semel per escarum abundantian concretus fuerit in medullis, necesse est egeri atque ab ipsa naturae lege propelli, quae exuberantiam cujuslibet umoris superflui velut noxiam sibi atque contrariam in semet ipsa residere non patitur ideoque rationabili semper et aequali est corpus nostrum parsimonia castigandum, ut si naturali hac necessitate commorantes in came omnimodis carere non possumus, saltim rarius nos et non amplius quamtrina vice ista conluvione respersos totius anni cursus inveniat, quod tureen sine ullo pruritu quietus egerat sopor, non fallax imago index occultae voluptatis eliciat. Wherefore this is the moderate and even allowance and measure of abstinence, of which we spoke, which has the approval also of the judgment of the fathers; viz., that daily hunger should go hand in hand with our daily meals, preserving both body and soul in one and the same condition, and not allowing the mind either to faint through weariness from fasting, nor to be oppressed by over-eating, for it ends in such a sparing diet that sometimes a man neither notices nor remembers in the evening that he has broken his fast.

Chapter XXIV.

Of the difficulty of uniformity in eating; and of the gluttonyof brother Benjamin. And so far is this not done without difficulty, that those who know nothing of perfect discretion would rather prolong their fasts for two days, and reserve for tomorrow what they should have eaten today, so that when they come to partake of food they may enjoy as much as they can desire. And you know that lastly your fellow citizen Benjamin most obstinately stuck to this: as he would not every day partake of his two biscuits, nor, continually take his meagre fare with uniform self-discipline, but preferred always to continue his fasts for two days that when he came to eat he might fill his greedy stomach with a double portion, and by eating four biscuits enjoy a comfortable sense of repletion, and manage to fill his belly by means of a two days' fast. And you doubtless remember what sort of an end there was to the life of this man who obstinately and pertinaciously relied on his own judgment rather than on the traditions of the Elders, for he forsook the desert and returned back to the vain philosophy of this world and earthly vanities, and so confirmed the above mentioned opinion of the Eiders by the example of his downfall, and by his destruction teaches a lesson that no one who trusts in his own opinion and judgment can possibly climb the heights of perfection, nor fail to be deceived by the dangerous wiles of the devil.

Chapter XXV.

A question how is it possible always to observe one and thesame measure. Germanus: How then can we observe this measure without ever breaking it? for sometimes at the ninth hour when the Station fast is over, brethren come to see us and then we must either for their sakes add something to our fixed and customary portion, or certainly fail in that courtesy which we are told to show to everybody.

Chapter XXVI.

The answer how we should not exceed the proper measure offood.

Moses: Both duties must be observed in the same way and with equal care: for we ought most scrupulously to preserve the proper allowance of food for the sake of our abstinence, and in like manner out of charity to show courtesy and encouragement to any of the brethren who may arrive; because it is absolutely ridiculous when you offer food to a brother, nay, to Christ Himself, not to partake of it with him, but to make yourself a stranger to his repast. And so we shall keep clear of guilt on either hand if we observe this plan; viz., at the ninth hour to partake of one of the two biscuits which form our proper canonical allowance, and to keep back the other to the evening, in expectation of something like this, that if any of the brethren comes to see us we may partake of it with him, and so add nothing to our own customary allowance: and by this arrangement the arrival of our brother which ought to be a pleasure to us will cause us no inconvenience: since we shall show him the civilities which courtesy requires in such a way as to relax nothing of the strictness of our abstinence.

But if no one should come, we may freely take this last biscuit as belonging to us according to our canonical rule, and by this frugality of ours as a single biscuit was taken at the ninth hour, our stomach will not be overloaded at eventide, a thing which is often the case with those who under the idea that they are observing a stricter abstinence put off all their repast till evening; for the fact that we have but recently taken food hinders our intellect from being bright and keen both in our evening and in our nocturnal prayers, and so at the ninth hour a convenient and suitable time has been allowed for food, in which a monk can refresh himself and so find that he is not only fresh and bright during his nocturnal vigils, but also perfectly ready for his evening prayers, as his food is already digested.

With such a banquet of two courses, as it were, the holy Moses feasted us, showing us not only the grace and power of discretion by his present learned speech, but also the method of renunciation and the end and aim of the monastic life by the discussion previously held; so as to make clearer than daylight what we had hitherto pursued simply with fervour of spirit and zeal for God but with closed eyes, and to make us feel how far we had up till then wandered from purity of heart and the straight line of our course, since the practice of all visible arts belonging to this life cannot possibly stand without an understanding of their aim, nor can it be taken in hand without a clear view of a definite end.

Chapter I.

Of the life and conduct of Abbot Paphnutius.

IN that choir of saints who shine like brilliant stars in the night of this world, we have seen the holy. Paphnutius, like some great luminary, shining with the brightness of knowledge. For he was a presbyter of our company, I mean of those whose abode was in the desert of Scete, where he lived to extreme old age, without ever moving from his cell, of which he had taken possession when still young, and which was five miles from the church, even to nearer districts; nor was he when worn out with years hindered by the distance from going to Church on Saturday or Sunday. But not wanting to return from thence empty handed he would lay on his shoulders a bucket of water to last him all the week, and carry it back to his cell, and even when he was past ninety would not suffer it to be fetched by the labour of younger men. He then from his earliest youth. threw himself into the monastic discipline with such fervour that when he had spent only a short time in it, he was endowed with the virtue of submission, as well as the knowledge of all good qualities.

For by the practice of humility and obedience he mortified all his desires, and by this stamped out all his faults and acquired every virtue which the monastic system and the teaching of the ancient fathers produces, and, inflamed with desire for still further advances, he was eager to penetrate into the recesses of the desert, so that, with no human companions to disturb him, he might be more readily united to the Lord, to whom he longed to be inseparably joined, even while he still lived in the society of the brethren. And there once more in his excessive fervour he outstripped the virtues of the Anchorites, and in his eager desire for continual divine meditation avoided the sight of them: and he plunged into solitary places yet wilder and more inaccessible, and hid himself for a long while in them, so that, as the Anchorites themselves only with great difficulty caught a glimpse of him every now and then, the belief was that he enjoyed and delighted in the daily society of angels, and because of this remarkable characteristic of his he was surnamed by them the Buffalo.

Chapter II.

Of the discourse of the same old man, and our reply to it. As then we were anxious to learn from his teaching, we came in some agitation to his cell towards evening. And after a short silence he began to commend our undertaking, because we had left our homes, and had visited so many countries out of love for the Lord, and were endeavouring with all our might to endure want and the trials of the desert, and to imitate their severe life, which even those who had been born and bred in the same state of want and penury, could scarcely put up with; and we replied that we had come for his teaching and instruction in order that we might be to some extent initiated in the customs of so great a man, and in that perfection which we had known from many evidences to exist in him, not that we might be honoured by any commendations to which we had no right, or be puffed up with any elation of mind, (with which we were sometimes exercised in our own cells at the suggestion of our enemy) in consequence of any words of his. Wherefore we begged him rather to lay before us what would make us humble and contrite, and not what would flatter us and puff us up.

Chapter III.

The statement of Abbot Paphnutius on the three kinds of vocations, and the three sorts of renunciations. Then The Blessed Paphnutius: There are, said he, three kinds of vocations. And we know that there are three sorts of renunciations as well, which are necessary to a monk, whatever his vocation may be. And we ought diligently to examine first the reason for which we said that there were three kinds of vocations, that when we are sure that we are summoned to God's service in the first stage of our vocation, we may take care that our life is in harmony with the exalted height to which we are called, for it will be of no use to have made a good beginning if we do not show forth an end corresponding to it. But if we feel that only in the last resort have we been dragged away from a worldly life, then, as it appears that we rest on a less satisfactory beginning as regards religion, so must we proportionately make the more earnest endeavours to rouse ourselves with spiritual fervour to make a better end. It is well too on every ground for us to know secondly the manner of the threefold renunciations because we shall never be able to attain perfection, if we are ignorant of it or if we know it, but do not attempt to carry it out in act.

Chapter IV.

An explanation of the three callings.

To make clear therefore the main differences between these three kinds of calling, the first is from God, the second comes through man, the third is from compulsion. And a calling is from God whenever some inspiration has taken possession of our heart, and even while we are asleep stirs in us at desire for eternal life and salvation, and bids us follow God and cleave to His commandments with life-giving contrition: as we read in Holy Scripture that Abraham was called by the voice of the Lord from his native country, and all his dear relations, and his father's house; when the Lord said "Get thee out from thy country and from thy kinsfolk and from thy father's house. And in this way we have heard that the blessed Antony also was called, the occasion of whose conversion was received from God alone. For on entering a church he there heard in the Gospel the Lord saying: "Whoever hateth not father and mother and children and wife and lands, yea and his own soul also, cannot be my disciple; and "if thou wilt be perfect, go sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come, follow me: And with heartfelt contrition he took this charge of the Lord as if specially aimed at him, and at once gave up everything and followed Christ, without any incitement thereto from the advice and teaching of men. The second kind of calling is that which we said took place through man;

viz., when we are stirred up by the example of some of the saints, and their advice, and thus inflamed with the desire of salvation: and by this we never forget that by the grace of the Lord we ourselves were summoned, as we were aroused by the advice and good example of the above-mentioned saint, to give ourselves up to this aim and calling; and in this way also we find in Holy Scripture that it was through Moses that the children of Israel were delivered from the Egyptian bondage. But the third kind of calling is that which comes from compulsion, when we have been involved in the riches and pleasures of this life, and temptations suddenly come upon us and either threaten us with peril of death, or smite us with the loss and confiscation of our goods, or strike us down with the death of those dear to us, and thus at length even against our will we are driven to turn to God whom we scorned to follow in the days of Our wealth. And of this compulsory call we often find instances in Scripture, when we read that on account of their sins the children of Israel were given up by the Lord to their enemies; and that on account of their tyranny and savage cruelty they

turned again, and cried to the Lord. And it says: "The Lord sent them a Saviour, called Ehud, the son of Gera, the son of Jemini, who used the left hand as well as the right:

and again we are told, "they cried unto the Lord, who raised them up a Saviour and delivered them, to wit, Othniel, the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. And it is of such that the Psalm speaks: "When He slew them, then they sought Him: and they returned and came to Him early in the morning: and they remem- bered that God was their helper, and the most High God their redeemer. And again: "And they cried unto the Lord when they were troubled, and He delivered them out of their distress."

Chapter V.

How the first of these calls is of no use to a sluggard, and the last is no hindrance to one who is in earnest.

OF these three calls then, although the two former may seem to rest on better principles, yet sometimes we find that even by the third grade, which seems the lowest and the coldest, men have been made perfect and most earnest in spirit, and have become like those who made an admirable beginning in approaching the Lord's service, and passed the rest of their lives also in most laudable fervour of spirit: and again we find that from the higher grade very many have grown cold, and often have come to a miserable end. And just as it was no hindrance to the former class that they seemed to be converted not of their own free will, but by force and compulsion, in as much as the loving kindness of the Lord secured for them the opportunity for repentance, so too to the latter it was of no avail that the early days of their conversion were so bright, because they were not careful to bring the remainder of their life to a suitable end. For in the case of Abbot Moses, who lived in a spot in the wilderness called Calamus, nothing was wanting to his merits and perfect bliss, in consequence of the fact that he was driven to flee to the monastery through fear of death, which was hanging over him because of a murder; for he made such use of his compulsory conversion that with ready zeal he turned it into a voluntary one and climbed the topmost heights of perfection.

As also on the Other hand; to very many, whose names I ought not to mention, it has been of no avail that they entered on the Lord's service with better beginning than this, as afterwards sloth and hardness of heart crept over them, and they fell into a dangerous state of torpor, and the bottomless pit of death, an instance of which we see clearly indicated in the call of the Apostles. For of what good was it to Judas that he had of his own free will embraced the highest grade of the Apostolate in the same way in which Peter and the rest of the Apostles had been summoned, as he allowed the splendid beginning of his call to terminate in a ruinous end of cupidity and covetousness, and as a cruel murderer even rushed into the betrayal of the Lord? Or what hindrance was it to Paul that he was suddenly blinded, and seemed to be drawn against his will into the way of salvation, as afterwards he followed the Lord with complete fervour of soul, and having begun by compulsion completed it by a free and voluntary devotion, and terminated with a magnificent end a life that was rendered glorious by such great deeds? Everything therefore depends upon the end; in which one

who was consecrated by a noble conversion at the outset may through carelessness turn out a failure, and one who was compelled by necessity to adopt the monastic life may through fear of God and earnestness be made perfect.

Chapter VI.

An account of the three sorts of renunciations.

WE must now speak of the renunciations, of which tradition and the authority of Holy Scripture show us three, and which every one of us ought with the utmost zeal to make complete. The first is that by which as far as the body is concerned we make light of all the wealth and goods of this world; the second, that by which we reject the fashions and vices and former affections of soul and flesh; the third, that by which we detach our soul from all present and visible things, and contemplate only things to come, and set our heart on what is invisible. And we read that the Lord charged Abraham to do all these. three at once, when He said to him "Get thee out from thy country, and thy kinsfolk, and thy father's house. First He said "from thy country," i.e., from the goods of this world, and earthly riches: secondly, "from thy kinsfolk," i.e., from this former life and habits and sins, which cling to us from our very birth and are joined to us as it were by ties of affinity and kinship: thirdly, "from thy father's house," i.e., from all the recollection of this world, which the sight of the eyes can afford. For of the two fathers, i.e., of the one who is to be forsaken, and of the one who is to be sought, David thus speaks in the person of God: "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear: forget also thine own people and thy father's house:

for the person who says "Hearken, O daughter," is certainly a Father; and yet he bears witness that the one, whose house and people he urges should be forgotten, is none the less father of his daughter. And this happens when being dead with Christ to the rudiments of this world, we no longer, as the Apostle says, regard "the things which are seen, but those which are not seen, for the things which are not seen are eternal," and going forth in heart from this temporal and visible home, turn our eyes and heart towards that in which we are to remain for ever. And this we shall succeed in doing when, while we walk in the flesh, we are no longer at war with the Lord according to the flesh, proclaiming in deed and actions the truth of that saying of the blessed Apostle "Our conversation is in heaven. To these three sorts of renunciations the three books of Solomon suitably correspond. For Proverbs answers to the first renunciation, as in it the desires for carnal things and earthly sins are repressed; to the second Ecclesiastes corresponds, as there everything which is done under the sun is declared to be vanity; to the third the Song of Songs, in which the soul

soaring above all things visible, is actually joined to the word of God by the contemplation of heavenly things.

Chapter VII.

How we can attain perfection in each of these sorts of renunciations.

Wherefore it Will not be of much advantage to us that we have made our first renunciation with the utmost devotion and faith, if we do not complete the second with the same zeal and ardour. And so when we have succeeded in this, we shall be able to arrive at the third as well, in which we go forth from the house of our former parent, (who, as we know well, was our father from our Very birth, after the old man, when we were "by nature children of wrath, as others also,") and fix our whole mental gaze on things celestial. And of this father Scripture says to Jerusalem which had despised God the true Father, "Thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother a Hittite; and in the gospel we read "Ye are of your father the devil and the lusts of your father ye love to do. And when we have left him, as we pass from things visible to things unseen we shall be able to say with the Apostle: "But we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved we have a habitation from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," and this also, which we quoted a little while ago: "But our conversation is in heaven, whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus, who will reform the body of our low estate made like to the body of His glory," and this of the blessed David:

"For I am a sojourner upon the earth," and "a stranger as all my fathers were; so that we may in accordance with the Lord's word be made like those of whom the Lord speaks to His Father in the gospel as follows: "They are not of the world, as I am not of the world," and again to the Apostles themselves: "If ye were of this world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of this world, therefore the world hateth you. Of this third renunciation then we shall succeed in reaching the perfection, whenever our soul is sullied by no stain of carnal coarseness, but, all such having been carefully eliminated, it has been freed from every earthly quality and desire, and by constant meditation on things Divine, and spiritual contemplation has so far passed on to things unseen, that in its earnest seeking after things above and things spiritual it no longer feels that it is prisoned in this fragile flesh, and bodily form, but is caught up into such an ecstasy as not only to hear no words with the outward ear, or to busy itself with gazing on the forms of things present, but not even to see things close at hand, or large objects straight before the very eyes. And of this no one can understand the

truth and force, except one who has made trial of what has been said, under the teaching of experience;

viz., one, the eyes of whose soul the Lord has turned away from all things present, so that he no longer considers them as things that will soon pass away, but as things that are already done with, and sees them vanish into nothing, like misty smoke; and like Enoch, ”walking with God,” and ”translated” from human life and fashions, not ”be found” amid the vanities of this life: And that this actually happened corporeally in the case of Enoch the book of Genesis thus tells us. ”And Enoch walked with God, and was not found, for God translated him. And the Apostle also says: ”By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death,” the death namely of which the Lord says in the gospel: ”He that liveth and believeth in me shall not die eternally. Wherefore, if we are anxious to attain true perfection, we ought to look to it that as we have outwardly with the body made light of parents, home, the riches and pleasures of the world, we may also inwardly with the heart forsake all these things and never be drawn back by any desires to those things which we have forsaken, as those who were led up by Moses, though they did not literally go back, are yet said to have returned in heart to Egypt; viz., by forsaking God who had led them forth with such mighty signs, and by worshipping the idols of Egypt of which they had thought scorn, as Scripture says:

”And in their hearts they turned back into Egypt, saying to Aaron: Make us gods to go before us,” for we should fall into like condemnation with those who, while dwelling in the wilderness, after they had tasted manna from heaven, lusted after the filthy food of sins, and of mean baseness, and should seem together with them to murmur in the same way: ”It was well with us in Egypt, when we sat over the flesh pots and ate the onions, and garlic, and cucumbers, and melons: A form of speech, which, although it referred primarily to that people, we yet see fulfilled today in our own case and mode of life: for everyone who after renouncing this world turns back to his old desires, and reverts to his former likings asserts in heart and act the very same thing that they did, and says ”It was well with me in Egypt,” and I am afraid that the number of these will be as large as that of the multitudes of backsliders of whom we read under Moses, for though they were reckoned as six hundred and three thousand armed men who came out of Egypt, of this number not more than two entered the land of promise. Wherefore we should be careful to take examples of goodness from those who are few and far between, because according to that figure of which we have spoken in the gospel ”Many are called but few” are said to be ”chosen.

A renunciation then in body alone, and a mere change of place from Egypt will not do us any good, if we do not succeed in achieving that renunciation in heart, which is far higher and more valuable. For of that mere bodily renunciation of which we have spoken the apostle declares as follows: ”Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and give my body to be burned, but have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. And the blessed Apostle would never have said this had it not been that he foresaw by the spirit that some who had given all their goods to feed the poor would not be able to attain to evangelical perfection and the

lofty heights of charity, because while pride or impatience ruled over their hearts they were not careful to purify themselves from their former sins, and unrestrained habits, and on that account could never attain to that love of God which never faileth, and these, as they fall short in this second stage of renunciation, can still less reach that third stage which is most certainly far higher. But consider too in your minds with great care the fact that he did not simply say ”If I bestow my goods. For it might perhaps be thought that he spoke of one who had not fulfilled the command of the gospel, but had kept back something for himself, as some half-hearted persons do.

But he says ”Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor,” i.e., even if my renunciation of those earthly riches be perfect. And to this renunciation he adds something still greater: ”And though I give my body to be burned, but have not charity, I am nothing:

As if he had said in other words, though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor in accordance with that command in the gospel, where we are told ”If thou wilt be perfect, go sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven,” renouncing them so as to keep back nothing at all for myself, and though to this distribution (of my goods) I should by the burning of my flesh add martyrdom so as to give up my body for Christ, and yet be impatient, or passionate or envious or proud, or excited by wrongs done by others, or seek what is mine, or indulge in evil thoughts, or not be ready and patient in bearing all that can be inflicted on me, this renunciation and the burning of the outer man will profit me nothing, while the inner man is still involved in the former sins, because, while in the fervour of the early days of my conversion I made light of the mere worldly substance, which is said to be not good or evil in itself but indifferent, I took no care to cast out in like manner the injurious powers of a bad heart, or to attain to that love of the Lord which is patient, which is ”kind, which envieth not, is not puffed up, is not soon angry, dealeth not perversely, seeketh not her own, thinketh no evil,” which ”beareth all things, endureth all things,” and which lastly never suffers him who follows after it to fall by the deceitfulness of sin.

Chapter VIII.

Of our very own possessions in which the beauty of the soulis seen or its foulness. WE ought then to take the utmost care that our inner man as well may cast off and make away with all those possessions of its sins, which it acquired in its former life: which as they continually cling to body and soul are our very own, and, unless we reject them and cut them off while we are still in the flesh, will not cease to accompany us after death. For as good qualities, or charity itself which is their source, may be gained in this world, and after the close of this life make the man who loves it lovely and glorious, so our faults transmit to that eternal remembrance a mind darkened and stained with foul colours. For the beauty or ugliness of the soul is the product of its virtues or its vices, the colour it takes from which either makes it so glorious, that it may well hear from the prophet ”And the king shall have pleasure in thy beauty,” or so black, and foul, and ugly, that it must surely acknowledge the stench of its shame, and say ”My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness,” and the Lord Himself says to it ”Why is not the wound of the daughter of my people closed?” And therefore these are our very own possessions, which continually remain with the soul, which no king and no enemy can either give or take away from us. These are our very own possessions which not even death itself can part from the soul, but by renouncing which we can attain to perfection, and by clinging to which we shall suffer the punishment of eternal death.

Chapter IX.

Of three sorts of possessions.

Riches and possessions are taken in Holy Scripture in three different ways, i.e., as good, bad, and indifferent. Those are bad, of which it is said: ”The rich have wanted and have · suffered hunger,” and ”Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation: and to have cast off these riches is the height of perfection; and a distinction which belongs to those poor who are commended in the gospel by the Lord’s saying: ”Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven; and in the Psalm: ”This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him,” and again: ”The poor and needy shall praise thy name. Those riches are good, to acquire which is the work of great virtue and merit, and the righteous possessor of which is praised by David who says ”The generation of the righteous shall be blessed: glory and riches are in his house, and his righteousness remaineth for ever: and again ”the ransom of a man’s life are his riches. And of these riches it is Said in the Apocalypse to him who has them not and to his shame is poor and naked: ”I will begin,” says he, ”to vomit thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest I am rich and wealthy and have need of nothing:

and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I counsel thee to buy of me gold fire-tried, that thou mayest be made rich, and mayest be clothed in white garments, and that the shame of thy nakedness may not appear. There are some also which are indifferent, i.e., which may be made either good or bad: for they are made either one or the other in accordance with the will and character of those who use them: of which the blessed, Apostle says ”Charge the rich of this world not to be high-minded nor to trust in the uncertainty of riches, but in God (who giveth us abundantly all things to enjoy), to do good, to give easily, to communicate to Others, to lay up in store for themselves a good foundation that they may lay hold on the true life. These are what the rich man in the gospel kept, and never distributed to the poor,-while the beggar Lazarus was lying at his gate and desiring to be fed with his crumbs; and so he was condemned to the unbearable flames and everlasting heat of hell-fire.

Chapter X.

That none can become perfect merely through the first gradeof renunciation.

IN leaving then these visible goods of the world we forsake not our own wealth, but that which is not ours, although we boast of it as either gained by our own exertions or inherited by us from our forefathers. For as I said nothing is our own, save this only which we possess with our heart, and which cleaves to our soul, and therefore cannot be taken away from us by any one. But Christ speaks in terms of censure of those visible riches, to those who clutch them as if they were their own, and refuse to share them with those in want. ”If ye have not been faithful in what is another’s, who will give to you what is your own? Plainly then it is not only daily experience which teaches us that these riches are not our own, but this saying of our Lord also, by the very title which it gives them. But concerning visible and worthless riches Peter says to the Lord: ”Lo, we have left all and followed thee. What shall we have therefore? when it is clear that they had left nothing but their miserable broken nets.

And unless this expression ”all” is understood to refer to that renunciation of sins which is really great and important, we shall not find that the Apostles had left anything of any value, or that the Lord had any reason for bestowing on them the blessing of so great glory, that they were allowed to hear from Him that ”in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. If then those, who have completely renounced their earthly and visible goods, cannot for sufficient reason attain to Apostolic charity, nor climb with readiness and vigour to that third stage of renunciation which is still higher and belongs to but few, what should those think of themselves, who do not even make that first step (which is very easy) a thorough one, but keep together with their old want of faith, their former sordid riches, and fancy that they can boast of the mere name of monks? The first renunciation then of which we spoke is of what is not our own, and therefore is not enough of itself to confer perfection on the renunciant, unless he advances to the second, which is really and truly a renunciation of what belongs to us.

And when we have made sure of this by the expulsion of all our faults, we shall mount to the heights of the third renunciation also, whereby we rise above not merely all those things which are done in this world or specially belong to men, but even that whole universe around

us which is esteemed so glorious, and shall with heart and soul look down upon it as subject to vanity and destined soon to pass away; as we look, as the Apostle says, ”not on those things which are seen, but on those which are not seen: for the things that are seen, are temporal, and the things which are not seen are eternal; that so we may be found worthy to hear that highest utterance, which was spoken to Abraham: ”and come into a land which I will show thee,” which clearly shows that unless a man has made those three former renunciations with all earnestness of mind, he cannot attain to this fourth, which is granted as a reward and privilege to one whose renunciation is perfect, that he may be found worthy to enter the land of promise which no longer bears for him the thorns and thistles of sins; which after all the passions have been driven out is acquired by purity of heart even in the body, and whichno good deeds or exertions of man’s efforts (can gain), but which the Lord Himself promises to show, saying ”And come into the land which I will show to thee:

which clearly proves that the beginning of our salvation results from the call of the Lord, Who says ”Get thee out from thy country,” and that the completion of perfection and purity is His gift in the same way, as He says ”And come into the land which I will show thee,” i.e., not one you yourself can know or discover by your own efforts, but one which I will show not only to one who is ignorant of it, but even to one who is not looking for it. And from this we clearly gather that as we hasten to the way of salvation through being stirred up by the inspiration of the Lord, so too it is under the guidance of His direction and illumination that we attain to the perfection of the highest bliss.

Chapter XI.

A question on the free will of man and the grace of God. Germanus: Where then is there room for free will, and how is it ascribed to our efforts that we are worthy of praise, if God both begins and ends everything in us which concerns our salvation?

Chapter XII.

The answer on the economy of Divine Grace, with free will stillremaining in us.

Paphnutius: This would fairly influence us, if in every work and practice, the beginning and the end were everything, and there were no middle in between. And so as we know that God creates opportunities of salvation in various ways, it is in our power to make use of the opportunities granted to us by heaven more or less earnestly. For just as the offer came from God Who called him "get thee out of thy country," so the obedience was on the part of Abraham who went forth; and as the fact that the saying "Come into the land" was carried into action, was the work of him who obeyed, so the addition of the words "which I will show thee" came from the grace of God Who commanded or promised it. But it is well for us to be sure that although we practise every virtue with unceasing efforts, yet with all our exertions and zeal we can never arrive at perfection, nor is mere human diligence and toil of itself sufficient to deserve to reach the splendid reward of bliss, unless we have secured it by means of the co-operation of the Lord, and His directing our heart to what is right. And so we ought every moment to pray and say with David "Order my steps in thy paths that my footsteps slip not: and "He hath set my feet upon a rock and ordered my goings:

that He Who is the unseen ruler of the human heart may vouchsafe to turn to the desire of virtue that will of ours, which is more readily inclined to vice either through want of knowledge of what is good, or through the delights of passion. And we read this in a verse in which the prophet sings very plainly: "Being pushed I was overturned that I might fall," where the weakness of our free will is shown. And "the Lord sustained me: again this shows that the Lord's help is always joined to it, and by this, that we may not be altogether destroyed by our free will, when He sees that we have stumbled, He sustains and supports us, as it were by stretching out His hand. And again: "If I said my foot was moved; viz., from the slippery character of the will, "Thy mercy, O Lord, helped me. Once more he joins on the help of God to his own weakness, as he confesses that it was not owing to his own efforts but to the mercy of God, that the foot of his faith was not moved. And again:

"According to the multitude of the sorrows which I had in my heart," which sprang most certainly from my free will, "Thy comforts have refreshed my soul," i.e., by coming through Thy inspiration into my heart, and laying open the view of future blessings which Thou hast prepared for them who labour in Thy name, they not only removed all anxiety from my

heart, but actually conferred upon it the greatest delight. And again: ”Had it not been that the Lord helped me, my soul had almost dwelt in hell. He certainly shows that through the depravity of this free will he would have dwelt in hell, had he not been saved by the assistance and protection of the Lord. For ”By the Lord,” and not by free-will, ”are a man’s steps directed,” and ”although the righteous fair” at least by free will, ”he shall not be east away. And why? because ”the Lord upholdeth him with His hand: and this is to say with the utmost clearness: None of the righteous are sufficient of themselves to acquire righteousness, unless every moment when they stumble and fall the Divine mercy supports them with His hands, that they may not utterly collapse and perish, when they have been cast down through the weakness of free will.

Chapter XIII.

That the ordering of our way comes from God. And truly the saints have never said that it was by their own efforts that they secured the direction of the way in which they walked in their course towards advance and perfection of virtue, but rather they prayed for it from the Lord, saying ”Direct me in Thy truth,” and ”direct my way in thy Sight.” But someone else declares that he discovered this very fact not only by faith, but also by experience, and as it were from the very nature of things: ”I know, O Lord, that the way of man is not his: neither is it in a man to walk and to direct his steps.” And the Lord Himself says to Israel: ”I will direct him like a green fir-tree: from Me is thy fruit found.”

Chapter XIV.

That knowledge of the law is given by the guidance and illumination of the Lord. The knowledge also of the law itself they daily endeavour to gain not by diligence in reading, but by the guidance and illumination of God as they say to Him: ”Show me Thy ways, O Lord, and teach me Thy paths:” and ”open Thou mine eyes: and I shall see the wondrous things of Thy law:” and ”teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God;” and again: ”Who teacheth man knowledge.”

Chapter XV.

That the understanding, by means of which we can recognize God's commands, and the performance of a good will are both gifts from the Lord.

Further the blessed David asks of the Lord that he may gain that very understanding, by which he can recognize God's com- rounds which, he well knew, were written in the book of the law, and he says "I am Thy servant: O give me understanding that I may learn Thy commandments. Certainly he was in possession of understanding, which had been granted to him by nature, and also had at his fingers' ends a knowledge of God's commands which were preserved in writing in the law: and still he prayed the Lord that he might learn this more thoroughly as he knew that what came to him by nature would never be sufficient for him, unless his understanding was enlightened by the Lord by a daily illumination from Him, to understand the law spiritually and to recognize His commands more clearly, as the "chosen vessel" also declares very plainly this which we are insisting on. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do according to good will. What could well be clearer than the assertion that both our good will and the completion of our work are fully wrought in us by the Lord? And again "For it is granted to you for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him but also to suffer for Him. Here also he declares that the beginning of our conversion and faith, and the endurance of suffering is a gift to us from the Lord.

And David too, as he knows this, similarly prays that the same thing may be granted to him by God's mercy. "Strengthen, O God, that which Thou hast wrought in us: showing that it is not enough for the beginning of our salvation to be granted by the gift and grace of God, unless it has been continued and ended by the same pity and continual help from Him. For not free will but the Lord "looseth them that are bound. No strength of ours, but the Lord "raiseth them that are fallen: no diligence in reading, but "the Lord enlightens the blind: where the Greeks have ku/rioj sofoi/ tuflou/j, i.e., "the Lord maketh wise the blind: no care on our part, but "the Lord careth for the stranger: no courage of ours, but "the Lord assists (or supports) all those who are down. But this we say, not to slight our zeal and efforts and diligence, as if they were applied unnecessarily and foolishly, but that we may know that we cannot strive without the help of God, nor can our efforts be of any use in securing the great reward of purity, unless it has been granted to us by the assistance and mercy of the

Lord: for ”a horse is prepared for the day of battle: but help cometh from the Lord,” ”for no man can prevail by strength. We ought then always to sing with the blessed David:

”My strength and my praise is” not my free will, but ”the Lord, and He is become my salvation. And the teacher of the Gentiles was not ignorant of this when he declared that he was made capable of the ministry of the New Testament not by his own merits or efforts but by the mercy of God. ”Not” says he, ”that we are capable of thinking anything of ourselves as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God, which can be put in less good Latin but more forcibly, ”our capability is of God,” and then there follows: ”Who also made us capable ministers of the New Testament.”

Chapter XVI.

That faith itself must be given us by the Lord.

But so thoroughly did the Apostles realize that everything which concerns salvation was given them by the Lord, that they even asked that faith itself should be granted from the Lord, saying: ”Add to us faith” as they did not imagine that it could be gained by free will, but believed that it would be bestowed by the free gift of God. Lastly the Author of man’s salvation teaches us how feeble and weak and insufficient our faith would be unless it were strengthened by the aid of the Lord, when He says to Peter ”Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed to my Father that thy faith fail not. And another finding that this was happening in his own case, and seeing that his faith was being driven by the waves of unbelief on the rocks which would cause a fearful shipwreck, asks of the same Lord an aid to his faith, saying ”Lord, help mine unbelief. So thoroughly then did those Apostles and men in the gospel realize that everything which is good is brought to perfection by the aid of the Lord, and not imagine that they could preserve their faith unharmed by their own strength or free will that they prayed that it might be helped or granted to them by the Lord.

And if in Peter’s case there was need of the Lord’s help that it might not fail, who will be so presumptuous and blind as to fancy that he has no need of daily assistance from the Lord in order to preserve it? Especially as the Lord Himself has made this clear in the gospel, saying: ”As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, so no more can ye, except ye abide in me. And again: ”for without me ye can do nothing. How foolish and wicked then it is to attribute any good action to our own diligence and not to God’s grace and assistance, is clearly shown by the Lord’s saying, which lays down that no one can show forth the fruits of the Spirit without His inspiration and co-operation. For ”every good gift and every perfect boon is from above, coming down from the Father of lights. And Zechariah too says, ”For whatever is good is His, and what is excellent is from Him. And so the blessed Apostle consistently says: ”What hast thou which thou didst not receive? But if thou didst receive it, why boastest thou as if thou hadst not received it?”

Chapter XVII.

That temperateness and the endurance of temptations must begiven to us by the Lord. And that all the endurance, with which we can bear the temptations brought upon us, depends not so much on our own strength as on the mercy and guidance of God, the blessed Apostle thus declares: ”No temptation hath come upon you but such as is common to man. But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation make also a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” And that God fits and strengthens our souls for every good work, and worketh in us all those things which are pleasing to Him, the same Apostle teaches: ”May the God of peace who brought out of darkness the great Shepherd of the sheep, Jesus Christ, in the blood of the everlasting Testament, fit you in all goodness, working in you what is well-pleasing in His sight.” And that the same thing may happen to the Thessalonians he prays as follows, saying: ”Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father who hath loved us and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope in grace, exhort your hearts, and confirm you in every good word and work.”

Chapter XVIII.

That the continual fear of God must be bestowed on us by theLord. And lastly the prophet Jeremiah, speaking in the person of God, clearly testifies that even the fear of God, by which we can hold fast to Him, is shed upon us by the Lord: saying as follows: ”And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me all days: and that it may be well with them and with their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them and will not cease to do them good: and I will give My fear in their hearts that they may not revolt from Me.” Ezekiel also says: ”And I will give them one heart, and will put a new spirit in their bowels: and I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh and will give them a heart of flesh: that they may walk in My commandments, and keep My judgments and do them: and that they may be My people, and I may be their God.”

Chapter XIX.

That the beginning of our good will and its completion comesfrom God.

And this plainly teaches us that the beginning of our good will is given to us by the inspiration of the Lord, when He draws us towards the way of salvation either by His own act, or by the exhortations of some man, or by compulsion; and that the consummation of our good deeds is granted by Him in the same way: but that it is in our own power to follow up the encouragement and assistance of God with more or less zeal, and that accordingly we are rightly visited either with reward or with punishment, because we have been either careless or careful to correspond to His design and providential arrangement made for us with such kindly regard. And this is clearly and plainly described in Deuteronomy. "When," says he, "the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which thou art going to possess, and shall have destroyed many nations before thee, the Hittite, and the Gergeshite, and the Amorite, the Canaanite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, seven nations much more numerous than thou art and stronger than thou, and the Lord thy God shall have delivered them to thee, thou shalt utterly destroy them. Thou shalt make no league with them. Neither shalt thou make marriage with them.

So then Scripture declares that it is the free gift of God that they are brought into the land of promise, that many nations are destroyed before them, that nations more numerous and mightier than the people of Israel are given up into their hands. But whether Israel utterly destroys them, or whether it preserves them alive and spares them, and whether or no it makes a league with them, and makes marriages with them or not, it declares lies in their own power. And by this testimony we can clearly see what we ought to ascribe to free will, and what to the design and daily assistance of the Lord, and that it belongs to divine grace to give us opportunities of salvation and prosperous undertakings and victory: but that it is ours to follow up the blessings which God gives us with earnestness or indifference. And this same fact we see is plainly taught in the healing of the blind men. For the fact that Jesus passed by them, was a free gift of Divine providence and condescension. But the fact that they cried out and said "Have mercy on us, Lord, thou son of David," was an act of their own faith and belief. That they received the sight of their eyes was a gift of Divine pity. But that after the reception of any blessing, the grace of God, and the use of free will both remain, the case of the ten lepers, who were all healed alike, shows us.

For when one of them through goodness of will returned thanks, the Lord looking for the nine, and praising the one, showed that He was ever anxious to help even those who were unmindful of His kindness. For even this is a gift of His visitation; viz., that he receives and commends the grateful one, and looks for and censures those who are thankless.

Chapter XX.

That nothing can be done in this world without God. But it is right for us to hold with unswerving faith that nothing whatever is done in this world without God. For we must acknowledge that everything is done either by His will or by His permission, i.e., we must believe that whatever is good is carried out by the will of God and by His aid, and whatever is the reverse is done by His permission, when the Divine Protection is withdrawn from us for our sins and the hardness of our hearts, and suffers the devil and the shameful passions of the body to lord it over us. And the words of the Apostle most assuredly teach us this, when he says: "For this cause God delivered them up to shameful passions:" and again: "Because they did not like to have God in their knowledge, God delivered them up to a reprobate sense, to do those things which are not convenient." And the Lord Himself says by the prophet: "But My people did not hear My voice and Israel did not obey me: Wherefore I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts. They shall walk after their own inventions."

Chapter XXI.

An objection on the power of free will. Germanus: This passage very clearly shows the freedom of the will, where it is said ”If My people would have hearkened unto Me,” and elsewhere ”But My people would not hear My voice.” For when He says ”If they would have heard” He shows that the decision to yield or not to yield lay in their own power. How then is it true that our salvation does not depend upon ourselves, if God Himself has given us the power either to hearken or not to hearken?

Chapter XXII.

The answer; viz., that our free will always has need of thehelp of the Lord.

Paphnutius: You have shrewdly enough noticed how it is said ”If they would have hearkened to Me: but have not sufficiently considered either who it is who speaks to one who does or does not hearken; or what follows: ”I should soon have put down their enemies, and laid My hand on those that trouble them. Let no one then try by a false interpretation to twist that which we brought forward to prove that nothing can be done without the Lord, nor take it in support of free will, in such a way as to try to take away from man the grace of God and His daily oversight, through this test: ”But My people did not hear My voice,” and again: ”If My people would have hearkened unto Me, and if Israel would have walked in My ways, etc.: but let him consider that just as the power of free will is evidenced by the disobedience of the people, so the daily over- sight of God who declares and admonishes him is also shown. For where He says ”If My people would have hearkened unto Me” He clearly implies that He had spoken to them before. And this the Lord was wont to do not only by means of the written law, but also by daily exhortations, as this which is given by Isaiah: ”All day long have I stretched forth My hands to a disobedient and gain-saying people. Both points then can be supported from this passage, where it says:

”If My people would have hearkened, and if Israel had walked in My ways, I should soon have put down their enemies, and laid My hand on those that trouble them. For just as free will is shown by the disobedience of the people, so the government of God and His assistance is made clear by the beginning and end of the verse, where He implies that He had spoken to them before, and that afterwards He would put down their enemies, if they would have hearkened unto Him. For we have no wish to do away with man’s free will by what we have said, but only to establish the fact that the assistance and grace of God are necessary to it every day and hour. When he had instructed us with this discourse Abbot Paphnutius dismissed us from his cell before midnight in a state of contrition rather than of liveliness; insisting on this as the chief lesson in his discourse;

viz., that when we fancied that by making perfect the first renunciation (which we were endeavouring to do with all our powers), we could climb the heights of perfection, we should make the discovery that we had not yet even begun to dream of the heights to which a monk can rise, since after we had learnt some few things about the second renunciation, we

should find out that we had not before this even heard a word of the third stage, in which all perfection is comprised, and which in many ways far exceeds these lower ones.

Chapter I.

Of the life of Abbot Daniel. Among the other heroes of Christian philosophy we also knew Abbot Daniel, who was not only the equal of those who dwelt in the desert of Scete in every sort of virtue, but was specially marked by the grace of humility. This man on account of his purity and gentleness, though in age the junior of most, was preferred to the office of the diaconate by the blessed Paphnutius, presbyter in the same desert: for the blessed Paphnutius was so delighted with his excellent qualities, that, as he knew that he was his equal in virtue and grace of life, he was anxious also to make him his equal in the order of the priesthood. And since he could not bear that he should remain any longer in an inferior office, and was also anxious to provide a worthy successor to himself in his lifetime, he promoted him to the dignity of the priesthood. He however relinquished nothing of his former customary humility, and when the other was present, never took upon himself anything from his advance to a higher order, but when Abbot Paphnutius was offering spiritual sacrifices, ever continued to act as a deacon in the office of his former ministry. However, the blessed Paphnutius though so great a saint as to possess the grace of foreknowledge in many matters, yet in this case was disappointed of his hope of the succession and the choice he had made, for he himself passed to God no long time after him whom he had prepared as his successor.

Chapter II.

An investigation of the origin of a sudden change of feeling from inexpressible joy to extreme dejection of mind. SO then we asked this blessed Daniel why it was that as we sat in the cells we were sometimes filled with the utmost gladness of heart, together with inexpressible delight and abundance of the holiest feelings, so that I will not say speech, but feeling could not follow it, and pure prayers were readily breathed, and the mind being filled with spiritual fruits, praying to God even in sleep could feel that its petitions rose lightly and powerfully to God: and again, why it was that for no reason we were suddenly filled with the utmost grief, and weighed down with unreasonable depression, so that we not only felt as if we ourselves were, overcome with such feelings, but also our cell grew dreadful, reading palled upon us, aye and our very prayers were offered up unsteadily and vaguely, and almost as if we were intoxicated: so that while we were groaning and endeavouring to restore ourselves to our former disposition, our mind was unable to do this, and the more earnestly it sought to fix again its gaze upon God, so was it the more vehemently carried away to wandering thoughts by shifting aberrations and so utterly deprived of all spiritual fruits, as not to be capable of being roused from this deadly slumber even by the desire of the kingdom of heaven, or by the fear of hell held out to it. To this he replied.

Chapter III.

His answer to the question raised. A Threefold account of this mental dryness of which you speak has been given by the Elders. For it comes either from carelessness on our part, or from the assaults of the devil, or from the permission and allowance of the Lord. From carelessness on our part, when through our own faults, coldness has come upon us, and we have behaved carelessly and hastily, and owing to slothful idleness have fed on bad thoughts, and so make the ground of our heart bring forth thorns and thistles; which spring up in it, and consequently make us sterile, and powerless as regards all spiritual fruit and meditation. From the assaults of the devil when, sometimes, while we are actually intent on good desires, our enemy with crafty subtilty makes his way into our heart, and without our knowledge and against our will we are drawn away from the best intentions.

Chapter IV.

How there is a twofold reason for the permission and allowance of God. But for God's permission and allowance there is a twofold reason. First, that being for a short time forsaken by the Lord, and observing with all humility the weakness of our own heart, we may not be puffed up on account of the previous purity of heart. granted to us by His visitation; and that by proving that when we are forsaken by Him we cannot possibly recover our former state of purity and delight by any groanings and efforts of our own, we may also learn that our previous gladness of heart resulted not from our own earnestness but from His gift, and that for the present time it must be sought once more from His grace and enlightenment. But a second reason for this allowance, is to prove our perseverance, and steadfastness of mind, and real desires, and to show in us, with what purpose of heart, or earnestness in prayer we seek for the return of the Holy Spirit, when He leaves us, and also in order that when we discover with what efforts we must seek for that spiritual gladness-when once it is lost-and the joy of purity, we may learn to preserve it more carefully, when once it is secured, and to hold it with firmer grasp. For men are generally more careless about keeping whatever they think can be easily replaced.

Chapter V.

How our efforts and exertions are of no use without God'shelp. And by this it is clearly shown that God's grace and mercy always work in us what is good, and that when it forsakes us, the efforts of the worker are useless, and that however earnestly a man may strive, he cannot regain his former condition without His help, and that this saying is constantly fulfilled in our case: that it is "not of him that willeth or runneth but of God which hath mercy." And this grace on the other hand sometimes does not refuse to visit with that holy inspiration of which you spoke, and with an abundance of spiritual thoughts, even the careless and indifferent; but inspires the unworthy, arouses the slumberers, and enlightens those who are blinded by ignorance, and mercifully reproves us and chastens us, shedding itself abroad in our hearts, that thus we may be stirred by the compunction which He excites, and impelled to rise from the sleep of sloth. Lastly we are often filled by His sudden visitation with sweet odours, beyond the power of human composition-so that the soul is ravished with these delights, and caught up, as it were, into an ecstasy of spirit, and becomes oblivious of the fact that it is still in the flesh.

Chapter VI.

How it is sometimes to our advantage to be left by God.

But the blessed David recognizes that sometimes this departure of which we have spoken, and (as it were) desertion by God may be to some extent to our advantage, so that he was unwilling to pray, not that he might not be absolutely forsaken by God in anything (for he was aware that this would have been disadvantageous both to himself and to human nature in its course towards perfection) but he rather entreated that it might be in measure and degree, saying "Forsake me not utterly" as if to say in other words: I know that thou dost forsake thy saints to their advantage, in order to prove them, for in no other way could they be tempted by the devil, unless they were for a little forsaken by Thee. And therefore I ask not that Thou shouldest never forsake me, for it would not be well for me not to feel my weakness and say "It is good for me that Thou hast brought me low" nor to have no opportunity of fighting. And this I certainly should not have, if the Divine protection shielded me incessantly and unbrokenly. For the devil will not dare to attack me while supported by Thy defence, as he brings both against me and Thee this objection and complaint, which he ever slanderously brings against Thy champions, "Does Job serve God for nought? Hast not Thou made a fence for him and his house and all his substance round about?

But I rather entreat that Thou forsake me not utterly-what the Greeks call e\#wj sfo/dra, i.e., too much. For, first, as it is advantageous to me for Thee to forsake me a little, that the steadfastness of my love may be tried, so it is dangerous if Thou suffer me to be forsaken excessively in proportion to my faults and what I deserve, since no power of man, if in temptation it is forsaken for too long a time by Thine aid, can endure by its own steadfastness, and not forthwith give in to the power of the enemy's side, unless Thou Thyself, as Thou knowest the strength of man, and moderatest his struggles, "Suffer us not to be tempted above that we are able, but makest with the temptation a way of escape that we may be able to bear it. And something of this sort we read in the book of Judges was mystically designed in the matter of the extermination of the spiritual nations which were opposed to Israel: "These are the nations, which the Lord left that by them He might instruct Israel, that they might learn to fight with their enemies," and again shortly after:

"And the Lord left them that He might try Israel by them, whether they would hear the commandments of the Lord, which He had commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses,

or not," And this conflict God reserved for Israel, not from envy of their peace, or from a wish to hurt them, but because He knew that it would be good for them that while they were always oppressed by the attacks of those nations they might not cease to feel themselves in need of the aid of the Lord, and for this reason might ever continue to meditate on Him and invoke His aid, and not grow careless through lazy ease, and lose the habit of resisting, and the practice of virtue. For again and again, men whom adversity could not overcome, have been east down by freedom from care and by prosperity.

Chapter VII.

Of the value of the conflict which the Apostle makes to consist in the strife between the flesh and the spirit. This conflict too we read in the Apostle has for our good been placed in our members: "For the flesh lusteth against the spirit: and the spirit against the flesh. But these two are opposed to each other so that ye should not do what ye would." You have here too a contest as it were implanted in our bodies, by the action and arrangement of the Lord. For when a thing exists in everybody universally and without the slightest exception, what else can you think about it except that it belongs to the substance of human nature, since the fall of the first man, as it were naturally: and when a thing is found to be congenital with everybody, and to grow with their growth, how can we help believing that it was implanted by the will of the Lord, not to injure them but to help them? But the reason of this conflict; viz., of flesh and spirit, he tells us is this: that ye should not do what ye would." And so, if we fulfil what God arranged that we should not fulfil, i.e., that we should not do what we liked, how can we help believing that it is bad for us? And this conflict implanted in us by the arrangement of the Creator is in a way useful to us, and calls and urges us on to a higher state: and if it ceased, most surely there would ensue on the other hand a peace that is fraught with danger.

Chapter VIII.

A question, how it is that in the Apostle's chapter, after he has spoken of the lusts of the flesh and spirit opposing one another, he adds a third thing; viz., man's will. Germanus: Although some glimmer of the sense nosy seems clear to us, yet as we cannot thoroughly grasp the Apostle!s meaning, we want you to explain this more clearly to us. For the existence of three things seems to be indicated here: first, the struggle of the flesh against the spirit, secondly the desire of the spirit against the flesh, and thirdly our own free will, which seems to be placed between the two, and of which it is said: "Ye should not do what ye will." And on this subject though as I said we can gather some hints, from what you have explained of the meaning, yet-since this conference gives the opportunity-we are anxious to have it more fully explained to us.

Chapter IX.

The answer on the understanding of one who asks rightly. Daniel: It belongs to the understanding to discern the distinctions and the drift of questions; and it is a main part of knowledge to understand how ignorant you are. Wherefore it is said that "if a fool asks questions, it will be accounted wisdom," because, although one who asks questions is ignorant of the answer to the question raised, yet as he wisely asks, and learns what he does not know, this very fact will be counted as wisdom in him, because he wisely discovers what he was ignorant of. According then to this division of yours, it seems that in this passage the Apostle mentions three things, the lust of the flesh against the spirit, and of the spirit against the flesh, the mutual struggle of which against each other appears to have this as its cause and reason; viz., "that," says he, "we should not do what we would." There remains then a fourth case, which you have overlooked; viz., that we should do what we would not. Now then, we must first discover the meaning of those two desires, i.e., of the flesh and spirit, and so next learn to discuss our free will, which is placed between the two, and then lastly in the same way we can see what cannot belong to our free will.

Chapter X.

That the word flesh is not used with one single meaning only. WE find that the word flesh is used in holy Scripture with many different meanings: for sometimes it stands for the whole man, i.e., for that which consists of body and soul, as here ”And the Word was made flesh,” and ”All flesh shall see the salvation of our God.” Sometimes it stands for sinful and carnal men, as here ”My spirit shall not remain in those men, because they are flesh.” Sometimes it is used for sins themselves, as here: ”But ye are not in the flesh but in the spirit,” and again ”Flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God:” lastly there follows, ”Neither shall corruption inherit incorruption.” Sometimes it stands for consanguinity and relationship, as here: ”Behold we are thy bone and thy flesh,” and the Apostle says: ”If by any means I may provoke to emulation them who are my flesh, and save some of them.” We must therefore inquire in which of these four meanings we ought to take the word flesh in this place, for it is clear that it cannot possibly stand as in the passage where it is said ”The Word was made flesh,” and ”All flesh shall see the salvation of God.” Neither can it have the same meaning as where it is said ”My Spirit shall not remain in those men because they are flesh,” because the word flesh is not used here as it is there where it stands simply for a sinful man-when he says” The flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh.” Nor is he speaking of things material, but of realities which in one and the same man struggle either at the same time or separately, with the shifting and changing of time.

Chapter XI.

What the Apostle means by flesh in this passage, and whatthe lust of the flesh is.

Wherefore in this passage we ought to take ”flesh” as meaning not man, i.e., his ma- terial substance, but the carnal will and evil desires, just as ”spirit” does not mean anything material, but the good and spiritual desires of the soul: a meaning which the blessed Apostle has clearly given just before, where he begins: ”But I say, walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the desires of the flesh; for the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh: but these are contrary the one to the other, that ye may not do what ye would. And since these two; viz., the desires of the flesh and of the spirit co-exist in one and the same man, there arises an internal warfare daily carried on within us, while the lust of the flesh which rushes blindly towards sin, revels in those delights which are connected with present ease. And on the other hand the desire of the spirit is opposed to these, and wishes to be entirely absorbed in spiritual efforts, so that it actually wants to be rid of even the necessary uses of the flesh, longing to be so constantly taken up with these things as to desire to have no share of anxiety about the weakness of the flesh. The flesh delights in wantonness and lust: the spirit does not even tolerate natural desires. The one wants to have plenty of sleep, and to be satiated with food:

the other is nourished with vigils and fasting, so as to be unwilling even to admit of sleep and food for the needful purposes of life. The one longs to be enriched with plenty of everything, the other is satisfied even without the possession of a daily supply of scanty food. The one seeks to look sleek by means of baths, and to be surrounded every day by crowds of flatterers, the other delights in dirt and filth, and the solitude of the inaccessible desert, and dreads the approach of all mortal men. The one lives on the esteem and applause of men, the other glories in injuries offered to it, and in persecutions.

Chapter XII.

What is our free will, which stands in between the lust of theflesh and the spirit.

Between these two desires then the free will of the soul stands in an intermediate position somewhat worthy of blame, and neither delights in the excesses of sin, nor acquiesces in the sorrows of virtue. Seeking to restrain itself from carnal passions in such a way as not nevertheless to be willing to undergo the requisite suffering, and wanting to secure bodily chastity without chastising the flesh, and to acquire purity of heart without the exertion of vigils, and to abound in spiritual virtues together with carnal ease, and to attain the grace of patience without the irritation of contradiction, and to practise the humility of Christ without the loss of worldly honour, to aim at the simplicity of religion in conjunction with worldly ambition, to serve Christ not without the praise and favour of men, to profess the strictness which truth demands without giving the slightest offence to anybody: in a word, it is anxious to pursue future blessings in such a way as not to lose present ones. And this free will would never lead us to attain true perfection, but would plunge us into a most miserable condition of lukewarmness, and make us like those who are rebuked by the Lord's remonstrance in the Apocalypse: "I know thy works, that thou art neither hot nor cold. I would that thou wert hot or cold. But now thou art lukewarm, and I will forthwith spue thee out of my mouth;

were it not that these contentions which rise up on both sides disturb and destroy this condition of lukewarmness. For when we give in to this free will of ours and want to let ourselves go in the direction of this slackness, at once the desires of the flesh start up, and injure us with their sinful passions, and do not suffer us to continue in that state of purity in which we delight, and allure us to that cold and thorny path of pleasure which we have to dread. Again, if inflamed with fervour of spirit, we want to root out the works of the flesh, and without any regard to human weakness try to raise ourselves altogether to excessive efforts after virtue, the frailty of the flesh comes in, and recalls us and restrains us from that over excess of spirit which is bad for us:

and so the result is that as these two desires are contradicting each other in a struggle of this kind, the soul's free will, which does not like either to give itself up entirely to carnal desires, nor to throw itself into the exertions which virtue calls for, is tempered as it were by a fair balance, while this struggle between the two hinders that more dangerous free will

of the soul, and makes a sort of equitable balance in the scales of our body, which marks out the limits of flesh and spirit most accurately, and does not allow the mind inflamed with fervour of spirit to sway to the right hand, nor the flesh to incline through the pricks of sin, to the left. And while this struggle goes on day after day in us to our profit, we are driven most beneficially to come to that fourth stage which we do not like, so as to gain purity of heart not by ease and carelessness, but by constant efforts and contrition of spirit; to retain our chastity, of the flesh by prolonged fastings, hunger, thirst, and watchfulness; to acquire purpose of heart by reading, vigils, constant prayer and the wretchedness of solitude; to preserve patience by the endurance of tribulation; to serve our Maker in the midst of blasphemies and abounding insults; to follow after truth if need be amid the hatred of the world and its enmity;

and while, with such a struggle going on in our body, we are secured from slothful carelessness, and incited to that effort which is against the gain, and to the desire for virtue, our proper balance is admirably secured, and on one side the languid choice of our free will is tempered by fervour of spirit, and on the other the frigid coldness of the flesh is moderated by a gentle warmth, and while the desire of the spirit does not allow the mind to be dragged into unbridled licence, neither does the weakness of the flesh allow the spirit to be drawn on to unreasonable aspirations after holiness, lest in the one case incentives to all kinds of sins might arise, or in the other the earliest of all sins might lift its head and wound us with a yet more fatal dart of pride: but a due equilibrium will result from this struggle, and open to us a safe and secure path of virtue between the two, and teach the soldier of Christ ever to walk on the King's highway. And thus the result will be that when, in consequence of the lukewarmness arising from this sluggish will of which we have spoken, the mind has been more easily entangled in carnal desires, it is checked by the desire of the spirit, which by no means acquiesces in earthly sins;

and again, if through over much feeling our spirit has been carried in unbounded fervour and towards ill-considered and impossible heights, it is recalled by the weakness of the flesh to sounder considerations and rising above the lukewarm condition of our free will with due proportion and even course proceeds along the way of perfection. Something of this sort we hear that the Lord ordained in the case of the building of that tower in the book of Genesis, where a confusion of tongues suddenly sprang up, and put a stop to the blasphemous and wicked attempts of men. For there would have remained there in opposition to God, aye and against the interest of those whohad begun to assail His Divine Majesty, an agreement boding no good, unless by God's providence the difference of languages, raising disturbances among them, had forced them because of the variations of their words to go on to a better condition, and a happy and valuable discord had recalled to salvation those whom a ruinous union had driven to destruction, as when divisions arose they began to experience human weakness of which when puffed up by their wicked plots they had hitherto known nothing.

Chapter XIII.

Of the advantage of the delay which results from the strugglebetween flesh and spirit. But from the differences which this conflict causes, there arises a delay that is so far advantageous to us, and from this struggle an adjournment that is for our good, so that while through the resistance of the material body we are hindered from carrying out those things which we have wickedly conceived with our minds, We are sometimes recalled to a better mind either by penitence springing up, or by some better thoughts which usually come to us when delay in carrying out things, and time for reflection intervene. Lastly, those who, as we know, are not prevented from carrying out the desires of their free will by any hindrances of the flesh, I mean devils and spiritual wickednesses, these, since they have fallen from a higher and angelical state, we see are in a worse plight than men, much in as much as (owing to the fact that opportunity is always present to gratify their desires) they are not delayed from irrevocably performing whatever evil they have imagined because as their mind is quick to conceive it, so their substance is ready and free to carry it out; and while a short and easy method is given them of doing what they wish, no salutary second thoughts come in to amend their wicked intention.

Chapter XIV.

Of the incurable depravity of spiritual wickednesses. For a spiritual substance and one that is not tied to any material flesh has no excuse for an evil thought which arises within, and also shuts out forgiveness for its sin, because it is not harassed as we are by incentives of the flesh without, to sin, but is simply inflamed by the fault of a perverse will. And therefore its sin is without forgiveness and its weakness without remedy. For as it falls through the allurements of no earthly matter, so it can find no pardon or place for repentance. And from this we can clearly gather that this struggle which arises in us of the flesh and spirit against each other is not merely harmless, but actually extremely useful to us.

Chapter XV.

Of the value of the lost of the flesh against the spirit in our case

To begin with, because it is an immediate reproof of our sloth and carelessness, and like some energetic schoolmaster who never allows us to deviate from the line of strict discipline, and if our carelessness has ever so little exceeded the limits of due gravity which become it, it immediately excites us by the stimulus of desire, and chides us and recalls us to due moderation. Secondly, because, in the matter of chastity and perfect purity, when by God's grace we see that we have been for some time kept from carnal pollution, in order that we may not imagine that we can no longer be disturbed by the motions of the flesh and thereby be elated and puffed up in our secret hearts as if we no longer bore about the corruption of the flesh, it humbles and checks us, and reminds us by its pricks that we are but men. For as we ordinarily fall without much thought into other kinds of sins and those worse and more harmful, and are not so easily ashamed of committing them, so in this particular one the conscience is especially humbled, and by means of this illusion it is stung by the recollection of passions that have been neglected, as it sees clearly that it is rendered unclean by natural emotions, of which it knew nothing while it was still more unclean through spiritual sins; and so coming back at once to the cure of its former sluggishness, it is warned both that it ought not to trust in the attainments of purity in the past, which it sees to be lost by ever so small a falling away from the Lord, and also that it cannot attain the gift of this purity except by God's grace alone, since actual experience somehow or other teaches us that if we are anxious to reach abiding perfection of heart we must constantly endeavour to obtain the virtue of humility.

Chapter XVI.

Of the excitements of the flesh, without the humiliation of which we should fall more grievously. To the fact then that the pride which results from this purity would be more dangerous than all sins and wickednesses, and that we should on that account gain no reward for any height of perfect chastity, we may call as witnesses those powers of which we spoke before, which since it is believed that they experience no such fleshly lusts, were cast down from their high and heavenly estate in everlasting destruction simply from pride of heart. And so we should be altogether hopelessly lukewarm, since we should have no warning of carelessness on our part implanted either in our body or in our mind, nor should we ever strive to reach the glow of perfection, or even keep to strict frugality and abstinence, were it not that this excitement of the flesh springs up and humbles us and baffles us and makes us keen and anxious about purifying ourselves from spiritual sins.

Chapter XVII.

Of the lukewarmness of eunuchs. Lastly, on this account in those who are Eunuchs, we often detect the existence of this lukewarmness of mind, because, as they are so to speak free from the needs of the flesh, they fancy that they have no need either of the trouble of bodily abstinence, or of contrition of heart; and being rendered slack by this freedom from anxiety, they make no efforts either truly to seek or to acquire perfection of heart or even purity from spiritual faults. And this condition which is the result of their state in the flesh, becomes natural, which is altogether a worse state. For he who passes from the state of coldness to that of lukewarmness is branded by the Lord's words as still more hateful.

Chapter XVIII.

The question what is the difference between the carnal andnatural man. Germanus: You have, it seems to us, very clearly shown the value of the struggle which is raised between the flesh and spirit, so that we can believe that it can in a sort of way be grasped by us; and therefore we want to have this also explained to us in the same way; viz., what is the difference between the carnal and the natural man, or how the natural man can be worse than the carnal.

Chapter XIX.

The answer concerning the threefold condition of souls.

Daniel: There are, according to the statements of Scripture, three kinds of souls; the first is the carnal, the second the natural, and the third the spiritual: which we find are thus described by the Apostle. For of the carnal he says: ”I gave you milk to drink, not meat: for you were not able as yet. But neither indeed are you now able; for you are yet carnal. And again: ”For whereas there is among you envying and contention, are you not carnal? Concerning the natural he also speaks as follows: ”But the natural man perceiveth not the things that are of the spirit of God; for it is foolishness to him. But concerning the spiritual: ”But the spiritual man judgeth all things: and he himself is judged by no man. And again ”You who are spiritual instruct such ones in the spirit of meekness. And so, though at our renunciation we ceased to be carnal, i.e., we began to separate ourselves from intercourse with those in the world, and to have nothing to do with open pollution of the flesh, we must still be careful to strive with all our might to attain forthwith a spiritual condition, lest haply we flatter ourselves because we seem as far as the outer man is concerned to have renounced this world and got rid of the defilement of carnal fornication, as if by this we had reached the heights of perfection;

and thence become careless and indifferent about purifying ourselves from other affections, and so being kept back between these two, become unable to reach the stage of spiritual advancement; either because we think that it is amply sufficient for our perfection if we seem to separate ourselves, as regards the outward man, from intercourse with this world and from its pleasure, or because we are free from corruption and carnal intercourse, and thus we find ourselves in that lukewarm condition which is considered the worst of all, and discover that we are spued out of the mouth of the Lord, in accordance with these words of His: ”I would that thou wert hot or cold. But now thou art lukewarm and I will begin to spue thee out of My mouth. And not without good reason does the Lord declare that those whom he has previously received in the bowels of His love, and who have become shamefully lukewarm, shall be spued out and rejected from His bosom: in as much as, though they might have yielded Him some health-giving subsistence, they preferred to be torn away from His heart: thus becoming far worse than those who had never found their way into the Lord’s mouth as food, just as we turn away with loathing from that which nausea compels

us to bring up. For whatever is cold is warmed when received intothe mouth and is received with satisfaction and good results.

But whatever has been once rejected owing to its miserable luke-warmness, we cannot - I will not say touch with the lips - but even look on from a distance without the greatest disgust. Rightly then is he said to be worse, because the carnal man, i.e., the worldly man and the heathen, is more readily brought to saving conversion and to the heights of perfection than one who has been professed as a monk, but has not, as his rule directs, laid hold on the way of perfection, and so has once for all drawn back from that fire of spiritual fervour. For the former is at last broken down by the sins of the flesh, and acknowledges his uncleanness, and in his compunction hastens from carnal pollution to the fountain of true cleansing, and the heights of perfection, and in his horror at that cold state of infidelity in which he finds himself, he is kindled with the fire of the spirit and flies the more readily to perfection. For one who has, as we said, once started with a lukewarm beginning, and has begun to abuse the name of monk, and who has not laid hold on the way of this profession with the humility and fervour that he ought, when once he is infected by this miserable plague, and is as it were unstrung by it, can no longer of himself discern what is perfect nor learn from the admonitions of another. For he says in his heart that which the Lord tells us:

"Because I am rich and wealthy and want nothing; and so this which follows is at once applied to him: "But thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: and he is so far in a worse condition than a worldly man, because he has no idea that he is wretched or blind or naked or requires cleansing, or needs to be directed and taught by any one; and on this account he receives no sound advice as he does not realise that he is weighted with the name of monk, and is lowered in the judgment of all, whereas, though everybody believes him to be a saint and regards him as a servant of God, he must hereafter be subjected to a stricter judgment and punishment. Lastly, why should we any longer linger over those things which we have sufficiently discovered and proved by experience? We have often seen those who were cold and carnal, i.e., worldly men and heathen, attain spiritual warmth: but lukewarm and "natural" men never. And these too we read in the prophet are hated of the Lord, so that a charge is given to spiritual and learned men to desist from warning and teaching them, and not to sow the seed of the life-giving word in ground that is barren and unfruitful and choked by noxious thorns; but that they should scorn this, and rather cultivate fallow ground, i.e., that they should transfer all their care and teaching, and their zeal in the life-giving word to pagans and worldly men:

as we thus read: "Thus saith the Lord to the men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns."

Chapter XX.

Of those who renounce the world but ill.

In the last place I am ashamed to say how we find that a large number have made their renunciation in such a way that we find that they have altered nothing of their former sins and habits, but only their state of life and worldly garb. For they are eager in amassing wealth which they never had before, or else do not give up that which they had, or which is still sadder, they actually strive to augment it under this excuse; viz., that they assert that it is right that they should always support with it their relations or the brethren, or they hoard it under pretence of starting congregations which they imagine that they can preside over as Abbots. But if only they would sincerely seek after the way of perfection, they would rather endeavour with all their might and main to attain to this: viz., that they might strip themselves not only of their wealth but of all their former likings and occupations, and place themselves unreservedly and entirely under the guidance of the Elders so as to have no anxiety not merely about others, but even about themselves. But on the contrary we find that while they are eager to be set over their brethren, they are never subject to their Eiders themselves, and, with pride for their starting point, while they are quite ready to teach others they take no trouble to learn themselves or to practise what they are to teach:

and so it is sure to end in their becoming, as the Saviour said," blind leaders of the blind "so that "both fall into the ditch. And this pride though there is only one kind of it, yet takes a twofold form. One form continually puts on the appearance of seriousness and gravity, the other breaks out with unbridled freedom into silly giggling and laughing. The former delights in not talking: the latter thinks it hard to be kept to the restraint of silence, and has no scruples about talking freely on matters that are unsuitable and foolish, while it is ashamed to be thought inferior to or less well informed than others. The one on account of pride seeks clerical office, the other looks down upon it, since it fancies that it is unsuitable or beneath its former dignity and life and the deserts of its birth. And which of these two should be accounted the worse each man must consider and decide for himself. At any rate the kind of disobedience is one and the same, if a man breaks the Elder's commands whether it be owing to zeal in work, or to love of ease: and it is as hurtful to upset the rules of the monastery for the sake of sleep, as it is for the sake of vigilance, and it is just the same to transgress the Abbot's orders in order to read, as it is to slight them in order to sleep:

nor is there any difference in the incentive to pride if you neglect a brother, whether it is because of your fast or because of your breakfast: except that those faults which seem to show themselves under the guise of virtues and in the form of spirituality are worse and less likely to be cured than those which arise openly and from carnal pleasures. For these latter, like sicknesses which are perfectly plain and visible, are grappled with and cured, while the former, since they are covered under the cloak of virtue, remain uncured, and cause their victims to fall into a more dangerous and deadly state of ill health.

Chapter XXI.

Of those who having made light of great things busy themselves about trifles.

For how can we show how absurd it is that we see that some men after their first enthusiasm of renunciation in which they forsook their estates and vast wealth and the service of the world, and betook themselves to the monasteries, are still earnestly devoted to those things which cannot altogether be cut off, and which we cannot do without in this state of life, even though they are small and trifling things; so that in their case the anxiety about these trifles is greater than their love of all their property. And it certainly will not profit them much that they have disregarded greater riches and property, if they have only transferred their affections (on account of which they were to make light of them) to small and trifling things. For the sin of covetousness and avarice of which they cannot be guilty in the matter of really valuable things, they retain with regard to commoner matters, and so show that they have not got rid of their former greed but only changed its object. For if they are too careful about their mats, baskets, blankets, books, and other trifles such as these, the same passion holds them captive as before. And they actually guard and defend their rights over them so jealously as to get angry with theirbrethren about them, and, what is worse, they are not ashamed to quarrel over them.

And being still troubled by the bad effects of their former covetousness, they are not content to possess those things which the needs and requirements of the body compel a monk to have, according to the common number and measure, but here too they show the greediness of their heart, as they try to have those things which they are obliged to use, better got up than the others; or, exceeding all due bounds, keep as their special and peculiar property and guard from the touch of others that which ought to belong to all the brethren alike. As if the difference of metals, and not the passion of covetousness was what mattered; and as if it was wrong to be angry about big things, while one might innocently be about trifling matters: and as if we had not given up all our precious things just in order that we might learn more readily to think nothing about trifles! For what difference does it make whether one gives way to covetousness in the matter of large and splendid things, or in the matter of the merest trifles, except that we ought to think a man so far worse if he has made light of great things and then is a slave to little things? And so that sort of renunciation of the

world does not attain perfection of heart, because though it ranks as poverty it still keeps the mind of wealth.

Chapter I.

Our arrival at Abbot Serapion's cell, and inquiry on the different kinds of faults and the way to overcome them. IN that assembly of Ancients and Elders was a man named Serapion, especially endowed with the grace of discretion, whose Conference I think it is worth while to set down in writing. For when we entreated him to discourse of the way to overcome our faults, so that their origin and cause might be made clearer to us, he thus began.

Chapter II.

Abbot Serapion's enumeration of eight principal faults. There are eight principal faults which attack mankind; viz., first gastrimargia, which means gluttony, secondly fornication,thirdly philargyria, i.e., avarice or the love of money, fourthly anger, fifthly dejection, sixthly acedia, i.e., listlessness or low spirits, seventhly cenodoxia, i.e., boasting or vain glory; and eighthly pride.

Chapter III.

Of the two classes of faults and their fourfold manner of actingon us. OF these faults then there are two classes. For they are either natural to us as gluttony, or arise outside of nature as covetousness.But their manner of acting on us is fourfold.For some cannot be consummated without anact on the part of the flesh, as gluttony and fornication, while some can be completed without any bodily act, as pride and vainglory. Some find the reasons for their being excited outside us, as covetousness and anger; others are aroused by internal feelings, as accidie and dejection.

Chapter IV.

A review of the passions of gluttony and fornication and theirremedies.

And to make this clearer not only by a short discussion to the best of my ability, but by Scripture proof as well, gluttony and fornication, though they exist in us naturally (for sometimes they spring up without any incitement from the mind, and simply at the motion and allurement of the flesh) yet if they are to be consummated, must find an external object, and thus take effect only through bodily acts. For ”every man is tempted of his own lust. Then lust when it has conceived beareth sin, and sin when it is consummated begets death. For the first Adam could not have fallen a victim to gluttony unless he had had material food at hand, and had used it wrongly, nor could the second Adam be tempted without the enticement of some object, when it was said to Him: ”If Thou art the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. And it is clear to everybody that fornication also is only completedby a bodily act, as God says of this spirit to the blessed Job: ”And his force is in his loins, and his strength in the navel of his belly. And so these two faults in particular, which are carried into effect by the aid of the flesh, especially require bodily abstinence as well as spiritual care of the soul;

since the determination of the mind is not in itself enough to resist their attacks (as is sometimes the case with anger or gloominess or the other passions, which an effort of the mind alone can overcome without any mortification of the flesh); but bodily chastisement must be used as well, and be carried out by means of fasting and vigils and acts of contrition; and to this must be added change of scene, because since these sins are the results of faults of both mind and body, so they can only be overcome by the united efforts of both. And although the blessed Apostle says generallythat all faults are carnal, since he enumerates enmities and anger and heresies among other works of the flesh, yet in order to cure them and to discover their nature more exactly we make a twofold division of them: for we call some of them carnal, and some spiritual. And those we call carnal, which specially have to do with pampering the appetites of the flesh, and with which it is so charmed and satisfied, that sometimes it excites the mind when at rest and even drags it against its will to consent to its desire. Of which the blessed Apostle says: ”In which also we all walked in time past in the desires of our flesh, fulfilling the will of the flesh and of our thoughts, and were by nature children of wrath even as the rest.

But we call those spiritual which spring only from the impulse of the mind andnot merely contribute no pleasure to the flesh, but actually bring on it a weakness that is harmful to it, and only feed a diseased mind with the food of a most miserable pleasure. And therefore these need a single medicine for the heart: but those which are carnal can only be cured, as we said, by a double remedy. Whence it is extremely useful for those who aspire to purity, to begin by withdrawing from themselves the material which feeds these carnal passions, through which opportunity for or recollection of these same desires can arise in a soul that is still affected by the evil. For a complicated disease needs a complicated remedy. For from the body the object and material which would allure it must be withdrawn, for fear lest the lust should endeavour to break out into act; and before the mind we should no less carefully place diligent meditation on Scripture and watchful anxiety and the withdrawal into solitude, lest it should give birth to desire even in thought. But as regards other faults intercourse with our fellows is no obstacle, or rather it is of the greatest possible use, to those who truly desire to get rid of them, because in mixing with others they more often meet with rebuke, and while they are more frequently provoked the existence of the faults is made evident, and so they are cured with speedy remedies.

Chapter V.

How our Lord alone was tempted without sin. And so our Lord Jesus Christ, though declared by the Apostle's word to have been tempted in all points like as we are, is yet said to have been "without sin," i.e., without the infection of this appetite, as He knew nothing of incitements of carnal lust, with which we are sure to be troubled even against our will and without our knowledge; for the archangel thus describes the manner of His conception: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: therefore that which shall be born of thee shall be called holy, the Son of God."

Chapter VI.

Of the manner of the temptation in which our Lord wasattacked by the devil.

For it was right that He who was in possession of the perfect image and likeness of God should be Himself tempted through those passions, through which Adam also was tempted while he still retained the image of God unbroken, that is, through gluttony, vainglory, pride; and not through those in which he was by his own fault entangled and involved after the transgression of the commandment, when the image and likeness of God was marred. For it was gluttony through which he took the fruit of the forbidden tree, vainglory through which it was said "Your eyes shall be opened," and pride through which it was said "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. With these three sins then we read that the Lord our Saviour was also tempted; with gluttony when the devil said to Him: "Command these stones that they be made bread: with vainglory: "If Thou art the Son of God cast Thyself down:"with pride, when he showed him all the kingdoms of the worldand the glory of them and said: "All this will I give to Thee if Thou wilt fall down and worship me: in order that He might by His example teach us how we ought to vanquish the tempter when we are attacked on the same lines of temptation as He was. And so both the former and the latter are spoken of as Adam; the one being the first for destruction and death, and the other the first for resurrection and life.

Through the one the whole race of mankind is brought into condemnation, through the other the whole race of mankind is set free. The one was fashioned out of raw and unformed earth, the other was born of the Virgin Mary. In His case then though it was fitting that He should undergo temptation, yet it was not necessary that He should fail under it. Nor could He who had vanquished gluttony be tempted byfornication, which springs from superfluityand gluttony as its root, with which even the first Adam would not have been destroyed unless before its birth he had been deceived by the wiles of the devil and fallen a victim to passion. And therefore the Son of God is not said absolutely to have come "in the flesh of sin," but "in the likeness ofthe flesh of sin," because though His was true flesh and He ate and drank and slept, and truly received the prints of the nails, there was in Him no true sin inherited from the fall, but only what was something like it. For He had no experience of the fiery darts of carnal lust, which in our case arise even against our will, from the constitution of our natures, but He took upon Him something like this, by sharing in our nature.

For as He truly fulfilled every function which belongs to us, and bore all human infirmities, He has consequently been considered to have been subject to this feeling also, that He might appear through these infirmities to bear in His own flesh the state even of this fault and sin. Lastly the devil only tempted Him to those sins, by which he had deceived the first Adam, inferring that He as manwould similarly be deceived in other matters if he found that He was overcome by those temptations by which he had overthrown His predecessor. But as he was overthrown in the first encounter he was not able to bring upon Him the second infirmity which had shot up as from the root of the first fault. For he saw that He had not even admitted anything from which this infirmity might take its rise, and it was idle to hope for the fruit of sin from Him, as he saw that He in no sort of way received into Himself seeds or roots of it.

Yet according to Luke, who places last that temptation in which he uses the words ”If Thou art the Son of God, cast Thyself down,” we can understand this of the feeling of pride, so that that earlier one, which Matthew places third, in which, as Luke the evangelist says, the devil showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time and promised them to Him, may be taken of the feeling of covetousness, because after His victory over gluttony, he did not venture to tempt Him to fornication, but passed on to covetousness, which he knew to be the root of all evils, and when again vanquished inthis, he did not dare attack Him with any of those sins which follow, which, as he knew full well, spring from this as a root and source; and so he passed on to the last passion; viz., pride, by which he knew that those who are perfect and have overcome all other sins, can be affected, and owing to which he remembered that he himself in his character of Lucifer, and many others too, had fallen from their heavenly estate, without temptation from any of the preceding passions. In this order then which we have mentioned, which is the one given by the evangelist Luke, there is an exact agreement between the allurements and forms of the temptations by which that most crafty foe attacked both the first and the second Adam. For to the one he said ”Your eyes shall be opened;

to theother ”he showed all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. In the one case he said ”Ye shall be as gods; in the other, ”If Thou art the Son of God.”

Chapter VII.

How vainglory and pride can be consummated without anyassistance from the body. And to go on in the order which we proposed, with our account of the way in which the other passions act (our analysis of which was obliged to be interrupted by this account of gluttony and of the Lord's temptation) vainglory and pride can be consummated even without the slightest assistance from the body. For in what way do those passions need any action of the flesh, which bring ample destruction on the soul they take captive simply by its assent and wish to gain praise and glory from men? Or what act on the part of the body was there in that pride of old in the case of the above mentioned Lucifer; as he only conceived it in his heart and mind, as the prophet tells us: "Who saidst in thine heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will set my throne above the stars of God. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the most High." And just as he had no one to stir him up to this pride, so his thoughts alone were the authors of the sin when complete and of his eternal fall; especially as no exercise of the dominion at which he aimed followed.

Chapter VIII.

Of covetousness, which is something outside our nature, and of the difference between it and those faults which are natural to us.

Covetousness and anger, although they are not of the same character (for the former is something outside our nature, while the latter seems to have as it were its seed plot within us) yet they spring up in the same way, as in most instances they find the reasons for their being stirred in something outside of us. For often men who are still rather weak complain that they have fallen into these sins through irritation and the instigation of others, and are plunged headlong into thepassions of anger and covetousness by the provocation of other people. But that covetousness is something outside our nature, we can clearly see from this; viz., that it is proved not to have its first starting point inside us, nor does it originate in what contributes to keeping body and soul together, and to the existence of life. For it is plain that nothing belongs to the actual needs and necessities of our common life except our daily meat and drink: but everything else, with whatever zeal and care we preserve it, is shown to be something distinct from the wants of man by the needs of life itself. And so this temptation, as being something outside our nature, only attacks those monks who are but lukewarm and built on a bad foundation, whereas those which are natural to us do not cease from troubling even the best of monks and those who dwell in solitude.

And so far is this shown to be true, that we find that there are some nations who are altogether free from this passion of covetousness, because they have never by use and custom received into themselves this fault and infirmity. And we believe that the old world before the flood was for long ages ignorant of the madness of this desire. And in the case of each one ofus who makes his renunciation of the world a thorough one, we know that it is extirpated without any difficulty, if, that is, a man gives up all his property, and seeks the monasticdiscipline in such a way as not to allow himself to keep a single farthing. And we can find thousands of men to bear witness to this, who in a single moment have given up all their property, and have so thoroughly eradicated this passion as not to be in the slightest degree troubled by it afterwards, though all their life long they have to fight against gluttony, and cannot be safe from it without striving with the utmost watchfulness of heart and bodily abstinence.

Chapter IX.

How dejection and accidie generally arise without any external provocation, as in the case of other faults. Dejection and accidie generally arise without any external provocation, like those others of which we have been speaking: for we are well aware that they often harass solitaries, and those who have settled themselves in the desert without any intercourse with other men, and this in the most distressing way. And the truth of this any one who has lived in the desert and made trial of the conflicts of the inner man, can easily prove by experience.

Chapter X.

How six of these faults are related, and the two which differfrom them are akin to one another.

OF these eight faults then, although they are different in their origin and in their way of affecting us, yet the six former; viz., gluttony, fornication, covetousness, anger, dejection, accidie, have a sort of connexion with each other, and are, so to speak, linked together in a chain, so that any excess of the one forms a starting point for the next. For from superfluity of gluttony fornication is sure to spring, and from fornication covetousness, from covetousness anger, from anger, dejection, and from dejection, accidie. And so we must fight against them in the same way, and with the same methods: and having overcome one, we ought always to enter the lists against the next. For a tall and spreading tree of a noxious kind will the more easily be made to wither if the roots onwhich it depends have first been laid bare orcut; and a pond of water which is dangerous will be dried up at once if the spring and flowing channel which produce it are carefullystopped up. Wherefore in order to overcome accidie, you must first get the betterof dejection: in order to get rid of dejection, anger must first be expelled: in order to quell anger, covetousness must be trampled under foot: in order to root out covetousness, fornication must be checked: and in order to destroy fornication, you must chastise the sin of gluttony. But the two remaining faults;

viz., vainglory and pride, are connected together in a somewhat similar way as the others of which we have spoken, so that the growth of the one makes a starting point for the other (for superfluity of vainglory produces an incentive to pride); but they are altogether different from the six former faults, and are not joined in the same category with them, since not only is there no opportunity given for them to spring up from these, but they are actually aroused in an entirely different way and manner. For when these others have been eradicated these latter flourish the more vigorously, and from the death of the others they shoot forth and grow up all the stronger: and therefore we are attacked by these two faults in quite a different way. For we fall into each one of those six faults at themoment when we have been overcome by the ones that went before them; but into these two we are in danger of falling when we have proved victorious, and above all after some splendid triumph. In the cases then of all faults just as they spring up from the growth of those that go before them, so are they eradicated by getting rid of the earlier ones. And in this way in order that

pride may be driven out vainglory must be stifled, and so if we always overcome the earlier ones, the later ones will be checked;

and through the extermination of those that lead the way, the rest of our passions will die down without difficulty. And though these eight faults of which we have spoken are connected and joined together in the way which we have shown, yet they may be more exactly divided into four groups and sub-divisions. For to gluttony fornication is linked by a special tie: to covetousness anger, to dejection accidie, and to vainglory pride is closely allied.

Chapter XI.

Of the origin and character of each of these faults. And now, to speak about each kind offault separately: of gluttony there are three sorts: (I) that which drives a monk to eatbefore the proper and stated times; (2) that which cares about filling the belly and gorging it with all kinds of food, and (3) that which is on the lookout for dainties anddelicacies. And these three sorts give a monk no little trouble, unless he tries to free himself from all of them with the same care and scrupulousness. For just as one should never venture to break one's fast before the right time so we must utterly avoid all greediness in eating, and the choice and dainty preparation of our food: for from these three causes different but extremely dangerous conditions of the soul arise. For from the first there springs up dislike of the monastery, and thence there grows up disgust and intoleranceof the life there, and this is sure to be soonfollowed by withdrawal and speedy departure from it. By the second there are kindled the fiery darts of luxury and lasciviousness. The third also weaves the entangling meshes of covetousness for the nets of its prisoners, and ever hinders monks from following the perfect self-abnegation of Christ. And when there are traces of this passion in us we can recognize them by this;

viz., if we are kept to dine by one of the brethren we are not content to eat our food with the relish which he has prepared and offers to us, but take the unpar- donable liberty of asking to have something else poured. over it or added to it, a thing which we should never do for three reasons: (I) because the monastic mind ought always to be accustomed to practise endurance and abstinence, and like the Apostle, to learn to be content in whatever state he is. For one who is upset by taking an unsavoury morsel once and in a way, and who cannot even for a short time overcome the delicacy of his appetite will never succeed in curbing the secret and more important desires of the body; (2) because it sometimes happens that at the time our host is out of that particular thing which we ask for, and we make him feel ashamed of the wants and bareness of his table, by exposing his poverty which he would rather was only known to God; (3) because sometimes other people do not care about the relish which we ask for, and so it turns out that we are annoying most of them while intent on satisfying the desires of our own palate. And on this account we must by all means avoid such a liberty. Of fornication there are three sorts: (I) that which is accomplished by sexual intercourse;

(2) that which takes place without touching a woman, for which we read that Onan the son of the patriarch Judah was smitten by the Lord; and which is termed by Scripture uncleanness: of which the Apostle says: ”But I say to the unmarried and to widows, that it is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they do not contain let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn; (3) that which is conceived in heart and mind, of which the Lord says in the gospel: ”Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath already committed adultery with her in his heart. And these three kinds the blessed Apostle tells us must be stamped out in one and the same way. ”Mortify,” says he, ”your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, lust, etc. And again of two of them he says to the Ephesians: ”Let fornication and uncleanness be not so much as named among you: and once more: ”But know this that no fornicator or unclean person, or covetous person who is an idolater hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. And just as these three must be avoided by us with equal care, go they one and all shut us out and exclude us equally from the kingdom of Christ. Of covetousness there are three kinds: (I) That which hinders renunciants from allowing themselves of be stripped of their goods and property;

(2) that which draws us to resume with excessive eagerness the possession of those things which we have given away and distributed to the poor; (3) that which leads a man to covet and procure what he never previously possessed. Of anger there are three kinds: one which rages within, which is called in Greek qumo/j; another which breaks out in word and deed and action, which they term o0rgh/: of which the Apostle speaks, saying ”But now do ye lay aside all anger and indignation; the third, which is not like those in boiling over and being done with in an hour, but which lasts for days and long periods, which is called mh=nij. And all these three must be condemned by us with equal horror. Of deflection there are two kinds: one, that which springs up when anger has died down, or is the result of some loss we have incurred or of some purpose which has been hindered and interfered with; the other, that which comes from unreasonable anxiety of mind or from despair. Of accidie there are two kinds: one of which sends those affected by it to sleep; while the other makes them forsake their cell and flee away. Of vainglory, although it takes various forms and shapes, and is divided into different classes, yet there are two main kinds: (I) when we are puffed up about carnal things and things visible, and (2) when we are inflamed with the desire of vain praise for things spiritual and unseen.

Chapter XII.

How vainglory may be useful to us.

But in one matter vainglory is found to be a useful thing for beginners. I mean by those who are still troubled by carnal sins, as for instance, if, when they are troubled by the spirit of fornication, they formed an idea of the dignity of the priesthood, or of reputation among all men, by which they maybe thought saints and immaculate: and so with these considerations they repell the unclean suggestions of lust, as deeming them base and at least unworthy of their rank and reputation; and so by means of a smaller evil they overcome a greater one. For it is better for a man to be troubled by the sin of vainglory than for him to fall into the desire for fornication, from which he either cannot recover at all or only with great difficulty after he has fallen. And this thought is admirably expressed byone of the prophets speaking in the person of God, and saying: ”For My name’s sake I will remove My wrath afar off: and with My praise I will bridle thee lest thou shouldest perish,” i.e., while you are enchained by the praises of vainglory, you cannot possibly rush on into the depths of hell, or plunge irrevocably into the commission of deadly sins.

Nor need we wonder that this passion has the power of checking anyone from rushing into the sin of fornication, since it has been again and again proved by many examples that when once a man has been affected by its poison and plague, it makes him utterly indefatigable, so that he scarcely feels a fast of even two or three days. And we have often known some who are living in this desert, confessing that when their home was in the monasteries of Syria they could without difficulty go for five days without food, while now they are so overcome with hunger even by the third hour, that they can scarcely keep ontheir daily fast tothe ninth hour. And on this subject there is a very neat answer of Abbot Macarius to one who asked him why he was troubled with hunger as early as the third hour in the desert, when in the monastery he had often scorned food for a whole week, without feeling hungry. ”Because,” said he, ”here there is nobody to see your fast, and feed and support you with his praise of you: but there you grew fat on the notice of others and the food of vainglory.

And of the way in which, as we said, the sin of fornication is prevented by an attack of vainglory, there is an excellent and significant figure in the book of Kings, where, when the children of Israel had been taken captive by Necho, King of Egypt, Nebuchadnezzar, King of Assyria, came up and brought them back from the borders of Egypt to their own country, not

indeed meaning to restore them to their former liberty and their native land, but meaning to carry them off to his own land and to transport them to a still more distant country than the land of Egypt in which they had been prisoners. And this illustration exactly applies to the case before us. For though there is less harm in yielding to the sin of vainglory than to fornication, yet it is more difficult to escape from the dominion of vainglory. For somehow or other the prisoner who is carried off to a greater distance, will have more difficulty in returning to his native land and the freedom of his fathers, and the prophet's rebuke will be deservedly aimed at him: "Wherefore art thou grown old in a strange country? since a man is rightly said to have grown old in a strange country, if he has not broken up the Found of his faults. Of pride there are two kinds: (I) carnal, and (2) spiritual, which is the worse. For it especially attacks those who are seen to have made progress in some good qualities.

Chapter XIII.

Of the different ways in which all these faults assault us. Although then these eight faults trouble all sorts of men, yet they do not attack them all in the same way. For in one man the spirit of fornication holds the chief place: wrath rides rough shod over another: over another vainglory claims dominion: in an other pride holds the field: and though it is clear that we are all attacked by all of them, yet the difficulties come to each of us in very different ways and manners.

Chapter XIV.

Of the struggle into which we must enter against our faults,when they attack us.

Wherefore we must enter the lists against these faults in such a way that every one should discover his besetting sin, and direct his main attack against it, directing all his care and watchfulness of mind to guard against its assault, directing against it daily the weapons of fasting, and at all times hurling against it the constant darts of sighs and groanings from the heart, and employing against it the labours of vigils and the meditation of the heart, and further pouring forth to God constant tears and prayers and continually and expressly praying to be delivered from its attack. For it is impossible for a man to win a triumph over any kind of passion, unless he has first clearly understood that he cannot possibly gain the victory in the struggle with it by his own strength and efforts, although in order that he may be rendered pure he must night and day persist in the utmost care and watchfulness.

And even when he feels that he has got rid of this fault, he should still search the inmost recesses of his heart with the same purpose, and single out the worst fault which he can see among those still there, and bring all the forces of the Spirit to bear against it in particular, and so by always overcoming the stronger passions, he will gain a quick and easy victory over the rest, because by a course of triumphs the soul is made more vigorous, and the fact that the next conflict is with weaker passion insures him a readier success in the struggle: as is generally the case with those who are wont to face all kinds of wild beasts in the presence of the kings of this world, out of consideration for the rewards - a kind of spectacle which is generally called ”pancarpus. Such men, I say, direct their first assault against whatever beasts they see to be the strongest and fiercest, and when they have despatched these, then they can more easily lay low the remaining ones, which are not so terrible and powerful. So too, by always overcoming the stronger passions, as weaker ones take their place, a perfect victory will be secured for us without any risk. Nor need we imagine that if any one grapples with one fault in particular, and seems too careless about guarding against the attacks of others, he will be easily wounded by a sudden assault, for this cannot possibly happen.

For where a man is anxious to cleanse his heart, and has steeled his heart’s purpose against the attack of any one fault, it is impossible for him not to have a general dread of all other faults as well, and take similar care of them. For if a man renders himself unworthy of the prize of purity by contaminating himself with other faults, how can he possibly succeed in

gaining the victory over that one passion from which he is longing to be freed? But when the main purpose of our heart has singled out one passion as the, special object of its attack, we shall pray about it more earnestly, and with special anxiety and fervour shall entreat that we may be more. especially on our guard against it and so succeed in gaining a speedy victory. For the giver of the law himself teaches us that we ought to follow this plan in our conflicts and not to trust in our own power; as he says: ”Thou shalt not fear them because the Lord thy God is in the midst of thee, a God mighty and terrible: He will consume these nations in thy sight by little and little and by degrees. Thou wilt not be able to destroy them altogether: lest perhaps the beasts of the earth should increase upon thee. But the Lord thy God shall deliver them in thy sight; and shall slay them until they be utterly destroyed.”

Chapter XV.

How we can do nothing against our faults without the help of God, and how we should not be puffed up by victories over them.

And that we ought not to be puffed up by victories over them he likewise charges us; saying, "Lest after thou hast eaten and art filled, hast built goodly houses and dwelt in them, and shalt have herds of oxen and flocks of sheep, and plenty of gold and of silver, and of all things, thy heart be lifted up and thou remember not the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; and was thy leader in the great and terrible wilderness. Solomon also says in Proverbs: "When thine enemy shall fall be not glad, and in his ruin be not lifted up, lest the Lord see and it displease Him, and He turn away His wrath from him," i.e., lest He see thy pride of heart, and cease from attacking him, and thou begin to be forsaken by Him and so once more to be troubled by that passion which by God's grace thou hadst previously overcome. For the prophet would not have prayed in these words, "Deliver not up to beasts, O Lord, the soul that confesseth to Thee," unless he had known that because of their pride of heart some were given over again to those faults which they had overcome, in order that they might be humbled.

Wherefore it is well for us both to be certified by actual experience, and also to be instructed by countless passages of Scripture, that we cannot possibly overcome such mighty foes in our own strength, and unless supported by the aid of God alone; and that we ought always to refer the Whole Of our victory each day to God Himself, as the Lord Himself also gives us instruction by Moses on this very point: "Say not in thine heart when the Lord thy God shall have destroyed them in thy sight: For my righteousness hath the Lord brought me in to possess this land, whereas these nations are destroyed for their wickedness. For it is not for thy righteousness, and the uprightness of thine heart, that thou shalt go in to possess their lands: but because they have done wickedly they are destroyed at thy coming in. I ask what could be said clearer in opposition to that impious notion and impertinence of ours, in which we want to ascribe everything that we do to our own free will and our own exertions? "Say not," he tells us, "in thine heart, when the Lord thy God shall have destroyed them in thy sight: For my righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land. To those who have their eyes opened and their ears ready to hearken does not this plainly say:

When your struggle with carnal faults has gone well for you, and you see that you are free from the filth of them, and from the fashions of this world, do not be puffed up by the success of the conflict and victory and ascribe it to your own power and wisdom, nor fancy that you have gained the victory over spiritual wickedness and carnal sins through your own exertions and energy, and free will?For there is no doubt that in all this you could not possibly have succeeded, unless you had been fortified and protected by the help of the Lord.

Chapter XVI.

Of the meaning of the seven nations of whose lands lsrael took possession, and the reason why they are sometimes spoken of as ”seven,” and sometimes as ”many.”

These are the seven nations whose lands the Lord promised to give to the children of lsrael when they came out of Egypt. And everything which, as the Apostle says, happened to them ”in a figure” we ought to take as written for our correction. For so we read: ”When the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land, which thou art going in to possess, and shall have destroyed many nations before thee, the Hittite, and the Girgashites, and the Amorite, the Canaanite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite, seven nations much more numerous thanthou art and much stronger than thou: and the Lord thy God shall have delivered them to thee, thou shalt utterly destroy them. And the reason that they are said to be much more numerous, is that faults are many more in number than virtues and so in the list of them the nations are reckoned as seven in number, but when the attack upon them is spoken of they are set down without theirnumber being given, for thus we read ”And shall have destroyed many nations before thee.”For the race of carnal passions which springs from this sevenfold incentive and root of sin, is more numerous than that of Israel. For thence spring up murders, strifes, heresies, thefts, false witness, blasphemy, surfeiting, drunkenness, back-biting, buffoonery, filthy conversation, lies, perjury, foolish talking, scurrility, restlessness, greediness, bitterness, clamour, wrath, contempt, murmuring, temptation, despair, and many other faults, which it would take too long to describe.

And if we are inclined to think these small matters, let us hear what the Apostle thought about them, and what was his opinion of them: ”Neither murmur ye,” says he, ”as some of them murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer: and of temptation: ”Neither let us tempt Christ as some of them tempted and perished by the serpents. Of backbiting: ”Love not backbiting lest thou be rooted out. And of despair: ”Who despairing have given themselves up to lasciviousness unto the working of all error, in uncleanness. And that clamour is condemned as well as anger and indignation and blasphemy, the words of the same Apostle teach us as clearly as possible when he thus charges us: ”Let all bitterness, and anger, and indignation, and clamour, and blasphemy be put away from you with all malice,” and many more things like these. And though these are far more numerous than the virtues are, yet if those eight principal sins, from which we know that these naturally proceed, are first

overcome, all these at once sink down, and are destroyed together with them with a lasting destruction. For from gluttony proceed surfeiting and drunkenness. From fornication filthy conversation, scurrility, buffoonery and foolish talking. From covetousness, lying, deceit, theft, perjury, the desire of filthy lucre, false witness, violence, inhumanity, and greed. From anger, murders, clamour and indignation. From dejection, rancor, cowardice, bitterness, despair. From accidie, laziness, sleepiness, rudeness, restlessness, wandering about, instability both ofmind and body, chattering, inquisitiveness. From vainglory, contention, heresies, boasting and confidence in novelties.

From pride, contempt, envy, disobedience, blasphemy, murmuring, backbiting. And that all these plagues are stronger than we, we can tell very plainly from the way in which they attack us. For the delight in carnal passions wars more powerfully in our members than does thedesire for virtue, which is only gained with the greatest contrition of heart and body. But if you will only gaze with the eyes of the spirit on those countless hosts of our foes, which the Apostle enumerates where he says: ”For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places,” and this which we find of the right- eous man in the nineteenth Psalm: ”A thousand shall fall beside thee and ten thousand at thy right hand,” then you will clearly see that they are far more numerous and more powerful than are we, carnal and earthly creatures as we are, while to them is given a substance which is spiritual and incorporeal.

Chapter XVII.

A question with regard to the comparison of seven nationswith eight faults.Germanus: How then is it that there areeight faults which assault us, when Moses reckons the nations opposed to the people of Israel as seven, and how is it well for us to take possession of the territory of our faults?

Chapter XVIII.

Serapion: Everybody is perfectly agreed that there are eight principal faults which affect a monk. And all of them are not included in the figure of the nations for this reason, because in Deuteronomy Moses, or rather the Lord through him, was speaking to those who had already gone forth from Egypt and been set free from one most powerful nation, I mean that of the Egyptians. And we find that this figure holds good also in our case, as when we have got clear of the snares of this world we are found to be free from gluttony, i.e., the sin of the belly and palate; and like them we have a conflict against these seven remaining nations, without taking account at all of the one which has been already overcome. And the land of this nation was not given to Israel for a possession, but the command of the Lord ordained that they should at once forsake it and go forth from it. And for this cause our fasts ought to be made moderate, that there may be no need for us through excessive abstinence, which results from weakness of the flesh and infirmity, to return again to the land of Egypt, i.e., to our former greed and carnal lust which we forsook when we made our renunciation of this world. And this has happened in a figure, in those who after having gone forth into the desert of virtue again hanker after the flesh pots over which they sat in Egypt.

Chapter XIX.

The reason why one nation is to be forsaken, while seven arecommanded to be destroyed.

But the reason why that nation in which the children of Israel were born, was biddennot to be utterly destroyed but only to have its land forsaken, while it was commanded that these seven nations were to be completely destroyed, is this: because however great may be the ardour of spirit, inspired by which we have entered on the desert of virtues, yet we cannot possibly free ourselves entirely from the neighbourhood of gluttony or from its service and, so to speak, from daily intercourse with it. For the liking for delicacies and dainties will live on as something natural and innate in us, even though we take pains to cut off all superfluous appetites and desires, which, as they cannot be altogether destroyed, ought to be shunned and avoided. For of these we read ”Take no care for the flesh with its desires. While then we still retain the feeling for this care, which we are bidden not altogether to cut off, but to keep without its desires, it is clear that we do not destroy the Egyptian nation but separate ourselves in a sort of way from it, not thinking anything about luxuries and delicate feasts, but, as the Apostle says, being ”content with our daily food and clothing. And this is commanded in a figure in the law, in this way: ”Thou shalt not abhor the Egyptian, because thou wast a stranger in his land. For necessary food is not refused to the body without danger to it and sinfulness in the soul.

But of those seven troublesome faults we must in every possible way root out the affections from the inmost recesses of our souls. For of them we read: ”Let all bitterness and anger and indignation and clamour and blasphemy be put away from you with all malice: and again:”But fornication and all uncleanness and covetousness let it not so much as be named among you, or obscenity orfoolish talking or scurrility. We can then cut out the roots of these faults which aregrafted into our nature from without whilewe cannot possibly cut off occasions of gluttony. For however far we have advanced, we cannot help being what we were born. And that this is so we can show not only from the lives of little people like ourselves but from the lives and customs of all who have attained perfection, who even when they have got rid of incentives to all other passions, and are retiring to the desert with perfect fervour of spirit and bodily abnegation, yet still cannot do without thought for their daily meal and the preparation of their food from year to year.

Chapter XX.

Of the nature of gluttony, which may be illustrated by thesimile of the eagle. An admirable illustration of this passion, with which a monk, however spiritual and excellent, is sure to be hampered, is found in the simile of the eagle. For this bird when in its flight on high it has soared above the highest clouds, and has withdrawn itself from the eyes of all mortals and from the face of the whole earth, is yet compelled by the needs of the belly to drop down and descend to the earth and feed upon carrion and dead bodies. And this clearly shows that the spirit of gluttony cannot be altogether extirpated like all other faults, nor be entirely destroyed like them, but that we can only hold down and check by the power of the mind all incentives to it and all superfluous appetites.

Chapter XXI.

Of the lasting character of gluttony as described to somephilosophers.

For the nature of this fault was admirably expressed under cover of the following puzzle by one of the Elders in a discussion with some philosophers, who thought that they might chaff him like a country bumpkin because of his Christian simplicity ”My father,” said he, ”left me in the clutches of a great many creditors. All the others I have paid in full, and have freed myself from all their pressing claims; but one I cannot satisfy even by a daily payment.” And when they could not see the meaning of the puzzle, and urgently begged him to explain it: ”I was,” said he,” in my natural condition, encompassed by a great many faults. But when God inspired me with the longing to be free, I, renounced this world, and at the same timegave up all my property which I had inherited from my father, and so I satisfied them all like pressing creditors, and freed myself entirely from them. But I was never able altogether to get rid of the incentives to gluttony. For though I reduce the quantity of food which I take to the smallest possible amount, yet I cannot avoid the force of its daily solicitations, but must be perpetually ‘dunned’ by it, and be making as it were interminable payments by continually satisfying it, and pay never ending toll at its demand.” Then they declared that this man, whom they had till now despised as a booby and a country bumpkin, had thoroughly grasped the first principles of philosophy, i.e., training in ethics, and they marvelled that he could by the light of nature have learnt that which no schooling in this world could have taught him, while they themselves with all their efforts and long course of training had not learnt this. This is enough on gluttony in particular. Now let us return to the discourse in which we had begun to consider the general relation of our faults to each other.

Chapter XXII.

How it was that God foretold to Abraham that Israel wouldhave to drive out ten nations. When the Lord was speaking with Abraham about the future (a point which you did not ask about) we find that He did not enumerate seven nations, but ten, whose land He promised to give to his seed. And this number is plainly made up by adding idolatry, and blasphemy, to whose dominion, before the knowledge of God and the grace of Baptism, both the irreligious hosts of the Gentiles and blasphemous ones of the Jews were subject, while they dwelt in a spiritual Egypt. But when a man has made his renunciation and come forth from thence, and having by God's grace conquered gluttony, has come into the spiritual wilderness, then he is free from the attacks of these three, and will only have to wage war against those seven which Moses enumerates.

Chapter XXIII.

How it is useful for usto take possession of their lands. But the fact that we are bidden for our good to take possession of the countries of those most wicked nations, may be understood in this way. Each fault has its own especial corner in the heart, which it claims for itself in the recesses of the soul, and drives out Israel, i.e., the contemplation of holy and heavenly things, and never ceases to oppose them. For virtues cannot possibly live side by side with faults. "For what participation hath righteousness with unrighteousness? Or what fellowship hath light with darkness?" But as soon as these faults have been overcome by the people of Israel, i.e., by those virtues which war against them, then at once the place in our heart which the spirit of concupiscence and fornication had occupied, will be filled by chastity. That which wrath had held, will be claimed by patience. That which had been occupied by a sorrow that worketh death, will be taken by a godly sorrow and one full of joy. That which had been wasted by accidie, will at once be tilled by courage. That which pride had trodden down will be ennobled by humility: and so when each of these faults has been expelled, their places (that is the tendency towards them) will be filled by the opposite virtues which are aptly termed the children of Israel, that is, of the soul that seeth God: and when these have expelled all passions from the heart we may believe that they have recovered their own possessions rather than invaded those of others.

Chapter XXIV.

How the lands from which the Canaanites were expelled, hadbeen assigned to the seed of Shem. For, as an ancient tradition tells us, these same lands of the Canaanites into which the children of Israel were brought, had been formerly allotted to the children of Shem at the division of the world, and afterward the descendants of Ham wickedly invading them with force and violence took possession of them. And in this the righteous judgment of God is shown, as He expelled from the land of others these who had wrongfully taken possession of them, and restored to those others the ancient property of their fathers which had been assigned to their ancestors at the division of the world. And we can perfectly well see that this figure holds good in our own case. For by nature God's will assigned the possession of our heart not to vices but to virtues, which, after the fall of Adam were driven out from their own country by the sins which grew up, i.e., by the Canaanites; and so when by God's grace they are by our efforts and labour restored again to it, we may hold that they have not occupied the territory of another, but rather have recovered their own country.

Chapter XXV.

Different passages of Scripture on the meaning of the eightfaults.

And in reference to these eight faults we also have the following in the gospel: ”But when the unclean spirit is gone out from a man, he walketh through dry places seeking rest and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return to my house from whence I came out: and coming he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished: then he goeth and taketh seven other spirits worse than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is made worse than the first.” Lo, just as in the former passages we read of seven nations besides that of the Egyptians from which the children of Israel had gone forth, so here too seven unclean spirits are said to return beside that one which we first hear of as going forth from the man. And of this sevenfold incentive of sins Solomon gives the following account in Proverbs: ”If thine enemy speak loud to thee, do not agree to him because there are seven mischiefs in his heart;” i.e., if the spirit of gluttony is overcome and begins to flatter you with having humiliated it, asking in a sort of way that you would relax something of the fervour with which you began, and yield to it something beyond what the due limits of abstinence, and measure of strict severity would allow, do not you be overcome by its submission, nor return in fancied security from its assaults, as you seem to have become for a time freed from carnal desires, to your previous state of carelessness or former liking for good things. For through this the spirit whom you have vanquished is saying ”I will return to my house from whence I came out,” and forthwith the seven spirits of sins which proceed from it will prove to you more injurious than that passion which in the first instance you overcame, and will presently drag you down to worse kinds of sins.

Chapter XXVI.

How when we have got the better of the passion of gluttony we must take pains to gain all the other virtues.

Wherefore while we are practising fasting and abstinence, we must be careful when we have got the better of the passion of gluttony never to allow our mind to remain empty of the virtues of which we stand in need; but we should the more earnestly fill the inmost recesses of our heart with them for fear lest the spirit of concupiscence should return and find us empty and void of them, and shouldnot be content to secure an entrance there for himself alone, but should bring in with him into our heart this sevenfold incentive of sins and make our last state worse than the first. For the soul which boasts that it has renounced this world with the eight faults that hold sway over it, will afterwards be fouler and more unclean and visited with severer punishments, than it was when formerly it was at home in the world, when it had taken upon itself neither the rules nor the name of monk. For these seven spirits are said to be worse than the first which went forth, for this reason; because the love of good things, i.e., gluttony would not be in itself harmful, were it not that it opened the door to other passions; viz, to fornication, covetousness, anger, dejection, and pride, which are clearly hurtful in themselves to the soul, and domineering over it. And therefore a man will never be able to gain perfect purity, if he hopes to secure it by means of abstinence alone, i.e., bodily fasting, unless he knows that he ought to practise it for this reason that when the flesh is brought low by means of fasting, he may with greater ease enter the lists against other faults, as the flesh has not been habituated to gluttony and surfeiting.

Chapter XXVII.

That our battles are not fought with our faults in the same order as that in which they stand in the list. But you must know that our battles are not all fought in the same order, because, as we mentioned that the attacks are not always made on us in the same way, each one of us ought also to begin the battle with due regard to the character of the attack which is especially made on him so that one man will have to fight his first battle against the fault which stands third on the list, another against that which is fourth or fifth. And in proportion as faults hold sway over us, and the character of their attack may demand, so we too ought to regulate the order of our conflict, in such a way that the happy result of a victory and triumph succeeding may insure our attainment of purity of heart and complete perfection.

Thus far did Abbot Serapion discourse to us of the nature of the eight principal faults, and so clearly did he expound the different sorts of passions which are latent within us - the origin and connexion of which, though we were daily tormented by them, we could never before thoroughly understand and perceive - that we seemed almost to see them spread out before our eyes as in a mirror.

Chapter I.

Description of the wilderness, and the question about thedeath of the saints.

IN the district of Palestine near the village of Tekoa which had the honour of producing the prophet Amos, there is a vast desert which stretches far and wide as far as Arabia and the dead sea, into which the streams of Jordan enter and are lost, and where are the ashes of Sodom. In this district there livedfor a long while monks of the most perfect life and holiness, who were suddenly destroyed by an incursion of Saracen robbers: whose bodies we knew were seized upon with the greatest veneration both by the Bishops of the neighbourhood and by the whole populace of Arabia, and deposited among the relics of the martyrs, so that swarms of people from two towns met, and made terrible war upon each other, and in their struggle actually came to blows for the possession of the holy spoil, while they strove among themselves with pious zeal as to which of them had the better claim to bury them and keep their relics - the one party boasting of their vicinity to the place of their abode, the other of the fact that they were near the place of their birth.

But we were upset by this and being disturbed either on our own account or on account of some of the brethren who were in no small degree scandalized at it, inquired why men of such illustrious merits and of so great virtues should be thus slain by robbers, and why the Lord permitted such a crime to be committed against his servants, so as to give up into the hands of wicked men those who were the admiration of everybody: and so in our grief we came to the holy Theodore, a man who excelled in practical common sense. For hewas living in Cellae, a place that lies between Nitria and Scete, and is five miles distant i from the monasteries of Nitria, and cut off by eighty intervening miles of desert from the wilderness of Scete where we were living. And when we had made our complaint to him about the death of the men mentioned above, and expressed our surprise at the great patience of God, because He suffered men of such worth to be killed in this way, so that those who ought to be able by the weight of their sanctity to deliver others from trials of this kind, could not save themselves from the hands of wicked men (and asked) why it was that God allowed so great a crime to be committed against his servants, then the blessed Theodore replied.

Chapter II.

Abbot Theodore's answer to the question proposed to him.

This question often exercises the minds of those who have not much faith or knowledge, and imagine that the prizes and rewards of the saints (which are not given in this world, but laid up for the future) are bestowed in the short space of this mortal life. But we whose hope in Christ is not only in this life, for fearlest, as the Apostle says, we should be "of all-men most miserable" (because as we receivenone of the promises in this world we shouldfor our unbelief lose them also in that to come) ought not wrongly to follow their ideas, lest through ignorance of the true real explanation, we should hesitate and tremble and fail in temptation, if we find ourselves given up to such men; and should ascribe to God injustice or carelessness about the affairs of mankind - a thing which it is almost a sin to mention - because He does not protect in their temptations men who are living an upright and holy life, nor requite good men with good things and evil men with evil things in this world; and so we should deserve to fall under the condemnation of those whom the prophet Zephaniah rebukes, saying "who say in their hearts the Lord will not do good, nor will He do evil: or at least be found among those of whom we are told that they blaspheme God with such complaints as this: "Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and such please Him:

for surely where is the God of judgment? Adding further that blasphemy which is described in the same way in what follows: "He laboureth in vain that serveth God, and what profit is itthat we have kept His ordinances, and walkedsorrowful before the Lord? Wherefore nowwe call the proud happy, for they that work wickedness are enriched, and they have tempted God, and are preserved. Wherefore that we may avoid this ignorance which is the root and cause of this most deadly error, we ought in the first place to knowwhat is really good, and what is bad, and so finally if we grasp the true scriptural meaning of these words, and not the false popular one, we shall escape being deceived by the errors of unbelievers.

Chapter III.

Of the three kinds of things there are in the world; viz., goodbad, and indifferent.

Altogether there are three kinds of things in the world; viz., good, bad, and indifferent. And so we ought to know what is properly good, and what is bad, and what is indifferent, that our faith may be supported by true knowledge and stand firm in all temptations. We must then believe that in things which are merely human there is no real good except virtue of soul alone, which leads us with unfeigned faith to things divine, and makes us constantly adhere to that unchanging good. And on the other hand we ought not to call anything bad, except sin alone, which separates us from the good God, and unites us to the evil devil. But those things are indifferent which can be appropriated to either side according to the fancy or wish of their owner, as for instance riches, power, honour, bodily strength, good health, beauty, life itself, and death, poverty, bodily infirmities, injuries, and other things of the same sort, which can contribute either to good or to evil as the character and fancy of their owner directs. For riches are often serviceable for our good, as the Apostle says, who charges ”the rich of this world to be ready to give, to distribute to the needy, to lay up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that” by this means ”they may lay hold on the true life. And according to the gospel they are a good thing for those who ”make to themselves friends of the unrighteous mammon.

And again, they can be drawn in the direction of what is bad when they are amassed only for the sake of hoarding them or for a life of luxury, and are not employed to meet the wants of the poor. And that power also and honour and bodily strength and good health are indifferent and available for either (good or bad) can easily be shown from the fact that many of the Old Testament saints enjoyed all these things and were in positions of great wealth and the highest honour, and blessed with bodily strength, and yet are known to have been most acceptable to God. And on the contrary those who have wrongfully abused these things and perverted them for their own purposes are not without good reason punished or destroyed, as the Book of Kings shows us has often happened. And that even life and death are in themselves indifferent the birth of S. John and of Judas proves. For in the case of the one his life was so profitable to himself that we are told that his birth brought joy to others also, as we read ”And many shall rejoice at his birth; but of the life of the other it is said:

”It were good for that man if he had never been born. Further it is said of the death of John and of all saints ”Right dear in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints:

but of that of Judas and men like him ”The death of the wicked is very evil. And how useful bodily sickness sometimes may be the blessing on Lazarus, the beggar who was full of sores, shows us. For Scripture makes mention of no other good qualities or deserts of his, but it was for this fact alone; viz., that he endured want and bodily sickness with the utmostpatience, that he was deemed worthy of the blessed lot of a place in Abraham’s bosom. And with regard to want and persecution and injuries which everybody thinks to be bad, how useful and necessary they are is clearly proved by this fact; viz., that the saints not only never tried to avoid them, but actually either sought them with all their powers or bravely endured them, and thus became the friends of God, and obtained the reward of eternal life, as the blessed Apostle chants: ”For which cause I delight myself in my infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong, for power is made perfect in infirmity.

And therefore those who are exalted with the greatest riches and honours and powers of this world, should not be deemed to have secured their chief good out of them (for this is shown to consist only in virtue) but only something indifferent, because just as to good men who use them well and properly they will be found to be useful and convenient (for they afford them opportunities for good works and fruits which shall endure to eternal life), so to those who wrongfully abuse their wealth, they are useless and out of place, and furnish occasions of sin and death.

Chapter IV.

How evil cannot be forced on any one by another againsthis will. Preserving then these distinctions clear and fixed, and knowing that there is nothing good except virtue alone, and nothing bad except sin alone and separation from God, let us now carefully consider whether God ever allows evil to be forced on his saints either by Himself or by some one else. And you will certainly find that this never happens. For another can never possibly force the evil of sin upon anyone, who does not consent and who resists, but only on one who admits it into himself through sloth and the corrupt desire of his heart. Finally, when the devil having exhausted all his wicked devices had tried to force upon the blessed Job this evil of sin, and had not only stripped him of all his worldly goods, but also after that terrible and utterly unlooked for calamity of bereavement through the death of his seven children, had heaped upon him dreadful wounds and intolerable tortures from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, he tried in vain to fastenon him the stain of sin, because he remained steadfast through it all, never brought himself to consent to blasphemy.

Chapter V.

An objection, how God Himself can be said to create evil. Germanus: We often read in holy Scripture that God has created evil or brought it upon men, as is this passage: ”There is none beside Me. I am the Lord, and there is none else: I form the light and create darkness, I make peace, and create evil.” And again: ”Shall there be evil in a city which the Lord hath not done?”

Chapter VI.

The answer to the question proposed.

Theodore: Sometimes holy Scripture is wont by an improper use of terms to use ”evils ”for ”affliction; not that these are properly and in their nature evils, but because they are imagined to be evils by those on whom they are brought for their good. For when divine judgment is reasoning with men it must speak with the language and feelings of men. For when a doctor for the sake of health with good reason either cuts or cauterizes those who are suffering from the inflammation of ulcers, it is considered an evil by those who have to bear it. Nor are the spur and the whip pleasant to a restive horse. Moreover all chastisement seems at the moment to be a bitter thing to those who are chastised, as the Apostle says: ”Now all chastisement for the present indeed seemeth not to bring with it joy but sorrow; but afterwards it will yield to them that are exercised by it most peaceable fruits of righteousness,” and ”whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth: for what son is there whom the father doth not correct? And so evils are sometimes wont to stand for afflictions, as where we read: ”And God repented of the evil which He had said that He would do to them and He did it not. And again:

”For Thou, Lord, are gracious and merciful, patient and very merciful and ready to repent of the evil,” i.e., of the sufferings and losses which Thou art forced to bring upon us as the reward of our sins. And another prophet, knowing that these are profitable to some men, and certainly not through any jealousy of their safety, but with an eye to their good, prays thus: ”Add evils to them, O Lord, add evils to the haughty ones of the earth; and the Lord Himself says ”Lo, I will bring evils upon them,” i.e., sorrows, and losses, with which they shall for the present be chastened for their soul’s health, and so shall be at length driven to return and hasten back to Me whom in their prosperity they scorned. And so that these are originally evil we cannot possibly assert: for to many they conduce to their good and offer the occasions of eternal bliss, and therefore (to return to the question raised) all those things, which are thought to be brought upon us as evils by our enemies or by any other people, should not be counted as evils, but as things indifferent. For in the end they will not be what he thinks, who brought them upon us in his rage and fury, but what he makes them who endures them. And so when death has been brought upon a saint, we ought not to think that an evil has happened to him but a thing indifferent;

which is an evil to a wicked man, while to the good it is rest and freedom from evils. ”For death is rest to a man whose way is hidden. And so a good man does not suffer any loss from it, because he suffers nothing strange, but by the crime of an enemy he only receives (and not without the reward of eternal life) that which would have happened to him in the course of nature, and pays the debt of man’s death, which must be paid by an inevitable law, with the interest of a most fruitful passion, and the recompense of a great reward.

Chapter VII.

A question whether the man who causes the death of a good man is guilty, if the good man is the gainer by his death. Germanus: Well then, if a good man does not only suffer no evil by being killed, butactually gains a reward from his suffering,how can we accuse the man who has donehim no harm but good by killing him?

Chapter VIII.

The answer to the foregoing question. Theodore: We are talking about the actual qualities of things good and bad, and what we call indifferent; and not about the characters of the men who do these things. Nor ought any bad or wicked man to go unpunished because his evil deed was not able to do harm to a good man. For the endurance and goodness of a righteous man are of no profit to the man who is the cause of his death or suffering, but only to him who patiently endures what is inflicted on him. And so the one is justly punished for savage cruelty, because he meant to injure him, while the other nevertheless suffers no evil, because in the goodness of his heart he patiently endures his temptation and sufferings, and so causes all those things, which were inflicted upon him with evil, intent, to turn out to his advantage, and to conduce to the bliss of eternal life.

Chapter IX.

The case of Job who was tempted by the devil i and of the Lord who was betrayed by Judas: and how prosperity as well as adversity is advantageous to a good man.

For the patience of Job did not bring any gain to the devil, through making him a better man by his temptations, but only to lob himself who endured them bravely; nor was Judas granted freedom from eternal punishment, because his act of betrayal contributed to the salvation of mankind. For we must not regard the result of the deed, but the purpose of the doer. Wherefore we should always cling to this assertion; viz., that evil cannot be brought upon a man by another, unless a man has admitted it by his sloth or feebleness of heart: as the blessed Apostle confirms this opinion of ours in a verse of Scripture: ”But we know that all things work together for good to them that love God. But by saying ”All things work together for good,” he includes everything alike, not only things fortunate, but also those which seem to be misfortunes: through which the Apostle tells us in another place that he himself has passed, when he says: ”By the amour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,” i.e.,” Through honour and dishonour, through evil report and goodreport, as deceivers and yet true, as sorrowful but always rejoicing, as needy and yet enriching many: All those things then which are considered fortunate, and are called those ”on the right hand,” which the holy Apostle designates by the terms honour and good report;

and those too which are counted misfortunes, which he clearly means by dishonour and evil report, and which he describes as ”on the left hand,” become to the perfect man ”the armour of righteousness,” if when they are brought upon him, he bears them bravely: because, as he fights with these, and uses those very weapons with which he seems to be attacked, and is protected by them as by bow and sword and stout shield against those who bring these things upon him, he secures the advantage of his patience and goodness, and obtains a grand triumph of steadfastness by means of those very weapons of his enemies which are hurled against him to kill him; and if only he is not elated by success or cast down by failure, but ever marches straightforward on the king’s highway, and does not swerve from that state of tranquillity as it were to the right hand, when joy overcomes him, nor let himself be driven so to speak to the left hand, when misfortunes overwhelm him, and sorrow holds sway. For ”Much peace have they that love Thy law, and to them there is no stumbling block. But of those who shift about according to the character and changes of the

several chances which happen to them, we read: ”But a fool will change like the moon. For just as it is said of men who are perfect and wise:

”To them that love God all things work together for good,” so of those who are weak and foolish it is declared that ”everything is against a foolish man,” for he gets no profit out of prosperity, nor does adversity make him any better. For it requires as much goodness to bear sorrows bravely, as to be moderate in prosperity: and it is quite certain that one who fails in one of these, will not bear up under the other. But a man can be more easily overcome by prosperity than by misfortunes: for these sometimes restrain men against their will and make them humble and through most salutary sorrow cause them to sin less, and make them better: while prosperity puffs up the mind with soothing but most pernicious flatteries and when men are secure in the prospect of their happiness dashes them to the ground with a still greater destruction.

Chapter X.

Of the excellence of the perfect man who is figurativelyspoken of as ambidextrous.

Those are they then who are figurately spoken of in holy Scripture as a0mfoterode/cion, i.e., ambidextrous, as Ehud is described in the book of Judges ”who used either hand as the right hand. And this power we also can spiritually acquire, if by making a right and proper use of those things which are fortunate, and which seem to be ”on the right hand,” as well as of those which are unfortunate and as we call it ”on the left hand,” we make them both belong to the right side, so that whatever turns up proves in our case, to use the words of the Apostle, ”the armour of righteousness. For we see that the inner man consists of two parts, and if I may be allowed the expression, two hands, nor can any of the saints do without that which we call the left hand: but by means of it the perfection of virtue is shown, where a man by skilful use can turn both hands into right hands.

And in order to make our meaning clearer, the saint has for his right hand his spiritual achievements, in which he is found when with fervent spirit he gets the better of his desires and passions, when he is free from all attacks of the devil, and without any effort or difficulty rejects and cuts off all carnal sins, when he is exalted above the earth and regards all things present and earthly as light smoke or vain shadows, and scorns them as what is about to vanish away, when with an overflowing heart he not only longs most intensely for the future but actually sees it the more clearly, when he is more effectually fed on spiritual contemplations, when he sees heavenly mysteries more brightly laid open to him, when he pours forth his prayers to God with greater purity and readiness, when he is so inflamed with fervent of spirit as to pass with the utmost readiness of soul to things invisible and eternal, so as scarcely to believe that he any longer remains in the flesh.

He has also a left hand, when he is entangled in the toils of temptation, when he is inflamed with the heat of desire for carnal lusts, when he is set on fire by emotion towards rage and anger, when he is overcome by being puffed up with pride or vainglory, when he is oppressed by a sorrow that worketh death, when l he is shaken to pieces by the contrivances andattacks of accidie, and when he has lost allspiritual warmth, and grows indifferent with a sort of lukewarmness and unreasonable griefso that not only is he forsaken by good and kindling thoughts, but actually Psalms, prayer, reading, and retirement in his cell all pall upon him, and all virtuous exercises seem byan intolerable and horrible loathing to have lost their

saviour. And when a monk is troubled in this way, then he knows that he is attacked ”on the left hand. Anyone therefore who is not at all puffed up through the aid of vainglory by any of those things on the right hand which we have mentioned, and who struggles manfully against those on the left hand, and does not yield to despair and give in, but rather on the other hand seizes the armour of patience to practise himself in virtue-this man can use both hands as fight hands, and in each action he proves triumphant and carries off the prize of victory from that condition on the left hand as well as that on the fight.

Such, we read, was the reward which the blessed Job obtained who was certainly crawned (for a victory) on the right hand, when he was the father of seven sons and walked as a rich and wealthy man, and yet offered daily sacrifices to the Lord for their purification, in his anxiety that they might prove acceptable and dear to God rather than to himself, when his gates stood open to every stranger, when he was ”feet to lame and eyes to blind,” when the shoulders of the suffering were kept warm by the wool of his sheep, when he was a father to orphans and a husband to widows, when he did not even in his heart rejoice at the fall of his enemy. And again it was the same man who with still greater virtue triumphed over adversity on the left hand, when deprived in one moment of his seven sons he was not as a father overcome with bitter grief but as a true servant of God rejoiced in the will of his Creator.

When instead of being a wealthy man he became poor, naked instead of rich, pining away instead of strong, despised and contemptible instead of famous and honourable, and yet preserved his fortitude of mind unshaken, when, lastly, bereft of all his wealth and substance he took up his abode on the dunghill, and like some stern executioner of his own body scraped with a potsherd the matter that broke out, and plunging his fingers deep into his wounds dragged out on every side masses of worms from his limbs. And in all this he never fell into despair and blasphemy, nor murmured at all against his Creator. Moreover also so little was he overcome by such a weight of bitter temptations that the cloak which out of all his former property remained to cover his body, and which alone could be saved from destruction by the devil because he was clothed with it, he rent and cast off, and covered with it his nakedness which he voluntarily endured, which the terrible robber had brought upon him. The hair of his head too, which was the only thing left untouched out of all the remains of his former glory, he shaved and cast to his tormentor, and cutting off even that which his savage foe had left to him he exulted over him and mocked him with that celestial cry of his: ”If we have received good at the hand of the Lord, should we not also receive evil?

Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither. The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; as it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done; blessed be the name of the Lord. I should also with good reason call Joseph ambidextrous, as in prosperity he was very dear to his father, affectionate to his brethren, acceptable to God; and in adversity was chaste, and faithful to the Lord, in prison most kind to the prisoners, forgetful of wrongs, generous to his enemies; and to his brethren who were envious of him and as far as lay in their powers, his murderers, he proved not only affectionate but actually munifi-

cent. These men then and those who are like them are rightly termed a0mfoterode/cion, i.e., ambidextrous. For they can use either hand as the right hand, and passing through those things which the Apostle enumerates can fairly say: "Through the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, through honour and dishonour, through evil report and good report etc. And of this right and left hand Solomon speaks as follows in the Song of songs, in the person of the bride: "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand shall embrace me. And while this passage shows that both are useful, yet it puts one under the head, because misfortunes ought to be subject to the control of the heart, since they are only useful for this;

viz., to train us for a time and discipline us for our salvation and make us perfect in the matter of patience. But the right hand she hopes will ever cling to her to cherish her and hold her fast in the blessed embrace of the Bridegroom, and unite her to him indissolubly. We shall then be ambidextrous, when neither abundance nor want affects us, and when the former does not entice us to the luxury of a dangerous carelessness, while the latter does not draw us to despair, and complaining; but when, giving thanks to God in either case alike, we gain one and the same advantage out of good and bad fortune. And such that truly ambidextrous man, the teacher of the Gentiles, testifies that he himself was, when he says: "For I have learnt in whatsoever state I am, to be content therewith. I know both how to be brought low and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to De hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things in Him which strengtheneth me."

Chapter XI.

Of the two kinds of trials, which come upon us in a three-fold way.

Well then, though we say that trial is twofold, i.e., in prosperity and in adversity, yet you must know that all men are tried in three different ways. Often for their probation, sometimes for their improvement, and in some cases because their sins deserve it. For their probation indeed, as we read that the blessed Abraham and Job and many of the saints endured countless tribulations; or this which is said to the people in Deuteronomy by Moses: "And thou shalt remember all the way through which the Lord thy God hath brought thee for forty years through the desert, to afflict thee and to prove thee, and that the things that were in thy heart might be made known, whether thou wouldst keep His Commandments or no: and this which we find in the Psalms: "I proved thee at the waters of strife. To Job also: "Thinkest thou that I have spoken for any other cause than that thou mightest be seen to be righteous?

But for improvement, when God chastens his righteous ones for some small and venial sins, or to raise them to a higher state of purity, and delivers them over to various trials, that He may purge away all their unclean thoughts, and, to use the prophet's word, the "dross," which he sees to have collected in their secret parts, and may thus transmit them like pure gold, to the judgment to come, as He allows nothing to remain in them for the fire of judgment to discover when hereafter it searches them with penal torments according to this saying: "Many are the tribulations of the righteous. And: "My son, neglect not the discipline of the Lord, neither be thou wearied whilst thou art rebuked by Him. For whom the Lord loveth He chastiseth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. For what son is there whom the father doth not correct? But if ye are without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. And in the Apocalypse: "Those whom I love, I reprove and chasten. To whom under the figure of Jerusalem the following words are spoken by Jeremiah, in the person of God: "For I will utterly consume all the nations among which I scattered thee: but I will not utterly consume thee: but I will chastise thee in judgment, that thou mayest not seem to thyself innocent. And for this life-giving cleansing David prays when he says: "Prove me, O Lord, and try me; turn my reins and my heart.

Isaiah also, well knowing the value of this trial, says "O Lord, correct us but with judgment: not in Thine anger. And again: "I will give thanks to thee, O Lord, for thou wast angry with

me: Thy wrath is turned away, and Thou hast comforted me. But as a punishment for sins, the blows of trial are inflicted, as where the Lord threatens that He will send plagues upon the people of Israel: ”I will send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the fury of creatures that trail upon the ground: and ”In vain have I struck your children: they have not received correction. In the Psalms also: ”Many are the scourges of the sinners: and in the gospel: ”Behold thou art made whole: now sin no more, lest a worse thing happen unto thee. We find, it is true, a fourth way also in which we know on the authority of Scripture that some sufferings are brought upon us simply for the manifestation of the glory of God and His works, according to these words of the gospel: ”Neither did this man sin nor his parents, but that the works of God might be manifested in him: and again: ”This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God that the Son of God may be glorified by it.

There are also other sorts of vengeance, with which some who have overpassed the bounds of wickedness are smitten in this life, as we read that Dathan and Abiram or Korah were punished, or above all, those of whom the Apostle speaks: ”Wherefore God gave them up to vile passions and a reprobate mind: and this must be counted worse than all other punishments. For of these the Psalmist says: ”They are not in the labours of men; neither shall they be scourged like other men. For theyare not worthy of being healed by the visitation of the Lord which gives life, and by plagues in this world, as ”in despair they have given themselves over to lasciviousness, unto the working of all error unto uncleanness,” and as by hardening their hearts, and by growing accustomed and used to sin they have got beyond cleansing in this brief life and punishment in the present world: men, who are thus reproved by the holy word of the prophet: ”I destroyed some of you, as God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet you returned not to Me, saith the Lord,” and Jeremiah: ”I have killed and destroyed thy people, and yet they are not returned from their ways. And again: ”Thou hast smitten them and they have not grieved: Thou hast bruised them and they refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than the rock, they have refused to return.

And the prophet seeing that all the remedies of this life will have been applied in vain for their healing, and already as it were despairing of their life, declares: ”The bellows have failed in the fire, the founder hath melted in vain: for their wicked deeds are not consumed. Call them reprobate silver, for the Lord hath rejected them. And the Lord thus laments that to no purpose has He applied this salutary cleansing by fire to those who are hardened in their sins, in the person of Jerusalem crusted all over with the rust of her sins, when He says: ”set it empty upon burning coals, that it may be hot, and the brass thereof may be melted; and let the filth of it be melted in the midst thereof. Great pains have been taken, and the great rust thereof is not gone out, no not even by fire. Thy uncleanness is execrable: because I desired to cleanse thee, and thou art not cleansed from thy filthiness. Wherefore like a skilful physician, who has tried all saving cures, and sees there is no remedy left which can be applied to their disease, the Lord is in a manner overcome by their iniquities and is obliged to desist from that kindly chastisement of His, and so denounces them saying: ”I will no longer be angry with thee, and thy jealousy has departed from thee.

But of others, whose heart has not grown hard by continuance in sin, and who do not stand in need of that most severe and (if I may so call it) caustic remedy, but for whose salvation the instruction of the life-giving word is suffi- cient-of them it is said: "I will improve them by hearing of their suffering. We are well aware that there are other reasons also of the punishment and vengeance whichis inflicted on those who have sinned grievously-not to expiate their crimes, nor wipeout the deserts of their sins, but that the living may be put in fear and amend their lives. And these we plainly see were inflicted on Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and Baasha the son of Ahiah, and Ahab and Jezebel, when the Divine reproof thus declares: "Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will cut down thy posterity, and will kill of Ahab every male, and him that is shut up and the last in Israel. And I will make thy house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahiah: for that which thou hast done to provoke Me to anger, and for making Israel to sin. The dogs also shall eat Jezebel in the field of Jezreel. If Ahab die in the city, the dogs shall eat him: but if he die in the field the birds of the air shall eat him," and this which is threatened as the greatest threat of all:

"Thy dead body shall not be brought to the sepulchre of thy fathers. It was not that this short and momentary punishment would suffice to purge away the blasphemous inventions of him who first made the golden calves and led to the lasting sin of the people, and their wicked separation from the Lord,-or the countless and disgraceful profanities of those others, but it was that by their example the fear of those punishments which they dreaded might fall on others also, who, as they thought little of the future or even disbelieved in it altogether, would only be moved by consideration of things present; and that owing to this proof of His severity they might acknowledge that there is no lack of care for the affairs of men, and for their daily doings, in the majesty of God on high, and so through that which they greatly feared might the more clearly See in God the rewarder of all their deeds. We find, it is true, that even for lighter faults some men have received the same sentence of death in this world, as that with which those men were punished who, as we said before, were the authors of a blasphemous falling away: as happened in the case of the man who gathered sticks on the Sabbath, and in that of Ananias and Sapphira, who through the sin of unbelief kept back some portion of their goods:

not that the guilt of their sins was equal, but because they were the firstfound out in a new kind of transgression, and so it was right that as they had given to others an example of sin, so also they should give them an example of punishment and of fear, that anyone, who should attempt to copy them, might know that (even if his punishment were postponed in this life) he would be punished in the same way that they were at the trial of the judgment hereafter. And, since in our desire to run through the different kinds of trials and punishments we seem to have wandered somewhat from our subject, on which we were saying that the perfect man will always remain steadfast in either kind of trial, now let us return to it once more.

Chapter XII.

How the upright man ought to be like a stamp not of wax butof hard steel. And so the mind of the upright man ought not to be like wax or any other soft material which always yields to the shape of what presses on it, and is stamped with its form and impress and keeps it until it takes another shape by having another seal stamped upon it; and so it results that it never retains its own form but is turned and twisted about to correspond to whatever is pressed upon it. But he should rather be like some stamp of hard steel, that the mind may always keep its proper form and shape inviolate, and may stamp and imprint on everything which occurs to it the marks of its own condition, while upon it itself nothing that happens can leave an y mark.

Chapter XIII.

A question whether the mind can constantly continue in oneand the same condition. Germanus: But can our mind constantly preserve its condition unaltered, and always continue in the same state?

Chapter XIV.

The answer to the point raised by the questioner.

Theodore: It is needful that one must either, as the Apostle says, ”be renewed in the spirit of the mind,” and daily advance by ”pressing forward to those things which are before,” or, if one neglects to do this, the sure result will be to go back, and become worse and worse. And therefore the mind cannot possibly remain in one and the same state. Just as when a man, by pulling hard, is trying to force a boat against the stream of a strong current he must either stem the rush of the torrent by the force of his arms, and so mount to what is higher up, or letting his hands slacken be whirled headlong down stream. Wherefore it will be a clear proof of our failure if we find that we have gained nothing more, nor should we doubt but that we have altogether gone back, whenever we find that we have not advanced upwards, because, as I said, the mind of man cannot possibly continue in the same condition, nor so long as he is in the flesh will any of the saints ever reach the height of all virtues, so that they continue unalterable. For something must either be added to them or taken away from them, and in no creature can there be such perfection, as not to be subject to the feeling of change; as we read in the book of Job:

”What is man that he should be without spot, and he that is born of a woman that he should appear just? Behold among His saints none is unchangeable, and the heavens are not pure in His sight. For we confess that God only is unchangeable, who alone is thus addressed by the prayer of the holy prophet ”But Thou art the same,” and who says of Himself ”I am God, and I change not,” because He alone is by nature always good, always full and perfect, and one to whom nothing can ever be added, or from whom nothing can be taken away. And so we ought always with incessant care and anxiety to give ourselves up to the acquirement of virtue, and constantly to occupy ourselves with the practice of it, lest, if we ceaseto go forward, the result should immediately be a going back. For, as we said, the mind cannot continue in one and the same condition, I mean without receiving addition to or diminution of its good qualities. For to fail to gain new ones, is to lose them, because when the desire of making progress ceases, there the danger of going back is present.

Chapter XV.

How one loses by going away from one's cell. And so we ought always to remain shut up in our cell. For whenever a man has strayed from it and returns fresh to it and begins again to live there he will be upset and disturbed. For if he has let it go he cannot without difficulty and pains recover that fixed purpose of mind, which he had gained when he remained in his cell; and as through this he has gone back, he will not think anything of the advance which he has missed, and which he would have secured if he had not allowed himself to leave his cell, but he will rather congratulate himself if he finds that he has regained that condition from which he fell away. For just as time once lost and gone cannot any more be recovered, so neither can those advantages which have been missed be restored: for whatever earnest purpose of the mind there may be afterwards, it will be the profit of the day then present, and the gain that belongs to the time that then is, and will not make up for the gain that has been once for all lost.

Chapter XVI.

How even celestial powers above are capable of change. But that even the powers above are, as we said, subject to change is shown by those who fell from their ranks through the fault of a corrupt will. Wherefore we ought not to think that the nature of those is unchangeable, who remain in the blessed condition in which they were created, simply because they were not in like manner led astray to choose the worse part. For it is one thing to have a nature incapable of change, and another thing for a man through the efforts of his virtue, and by guarding what is good through the grace of the unchangeable God, to be kept from change. For everything that is secured or preserved by care, can also be lost by carelessness. And so we read: ”Call no man blessed before his death,” because so long as a man is still engaged in the struggle, and if I may use the expression, still wrest-ling-even though he generally conquers and carries off many prizes of victory,-yet he can never be free from fear, and from the suspicion of an uncertain issue. And therefore God alone is called unchangeable and good, as His goodness is not the result of effort, but a natural possession, and so He cannot be anything but good. No virtue then can be acquired by man without the possibility of change, but in order that when it once exists it may be continually preserved, it must be watched over with the same care and diligence with which it was acquired.

Chapter XVII.

That no one is dashed to the ground by a sudden fall.

But we must not imagine that anyone slips and comes to grief by a sudden fall, but that he falls by a hopeless collapse either from being deceived by beginning his training badly, or from the good qualities of his soul failing through a long course of carelessness of mind, and so his faults gaining ground upon him little by little. For ”loss goeth before destruction, and an evil thought before a fall,” just as no house ever fails to the ground by a sudden collapse, but only when there is some flaw of long standing in the foundation, or when by long continued neglect of its inmates, what was at first only a little drip finds its way through, and so the protecting wails are by degrees ruined, and in consequence of long standing neglect the gap becomes larger, and break away, and in time the drenching storm and rain pours in like a river: for ”by slothfulness a building is cast down, and through the weakness of hands the house shall drop through,” And that the same thing happens spiritually to the soul the same Solomon thus tells us in other words, when he says: ”water dripping drives a man out of the house. on a stormy day. Elegantly then does he compare carelessness of mind to a roof, and to tiles that have not been looked after, through which in the first instance only very slight drippings (so to speak) of the passions make their way to the soul:

but if these are not heeded, as being but small and trifling, then the beams of virtues will decay and be carried away by a great tempest of sins, through which ”on a stormy day,” i.e., in the time of temptation, the devil’s attack will assail us, and the soul will be driven forth from the abode of virtue, in which, as long as it preserved all watchful diligence, it had remained as in a house that belonged to it.

And so when we had heard this, we were so immensely delighted with our spiritual repast, that the mental pleasure with which we were filled by this conference outweighed the sorrow which we had experienced before from the death of the saints. For not only were we instructed in things about which we had been puzzled, but we also learnt from the raising of that question some things, which our understanding had been too small for us to ask about.

Chapter I.

On the chastity of Abbot Serenus. As we desire to introduce to earnest minds the Abbot Serenus, a man of the greatest holiness and continence, and one who answers like a mirror to his name, whom we admired above all others with peculiar veneration, we think that we only carry out our desire by the attempt to insert his conferences in our book. To this man beyond all other virtues, which shone forth not merely in his actions and manners, but by God's grace in his very look as well, there was granted by a special blessing the gift of continence, so that he never felt himself disturbed even by natural incitements even in sleep. And how it was that by the assistance of God's grace he attained such wondrous purity of the flesh, as it seems beyond the conditions of human nature, I think that I ought first of all to explain.

Chapter II.

The question of the aforesaid old man on the state of our thoughts.

This man then in his prayers by day and night, and in fasts and vigils unweariedly entreated for inward chastity of heart and soul, and seeing that he had obtained what he wished and prayed for, and that all the passions of carnal concupiscence in his heart were dead, was roused as it were by the sweetest taste of purity, and inflamed by his zeal for chastity towards a yet more ardent desire, and began to apply himself to stricter fasts and prayers that the mortification of this passion which by God's grace had been granted to his inner man, might be extended also so as to include external purity, to such an extent that he might no longer be affected by any simple and natural movement, such as is excited even in children and infants. And by the experience of the gift he had obtained, which he knew he had secured by no merit of his labours, but by the grace God, he was the more ardently stimulated to obtain this also in like manner, as he believed that God could much more easily tear up by the roots this incitement of the flesh, (which even by man's art and skill is sometimes destroyed by potions and remedies or by the use of the knife) since He had of His own free gift conferred that purity of spirit which is a still greater thing, and which cannot be acquired by human efforts and exertions.

And when with unceasing supplications and tears he was applying himself unweariedly to the petition he had commenced, there came to him an angel in a vision by night, and seemed to open his belly, and to remove from his bowels a sort of fiery fleshly humour, and to cast it away, and restore everything to its place as before; and "lo" he said, "the incitements of your flesh are removed, and you may be sure that you have this day obtained that lasting purity of body for which you have faithfully asked. It will be enough thus briefly to have told this of the grace of God which was granted to this famous man in a special way. But I deem it unnecessary to say anything of those virtues which he possessed in common with other good men, for fear lest that particular narrative on this man's name might seem to deprive others of that which is specially mentioned of him. Him therefore, as we were inflamed with the greatest eagerness for conference with and instruction from him, we arranged to visit in Lent; and when he had very quietly inquired of us of the character of our thoughts and the state of our inner man, and what help we had got towards its purity from our long stay in the desert, we approached him with these complaints:

Chapter III.

Our answer on the fickle character of our thoughts.

The time spent here, and the dwelling in solitude, and meditation, through which you think that we ought to have attained perfection of the inner man, has only done this for us; viz., teach us that which we are unable to be, without making us what we are trying to be. Nor do we feel that by this knowledge we have acquired any fixed steadfastness of the purity which we long for, or any strength and firmness; but only an increase of confusion and shame: for though our meditation in all our discipline aims at this in our daily studies, and endeavours from trembling beginnings to reach a sure and unwavering skill, and to begin to know something of what originally it knew but vaguely or was altogether ignorant of, and by advancing by sure steps (so to speak) towards the condition of that discipline, to habituate itself perfectly to it without any difficulty, I find on the contrary that while I am struggling in this desire for purity, I have only got far enough to know what I cannot be. And hence I feel that nothing but trouble results to me from all this contrition of heart, so that matter for tears is never wanting, and yet I do not cease to be what I ought not to be. And so what is the good of having learnt what is best, if it cannot be attained even when known?

for when we have been feeling that the aim of our heart was directed towards what we purposed, insensibly the mind returns to its previous wandering thoughts and slips back with a more violent rush, and is taken up with daily distractions and incessantly drawn away by numberless things that take it captive, so that we almost despair of the improvement which we long for, and all these observances seem useless. Since the mind which every moment wanders off vaguely, when it is brought back to the fear of God or spiritual contemplation, before it is established in it, darts off and strays; and when we have been roused and have discovered that it has wandered from the purpose set before it, and want to recall it to the meditation from which it has strayed, and to bind it fast with the firmest purpose of heart, as if with chains, while we are making the attempt it slips away from the inmost recesses of the heart swifter than a snake. Wherefore we being inflamed by daily exercises of this kind, and yet not seeing that we gain from them any strength and stability in heart are overcome and in despair driven to this opinion; viz., to believe that it is from no fault of our own but from a fault of our nature that these wanderings of mind are found in mankind.

Chapter IV.

The discourse of the old man on the state of the soul and its excellence.

Serenus: It is dangerous to jump to a conclusion and lay down the law hastily on the nature of anything before you have properly discussed the subject and considered its true character. Nor should you, looking only at your own weakness, hazard a conjecture instead of pronouncing a judgment based on the character and value of the practice itself, and others' experience of it. For if anyone, who was ignorant of swimming but knew that the weight of his body could not be supported by water, wished from the proof which his inexperience afforded, to lay down that no one composed of solid flesh could possibly be supported on the liquid element, we ought not therefore to think his opinion a true one, which he seemed to bring forward in accordance with his own experience, since this can be shown to be not merely not impossible but actually extremely easily done by others, by the clearest proofs and ocular demonstration. And so the nou=j, i.e., the mind, is defined as a0eiki/nhtoj kai\ poluki/nhioj, i.e., ever shifting and very shifting: as it is thus described in the so called wisdom of Solomon in other words: kai\ gew=dej skh=noj bri/qei nou=n polufro/ntida, i.e.," And the earthly tabernacle weigheth down the mind that museth on many things.

This then in accordance with its nature can never remain idle, but unless provision is made where it may exercise its motions and have what will continually occupy it, it must by its own fickleness wander about and stray over all kinds of things until, accustomed by long practice and daily use-in which you say that you have toiled without result-it tries and learns what food for the memory it ought to prepare, toward which it may bring back its unwearied flight and acquire strength for remaining, and thus may succeed in driving away the hostile suggestion of the enemy by which it is distracted, and in persisting in that state and condition which it yearns for. We ought not then to ascribe this wandering inclination of our heart either to human nature or to God its Creator. For it is a true statement of Scripture, that "God made man upright; but they themselves found out many thoughts" The character of these then depends on us ourselves, for it says "a good thought comes near to those that know it, but a prudent man will find it. For where anything is subject to our prudence and industry so that it can be found out, there if it is not found out, we ought certainly to set it down to our own laziness or carelessness and not to the fault of our nature.

And with this meaning the Psalmist also is in agreement, when he says: ”Blessed is the man whose help is from Thee:

in his heart he hath disposed his ascents. You see then that it lies in our power to dispose in our hearts either ascents, i.e., thoughts that belong to God, or descents; viz., those that sink down to carnal and earthly things. And if this was not in our power the Lord would not have rebuked the Pharisees, saying ”Why do ye think evil in your hearts? nor wou. He have given this charge by the prophet, saying: ”Take away the evil of your thoughts from mine eyes; and ”How long shall wicked thoughts remain in you? Nor would the character of them as of our works be taken into consideration in the day of judgment in our case as the Lord threatens by Isaiah: ”Lo, I come to gather together their works and thoughts together with all nations and tongues; nor would it be right that we should be condemned or defended by their evidence in that terrible and dreadful examination, as the blessed Apostle says: ”Their thoughts between themselves accusing or also defending one another, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men according to my gospel.”

Chapter V.

On the perfection of the soul, as drawn from the comparison of the Centurion in the gospel.

Of this perfect mind then there is an excellent figure drawn in the case of the centurion in the gospel; whose virtue and consistency, owing to which he was not led away by the rush of thoughts, but in accordance with his own judgment either admitted such as were good, or easily drove away those of the opposite character, are described in this tropical form: ”For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. If then we too strive manfully against disturbances and sins and can bring them under our own control and discretion, and fight and destroy the passions in our flesh, and bring under the sway of reason the swarm of our thoughts, and drive back from our breast the terrible hosts of the powers opposed to us by the life-giving standard of the Lord’s cross, we shall in reward for such triumphs be promoted to the rank of that centurion spiritually understood, who, as we read in Exodus, was mystically pointed to by Moses: ”Appoint for thee rulers of thousands, and of hundreds, and of fifties and of tens.

And so we too when raised to the height of this dignity shall have the same right and power to command, so that we shall not be carried away by thoughts against our will, but shall be able to continue in and cling to those which spiritually delight us, commanding the evil suggestions to depart, and they will depart, while to good ones we shall say ”Come,” and they will come: and to our servant also, i.e., the body we shall in like manner enjoin what belongs to chastity and continence, and it will serve us without any gainsaying, no longer arousing in us the hostile incitements of concupiscence, but showing all subservience to the spirit. And what is the character of the arms of this centurion, and for what use in battle they are, hear the blessed Apostle declaring: ”The arms,” he says ”of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty to God. He tells us their character; viz., that they are not carnal or weak, but spiritual and mighty to God. Then he next suggests in what struggles they are to be used: ”Unto the pulling down of fortifications, purging the thoughts, and every height that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ, and having in readiness to avenge all disobedience, when your obedience shall be first fulfilled.

And since though useful, it yet belongs to another time to run through these one by one, I only want you to see the different sorts of these arms and their characteristics, as we also ought always to walk with them girt upon us if we mean to fight the Lord's battles and to serveamong the centurions of the gospel. ”Take,” he says ”the shield of faith, wherewith ye may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. Faith then is that which intercepts the flaming darts of lust, and destroys them by the fear of future judgment, and belief in the heavenly kingdom. ”And the breastplate,” he says, ”of charity. This indeed is that which going round the vital parts of the breast and protecting what is exposed to the deadly wounds of swelling thoughts, keeps off the blows opposed to it, and does not allow the darts of the devil to penetrate to our inner man. For it ”endureth all things, suffereth all things, beareth all things. ”And for an helmet the hope of salvation. The helmet is what protects the head. As then Christ is our head, we ought always in all temptations and persecutions to protect it with the hope of future good things to come, and especially to keep faith in Him whole and undefiled. For it is possible for one who has lost other parts of the body, weak as he may be, still to survive:

but even a short time of living is extended to no one without a head. ”And the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. For it is ”sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart: as it divides and cuts off whatever carnal and earthly things it may find in us. And whosoever is protected by these arms will ever be defended from the weapons and ravages of his foes, and will not be led away bound in the chains of his spoilers, a captive and a prisoner, to the hostile land of vain thoughts, nor hear the words of the prophet: ”Why art thou grown old in a strange country? But he will stand like a triumphant conqueror in the land of thoughts which he has chosen. Would you understand too the strength and courage of this centurion, by which he bears these arms of which we spoke before as not carnal but mighty to God? Hear of the selection by which the King himself marks and approves brave men when he summons them to the spiritual combat. ”Let,” says He, ”the weak say that I am strong; and: ”Let him who is the sufferer become a warrior. You see then that none but sufferers and weak people can fight the Lord's battles, weak indeed with that weakness, rounded on which that centurion of ours in the gospel said with confidence:

”For when I am weak, then am I strong,” and again, ”for strength is made perfect in weakness. Of which weakness one of the prophets says: ”And he that is weak among them shall be as the house of David. For the patient sufferer shall fight these wars, with that patience of which it is said ”patience is necessary for you that doing the will of God you may receive the reward.”

Chapter VI.

Of perseverance as regards care of the thoughts.

But we shall find out by our own experience that we can and ought to cling to the Lord if we have our wills mortified and the desires of this world cut off, and we shall be taught by the authority of those who in converse with the Lord say in all confidence: ”My soul hath stuck close to Thee; and: ”I have stuck unto Thy testimonies, O Lord; and: ”It is good for me to stick fast to God; and: ”He who cleaveth to the Lord, is one spirit. We ought not then to be wearied out by these wanderings of mind and relax from our fervour: for ”he that tilleth his ground shall be filled with bread: but he that followeth idleness shall be filled with poverty. Nor should we be drawn away from being intent on this watchfulness through a dangerous despair, for ”in every one who is anxious there is abundance, for he who is pleasant and free from grief will be in want; and again: ”a man in grief labours for himself, and forcibly brings about his own destruction. Moreover also:

”the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force,” for no virtue is acquired without effort, nor can anyone attain to that mental stability which he desires without great sorrow of heart, for ”man is born to trouble,” and in order that he may be able to attain to ”the perfect man, the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” he must ever be on the watch with still greater intentness, and toil with ceaseless carefulness. But to the fulness of this measure no one will ever attain, but one Who has considered it beforehand and been trained to it now and has had some foretaste of it while still in this world, and being marked a most precious member of Christ, has possessed in the flesh an earnest of that ”joint” by which he can be united to His body: desiring one thing alone, thirsting for but one thing, ever bringing not only his acts but even his thoughts to bear on one thing alone; viz., that he may even now keep as an earnest that which is said of the blessed life of thesaints hereafter; viz., that ”God may be” to him ”all in all.”

Chapter VII.

A question on the roving tendency of the mind and the attacks of spiritual wickedness. Germanus: Perhaps this tendency of the mind to rove might to some extent be checked were it not that so great a swam of enemies surrounded it, and ceaselessly urged it toward what it has no wish for, or rather whither the roving character of its own nature drives it. And since such numberless foes, and those so powerful and terrible, surround it, we should not fancy that it was possible for them to be withstood especially by this weak flesh of ours, were we not encouraged to this view by your words as if by oracles from heaven.

Chapter VIII.

The answer on the help of God and the power of free will Serenus: No one who has experienced the conflicts of the inner man, can doubt that our foes are continually lying in wait for us. But we mean that they oppose our progress in such a way that we can think of them as only inciting to evil things and not forcing. But no one could altogether avoid whatever sin they were inclined to imprint upon our hearts, if a strong impulse was present to force (evil) upon us, just as it is to suggest it. Wherefore as there is in them ample power of inciting, so in us there is a supply of power of rejection, and of liberty of acquiescing. But if we are afraid of their power and assaults, we may also claim the protection and assistance of God against them, of which we read: ”For greater is He who is in us than he who is in this world:” and His aid fights on our side with much greater power than their hosts fight against us; for God is not only the suggester of what is good, but the maintainer and insister of it, so that sometimes He draws us towards salvation even against our will and without our knowing it. It follows then that no one can be deceived by the devil but one who has chosen to yield to him the consent of his own will: as Ecclesiastes clearly puts it in these words: ”For since there is no gainsaying by those who do evil speedily, therefore the heart of the children of men is filled within them to do evil.” It is therefore clear that each man goes wrong from this; viz., that when evil thoughts assault him he does not immediately meet them with refusal and contradiction, for it says: ”resist him, and he will flee from you.”

Chapter IX.

A question on the union ofthe soulwith devils. Germanus: What, I pray you, is that indiscriminate and common union of the soul with those evil spirits, by which it is possible for them to be (I will not say joined with but) united to it in such a way that they can imperceptibly talk with it, and find their way into it and suggest to it whatever they want, and incite it to whatever they like, and look into and see its thoughts and movements; and the result is so close a union between them and the soul that it is almost impossible without God's grace to distinguish between what results from their instigation, and what from our free will.

Chapter X.

The answer how unclean spirits are united with human souls. Serenus: It is no wonder that spirit can be imperceptibly joined with spirit, and exercise an unseen power of persuasion toward what is allowed to it. For there is between them (just as between men) some sort of similarity and kinship of substance, since the description which is given of the nature of the soul, applies equally well to their substance. But it is impossible for spirits to be implanted in spirits inwardly or united with them in such a way that one can hold the other; for this is the true prerogative of Deity alone, which is the only simple and incorporeal nature.

Chapter XI.

An objection whether unclean spirits can be present in or united with the souls of those whom they have filled. Germanus: To this idea we think that what we see happen in the case of those possessed is sufficiently opposed, when they say and do what they know not under the influence of the spirits. How then are we to refuse to believe that their souls are not united to those spirits, when we see them made their instruments, and (forsaking their natural condition) yielding to their movements and moods, in such a way that they give expression no longer to their own words and actions and wishes, but to those of the demons?

Chapter XII.

The answer how it is that unclean spirits can lord it over those possessed.

Serenus: What you speak of as taking place in the case of demoniacs is not opposed to our assertion; viz., that those possessed by unclean spirits say and do what they do not i want to, and are forced to utter what they know not; for it is perfectly clear that they are not subject to the entrance of the spirits all in the same way: for some are affected by them in such a way as to have not the slight est conception of what they do and say, while others know and afterwards recollect it. But we must not imagine that this is done by the infusion of the spirit in such a way that it penetrates into the actual substance of the soul and, being as it were united to it and somehow clothed with it, utters words and sayings through the mouth of the sufferer. For we ought not to believe that this can possibly be done by them. For we can clearly see that this results from no loss of the soul but from weakness of the body, when the unclean spirit seizes on those members in which the vigour of the soul resides, and laying on them an enormous and intolerable weight overwhelms it with foulest darkness, and interferes with its intellectual powers: as we see sometimes happen also from the fault of wine and fever or excessive cold, and other indispositions affecting men from without; and it was this which the devil was forbidden to attempt to inflict on the blessed Job, though he had received power over his flesh, when the Lord commanded him saying: "Lo, I give him into thine hands: only preserve his soul," i.e., do not weaken the seat of his soul and make him mad, and overpower the understanding and wisdom of what remains, by smothering the ruling power in his heart with your weight.

Chapter XIII.

How spirit cannot be penetrated by spirit, and how God alone is incorporeal.

For even if spirit is mingled with this crass and solid matter; viz., flesh (as very easily happens), should we therefore believe that it can be united to the soul, which is in like manner spirit, in such a way as to make it also receptive in the same way of its own nature: a thing which is possible to the Trinity alone, which is so capable of pervading every intellectual nature, that it cannot only embrace and surround it but even insert itself into it and, incorporeal though it is, be infused into a body? For though we maintain that some spiritual natures exist, such as angels, archangels and the other powers, and indeed our own souls and the thin air, yet we ought certainly not to consider them incorporeal. For they have in their own fashion a body in which they exist, though it is much finer than our bodies are, in accordance with the Apostle's words when he says: "And there are bodies celestial, and bodies terrestrial: and again: "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body; from which it is clearly gathered that there is nothing incorporeal but God alone, and therefore it is only by Him that all spiritual and intellectual substances can be pervaded, because He alone is whole and everywhere and in all things, in such a way as to behold and see the thoughts of men and their inner movements and all the recesses of the soul;

since it was of Him alone that the blessed Apostle spoke when he said: "For the word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow; and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart; and there is no creature invisible in His sight, but all things are naked and open to His eyes. And the blessed David says: "Who fashioneth their hearts one by one; and again: "For He knoweth the secrets of the heart; and Job too: "Thou who alone knowest the hearts of men."

Chapter XIV.

An objection, as to how we ought to believe that devils see into the thoughts of men. Germanus: In this way, which you describe, those spirits cannot possibly see into our thoughts. But we think it utterly absurd to hold such an opinion, when Scripture says: "If the spirit of him that hath power ascend upon thee;" and again: "When the devil had put it into the heart of Simon Iscariot to betray the Lord." How then can we believe that our thoughts are not open to them, when we feel that for the most part they spring up and are nursed by their suggestions and instigation?

Chapter XV.

The answer what devils can and what they cannot do in regard to the thoughts of men.

Serenus: Nobody doubts that unclean spirits can influence the character of our thoughts, but this is by affecting them from without by sensible influences, i.e., either from our inclinations or from our words, and those likings to which they see that we are especially disposed. But they cannot possibly come near to those which have not yet come forth from the inmost recesses of the soul. And the thoughts too, which they suggest, whether they are actually or in a kind of way embraced, are discovered by them not from the nature of the soul itself, i.e., that inner inclination which lies concealed so to speak in the very marrow, but from motions and signs given by the outward man, as for example, when they suggest gluttony, if they have seen a monk raising his eyes anxiously to the window or to the sun, or inquiring eagerly what o'clock it is, they know that he has admitted the feeling of greediness. If when they suggest fornication they find him calmly submitting to the attack of lust, or see him perturbed in body, or at any rate not groaning as he ought under the wantonness of an impure suggestion, they know that the dart of lust is already fixed in his very soul. If they stir up incitements to grief, or anger, or rage, they can tell whether they have taken root in the heart by the movements of the body, and visible disturbances, when, for instance, they have noticed him either groaning silently, or panting with indignation or changing colour;

and so they cunningly discover the fault to which he is given over. For they know that every one of us is enticed in a regular way by that one, to the incitement of which they see, by a sort of assenting motion of the body, that he has yielded his consent and agreement. And it is no wonder that this is discovered by those powers of the air, when we see that even clever men can often discover the state of the inner man from his mien and look and external bearing. How much more surely then can this be discovered by those who as being of a spiritual nature are certainly much more subtle and cleverer than men.

Chapter XVI.

An illustration showing how we are taught that unclean spirits know the thoughts of men. For just as some thieves are in the habit of examining the concealed treasures of the men in those houses which they mean to rob, and in the dark shades of night sprinkle with careful hands little grains of sand and discover the hidden treasures which they cannot see by the tinkling sound with which they answer to the fall of the sand, and so arrive at certain knowledge of each thing and metal, which betrays itself in a way by the voice elicited from it; so these too, in order to explore the treasures of our heart, scatter over us the sand of certain evil suggestions, and when they see some bodily affection arise corresponding to their character, they recognize as if by a sort of tinkling sound proceeding from the inmost recesses, what it is that is stored up in the secret chamber of the inner man.

Chapter XVII.

On the fact that not every devil has the power of suggesting every passion to men. But we ought to know this, that not all devils can implant all the passions in men, but that certain spirits brood over each sin, and that some gloat over uncleanness and filthy lusts, others over blasphemy, others are more particularly devoted to anger and wrath, others thrive on gloominess, others are pacified with vainglory and pride; and each one implants in the hearts of men that sin, in which he himself revels, and they cannot implant their special vices all at one time, but in turn, according as the opportunity of time or place, or a man, who is open to their suggestions, excites them.

Chapter XVIII.

A question whether among the devils there is any order observed in the attack, or system in its changes. Germanus: Must we then believe that wickedness is arranged and so to speak systematized among them in such a way that there is some order in the changes observed by them, and a regular plan of attack carried out, though it is clear that method and system can only exist among good and upright men, as Scripture says: ”Thou shalt seek wisdom among the ungodly and shalt not find it; and: ”our enemies are senseless;” and this: ”There is neither wisdom, nor courage, nor counsel among the ungodly.”

Chapter XIX.

The answer how far an agreement exists among devils about the attack and its changes. Serenus: It is a true assertion that there is no lasting concord among bad men, and that perfect harmony cannot exist even in regard to those particular faults which have attractions for them all in common. For, as you have said, it can never be that system and discipline are preserved among undisciplined things. But in some matters, where community of interests, and necessity enforces it, or participation in some gain recommends it, they must arrange for some agreement for the time being. And we see very clearly that this is so in the case of this war of spiritual wickedness; so that not only do they observe times and changes among themselves, but actually are known specially to occupy some particular spots and to haunt them persistently: for since they must make their attacks through certain fixed temptations and well defined sins, and at particular times, we clearly infer from this that no one can at one and at the same time be deluded by the emptiness of vainglory and inflamed by the lust of fornication, nor at one and the same time be puffed up by the outrageous haughtiness of spiritual pride, and subject to the humiliation of carnal gluttony. Nor can anyone be overcome by silly giggling and laughter and at the same time be excited by the stings of anger, or at any rate filled with the pains of gnawing grief: but all the spirits must one by one advance to attack the soul, in such a way that when one has been vanquished and retreated, he must make way for another spirit to attack it still more vehemently, or if he has come forth victorious, he will none the less hand it over to be deceived by another.

Chapter XX.

Of the fact that opposite powers are not of the same boldness, and that the occasions of temptation are not under their control. WE ought also not to be ignorant of this, that they have not all the same fierceness and energy, nor indeed the same boldness and malice, and that with beginners and feeble folk only the weaker spirits join battle, and when these spiritual wickednesses are beaten, then gradually the assaults of stronger ones are made against the athlete of Christ. For in proportion to a man's strength and progress, is the difficulty of the struggle made greater: for none of the saints could possibly be equal to the endurance of the malice of so many and so great foes, or meet their attacks, or even bear their cruelty and savagery, were it not that the merciful judge of our contest, and president of the games, Christ Himself, equalized the strength of the combatants, and repelled and checked their excessive attacks, and made with the temptation a way of escape as well that we might be able to bear it.

Chapter XXI.

Of the fact that devils struggle with men not without effort on their part.

But our belief is that they undertake this struggle not without effort on their part. For in their conflict they themselves have some sort of anxiety and depression, and especially when they are matched with stronger rivals, i.e., saints and perfect men. Otherwise no contest or struggle, but only a simple deception of men, and one free from anxiety on their part would be assigned to them. And how then would the Apostle's words stand, where he says: "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against world-rulers of this darkness, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places; and this too: "So fight I, not as one that beateth the air; and again: "I have fought a good fight"? For where it is spoken of as a fight, and conflict, and battle, there must be effort and exertion and anxiety on both sides, and equally there must either be in store for them chagrin and confusion for their failure, or delight consequent upon their victory. But where one fights with ease and security against another who struggles with great effort, and in order to overthrow his rival makes use of his will alone as his strength, there it ought not to be called a battle, struggle, or strife, but a sort of unfair and unreasonable assault and attack.

But they certainly have to labour, and when they attack men, exert themselves in no lesser degree in order to secure from each one that victory which they want to obtain, and there is hurled back upon them the same confusion which was awaiting us had we been worsted by them; as it is said: "The head of their compassing me about, the labour of their own lips shall overwhelm them; and: "His sorrow shall be turned on his own head; and again: "Let the snare which he knoweth not come upon him, and let the net which he hath hidden catch him, and into that very snare let him fall; viz., that which he contrived for the deception of men. They then themselves also come to grief, and as they damage us so are they also in like manner damaged by us, nor when they are worsted do they depart without confusion, and seeing these defeats of theirs and their struggles, one who had good eyes in his inner man, seeing also that they gloated over the downfall and mischances of individuals, and fearing lest his own case might furnish them with this kind of delight, prayed to the Lord saying: "Lighten mine eyes that I sleep not in death: lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him. They that trouble me will rejoice if I be moved; and: "O My God, let them not

rejoice over me; let them not say in their hearts, Aha, Aha, our very wish; neither let them say; we have devoured hint.

and: "They gnashed their teeth upon me. Lord, how long wilt Thou look on this? for: "he lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to ravish the poor; and: "He seeketh from God his meat. And again when all their efforts are exhausted, and they have failed to secure our deception, they must "be confounded and blush" at the failure of their efforts, "who seek our souls to destroy them: and let them be covered with shame and confusion who imagine evil against us. Jeremiah also says: "Let them be confounded, and let not me be confounded: let them be afraid, and let not me be afraid: bring upon them the fury of Thy wrath, and with a double destruction destroy them. For no one can doubt that when they are vanquished by us they will be destroyed with a double destruction: first, because while men are seeking after holiness, they, though they possessed it, lost it, and became the cause of man's ruin; secondly, because being spiritual existences, they have been vanquished by carnal and earthly ones. Each one then of the saints when he looks on the destruction of his foes and his own triumphs, exclaims with delight: "I will follow after mine enemies and overtake them: and I will not turn until they are destroyed. I will break them and they shall not be able to stand: they shall fall under my feet," and in his prayers against them the same prophet says:

"Judge thou, O Lord, them that wrong me: overthrow them that fight against me. Take hold of arms and shield: and rise up to help me. Bring out the sword and shut up the way against them that persecute me: say to my soul, I am thy salvation. And when by subduing and destroying all our passions we have vanquished these, we shall then be permitted to hear those words of blessing: "Thy hand shall be exalted over thine enemies, and all thine enemies shall perish. And so when we read or chant all these and such like passages found in holy writ, unless we take them as written against those spiritual wickednesses which lie in wait for us night and day, we shall not only fail to draw from them any edification to make us gentle and patient, but shall actually meet with some dreadful consequence and one that is quite contrary to evangelical perfection. For we shall not only not be taught to pray for or to love our enemies, but actually shall be stirred up to hate them with an implacable hatred, and to curse them and incessantly to pour forth prayers against them.

And it is terribly wrong and blasphemous to think that these words were uttered in such a spirit by holy men and friends of God, on whom before the coming of Christ the law was not imposed for the very reason that they went beyond its commands, and chose rather to obey the preCepts of the gospel and to aim at apostolical perfection, though they lived before the dispensation of the time.

Chapter XXII.

On the fact that the power to hurt does not depend upon the will of the devils. But that they have not the power of hurting any man is shown in a very clear way by the instance of the blessed Job, where the enemy did not venture to try him beyond what was allowed to him by the Divine permission; and it is evidenced by the confession of the same spirits contained in the records of the gospel, where they say: "If Thou cast us out, suffer us to go into the herd of swine." And far more must we hold that they cannot of their own free will enter into any one of men who are created in the image of God, if they have not power to enter into dumb and unclean animals without the permission of God. But no one-I will not say of the younger men, whom we see living most steadfastly in this desert, but even of those who are perfect-could live alone in the desert, surrounded by such swarms of foes of this kind, if they had unlimited power and freedom to hurt and tempt us: and still more clearly is this supported by the words of our Lord and Saviour, which in the lowliness of the manhood He had assumed, He uttered to Pilate, when He said: "Thou couldest have no power against Me at all, unless it were given thee from above."

Chapter XXIII.

Of the diminished power of the devils.

But we have thoroughly discovered both by our own experience and by the testimony of the Elders that the devils have not now the same power as they had formerly during the early days of the anchorites, when yet there were only a few monks living in the desert. For such was their fierceness that it was with difficulty that a few very steadfast men, and those advanced in years were able to endure a life of solitude. Since in the actual monasteries where eight or ten men used to live, their violence attacked them so and their assaults were experienced so frequently, and so visibly, that they did not dare all to go to bed at once by night, but took turns and while some snatched a little sleep, others kept watch and devoted themselves to Psalms and prayer and reading. And when the wants of nature compelled them to sleep, they awoke the others, and committed to them in like manner the duty of keeping watch over those who were going to bed. Whence we cannot doubt that one of two things has brought about this result not only in the case of us who seem to be fairly strong from the experience which our age gives us, but also in the case of younger men as well. For either the malice of the devils has been beaten back by the power of the cross penetrating even to the desert, and by its grace which shines everywhere;

or else our carelessness makes them relax something of their first onslaught, as they scorn to attack us with the same energy with which they formerly raged against those most admirable soldiers of Christ; and by this deceit and ceasing from open attacks they do us still more damage. For we see that some have fallen into so sluggish a condition that they have to be coaxed by too gentle exhortations for fear lest they should forsake their cells and fall into more dangerous troubles, and wander and stray about and be entangled in what I would call grosser sins; and it is thought that a great thing is got from them if they can even with some listlessness remain in the desert, and the Elders often say to them as a great relief: Stop in your cells, and eat and drink and sleep as much as you like, if only you will stay in them always.

Chapter XXIV.

Of the way in which the devils prepare for themselves an entrance into the bodies of those whom they are going to possess. IT is clear then that unclean spirits cannot make their way into those whose bodies they are going to seize upon, in any other way than by first taking possession of their minds and thoughts. And when they have robbed them of fear and the recollection of God and spiritual meditation, they boldly advance upon them, as if they were dispossessed of all protection and Divine safeguard, and could easily be bound, and then take up their dwelling in them as if in a possession given over to them.

Chapter XXV.

On the fact that those men are more wretched who are possessed by sins than those who are possessed by devils. Although it is a fact that those men are more grievously and severely troubled, who, while they seem to be very little affected by them in the body, are yet possessed in spirit in a far worse way, as they are entangled in their sins and lusts. For as the Apostle says: ”Of whom a man is overcome, of him he is also the servant.” Only that in this respect they are more dangerously ill, because though they are their slaves, yet they do not know that they are assaulted by them, and under their dominion. But we know that even saintly men have been given over in the flesh to Satan and to great afflictions for some very slight faults, since the Divine mercy will not suffer the very least spot or stain to be found in them on the day of judgment, and purges away in this world every spot of their filth, as the prophet, or rather God Himself says, in order that He may commit them to eternity as gold or silver refined and needing no penal purification. ”And,” says He, ”I will clean purge away thy dross, and I will take away all thy tin; and after this thou shall be called the city of the just, a faithful city.” And again: ”Like as silver and gold are tried in the furnace, so the Lord chooseth the hearts;” And again: ”The fire tries gold and silver; but man is tried in the furnace of humiliation;” and this also: ”For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.”

Chapter XXVI.

Of the death of the prophet who was led astray, and of the infirmity of the Abbot Paul, with which he was visited for the sake of his cleansing.

And we see clear instance of this in the case of that prophet and man of God in the third book of Kings, who was straightway destroyed by a lion for a single fault of disobedience, in which he was implicated not of set purpose nor by the fault of his own will but by the enticement of another, as the Scripture speaks thus of him: ”It is the man of God, who was disobedient to the mouth of the Lord, and the Lord delivered him to the lion, and it tare him according to the word of the Lord, which He spake. In which case the punishment of the present offence and carelessness together with the reward of his righteousness, for which the Lord gave over his prophet in this world to the destroyer, are shown by the moderation and abstinence of the beast of prey, as that most savage creature did not dare even to taste the carcass that was given over to him. And of the same thing a very clear and plain proof has been given in our own days in the case of the Abbots Paul and Moses who lived in a spot in this desert called Calamus, for the former had formerly dwelt in the wilderness which is hard by the city of Panephysis, which we know had only recently been made a wilderness by an inundation of salt water;

which whenever the north wind blew, was driven from the marshes and spreading over the adjacent fields covered the face of the whole district, so as to make the ancient villages, which on this very account had been deserted by all their inhabitants, look like islands. Here, then, the Abbot Paul had made such progress in purity of heart in the stillness and silence of the desert, that he did not suffer, I will not say a woman’s face, but even the clothes of one of that sex to appear in his sight. For when as he was going to the cell of one of the Elders together with Abbot Archebius who lived in the same desert, by accident a woman met him, he was so disgusted at meeting her that he dropped the business of his friendly visit which he had taken in hand and dashed back again to his own monastery with greater speed than a man would flee from the face of a lion or terrible dragon; so that he was not moved even by the shouts and prayers of the aforesaid Abbot Archebius who called him back to go on with the journey they had undertaken to ask the old man what they had proposed to do.

But though this was done in his eagerness for chastity and desire for purity, yet because it was done not according to knowledge, and because the observance of discipline, and the methods of proper strictness were overstrained, for he imagined that not merely familiarity with a woman (which is the real harm,) but even the very form of that sex was to be execrated, he was forthwith overtaken by such a punishment that his whole body was struck with paralysis, and none of his limbs were able to perform their proper functions, since not merely his hands and feet, but even the movements of the tongue, which enables us to frame our words, (were affected) and his very ears lost the sense of hearing, so that there was left in him nothing more of his manhood than an immovable and insensible figure. But he was reduced to such a condition that the utmost care of men was unable to minister to his infirmity, but only the tender service of women could attend to his wants: for when he was taken to a convent of holy virgins, food and drink, which he could not ask for even by signs, were brought to him by female attendants, and for the performance of all that nature required he was ministered to by the same service for nearly four years, i.e., to the end of his life.

And though he was affected by such weakness of all his members that none of his limbs retained their keen power of motion and feeling, nevertheless such grace of goodness proceeded from him that when sick persons were anointed with the oil which had touched what should be called his corpse rather than his body, they were instantly healed of all diseases, so that as regards his own malady it was made clearly and plainly evident even to unbelievers that the infirmity of all his limbs was caused by the providence and love of the Lord, and that the grace of these healings was granted by the power of the Holy Ghost as a witness of his purity and a manifestation of his merits.

Chapter XXVII.

On the temptation of Abbot Moses. But the second person whom we mentioned as living in this desert, although he was also a remarkable and striking man, yet, in order to punish a single word, to which in a dispute with Abbot Macarius, he had given utterance somewhat too sharply, as he was anticipated in some opinion, he was instantly delivered to so dreadful a demon that he filled his mouth with filth which he supplied, and the Lord showed by the quickness of his cure, and the author of his healing, that He had brought this scourge upon him to purify him, that there might not remain in him any stain from his momentary error: for as soon as Abbot Macarius committed himself to prayer, quicker than a word the evil spirit tied away from him and departed.

Chapter XXVIII.

How we ought not to despise those who are delivered up to unclean spirits. From which it plainly results that we ought not to hate or despise those whom we see to be delivered up to various temptations or to those spirits of evil, because we ought firmly to hold these two points: first, that none of them can be tempted at all by them without God's permission, and secondly that all things which are brought upon us by God, whether they seem to us at the present time to be sad or joyful, are inflicted for our advantage as by a most kind father and most compassionate physician, and that therefore men are, as it were, given into the charge of schoolmasters, and humbled in order that when they depart out of this world they may be removed in a state of greater purity to the other life, or have a lighter punishment inflicted on them, as they have been, as the Apostle says, delivered over at the present time "to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

Chapter XXIX.

An objection, asking why those who are tormented by unclean spirits are separated from the Lord's communion. Germanus: And how is it that we see them not only scorned and shunned by everybody, but actually always kept away from the Lord's communion in our provinces, in accordance with these words of the gospel: "Give not that which is holy to the dogs, neither cast four pearls before swine;" while you tell us that somehow we ought to hold that the humiliation of this temptation is brought upon them with a view to their purification and profit?

Chapter XXX.

The answer to the question raised. Serenus: If we had this knowledge. or rather faith, of which I treated above; viz., to believe that all things were brought about by God, and ordered for the good of our souls, we should not only never despise them, but rather pray without ceasing for them as our own members, and sympathize with them with all our hearts and the fullest affection (for "when one member suffers, all the members suffer with it"), as we know that we cannot possibly be perfected without them inasmuch as they are members of us, just as we read that our predecessors could not attain the fulness of promise without us, as the Apostle speaks of them as follows: "And these all being approved by the testimony of faith, received not the promise, God providing some better thing for us that they should not be perfected without us." But we never remember that holy, communion was forbidden them; nay rather if it were possible, they thought that it ought to be given to them daily; nor indeed according to the words of the gospel which you incongruously apply in this sense "Give not that which is holy to dogs," ought we to believe that holy communion becomes food for the demon, and not a purification and safeguard of body and soul; for when it is received by a man it, so to speak, burns out and puts to flight the spirit which has its seat in his members or is trying to lurk in them. For in this way we have lately seen Abbot Andronicus and many others cured. For the enemy will more and more abuse the man who is possessed, if he sees him cut off from the heavenly medicine, and will tempt him more often and more fearfully, as he sees him removed the further from this spiritual remedy.

Chapter XXXI.

On the fact that those men are more to be pitied to whom it is not given to be subjected to those temporal temptations.

But we ought to consider those men truly wretched and miserable in whose case, although they defile themselves with all kinds of sins and wickedness, yet not only is there no visible sign of the devil's possession shown in them, nor is any temptation proportionate to their actions, nor any scourge of punishment brought to bear upon them. For they are vouchsafed no swift and immediate remedy in this world, whose "hardness and impenitent heart," being too much for punishment in this life, "heapeth up for itself wrath and indignation in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God," "where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched. Against whom the prophet as if perplexed at the affliction of the saints, when he sees them subject to various losses and temptations, and on the other hand sees sinners not only passing through the course of this world without any scourge of humiliation, but even rejoicing in great riches, and the utmost prosperity in everything, inflamed with uncontrollable indignation and fervour of spirit, exclaims: "But as for me, my feet had almost gone, my treadings had well nigh slipped. For I was grieved at the wicked, when I saw the peace of sinners. For there is no regard to their death, nor is there strength in their stripes.

They are not in the labour of men, neither shall they be scourged like other men," since hereafter they shall be punished with the devils, to whom in this world it was not vouchsafed to be scourged in the lot and discipline of sons, together with men. Jeremiah also, when conversing with God on this prosperity of sinners, although he never professes to doubt about the justice of God, as he says "for Thou art just, O Lord, if I dispute with Thee," yet in his inquiry as to the reasons of this inequality, proceeds to say: "But yet I will speak what is just to Thee. Why doth the way of the wicked prosper? Why is it well with all them that transgress and do wickedly? Thou hast planted them and they have taken root: they prosper and bring forth fruit. Thou art near in their mouth and far from their reins. And when the Lord mourns for their destruction by the prophet, and anxiously directs doctors and physicians to heal them, and in a manner urges them on to a similar lamentation and says: "Babylon is suddenly fallen: she is destroyed. Howl for her: take balm for her pain, if so she may be healed; then, in their despair, the angels, to whom is entrusted the care of

man's salvation, make reply; or at any rate the prophet in the person of the Apostles and spiritual men and doctors who see the hardness of their soul, and their impenitent heart: "We have healed Babylon:

but she is not cured. Let us forsake her, and let us go every man to his own land because her judgment hath reached even to the heavens, and is lifted up to the clouds. Of their desperate feebleness then Isaiah speaks in the Person of God to Jerusalem: From the sole of the foot unto the top of the head there is no soundness therein: wounds and bruises and swelling sores: they are not bound up nor dressed nor fermented with oil."

Chapter XXXII.

Of the different desires and wishes which exist in the powers of the air.

But it is clearly proved that there exist in unclean spirits as many desires as there are in men. For some of them, which are commonly called Plani, are shown to be so seductive and sportive that, when they have taken continual possession of certain places or roads, they delight themselves not indeed with tormenting the passers by whom they can deceive, but, contenting themselves merely with laughing at them and mocking them, try to tire them out rather than to injure them: while some spend the night merely by harmlessly taking possession of men, though others are such slaves to fury and ferocity that they are not simply content with hurting the bodies of those, of whom they have taken possession, by tearing them in a dreadful manner, but actually are eager to rush upon those who are passing by at a distance, and to attack them with most savage slaughter: like those described in the gospel, for fear of whom no man dared to pass by that way. And there is no doubt that these and such as these in their insatiable fury delight in wars and bloodshed. Others we find affect the hearts of those whom they have seized with empty pride, (and these are commonly called Bacucei) so that they stretch themselves up beyond their proper height and at one time puff themselves up with arrogance and pomposity, and at another time condescend in an ordinary and bland manner, to a state of calmness and affability:

and as they fancy that they are great people and the wonder of everybody, at one time show by bowing their body that they are worshipping higher powers, while at another time they think that they are worshipped by others, and so go through all those movements which express true service either proudly or humbly. Others we find are not only keen for lies, but also inspire men with blasphemies. And of this we ourselves can testify as we have heard a demon openly confessing that he had proclaimed a wicked and impious doctrine by the mouths of Arius and Eunomius. And the same thing we read that one of them openly proclaimed in the fourth book of Kings: ”I will go forth,” he said, ”and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. On which the Apostle, when reproving those who are deceived by them, adds as follows: ”giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils speaking lies in hypocrisy. And that there are other kinds of devils which are deaf and dumb the gospels testify. And that some spirits incite to lust and wantonness the prophet maintains saying: ”The spirit of fornication deceived them and they went astray from their God. In

the same way the authority of Scripture teaches us that there are demons of the night and of the day and of the noonday:

But it would take too long to search through the whole of Scripture and run through the different kinds of them, as they are termed by the prophets onocentaurs, satyrs, sirens, witches, howlers, ostriches, urchins; and asps and basilisks in the Psalms; and are called lions, dragons, scorpions in the gospel, and are named by the Apostle the prince of this world, rulers of this darkness, and spirits of wickedness. And all these names we ought not to take as given at random or hap-hazard, but as alluding to their fierceness and madness under the sign of those wild beasts which are more or less harmful and dangerous among us, and by comparing them to the poisonous wickedness or power which among other beasts or serpents, some pre-eminence in evil confers on them, they are called by their names, in such a way that to one is assigned the name of lion because of the fury of his rage and the madness of his anger, to another that of basilisk because of his deadly poison, which kills a person before it is perceived, and to another that of onocentaur or urchin or ostrich because of his sluggish malice.

Chapter XXXIII.

A question as to the origin of such differences in powers of evil in the sky. Germanus: We certainly do not doubt that those orders which the Apostle enumerates refer to them: ”For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against spirits of wickedness in heavenly places:” but we want to know whence comes such a difference between them, or how such grades of wickedness exist? Were they created for this, to meet with these orders of evil, and in some way to serve this wickedness?

Chapter XXXIV.

The postponement of the answer to the question raised. Serenus: Although your proposals would rob us of our whole night's rest, so that we should not notice the approach of the rising dawn, and should be tempted greedily to prolong our conference till sunrise, yet since the solving of the question raised, if we began to trace it out, would launch us on a wide and deep sea of questions, which the shortness of the time at our disposal would not permit us to traverse, I think it will be more convenient to reserve it for consideration another night, when by the raising of this question I shall receive from your very ready converse some spiritual joy and richer fruit, and we shall be able if the Holy Spirit grants us a prosperous breeze to penetrate more freely into the intricacies of the questions raised. Wherefore let us enjoy a little sleep, and so shake off the drowsiness that steals over our eyes, as the dawn approaches, and then we will go together to church, for the observance of Sunday bids us do this, and after service will come back, and as you wish, discuss with redoubled delight what the Lord may have given to us for our common improvement.

Chapter I.

Of the hospitality of Abbot Serenus. When we had finished the duties of the day, and the congregation had been dismissed from Church we returned to the old man's cell, and enjoyed a most sumptuous repast. For instead of the sauce which with a few drops of oil spread over it was usually set on the table for his daily meal, he mixed a little decoction and poured over it a somewhat more liberal allowance of oil than usual; for each of them when he is going to partake of his daily repast, pours those drops of oil on, not that he may receive any enjoyment from the taste of it (for so limited is the supply that it is hardly enough I will not say to line the passage of his throat and jaws, but even to pass down it) but that using it, he may keep down the pride of his heart (which is certain to creep in stealthily and surely if his abstinence is any stricter) and the incitements to vainglory, for as his abstinence is practised with the greater secrecy, and is carried on without anyone to see it, so much the more subtly does it never cease to tempt the man who conceals it. Then he set before us table salt, and three olives each: after which he produced a basket containing parched vetches which they call trogalia, from which we each took five grains, two prunes and a fig apiece. For it is considered wrong for anyone to exceed that amount in that desert. And when we had finished this repast and had begun to ask him again for his promised solution of the question, "Let us hear," said the old man, "your question, the consideration of which we postponed till the present time."

Chapter II.

Statements on the different kinds of spiritual wickednesses. Then Germanus: We want to know what is the origin of the great variety of hostile powers opposed to men, and the difference between them, which the blessed Apostle sums up as follows: ”We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against spiritual wickedness in hea- venly places:” and a again: ”Neither angels nor principalities nor powers nor any other creature, can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Whence then arises the enmity of all this malice jealous of us? Are we to believe that those powers were created by the Lord for this; viz., to fight against men in these grades and orders?

Chapter III.

The answer on the many kinds of food provided in holy Scripture.

Serenus: The authority of holy Scripture says on those points on which it would inform us some things so plainly and clearly even to those who are utterly void of understanding, that not only are they not veiled in the obscurity of any hidden meaning, but do not even require the help of any explanation, but carry their meaning and sense on the surface of the words and letters: but some things are so concealed and involved in mysteries as to offer us an immense field for skill and care in the discussion and explanation of them. And it is clear that God has so ordered it for many reasons: first for fear lest the holy mysteries, if they were covered by no veil of spiritual meaning, should be exposed equally to the knowledge and understanding of everybody, i.e., the profane as well as the faithful and thus there might be no difference in the matter of goodness and prudence between the lazy and the earnest: next that among those who are indeed of the household of faith, while immense differences of intellectual power open out before them, there might be the opportunity of reproving the slothfulness of the idle, and of proving the keenness and diligence of the earnest.

And so holy Scripture is fitly compared to a rich and fertile field, which, while bearing and producing much which is good for man's food without being cooked by fire, produces some things which are found to be unsuitable for man's use or even harmful unless they have lost all the roughness of their raw condition by being tempered and softened down by the heat of fire. But some are naturally fit for use in both states, so that even when uncooked they are not unpleasant from their raw condition, but still are rendered more palatable by being cooked and heated by fire. Many more things too are produced only fit for the food of irrational creatures, and cattle, and wild animals and birds, but utterly useless as food for men, which while still in their rough state without being in any way touched by fire, conduce to the health and life of cattle. And we can clearly see that the same system holds good in that most fruitful garden of the Scriptures of the Spirit, in which some things shine forth clear and bright in their literal sense, in such a way that while they have no need of any higher interpretation, they furnish abundant food and nourishment in the simple sound of the words, to the hearers: as in this passage: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord; and: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength.

But there are some which, unless they are weakened down by an allegorical interpretation, and softened by the trial of the fire of the spirit cannot become wholesome food for the inner man without injury and loss to him; and damage rather than profit will accrue to him from receiving them: as with this passage: ”But let your loins be girded up and your lights burning; and: ”whosoever has no sword, let him sell his coat and buy himself a sword; and: ”whosoever taketh not up his cross and followeth after Me is not worthy of Me; a passage which some most earnest monks, having ”indeed a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge” understood literally, and so made themselves wooden crosses, and carried them about constantly on their shoulders, and so were the cause not of edification but of ridicule on the part of all who saw them. But some are capable of being taken suitable and properly in both ways, i.e., the historical and allegorical, so that either explanation furnishes a healing draught to the soul; as this passage: ”If any one shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; and: ”when they persecute you in one city, flee to another; and: ”if thou wilt be perfect, go, sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come follow Me. It produces indeed ”grass for the cattle” also, (and of this food all the fields of Scripture are full);

viz., plain and simple narratives of history, by which simple folk, and those who are incapable of perfect and sound understanding (of whom it is said ”Thou, Lord, wilt save both man and beast”) may be made stronger and more vigorous for their hard work and the labour of actual life, in accordance with the state and measure of their capacity.

Chapter IV.

Of the double sense in which Holy Scripture may be taken. Wherefore on those passages which are brought forward with a clear explanation we also can constantly lay down the meaning and boldly state our own opinions. But those which the Holy Spirit, reserving for our meditation and exercise, has inserted in holy Scripture with veiled meaning, wishing some of them to be gathered from various proofs and conjectures, ought to be step by step and carefully brought together, so that their assertions and proofs may be arranged by the discretion of the man who is arguing or supporting them. For sometimes when a difference of opinion is expressed on one and the same subject, either view may be considered reasonable and be held without injury to the faith either firmly, or doubtfully, i.e., in such a way that neither is full belief nor absolute rejection accorded to it, and the second view need not interfere with the former, if neither of them is found to be opposed to the faith: as in this case: where Elias came in the person of John, and is again to be the precursor of the Lord's Advent: and in the matter of the "Abomination of desolation" which "stood in the holy place," by means of that idol of Jupiter which, as we read, was placed in the temple in Jerusalem, and which is again to stand in the Church through the coming of Antichrist, and all those things which follow in the gospel, which we take as having been fulfilled before the captivity of Jerusalem and still to be fulfilled at the end of this world. In which matters neither view is opposed to the other, nor does the first interpretation interfere with the second.

Chapter V.

Of the fact that the question suggested ought to be included among those things to be held in a neutral or doubtful way. And therefore since the question raised by us, does not seem to have been sufficiently or often ventilated among men, and is clear to most people, and from this fact what we bring forward may perhaps appear to some to be doubtful, we ought to regulate our own view (since it does not interfere with faith in the Trinity) so that it may be included among those things which are to be held doubtfully; although they rest not on mere opinions such as are usually given to guesses and conjectures, but on clear Scripture proof. Chapter VI Of the fact that nothing is created evil by God. God forbid that we should admit that God has created anything which is substantially evil, as Scripture says ”everything that God had made was very good.” For if they were created by God such as they are now, or made for this purpose; viz., to occupy these positions of malice, and ever to be ready for the deception and ruin of men, we should in opposition to the view of the above quoted Scripture slander God as the Creator and author of evil, as having Himself formed utterly evil wills and natures, creating them for this very purpose; viz., that they might ever persist in their wickedness and never pass over to the feeling of a good will. The following reason then of this diversity is what we received from the tradition of the fathers, being drawn from the fount of Holy Scripture.

Chapter VII.

Of the origin of principalities or powers.

None of the faithful question the fact that before the formation of this visible creation God made spiritual and celestial powers, in order that owing to the very fact that they knew that they had been formed out of nothing by the goodness of the Creator for such glory and bliss, they might render to Him continual thanks and ceaselessly continue to praise Him, For neither should we imagine that God for the first time began to originate His creation and work with the formation of this world, as if in those countless ages beforehand He had taken no thought of Providence and the divine ordering of things, and as if we could believe that having none towards whom to show the blessings of His goodness, He had been solitary, and a stranger to all bountifulness; a thing which is too poor and unsuitable to fancy of that boundless and eternal and incomprehensible Majesty; as the Lord Himself says of these powers: ”When the stars were made together, all my angels praised Me with a loud voice. Those then who were present at the creation of the stars, are most clearly proved to have been created before that ”beginning” in which it is said that heaven and earth were made, inasmuch as they are said with loud voices and admiration to have praised the Creator because of all those visible creatures which, as they saw, proceeded forth from nothing.

Before then that beginning in time which is spoken of by Moses, and which according to the historic and Jewish interpretation denotes the age of this world (without prejudice to our interpretation, according to which we explain that the ”beginning,” of all things is Christ, in whom the Father created all things, as it is said ”All things were made by him, and without Him was not anything made,”) before, I say, that beginning of Genesis in time there is no question that God had already created all those powers and heavenly virtues; which the Apostle enumerates in order and thus describes: ”For in Christ were created all things both in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be angels or archangels, whether they be thrones or dominions, whether they be principalities or powers. All things were made by Him and in Him.”

Chapter VIII.

Of the fall of the devil and the angels.

And So we are clearly shown that out of that number of them some of the leaders fell, by the lamentations of Ezekiel and Isaiah, in which we know that the prince of Tyre or that Lucifer who rose in the morning is lamented with a doleful plaint: and of him the Lord speaks as follows to Ezekiel: ”Son of man, take up a lamentation over the prince of Tyre, and say to him: Thus saith the Lord God: Thou wast the seal of resemblance, full of wisdom, perfect in beauty. Thou wast in the pleasures of the paradise of God: every precious stone was thy covering: the sardius, the topaz and the jasper, the chrysolyte and the onyx and the beryl, the sapphire and the carbuncle and the emerald: gold the work of thy beauty, and thy pipes were prepared in the day that thou wast created. Thou wast a cherub stretched out and protecting, and I set thee in the holy mountain of God, thou hast walked in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day of thy creation, until iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise thy inner parts were filled with iniquity and thou hast sinned; and I cast thee out from the mountain of God, and destroyed thee, O covering cherub, out of the midst of the stones of fire. And thy heart was lifted up with thy beauty:

thou hast lost thy wisdom in thy beauty, I have cast thee to the ground: I have set thee before the face of kings, that they might behold thee. Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thy iniquities and by the iniquity of thy traffic. Isaiah also says of another: ”How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, who didst rise in the morning? how art thou fallen to the ground, that didst wound the nations? and thou saidst in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will sit in the mountain of the covenant, in the sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will be like the Most High. But Holy Scripture relates that these fell not alone from that summit of their station in bliss, as it tells us that the dragon dragged down together with himself the third part of the stars. One of the Apostles too says still more plainly: ”But the angels who kept not their first estate, but left their own dwelling, He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness to the judgmentof the great day. This too which is said to us: ”But ye shall die like men and fall like one of the princes,” what does it imply but

that many princes have fallen? And by these testimonies we can gather the reason for this diversity;

viz., either that they still retain those differences of rank (which adverse powers are said to possess, after the manner of holy and heavenly virtues) from the station of their former rank in which they were severally created, or else that, though themselves cast down from heavenly places, yet, as a reward for that wickedness of theirs in which they have graduated in evil, they claim in perversity these grades and titles of rank among themselves, by way of copying those virtues which have stood firm there.

Chapter IX.

An objection seating that the fall of the devil took its origin from the deception of God. Germanus: Up till now we used to believe that the reason and commencement of the ruin and fall of the devil, in which he was cast out from his heavenly estate, was more particularly envy, when in his spiteful subtlety he deceived Adam and Eve.

Chapter X.

The answer about the beginning of the devil's fall.

Serenus: The passage in Genesis shows that that was not the beginning of his fall and ruin, as before their deception it takes the view that he had already been branded with the ignominy of the name of the serpent, where it says: "But the serpent was wiser" or as the Hebrew copies express it, "more subtle than all the beasts of the earth, which the Lord God had made. You see then that he had fallen away from his angelic holiness even before he deceived the first man, so that he not only deserved to be stamped with the ignominy of this title, but actually excelled all other beasts of the earth in the subterfuges of wickedness. For Holy Scripture would not have designated a good angel by such a term, nor would it say of those who were still continuing in that state of bliss: "But the serpent was wiser than all the beasts of the earth. For this title could not possibly be applied I say not to Gabriel or Michael, but it would not even be suitable to any good man. And so the title of serpent and the comparison to beasts most clearly suggests not the dignity of an angel but the infamy of an apostate.

Finally the occasion of the envy and seduction, which led him to deceive man, arose from the ground of his previous fall, in that he saw that man, who had but recently been formed out of the dust of the ground, was to be called to that glory, from which he remembered that he himself, while still one of the princes, had fallen. And so that first fall of his, which was due to pride, and which obtained for him the name of the serpent, was followed by a second owing to envy: and as this one found him still in the possession of something upright so that he could enjoy some interchange of conference and counsel with man, by the Lord's sentence he was very properly cast down to the lowest depth, that he might no longer walk as before erect, and looking up on high, but should cleave to the ground and creep along, and be brought low upon his belly and feed upon the earthly food and works of sins, and henceforward proclaim his secret hostility, and put between himself and man an enmity that is to our advantage, and a discord that is to our profit, so that while men are on their guard against him as a dangerous enemy, he can no longer injure them by a deceptive show of friendship.

Chapter XI.

The punishment of the deceiver and the deceived. But we ought in this matter, in order that we may shun evil counsels, to learn a special lesson from the fact that though the author of the deception was visited with a fitting punishment and condemnation, yet still the one who was led astray did not go scot free from punishment, although it was somewhat lighter than that of him who was the author of the deception. And this we see was very plainly expressed. For Adam who was deceived, or rather (to use the Apostle's words) "was not deceived" but, acquiescing in the wishes of her who was deceived, seems to have come to yield a consent that was deadly, is only condemned to labour and the sweat of his brow, which is assigned to him not by means of a curse upon himself, but by means of a curse upon the ground, and its barrenness. But the woman, who persuaded him to this, is visited with an increase of anguish, and pains and sorrow, and also given over to the yoke of perpetual subjection. But the serpent who was the first to incite them to this offence, is punished by a lasting curse. Wherefore we should with the utmost care and circumspection be on our guard against evil counsels, for as they bring punishment upon their authors, so too they do not suffer those who are deceived by them to go free from guilt and punishment.

Chapter XII.

Of the crowd of the devils, and the disturbance which they always raise in our atmosphere. But the atmosphere which extends between heaven and earth is ever filled with a thick crowd of spirits, which do not fly about in it quietly or idly, so that most fortunately the divine providence has withdrawn them from human sight. For through fear of their attacks, or horror at the forms, into which they transform and turn themselves at will, men would either be driven out of their wits by an insufferable dread, and faint away, from inability to look on such things with bodily eyes, or else would daily grow worse and worse, and be corrupted by their constant example and by imitating them, and thus there would arise a sort of dangerous familiarity and deadly intercourse between men and the unclean powers of the air, whereas those crimes which are now committed among men, are concealed either by walls and enclosures or by distance and space, or by some shame and confusion: but if they could always look on them with open face, they would be stimulated to a greater pitch of insanity, as there would not be a single moment in which they would see them desist from their wickedness, since no bodily weariness, or occupation in business or care for their daily food (as in our case) forces them sometimes even against their will to desist from the purposes they, have begun to carry out.

Chapter XIII.

Of the fact that opposing powers turn the attack, which they aim at men, even against each other.

For it is quite clear that they aim these attacks, with which they assault men, even against each other, for in like manner they do not cease to promote with unwearied strife the discords and struggles which they have undertaken for some peoples because of a sort of innate love of wickedness which they have: and this we read of as being very clearly set forth in the vision of Daniel the prophet, where the angel Gabriel speaks as follows: ”Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thy heart to understand, to afflict thyself in the sight of thy God, thy words have been heard: and I am come for thy words. But the prince of the kingdom of the Persians resisted me one and twenty days: and behold Michael one of the chief princes came to help me, and I remained there by the king of the Persians. But I am come to teach thee what thinks shall befall thy people in the latter days. And we can not possibly doubt that this prince of the kingdom of the Persians was a hostile power, which favoured the nation of the Persians an enemy of God’s people;

for in order to hinder the good which it saw would result from the solution of the question for which the prophet prayed the Lord, by the archangel, in its jealousy it opposed itself to prevent the saving comfort of the angel from reaching Daniel too speedily, and from strengthening the people of God, over which the archangel Gabriel was: and the latter said that even then, owing to the fierceness of his assaults, he would not have been able to come to him, had not Michael the archangel come to help him, and met the prince of the kingdom of the Persians, and joined battle with him, and intervened, and defended him from his attack, and so enabled him to come to instruct the prophet after twenty-one days. And a little later on it says: ”And the angel said: Dost thou know wherefore I am come to thee? And now I will return to fight against the prince of the Persians. For when I went forth, there appeared the prince of the Greeks coming. But I will tell thee what is written down in the Scriptures of truth: and none is my helper in all these things but Michael your prince. And again: ”At that time shall Michael rise up, the great prince, who standeth for the children of thy people.

So then we read that in the same way another was called the prince of the Greeks, who since he was patron of that nation which was subject to him seems to have been opposed to

the nation of the Persians as well as to the people of Israel. From which we clearly see that antagonistic powers raise against each other those quarrels of nations, and conflicts and dissensions, which they show among themselves at their instigation, and that they either exult at their victories or are cast down at theirdefeats, and thus cannot live in harmony among themselves, while each of them is always striving with restless jealousy on behalf of those whom he presides over, against the patron of some other nation.

Chapter XIV.

How it is that spiritual wickednesses obtained the names of powers or principalities. WE can then see clear reasons, in addition to those ideas which we expounded above, why they are called principalities or powers; viz., because they rule and preside over different nations, and at least hold sway over inferior spirits and demons, of which the gospels give us evidence by their own confession that there exist legions. For they could not be called lords unless they had some over whom to exercise the sway of lordship; nor could they be called powers or principalities, unless there were some over whom they could claim power: and this we find pointed out very clearly in the gospel by the Pharisees in their blasphemy: ”He casteth out devils by Beelzebub the prince of the devils,” for we find that they are also called ”rulers of darkness,” and that one of them is styled ”the prince of this world.” But the blessed Apostle declares that hereafter, when all things shall be subdued to Christ, these orders shall be destroyed, saying: ”When He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God even the Father, when He shall have destroyed all principalities and powers and dominions.” And this certainly can only take place if they are removed from the sway of those over whom we know that powers and dominions and principalities take charge in this world.

Chapter XV.

Of the fact that it is not without reason that the names of angels and archangels are given to holy and heavenly powers. For no one doubts that not without cause or reason are the same titles of rank assigned to the better sort, and that they are names of office and of worth or dignity, for it is plain that they are termed angels, i.e., messengers from their office of bearing messages, and the appropriateness of the name teaches that theyare ”archangels” because the preside over angels, ”dominions” because they hold dominion over certain persons, and ”principalities” because they have some to be princes over, and ”thrones” because they are so near to God and so privy and close to Him that the Divine Majesty specially rests in them as in a Divine throne, and in a way reclines surely on them.

Chapter XVI.

Of the subjection of the devils, which they show to their own princes, as seen in a brother's victim.

But that unclean spirits are ruled over by worse powers and are subject to them we not only find from those passages of Scripture, recorded in the gospels when the Pharisees maligned the Lord, and He answered "If I by Beelzebub the prince of the devils cast out devils," but we are also taught this by clear visions and many experiences of the saints, for when one of our brethren was making a journey in this desert, as day was now declining he found a cave and stopped there meaning to say his evening office in it, and there midnight passed while he was still singing the Psalms. And when after he had finished his office he sat down a little before refreshing his wearied body, on a sudden he began to see innumerable troops Of demons gathering together on all sides, who came forward in an immense crowd, and a long line, some preceding and others following their prince; who at length arrived, being taller and more dreadful to look at than all the others; and, a throne having been placed, he sat down as on some lofty tribunal, and began to investigate by a searching examination the actions of each one of them; and those who said that they had not yet been able to circumvent their rivals, he commanded to be driven out of his sight with shame and ignominy as idle and slothful, rebuking them with angry wrath for the waste of so much time, and for their labour thrown away:

but those who reported that they had deceived those assigned to them, he dismissed before all with the highest praise amidst the exultation and applause of all, as most brave warriors, and most renowned as an example to all the rest: and when in this number some most evil spirit had presented himself, in delight at having to relate some magnificent triumph, he mentioned the name of a very well known monk, and declared that after having incessantly attacked him for fifteen years, he had at last got the better of him, so as to destroy him that very same night by the sin of fornication, for that he had not only impelled him to commit adultery with some consecrated maid, but had actually persuaded him to keep her and marry her. And when there arose shouts of joy at this narrative, he was extolled with the highest praise by the‘ prince of darkness, and departed crowned with great honours. And so when at break of day the whole swarm of demons had vanished from his eyes, the brother being doubtful about the assertion of the unclean spirit, and rather thinking that he had

desired to entice him by an ancient customary deceit, and to brand an innocent brother with the crime of incest, being mindful of those words of the gospel; viz., that ”he abode not in the truth because there is no truth in him.

When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar, and its father,” he made his way to Pelusium, where he knew that the man lived, whom the evil spirit declared to be destroyed: for the brother was very well known to him, and when he had asked him, he found that on the same night on which that foul demon had announced his downfall to his company and prince, he had left his former monastery, and sought the town, and had gone astray by a wretched fall with the girl mentioned.

Chapter XVII.

Of the fact that two angels always cling to every man. For Holy Scripture bears witness that two angels, a good and a bad one, cling to each one of us. And of the good ones the Saviour says: ”Do not despise one of these little ones; for I say unto you that their angels in heaven do always behold the face of thy Father which is in heaven:” and this also: ”the angel of the Lord shall encamp round about them that fear Him, and deliver them.” Moreover this also which is said in the Acts of the Apostles, of Peter, that ”it is his angel.” But of both sorts the book of the Shepherd teaches us very fully. But if we consider about him who attacked the blessed Job we shall clearly learn that it was he who always plotted against him but never could entice him to sin, and that therefore he asked for power from the Lord, as he was worsted not by his (Job’s) virtue but by the Lord’s protection which ever shielded him. Of Judas also it is said: ”And let the devil stand at his right hand.”

Chapter XVIII.

Of the degrees of wickedness which exist in hostile spirits, as shown in the case of two philosophers. But of the difference that there is between demons we have learnt a great deal by means of those two philosophers who formerly by acts of magic had oftentimes great experience both of their laziness and of their courage and savage wickedness. For these looking down on the blessed Antony as a boor and rustic, and wanting, if they could not injure him any further, at least to drive him from his cell by illusions of magic and the devices of demons, despatched against him most foul spirits. for they were impelled to this attack upon him by the sting of jealousy because enormous crowds came daily to him as the servant of God. And when these most savage demons did not even venture to approach him as he was now signing his breast and forehead with the sign of the cross, and, now devoting himself to prayer and supplication, they returned without any result to those who had directed them; and these again sent against him others more desperate in wickedness, and when these too had spent their strength in vain, and returned without having accomplished anything, and others still more powerful were nevertheless told off against the victorious soldier of Christ, and could prevail nothing against him, all these great plots of theirs devised with all the arts of magic were only useful in proving the great value that there is in the profession of Christians, so that those fierce and powerful shadows, which they thought would veil the sun and moon if they were directed towards them, could not only not injure him, but not even draw him forth from his monastery for a single instant.

Chapter XIX.

Of the fact that devils cannot prevail at all against men unless they have first secured possession of their minds. And when in their astonishment at this they came straight to Abbot Antony and disclosed the extent of their attacks and the reason of them and their plots, they dissembled their jealousy and asked that they might forthwith be made Christians. But when he had asked of them the day when the assault was made, he declared that at that time he had been afflicted with the most bitter pangs of thought. And by this experience the blessed Antony proved and established the opinion which we expressed yesterday in our Conference, that demons cannot possibly find an entrance into the mind or body of anyone, nor have they the power of overwhelming the soul of anyone, unless they have first deprived it of all holy thoughts, and made it empty and free from spiritual meditation. But you must know that unclean spirits are obedient to men in two ways. For either they are by divine grace and power subject to the holiness of the faithful, or they are captivated by the sacrifices of sinners, and certain charms, and are flattered by them as their worshippers. And the Pharisees too were led astray by this notion and fancied that by this device even the Lord the Saviour gave commands to devils, and said ”By Beelzebub the prince of the devils He casteth out devils,” in accordance with that plan by which they knew that their own magicians and enchanters-by invoking his name and offering sacrifices, with which they know he is pleased and delighted-have as his servants power even over the devils who are subject to him.

Chapter XX.

A question about the fallen angels who are said in Genesis to have had intercourse with the daughters of men. Germanus: Since a passage of Genesis was a little while ago by the providence of God brought forward in our midst, and happily reminded us that we can now conveniently ask about a point which we have always longed to learn, we want to know what view we ought to take about those fallen angels who are said to have had intercourse with the daughters of men, and whether such a thing can literally take place with a spiritual nature. And also with regard to this passage of the gospel which you quoted of the devil a little while back, ”for he is a liar and his father,” we should like in the same way to hear who is to be understood by ”his father.”

Chapter XXI.

The answer to the question raised.

Serenus: You have propounded two not unimportant questions, to which I will reply, to the best of my ability, in the order in which you have raised them. We cannot possibly believe that spiritual existences can have carnal intercourse with women. But if this could ever have literally happened how is it that it does not now also sometimes take place, and that we do not see some in the same way born of women by the agency of demons without intercourse with men? especially when it is clear that they delight in the pollution of lust, which they would certainly prefer to bring about through their own agency rather than through that of men, if they could possibly manage it, as Ecclesiastes declares: "What is it that hath been? The same that is. And what is it that hath been done? The same that is done. And there is nothing new that can be said under the sun, so that a man can say: Behold this is new; for it hath already been in the ages which were before us. But the question raised may be resolved in this way. After the death of righteous Abel, in order that the whole human race might not spring from a wicked fratricide, Seth was born in the place of his brother who was slain, to take the place of his brother not only as regards posterity, but also as regards justice and goodness.

And his offspring, following the example of their father's goodness, always remained separate from intercourse with and the society of their kindred descended from the wicked Cain, as the difference of the genealogy very clearly tells us, where it says: "Adam begat Seth, Seth begat Enos, Enos begat Cainan, but Cainan begat Mahalaleel, but Mahalaleel begat Jared, Jared begat Enoch, Enoch begat Methuselah, Methuselah begat Lamech, Lamech begat Noah. And the genealogy of Cain is given separately as follows: "Cain begat Enoch, Enoch begat Cainan, Cainan begat Mahalaleel, Mahalaleel begat Methuselah, Methuselah begat Lamech, Lamech begat Jabal and Jubal. And so the line which sprang from the seed of righteous Seth always mixed with its own kith and kin, and continued for a long while in the holiness of its fathers and ancestors, untouched by the blasphemies and the wickedness of an evil offspring, which had implanted in it a seed of sin as it were transmitted by its ancestors. As long then as there continued that separation of the lines between them, the seed of Seth, as it sprang from an excellent root, was by reason of its sanctity termed "angels of God," or as some copies have it "sons of God; and on the contrary the others by reason of

their own and their fathers' wickedness and their earthly deeds were termed "children of men.

Though then there was up to this time that holy and salutary separation between them, yet after this the sons of Seth who were the sons of God saw the daughters of those who were born of the line of Cain, and inflamed with the desire for their beauty took to themselves from them wives who taught their husbands the wickedness of their fathers, and at once led them astray from their innate holiness and the single-mindedness of their forefathers. To whom this saying applies with sufficient accuracy: "I have said: Ye are Gods, and ye are all the children of the Most High. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes; who fell away from that true study of natural philosophy, handed down to them by their ancestors, which the first man who forthwith traced out the study of all nature, could clearly attain to, and transmit to his descendants on sure grounds, inasmuch as he had seen the infancy of this world, while still as it were tender and throbbing and unorganized;

and as there was in him not only such fulness of wisdom, but also the grace of prophecy given by the Divine inspiration, so that while he was still an untaught inhabitant of this world he gave names to all living creatures, and not only knew about the fury and poison of all kinds of beasts and serpents, but also distinguished between the virtues of plants and trees and the natures of stones, and the changes of seasons of which he had as vet no experience, so that he could well say: "The Lord hath given me the true knowledge of the things that are, to know the disposition of the whole world, and the virtues of the elements, the beginning and the ending and the midst of times, the alterations of their courses and the changes of their seasons, the revolutions of the year and the disposition of the stars, the natures of living creatures and the rage of wild beasts, the force of winds, and the reasonings of men, the diversities of plants and the virtues of roots, and all such things as are hid and open I have learnt. This knowledge then of all nature the seed of Seth received through successive generations, handed down from the fathers, so long as it remained separate from the wicked line, and as it had received it in holiness, so it made use of it to promote the glory of God and the needs of everyday life.

But when it had been mingled with the evil generation, it drew aside at the suggestion of devils to profane and harmful uses what it had innocently learnt, and audaciously taught by it the curious arts of wizards and enchantments and magical superstitions, teaching its posterity to forsake the holy worship of the Divinity and to honour and worship either the elements or fire or the demons of the air. How it was then that this knowledge of curious arts of which we have spoken, did not perish in the deluge, but became known to the ages that followed, should, I think, be briefly explained, as the occasion of this discussion suggests, although the answer to the question raised scarcely requires it. And so, as ancient traditions tell us, Ham the son of Noah, who had been taught these superstitions and wicked and profane arts, as he knew that he could not possibly bring any handbook on these subjects into the ark, into which he was to enter with his good father and holy brothers, inscribed these nefarious arts and profane devices on plates of various metals which could not be de-

stroyed by the flood of waters, and on hard rocks, and when the flood was over he hunted for them with the same inquisitiveness with which he had concealed them, and so transmitted to his descendants a seed-bed of profanity and perpetual sin. In this way then that common notion, according to which men believe that angels delivered to men enchantments and diverse arts, is in truth fulfilled.

From these sons of Seth then and daughters of Cain, as we have said, there were I born still worse children who became mighty, hunters, violent and most fierce men who were termed giants by reason of the size of their bodies and their cruelty and wickedness. For these first began to harass their neighbours and to practise pillaging among men, getting their living rather by rapine than by being contented with the sweat and labour of toil, and their wickedness increased to such a pitch that the world could only be purified by the flood and deluge. So then when the sons of Seth at the instigation of their lust had transgressed that command which had been for a long while kept by a natural instinct from the beginning of the world, it was needful that it should afterwards be restored by the letter of the law: "Thou shalt not give thy daughter to his son to wife, nor shalt thou take a wife of his daughters to thy son; for they shall seduce your hearts to depart from your God, and to follow their gods and serve them."

Chapter XXII.

An objection, as to how an unlawful intermingling with the daughters of Cain could be charged against the line of Seth before the prohibition of the law. Germanus: If that command had been given to them, then the sin of breaking it might fairly have been brought against them for their audacity in so marrying. But since the observance of that separation had not yet been established by any rule, how could that intermingling of races be counted wrong in them, as it had not been forbidden by any command? For a law does not ordinarily forbid crimes that are past, but those that are future.

Chapter XXIII.

The answer, that by the law of nature men were from the beginning liable to judgment and punishment.

Serenus: God at man's creation implanted in him naturally complete knowledge of the law, and if this had been kept by man, as at the beginning, according to the Lord's purposes, there would not have been any need for another law to be given, which He afterwards proclaimed in writing: for it were superfluous for an external remedy to be offered, where an internal one was still implanted and vigorous. But since this had been, as we have said, utterly corrupted by freedom and the opportunity of sinning, the severe restrictions of the law of Moses were added as the executor and vindicator of this (earlier law) and to use the expressions of Scripture, as its helper, that through fear of immediate punishment men might be kept from altogether losing the good of natural knowledge, according to the word of the prophet who says "He gave the law to help them: and it is also described by the Apostle as having been given as a schoolmaster to little children, as it instructs and guards them to prevent them from departing through sheer forgetfulness from the teaching in which they had been instructed by the light of nature: for that the complete knowledge of the law was implanted in man at his first creation, is clearly proved from this; viz., that we know that before the law, aye, and even before the flood, all holy men observed the commands of the law without having the letter to read.

For how could Abel, without the command of the law, have known that he ought to offer to God a sacrifice of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof, unless he had been taught by the law which was naturally implanted in him? How could Noah have distinguished what animals were clean and what were unclean, when the commandment of the law had not yet made a distinction, unless he had been taught by a natural knowledge? Whence did Enoch learn how to "walk with God," having never acquired any light of the law from another? Where had Shem and Japheth read "Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father," so that they went backwards and covered the shame of their father? How was Abraham taught to abstain from the spoils of the enemy which were offered to him, that he might not receive any recompense for his toil, or to pay to the priest Melchizedec the tithes which are ordered by the law of Moses? How was it too that the same Abraham and Lot also humbly offered to passers by and strangers offices of kindness and the washing of their feet, while

yet the Evangelic command had not shone forth? Whence did Job obtain such earnestness of faith, such purity of chastity, such knowledge of humility, gentleness, pity and kindness, as we now see shown not even by those who know the gospels by heart?

Which of the saints do we read of as not having observed some commandment of the law before the giving of the law? Which of them failed to keep this: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord? Which of them did not fulfil this: "Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of anything which is in heaven or in the earth or under the earth? Which of them did not observe this: "Honour thy father and thy mother," or what follows in the Decalogue: "Thou shalt do no murder; Thou shalt not commit adultery; Thou shalt not steal; Thou shalt not bear false witness; Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife," and many other things besides, in which they anticipated the commands not only of the law but even of the gospel?

Chapter XXIV.

Of the fact that they were justly punished, who sinned before the flood.

And so then we see that from the beginning God created everything perfect, nor would there have been need for anything to have been added to His original arrangement-as if it were shortsighted and imperfect-if everything had continued in that state and condition in which it had been created by Him. And therefore in the case of those who sinned before the law and even before the flood we see that God visited them with a righteous judgment, because they deserved to be punished without any excuse, for having transgressed the law of nature; nor should we fall into the blasphemous slanders of those who are ignorant of this reason, and so depreciate the God of the Old Testament, and run down our faith, and say with a sneer: Why then did it please your God to will to promulgate the law after so many thousand years, While He suffered such long ages to pass without any law? But if He afterwards discovered something better, then it appears that at the beginning of the world His wisdom was inferior and poorer, and that afterwards as if taught by experience He began to provide for something better, and to amend and improve His original arrangements. Athing which certainly cannot happen to the infinite foreknowledge of God, nor can these assertions be made about Him by the mad folly of heretics without grievous blasphemy, as Ecclesiastes says: ”I have learnt that all the words which God hath made from the beginning shall continue forever:

nothing can be added to them, and nothing can be taken away from them,” and therefore ”the law is not made for the righteous, but for the unrighteous, and insubordinate, for the ungodly and sinners, for the wicked and profane. For as they had the sound and complete system of natural laws implanted in them they had no need of this external law in addition, and one committed to writing, and what was given as an aid to that natural law. From which we infer by the clearest of reasonings that that law committed to writing need not have been given at the beginning (for it was unnecessary for this to be done while the natural law still remained, and was not utterly violated) nor could evangelical perfection have been granted before the law had been kept. For they could not have listened to this saying: ”If a man strikes thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also,” who were not content to avenge wrongs done to them with the even justice of the lex talionis, but repaid a very slight touch with deadly kicks and wounds with weapons, and for a single truth sought to take the life of

those who had struck them. Nor could it be said to them, ”love your enemies,” among whom it was considered a great thing and most important if they loved their friends, but avoided their enemies and dissented from them only in hatred without being eager to oppress and kill them.

Chapter XXV.

How this that is said of the devil in the gospel is to be understood; viz., that ”he is a liar, and his father.”

But as for this which disturbed you about the devil, that ”he is a liar and his father,” as if it seemed that he and his father were pronounced by the Lord to be liars, it is sufficiently ridiculous to imagine this even cursorily. For as we said a little while ago spirit does not beget spirit just as soul cannot procreate soul, though we do not doubt that the compacting of flesh is formed from man’s seed, as the Apostle clearly distinguishes in the case of both substances; viz., flesh and spirit, what should be ascribed to whom as its author, and says: ”Moreover we have had fathers of our flesh for instructors, and we reverenced them: shall we not much more be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? ” What could show more clearly than this distinction, that he laid down that men were the fathers of our flesh, but always taught that God alone was the Father of souls. Although even in the actual compacting of this body a ministerial office alone must be attributed to men, but the chief part of its formation to God the Creator of all, as David says: ”Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: And the blessed Job: ”Hast thou not milked me as milk, and curdled me as cheese? Thou hast put me together with bones and sinews; and the Lord to Jeremiah: ”Before I formed thee in the womb, I knew thee.

But Ecclesiastes very clearly and accurately gathers the nature of either substance, and its beginning, by an examination of the rise and commencement, from which each originated, and by a consideration of the end to which each is tending, and decides also of the division of this body and soul, and discourses as follows: ”Before the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns unto God who gave it. But what could be said with greater plainness than that he declares that the matter of the flesh which he styled dust, because it springs from the seed of man, and seems to be sown by his ministration, mush as it was taken from the earth, again return to the earth, while he points out that the spirit which is not begotten by intercourse between the sexes, but belongs to God alone in a special way, returns to its creator? And this also is clearly implied in that breathing by God, through which Adam in the first instance received his life. And so from these passages we clearly infer that no one can be called the Father of spirits but God alone, who makes them out of nothing whenever He pleases, while men can only be termed the fathers of our flesh. So

then the devil also in as much as he was created a spirit or an angel and good, had no one as his Father but God his Maker. But when he had become puffed up by pride and had said in his heart:

"I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High," he became a liar, and "abode not in the truth; but brought forth a lie from his own storehouse of wickedness and so became not only a liar, but also the father of the actual lie, by which when he promised Divinity to man and said "Ye shall be as gods," he abode not in the truth, but from the beginning became a murderer, both by bringing Adam into a state of mortality, and by slaying Abel by the hand of his brother at his suggestion. But already the approach of dawn is bringing to a close our discussion, which has occupied nearly two whole nights, and our brief and simple words have drawn our bark of this Conference from the deep sea of questions to a safe harbour of silence, in which deep indeed, as the breath of the Divine Spirit drives us further in, so is there ever opened out a wider and boundless space reaching beyond the sight of our eye, and, as Solomon says, "It will become much further from us than it was, and a great depth; who shall find it out? Wherefore let us pray the Lord that both His fear and His love, which cannot fail, may continue steadfast in us, and make us wise in all things, and ever shield us unharmed, from the darts of the devil. For with these guards it is impossible for anyone to fall into the snares of death.

But there is this difference between the perfect and imperfect, that in the case of the former love is steadfast, and so to speak riper and lasts more abidingly and so makes them persevere in holiness more steadfastly and more easily, while in the case of the latter its position is weaker and it more easily grows cold, and so quickly and more frequently allows them to be entangled in the snares of sin. And when we heard this, the words of this Conference so fired us that when we went away from the old man's cell we longed with a keener ardour of soul than when we first came, for the fulfilment of his teaching.

Chapter I.

Introduction to the Conference. What was promised in the second book of the Institutes on continual and unceasing perseverance in prayer, shall be by the Lord's help fulfilled by the Conferences of this Eider, whom we will now bring forward; viz., Abbot Isaac: and when these have been propounded I think that I shall have satisfied the commands of Pope Castor of blessed memory, and your wishes, O blessed Pope Leontius and holy brother Helladius, and the length of the book in its earlier part may be excused, though, in spite of our endeavour not only to compress what had to be told into a brief discourse, but also to pass over very many points in silence, it has been extended to a greater length than we intended. For having commenced with a full discourse on various regulations which we have thought it well to curtail for the sake of brevity, at the close the blessed Isaac spoke these words.

Chapter II.

The words of Abbot Isaac on the nature of prayer.

The aim of every monk and the perfection of his heart tends to continual and unbroken perseverance in prayer, and, as far as it is allowed to human frailty, strives to acquire an immovable tranquillity of mind and a perpetual purity, for the sake of which we seek unwearied and constantly to practise all bodily labours as well as contrition of spirit. And there is between these two a sort of reciprocal and inseparable union. For just as the crown of the building of all virtues is the perfection of prayer, so unless everything has been united and compacted by this as its crown, it cannot possibly continue strong and stable. For lasting and continual calmness in prayer, of which we are speaking, cannot be secured or consummated without them, so neither can those virtues which lay its foundations be fully gained without persistence in it. And so we shall not be able either to treat properly of the effect of prayer, or in a rapid discourse to penetrate to its main end, which is acquired by labouring at all virtues, unless first all those things which for its sake must be either rejected or secured, are singly enumerated and discussed, and, as the Parable in the gospel teaches, whatever concerns the building of that spiritual and most lofty tower, is reckoned up and carefully considered beforehand.

But yet these things when prepared will be of no use nor allow the lofty height of perfection to be properly placed upon them unless a clearance of all faults be first undertaken, and the decayed and dead rubbish of the passions be dug up, and the strong foundations of simplicity and humility be laid on the solid and (so to speak) living soil of our breast, or rather on that rock of the gospel, and by being built in this way this tower of spiritual virtues will rise, and be able to stand unmoved, and be raised to the utmost heights of heaven in full assurance of its, stability. For if it rests on such foundations, then though heavy storms of passions break over it, though mighty torrents of persecutions beat against it like a battering ram, though a furious tempest of spiritual foes dash against it and attack it, yet not only will no ruin overtake it, but the onslaught will not injure it even in the slightest degree.

Chapter III.

How pure and sincere prayer can be gained.

And therefore in order that prayer may be offered up with that earnestness and purity with which it ought to be, we must by all means observe these rules. First all anxiety about carnal things must be entirely got rid of; next we must leave no room for not merely the care but even the recollection of any business affairs, and in like manner also must lay aside all backbitings, vain and incessant chattering, and buffoonery; anger above all and disturbing moroseness must be entirely destroyed, and the deadly taint of carnal lust and covetousness be torn up by the roots. And so when these and such like faults which are also visible to the eyes of men, are entirely removed and cut off, and when such a purification and cleansing, as we spoke of, has first taken place, which is brought about by pure simplicity and innocence, then first there must be laid the secure foundations of a deep humility, which may be able to support a tower that shall reach the sky; and next the spiritual structure of the virtues must be built up upon them, and the soul kept free from all conversation and from roving thoughts that thus it may by little and little begin to rise to the contemplation of God and to spiritual insight. For whatever our mind has been thinking of before the hour of prayer, is sure to occur to us while we are praying through the activity of the memory.

Wherefore what we want to find ourselves like while we are praying, that we ought to prepare ourselves to be before the time for prayer. For the mind in prayer is formed by its previous condition, and when we are applying ourselves to prayer the images of the same actions and words and thoughts will dance before our eyes, and make us either angry, as in Our previous condition, or gloomy, or recall our former lust and business, or make us shake with foolish laughter (which I am ashamed to speak of) at some silly joke, or smile at some action, or fly back to our previous conversation. And therefore if we do not want anything to haunt us while we are praying, we should be careful before our prayer, to exclude it from the shrine of our heart, that we may thus fulfill the Apostle's injunction: "Pray without ceasing; and: "In every place lifting up holy hands without wrath or disputing. For otherwise we shall not be able to carry out that charge unless our mind, purified from all stains of sin, and given over to virtue as to its natural good, feed on the continual contemplation of Almighty God.

Chapter IV.

Of the lightness of the soul which may be compared to a wing or feather. For the nature of the soul is not inaptly compared to a very fine feather or very light wing, which, if it has not been damaged or affected by being spoilt by any moisture falling on it from without, is borne aloft almost naturally to the heights of heaven by the lightness of its nature, and the aid of the slightest breath: but if it is weighted by any moisture falling upon it and penetrating into it, it will not only not be carried away by its natural lightness into any aerial flights but will actually be borne down to the depths of earth by the weight of the moisture it has received. So also our soul, if it is not weighted with faults that touch it, and the cares of this world, or damaged by the moisture of injurious lusts, will be raised as it were by the natural blessing of its own purity and borne aloft to the heights by the light breath of spiritual meditation; and leaving things low and earthly will be transported to those that are heavenly and invisible. Wherefore we are well warned by the Lord's command: "Take heed that your hearts be not weighed down by surfeiting and drunkenness and the cares of this world." And therefore if we want our prayers to reach not only the sky, but what is beyond the sky, let us be careful to reduce our soul, purged from all earthly faults and purified from every stain, to its natural lightness, that so our prayer may rise to God unchecked by the weight of any sin.

Chapter V.

Of the ways in which our soul is weighed down.

But we should notice the ways in which the Lord points out that the soul is weighed down: for He did not mention adultery, or fornication, or murder, or blasphemy, or rapine, which everybody knows to be deadly and damnable, but surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares or anxieties of this world: which men of this world are so far from avoiding or considering damnable that actually some who (I am ashamed to say) call themselves monks entangle themselves in these very occupations as if they were harmless or useful. And though these three things, when literally given way to weigh down the soul, and separate it from God, and bear it down to things earthly, yet it is very easy to avoid them, especially for us who are separated by so great a distance from all converse with this world, and who do not on any occasion have anything to do with those visible cares and drunkenness and surfeiting. But there is another surfeiting which is no less dangerous, and a spiritual drunkenness which it is harder to avoid, and a care and anxiety of this world, which often ensnares us even after the perfect renunciation of all our goods, and abstinence from wine and all feastings and even when we are living in solitude-and of such the prophet says: ”Awake, ye that are drunk but not with wine; and another: ”Be astonished and wonder and stagger: be drunk and not with wine: be moved, but not with drunkenness.

And of this drunkenness the wine must consequently be what the prophet calls ”the fury of dragons”: and from what root the wine comes you may hear: ”From the vineyard of Sodom,” he says, ”is their vine, and their branches from Gomorrha. Would you also know about the fruit of that vine and the seed of that branch? ”Their grape is a grape of gall, theirs is a cluster of bitterness” for unless we are altogether cleansed from all faults and abstaining from the surfeit of all passions, our heart will without drunkenness from wine and excess of any feasting be weighed down by a drunkenness and surfeiting that is still more dangerous. For that worldly cares can sometimes fall on us who mix with no actions of this world, is clearly shown according to the rule of the Elders, who have laid down that anything which goes beyond the necessities of daily food, and the unavoidable needs of the flesh, belongs to worldly cares and anxieties, as for example if, when a job bringing in a penny would satisfy the needs of our body, we try to extend it by a longer toil and work in order to get twopence or threepence;

and when a covering of two tunics would be enough for our use both by night and day, we manage to become the owners of three or four, or when a hut containing one or two cells would be sufficient, in the pride of worldly ambition and greatness we build four or five cells, and these splendidly decorated, and larger than our needs required, thus showing the passion of worldly lusts whenever we can.

Chapter VI.

Of the vision which a certain Elder saw concerning the restless work of a brother.

And that this is not done without the prompting of devils we are taught by the surest proofs, for when one very highly esteemed Eider was passing by the cell of a certain brother who was suffering from this mental disease of which we have spoken, as he was restlessly toiling in his daily occupations in building and repairing what was unnecessary, he watched him from a distance breaking a very hard stone with a heavy hammer, and saw a certain Ethiopian standing over him and together with him striking the blows of the hammer with joined and clasped hands, and urging him on with fiery incitements to diligence in the work: and so he stood still for a long while in astonishment at the force of the fierce demon and the deceitfulness of such an illusion. For when the brother was worn out and tired and wanted to rest and put an end to his toil, he was stimulated by the spirit's prompting and urged on to resume his hammer again and not to cease from devoting himself to the work which he had begun, so that being unweariedly supported by his incitements he did not feel the harm that so great labour was doing him. At last then the old man, disgusted at such a horrid mystification by a demon, turned aside to the brother's cell and saluted him, and asked "what work is it, brother, that you are doing? and he replied:

"We are working at this awfully hard stone, and we can hardly break it at all. Whereupon the Elder replied: "You were right in saying 'we can,' for you were not alone, when you were striking it, but there was another with you whom you did not see, who was standing over you not so much to help you as urge you on with all his force. And thus the fact that the disease of worldly vanity has not got hold of our hearts, will be proved by no mere abstinence from those affairs which even if we want to engage in, we cannot carry out, nor by the despising of those matters which if we pursued them would make us remarkable in the front rank among spiritual persons as well as among worldly men, but only when we reject with inflexible firmness of mind whatever ministers to our power and seems to be veiled in a show of right. And in reality these things which seem trivial and of no consequence, and which we see to be permitted indifferently by those who belong to our calling, none the less by their character affect the soul than those more important things, which according to their condition usually intoxicate the senses of worldly people and which do not allow a monk to lay aside earthly impurities and aspire to God, on whom his attention should ever

be fixed; for in his case even a slight separation from that highest good must be regarded as present death and most dangerous destruction.

And when the soul has been established in such a peaceful condition, and has been freed from the meshes of all carnal desires, and the purpose of the heart has been steadily fixed on that which is the only highest good, he will then fulfil this Apostolic precept: ”Pray without ceasing; and: ”in every place lifting up holy hands without wrath and disputing: for when by this purity (if we can say so) the thoughts of the soul are engrossed, and are re-fashioned out of their earthly condition to bear a spiritual and angelic likeness, whatever it receives, whatever it takes in hand, whatever it does, the prayer will be perfectly pure and sincere.

Chapter VII.

A question how it is that it is harder work to preserve than to originate good thoughts.

Germanus: If only we could keep as a lasting possession those spiritual thoughts in the same way and with the same ease with which we generally conceive their germs! for when they have been conceived in our hearts either through the recollection of the Scriptures or by the memory of some spiritual actions, or by gazing upon heavenly mysteries, they vanish all too soon and disappear by a sort of unnoticed flight. And when our soul has discovered some other occasions for spiritual emotions, different ones again crowd in upon us, and those which we had grasped are scattered, and lightly fly away so that the mind retaining no persistency, and keeping of its own power no firm hand over holy thoughts, must be thought, even when it does seem to retain them for a while, to have conceived them at random and not of set purpose. For how can we think that their rise should be ascribed to our own will, if they do not last and remain with us? But that we may not owing to the consideration of this question wander any further from the plan of the discourse we had commenced, or delay any longer the explanation promised of the nature of prayer, we will keep this for its own time, and ask to be informed at once of the character of prayer, especially as the blessed Apostle exhorts us at no time to cease from it, saying ”Pray without ceasing.” And so we want to be taught first of its character, i.e., how prayer ought always to be offered up, and then how we can secure this, whatever it is, and practise it without ceasing. For that it cannot be done by any light purpose of heart both daily experience and the explanation of four holiness show us, as you have laid it down that the aim of a monk, and the height of all perfection consist in the consummation of prayer.

Chapter VIII.

Of the different characters of prayer. Isaac: I imagine that all kinds of prayers cannot be grasped without great purity of heart and soul and the illumination of the Holy Spirit. For there are as many of them as there can be conditions and characters produced in one soul or rather in all souls. And so although we know that owing to our dulness of heart we cannot see all kinds of prayers, yet we will try to relate them in some order, as far as our slender experience enables us to succeed. For according to the degree of the purity to which each soul attains, and the character of the state in which it is sunk owing to what happens to it, or is by its own efforts renewing itself, its very prayers will each moment be altered: and therefore it is quite clear that no one can always offer up uniform prayers. For every one prays in one way when he is brisk, in another when he is oppressed with a weight of sadness or despair, in another when he is invigorated by spiritual achievements, in another when cast down by the burden of attacks, in another when he is asking pardon for his sins, in another when he asks to obtain grace or some virtue or else prays for the destruction of some sin, in another when he is pricked to the heart by the thought of hell and the fear of future judgment, in another when he is aglow with the hope and desire of good things to come, in another when he is taken up with affairs and dangers, in another when he is in peace and security, in another when he is enlightened by the revelation of heavenly mysteries, and in another when he is depressed by a sense of barrenness in virtues and dryness in feeling.

Chapter IX.

Of the fourfold nature of prayer. And therefore, when we have laid this down with regard to the character of prayer, although not so fully as the importance of the subject requires, but as fully as the exigencies of time permit, and at any rate as our slender abilities admit, and our dulness of heart enables us,-a still greater difficulty now awaits us; viz., to expound one by one the different kinds of prayer, which the Apostle divides in a fourfold manner, when he says as follows: "I exhort therefore first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings be made." And we cannot possibly doubt that this division was not idly made by the Apostle. And to begin with we must investigate what is meant by supplication, by prayer, by intercession, and by thanksgiving. Next we must inquire whether these four kinds are to be taken in hand by him who prays all at once, i.e., are they all to be joined together in every prayer,-or whether they are to be offered up in turns and one by one, as, for instance, ought at one time supplications, at another prayers, at another intercessions, and at another thanksgivings to be offered, or should one man present to God supplications, another prayers, another intercessions, another thanksgivings, in accordance with that measure of age, to which each soul is advancing by earnestness of purpose?

Chapter X.

Of the order of the different kinds laid down with regard to the character of prayer. And so to begin with we must consider the actual force of the names and words, and discuss what is the difference between prayer and supplication and intercession; then in like manner we must investigate whether they are to be offered separately or all together; and in the third place must examine whether the particular order which is thus arranged by the Apostle's authority has anything further to teach the hearer, or whether the distinction simply is to be taken, and it should be considered that they were arranged by him indifferently in such a way: a thing which seems to me utterly absurd. For one must not believe that the Holy Spirit uttered anything casually or without reason through the Apostle. And so we will, as the Lord grants us, consider them in the same order in which we began.

Chapter XI.

Of Supplications. ”I Exhort therefore first of all that supplications be made.” Supplication is an imploring or petition concerning sins, in which one who is sorry for his present or past deeds asks for pardon.

Chapter XII.

Of Prayer. Prayers are those by which we offer or vow something to God, what the Greeks call eu0kh/, i.e., a vow. For where we read in Greek i0a/j eu0ka/j mou tw= kuriw= a0podw/sw, in Latin we read: "I will pay my vows unto the Lord;" where according to the exact force of the words it may be thus represented: "I will pay my prayers unto the Lord." And this which we find in Ecclesiastes: "If thou vowest a vow unto the Lord do not delay to pay it," is written in Greek likewise: e0a/n eu0ch/ e0uxh\n tw= kuri/w= i.e., "If thou prayest a prayer unto the Lord, do not delay to pay it," which will be fulfilled in this way by each one of us. We pray, when we renounce this world and promise that being dead to all worldly actions and the life of this world we will serve the Lord with full purpose of heart. We pray when we promise that despising secular honours and scorning earthly riches we will cleave to the Lord in all sorrow of heart and humility of spirit. We pray when we promise that we will ever maintain the most perfect purity of body and steadfast patience, or when we vow that we will utterly root out of our heart the roots of anger or of sorrow that worketh death. And if, enervated by sloth and returning to our former sins we fail to do this we shall be guilty as regards our prayers and vows, and these words will apply to us: "It is better not and not to pay," which to vow, than to vow and not to pay can be rendered in accordance with the Greek: "It is better for thee not to pray than to pray and not to pay."

Chapter XIII.

Of Intercession. IN the third place stand intercessions, which we are wont to offer up for others also, while we are filled with fervour of spirit, making request either for those dear to us or for the peace of the whole world, and to use the Apostle's own phrase, we pray "for all men, for kings and all that are in authority."

Chapter XIV.

Of Thanksgiving. Then in the fourth place there stand thanksgivings which the mind in ineffable transports offers up to God, either when it recalls God's past benefits or when it contemplates His present ones, or when it looks forward to those great ones in the future which God has prepared for them that love Him. And with this purpose too sometimes we are wont to pour forth richer prayers, while, as we gaze with pure eyes on those rewards of the saints which are laid up in store hereafter, our spirit is stimulated to offer up unspeakable thanks to God with boundless joy.

Chapter XV.

Whether these four kinds of prayers are necessary for everyone to offer all at once or separately and in turns.

And of these four kinds, although sometimes occasions arise for richer and fuller prayers (for from the class of supplications which arises from sorrow for sin, and from the kind of prayer which flows from confidence in our offerings and the performance of our vows in accordance with a pure conscience, and from the intercession which proceeds from fervour of love, and from the thanksgiving which is born of the consideration of God's blessings and His greatness and goodness, we know that oftentimes there proceed most fervent and ardent prayers so that it is clear that all these kinds of prayer of which we have spoken are found to be useful and needful for all men, so that in one and the same man his changing feelings will give utterance to pure and fervent petitions now of supplications, now of prayers, now of intercessions) yet the first seems to belong more especially to beginners, who are still troubled by the stings and recollection of their sins; the second to those who have already attained some loftiness of mind in their spiritual progress and the quest of virtue; the third to those who fulfil the completion of their vows by their works, and are so stimulated to intercede for others also through the consideration of their weakness, and the earnestness of their love;

the fourth to those who have already torn from their hearts the guilty thorns of conscience, and thus being now free from care can contemplate with a pure mind the beneficence of God and His compassions, which He has either granted in the past, or is giving in the present, or preparing for the future, and thus are borne onward with fervent hearts to that ardent prayer which cannot be embraced or expressed by the mouth of men. Sometimes however the mind which is advancing to that perfect state of purity and which is already beginning to be established in it, will take in all these at one and the same time, and like some incomprehensible and all-devouring flame, dart through them all and offer up to God inexpressible prayers of the purest force, which the Spirit Itself, intervening with groanings that cannot be uttered, while we ourselves understand not, pours forth to God, grasping at that hour and ineffably pouring forth in its supplications things so great that they cannot be uttered with the mouth nor even at any other time be recollected by the mind. And thence

it comes that in whatever degree any one stands, he is found sometimes to offer up pure and devout prayers;

as even in that first and lowly station which has to do with the recollection of future judgment, he who still remains under the punishment of terror and the fear of judgment is so smitten with sorrow for the time being that he is filled with no less keenness of spirit from the richness of his supplications than he who through the purity of his heart gazes on and considers the blessings of God and is overcome with ineffable joy and delight. For, as the Lord Himself says, he begins to love the more, who knows that he has been forgiven the more.

Chapter XVI.

Of the kinds of prayer to which we ought to direct ourselves. Yet we ought by advancing in life and attaining to virtue to aim rather at those kinds of prayer which are poured forth either from the contemplation of the good things to come or from fervour of love, or which at least, to speak more humbly and in accordance with the measure of beginners, arise for the acquirement of some virtue or the extinction of some fault. For otherwise we shall not possibly attain to those sublimer kinds of supplication of which we spoke, unless our mind has been little by little and by degrees raised through the regular course of those intercessions.

Chapter XVII.

How the four kinds of supplication were originated by the Lord.

These four kinds of supplication the Lord Himself by His own example vouchsafed to originate for us, so that in this too He might fulfil that which was said of Him: ”which Jesus began both to do and to teach. For He made use of the class of supplication when He said: ”Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; or this which is chanted in His Person in the Psalm: ”My God, My God, look upon Me, why hast Thou forsaken me,” and others like it. It is prayer where He says: ”I have magnified Thee upon the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do,” and this: ”And for their sakes I sanctify Myself that they also may be sanctified in the truth. It is intercession when He says: ”Father, those Whom Thou hast given me, I will that they also may be with Me that they may see My glory which Thou hast given Me; or at any rate when He says: ”Father, forgive them for they know not what they do. It is thanksgiving when He says: ”I confess to Thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight: or at least when He says: ”Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. But I knew that Thou hearest Me always.

But though our Lord made a distinction between these four kinds of prayers as to be offered separately and one by one according to the scheme which we know of, yet that they can all be embraced in a perfect prayer at one and the same time He showed by His own example in that prayer which at the close of S. John’s gospel we read that He offered up with such fulness. From the words of which (as it is too long to repeat it all) the careful inquirer can discover by the order of the passage that this is so. And the Apostle also in his Epistle to the Philippians has expressed the same meaning, by putting these four kinds of prayers in a slightly different order, and has shown that they ought sometimes to be offered together in the fervour of a single prayer, saying as follows: ”But in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And by this he wanted us especially to understand that in prayer and supplication thanksgiving ought to be mingled with our requests.

Chapter XVIII.

Of the Lord's Prayer.

And so there follows after these different kinds of supplication a still more sublime and exalted condition which is brought about by the contemplation of God alone and by fervent love, by which the mind, transporting and flinging itself into love for Him, addresses God most familiarly as its own Father with a piety of its own. And that we ought earnestly to seek after this condition the formula of the Lord's prayer teaches us, saying "Our Father. When then we confess with our own mouths that the God and Lord of the universe is our Father, we profess forthwith that we have been called from our condition as slaves to the adoption of sons, adding next "Which art in heaven," that, by shunning with the utmost horror all lingering in this present life, which we pass upon this earth as a pilgrimage, and what separates us by a great distance from our Father, we may the rather hasten with all eagerness to that country where we confess that our Father dwells, and may not allow anything of this kind, which would make us unworthy of this our profession and the dignity of an adoption of this kind, and so deprive us as a disgrace to our Father's inheritance, and make us incur the wrath of His justice and severity.

To which state and condition of sonship when we have advanced, we shall forthwith be inflamed with the piety which belongs to good sons, so that we shall bend all our energies to the advance not of our own profit, but of our Father's glory, saying to Him: "Hallowed be Thy name," testifying that our desire and our joy is His glory, becoming imitators of Him who said: "He who speaketh of himself, seeketh his own glory. But He who seeks the glory of Him who sent Him, the same is true and there is no unrighteousness in Him. Finally the chosen vessel being filled with this feeling wished that he could be anathema from Christ if only the people belonging to Him might be increased and multiplied, and the salvation of the whole nation of Israel accrue to the glory of His Father; for with all assurance could he wish to die for Christ as he knew that no one perished for life. And again he says: "We rejoice when we are weak but ye are strong. And what wonder if the chosen vessel wished to be anathema from Christ for the sake of Christ's glory and the conversion of His own brethren and the privilege of the nation, when the prophet Micah wished that he might be a liar and a stranger to the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, if only the people of the Jews

might escape those plagues and the going forth into captivity which he had announced in his prophecy, saying:

”Would that I were not a man that hath the Spirit, and that I rather spoke a lie;” -to pass over that wish of the Lawgiver, who did not refuse to die together with his brethren who were doomed to death, saying: ”I beseech Thee, O Lord; this people hath sinned a heinous sin; either forgive them this trespass, or if Thou do not, blot me out of Thy book which Thou hast written. But where it is said ”Hallowed be Thy name,” it may also be very fairly taken in this way: ”The hallowing of God is our perfection. And so when we say to Him” Hallowed be Thy name” we say in other words, make us, O Father, such that we maybe able both to understand and take in what the hallowing of Thee is, or at any rite that Thou mayest be seen to be hallowed in our spiritual converse. And this is effectually fulfilled in our case when ”men see our good works, and glorify our Father Which is in heaven.”

Chapter XIX.

Of the clause ”Thy kingdom come.” The second petition of the pure heart desires that the kingdom of its Father may come at once; viz., either that whereby Christ reigns day by day in the saints (which comes to pass when the devil’s rule is cast out of our hearts by the destruction of foul sins, and God begins to hold sway over us by the sweet odour of virtues, and, fornication being overcome, charity reigns in our hearts together with tranquillity, when rage is conquered; and humility, when pride is trampled under foot) or else that which is promised in due time to all who are perfect, and to all the sons of God, when it will be said to them by Christ: ”Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;” (as the heart) with fixed and steadfast gaze, so to speak, yearns and longs for it and says to Him ”Thy kingdom come.” For it knows by the witness of its own conscience that when He shall appear, it will presently share His lot. For no guilty person would dare either to say or to wish for this, for no one would want to face the tribunal of the Judge, who knew that at His coming he would forthwith receive not the prize or reward of his merits but only punishment.

Chapter XX.

Of the clause ”Thy will be done.” The third petition is that of sons: ”Thy will be done as in heaven so on earth.” There can now be no grander prayer than to wish that earthly things may be made equal with things heavenly: for what else is it to say ”Thy will be done as in heaven so on earth,” than to ask that men may be like angels and that as God’s will is ever fulfilled by them in heaven, so also all those who are on earth may do not their own but His will? This too no one could say from the heart but only one who believed that God disposes for our good all things which are seen, whether fortunate or unfortunate, and that He is more careful and provident for our good and salvation than we ourselves are for ourselves. Or at any rate it may be taken in this way: The will of God is the salvation of all men, according to these words of the blessed Paul: ”Who willeth all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Of which will also the prophet Isaiah says in the Person of God the Father: ”And all Thy will shall be done.” When we say then ”Thy will be done as in heaven so on earth,” we pray in other words for this; viz., that as those who are in heaven, so also may all those who dwell on earth be saved, O Father, by the knowledge of Thee.

Chapter XXI.

Of our supersubstantial or daily bread. Next: ”Give us this day our bread which is e0piou/sion,” i.e., ”supersubstantial,” which another Evangelist calls ”daily.” The former indicates the quality of its nobility and substance, in virtue of which it is above all substances and the loftiness of its grandeur and holiness exceeds all creatures, while the latter intimates the purpose of its use and value. For where it says ”daily” it shows that without it we cannot live a spiritual life for a single day. Where it says ”today” it shows that it must be received daily and that yesterday’s supply of it is not enough, but at it must be given to us today also in like manner. And our daily need of it suggests to us that we ought at all times to offer up this prayer, because there is no day on which we have no need to strengthen the heart of our inner man, by eating and receiving it, although the expression used, ”today” may be taken to apply to his present life, i.e., while we are living in this world supply us with this bread. For we know that it will be given to those who deserve it by Thee hereafter, but we ask that Thou wouldest grant it to us today, because unless it has been vouchsafed to a man to receive it in this life he will never be partaker of it in that.

Chapter XXII.

Of the clause: ”Forgive us our debts, etc.”

”And forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors. O unspeakable mercy of God, which has not only given us a form of prayer and taught us a system of life acceptable to Him, and by the requirements of the form given, in which He charged us always to pray, has torn up the roots of both anger and sorrow, but also gives to those who pray an opportunity and reveals to them a way by which they may move a merciful and kindly judgment of God to be pronounced over them and which somehow gives us a power by which we can moderate the sentence of our Judge, drawing Him to forgive our offences by the example of our forgiveness: when we say to Him: ”Forgive us as we also forgive. And so without anxiety and in confidence from this prayer a man may ask for pardon of his own offences, if he has been forgiving towards his own debtors, and not towards those of his Lord. For some of us, which is very bad, are inclined to show ourselves calm and most merciful in regard to those things which are done to God’s detriment, however great the crimes may be, but to be found most hard and inexorable exactors of debts to ourselves even in the case of the most trifling wrongs.

Whoever then does not from his heart forgive his brother who has offended him, by this prayer calls down upon himself not forgiveness but [condemnation, and by his own profession asks that he himself may be judged more severely, saying: Forgive me as I also have forgiven. And if he is repaid according to his own request, what else will follow but that he will be punished after his own example with implacable wrath and a sentence that cannot be remitted? And so if we want to be judged mercifully, we ought also to be merciful towards those who have sinned against us. For only so much will be remitted to us, as we have remitted to those who have injured us however spitefully. And some dreading this, when this prayer is chanted by all the people in church, silently omit this clause, for fear lest they may seem by their own utterance to bind themselves rather than to excuse themselves, as they do not understand that it is in vain that they try to offer these quibbles to the Judge of all men, who has willed to show us beforehand how He will judge His suppliants. For as He does not wish to be found harsh and inexorable towards them, He has marked out the manner of His judgment, that just as we desire to be judged by Him, so we should also judge our

brethren, if they have wronged us in anything, for ”he shall have judgment without mercy who hath shown no mercy.”

Chapter XXIII.

Of the clause: ”Lead us not into temptation.” Next there follows: ”And lead us not into temptation,” on which there arises no unimportant question, for if we pray that we may not be suffered to be tempted, how then will our power of endurance be proved, according to this text: ”Every one who is not tempted is not proved;” and again: ”Blessed is the man that endureth temptation?” The clause then, ”Lead us not into temptation,” does not mean this; viz., do not permit us ever to be tempted, but do not permit us when we fall into temptation to be overcome. For Job was tempted, but was not led into temptation. For he did not ascribe folly to God nor blasphemy, nor with impious mouth did he yield to that wish of the tempter toward which he was drawn. Abraham was tempted, Joseph was tempted, but neither of them was led into temptation for neither of them yielded his consent to the tempter. Next there follows: ”But deliver us from evil,” i.e., do not suffer us to be tempted by the devil above that we are able, but ”make with the temptation a way also of escape that we may be able to bear it.”

Chapter XXIV.

How we ought not to ask for other things, except only those which are contained in the limits of the Lord's Prayer. You see then what is the method and form of prayer proposed to us by the Judge Himself, who is to be prayed to by it, a form in which there is contained no petition for riches, no thought of honours, no request for power and might, no mention of bodily health and of temporal life. For He who is the Author of Eternity would have men ask of Him nothing uncertain, nothing paltry, and nothing temporal. And so a man will offer the greatest insult to His Majesty and Bounty, if he leaves on one side these eternal petitions and chooses rather to ask of Him something transitory and uncertain; and will also incur the indignation rather than the propitiation of the Judge by the pettiness of his prayer.

Chapter XXV.

Of the character of the sublimer prayer. This prayer then though it seems to contain all the fulness of perfection, as being what was originated and appointed by the Lord's own authority, yet lifts those to whom it belongs to that still higher condition of which we spoke above, and carries them on by a loftier stage to that ardent prayer which is known and tried by but very few, and which to speak more truly is ineffable; which transcends all human thoughts, and is distinguished, I will not say by any sound of the voice, but by no movement of the tongue, or utterance of words, but which the mind enlightened by the infusion of that heavenly light describes in no human and confined language, but pours forth richly as from copious fountain in an accumulation of thoughts, and ineffably utters to God, expressing in the shortest possible space of time such great things that the mind when it returns to its usual condition cannot easily utter or relate. And this condition our Lord also similarly prefigured by the form of those supplications which, when he retired alone in the mountain He is said to have poured forth in silence, and when being in an agony of prayer He shed forth even drops of blood, as an example of a purpose which it is hard to imitate.

Chapter XXVI.

Of the different causes of conviction. But who is able, with whatever experience he may be endowed, to give a sufficient account of the varieties and reasons and grounds of conviction, by which the mind is inflamed and set on fire and incited to pure and most fervent prayers? And of these we will now by way of specimen set forth a few, as far as we can by God's enlightenment recollect them. For sometimes a verse of any one of the Psalms gives us an occasion of ardent prayer while we are singing. Sometimes the harmonious modulation of a brother's voice stirs up the minds of dullards to intense supplication. We know also that the enunciation and the reverence of the chanter adds greatly to the fervour of those who stand by. Moreover the exhortation of a perfect man, and a spiritual conference has often raised the affections of those present to the richest prayer. We know too that by the death of a brother or some one dear to us, we are no less carried away to full conviction. The recollection also of our coldness and carelessness has sometimes aroused in us a healthful fervour of spirit. And in this way no one can doubt that numberless opportunities are not wanting, by which through God's grace the coldness and sleepiness of our minds can be shaken off.

Chapter XXVII.

Of the different sorts of conviction. But how and in what way those very convictions are produced from the inmost recesses of the soul it is no less difficult to trace out. For often through some inexpressible delight and keenness of spirit the fruit of a most salutary conviction arises so that it actually breaks forth into shouts owing to the greatness of its incontrollable joy; and the delight of the heart and greatness of exultation makes itself heard even in the cell of a neighbour. But sometimes the mind hides itself in complete silence within the secrets of a profound quiet, so that the amazement of a sudden illumination chokes all sounds of words and the overawed spirit either keeps all its feelings to itself or loses them and pours forth its desires to God with groanings that cannot be uttered. But sometimes it is filled with such overwhelming conviction and grief that it cannot express it except by floods of tears.

Chapter XXVIII.

A question about the fact that a plentiful supply of tears is not in our own power. Germanus: My own poor self indeed is not altogether ignorant of this feeling of conviction. For often when tears arise at the recollection of my faults, I have been by the Lord's visitation so refreshed by this ineffable joy which you describe that the greatness of the joy has assured me that I ought not to despair of their forgiveness. Than which state of mind I think there is nothing more sublime if only it could be recalled at our own will. For sometimes when I am desirous to stir myself up with all my power to the same conviction and tears, and place before my eyes all my faults and sins, I am unable to bring back that copiousness of tears, and so my eyes are dry and hard like some hardest flint, so that not a single tear trickles from them. And so in proportion as I congratulate myself on that copiousness of tears, just so do I mourn that I cannot bring it back again whenever I wish.

Chapter XXIX.

The answer on the varieties of conviction which spring from tears.

Isaac: Not every kind of shedding of tears is produced by one feeling or one virtue. For in one way does that weeping originate which is caused by the pricks of our sins smiting our heart, of which we read: ”I have laboured in my groanings, every night I will wash my bed; I will water my couch with my tears. And again: ”Let tears run down like a torrent day and night: give thyself no rest, and let not the apple of thine eye cease. In another, that which arises from the contemplation of eternal good things and the desire of that future glory, owing to which even richer well-springs of tears burst forth from uncontrollable delights and boundless exultation, while our soul is athirst for the mighty Living God, saying, ”When shall I come and appear before the presence of God? My tears have been my meat day and night,” declaring with daily crying and lamentation: ”Woe is me that my sojourning is prolonged; and: ”Too long hath my soul been a sojourner. In another way do the tears flow forth, which without any conscience of deadly sin, yet still proceed from the fear of hell and the recollection of It hat terrible judgment, with the terror of which the prophet was smitten and prayed to God, saying: ”Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified.

There is too another kind of tears, which are caused not by knowledge of one’s self but by the hardness and sins of others; whereby Samuel is described as having wept for Saul, and both the Lord in the gospel and Jeremiah in former days for the city of Jerusalem, the latter thus saying: ”Oh, that my head were water and mine eyes a fountain of tears! And I will weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people. Or also such as were those tears of which we hear in the hundred and first Psalm: ”For I have eaten ashes for my bread, and mingled my cup with weeping. And these were certainty not caused by the same feeling as those which arise in the sixth Psalm from the person of the penitent, but were due to the anxieties of this life and its distresses and losses, by which the righteous who are living in this world are oppressed. And this is clearly shown not only by the words of the Psalm itself, but also by its title, which runs as follows in the character of that poor person of whom it is said in the gospel that ”blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven: ”A prayer of the poor when he was in distress and poured forth his prayer to God.”

Chapter XXX.

How tears ought not to be squeezed out, when they do not flow spontaneously. From these tears those are vastly different which are squeezed out from dry eyes while the heart is hard: and although we cannot believe that these are altogether fruitless (for the attempt to shed them is made with a good intention, especially by those who have not yet been able to attain to perfect knowledge or to be thoroughly cleansed from the stains of past or present sins), yet certainly the flow of tears ought not to be thus forced out by those who have already advanced to the love of virtue, nor should the weeping of the outward man be with great labour attempted, as even if it is produced it will never attain the rich copiousness of spontaneous tears. For it will rather cast down the soul of the suppliant by his endeavours, and humiliate him, and plunge him in human affairs and draw him away from the celestial heights, wherein the awed mind of one who prays should be steadfastly fixed, and will force it to relax its hold on its prayers and grow sick from barren and forced tears.

Chapter XXXI.

The opinion of Abbot Antony on the condition of prayer. And that you may see the character of true prayer I will give you not my own opinion but that of the blessed Antony: whom we have known sometimes to have been so persistent in prayer that often as he was praying in a transport of mind, when the sunrise began to appear, we have heard him in the fervour of his spirit declaiming: Why do you hinder me, 0 sun, who art arising for this very purpose; viz., to withdraw me from the brightness of this true light? And his also is this heavenly and more than human utterance on the end of prayer: That is not, said he, a perfect prayer, wherein a monk understands himself and the words which he prays. And if we too, as far as our slender ability allows, may venture to add anything to this splendid utterance, we will bring forward the marks of prayer which are heard from the Lord, as far as we have tried them.

Chapter XXXII.

Of the proof of prayer being heard. When, while we are praying, no hesitation intervenes and breaks down the. confidence of our petition by a sort of despair, but we feel that by pouring forth our prayer we have obtained what we are asking for, we have no doubt that our prayers have effectually reached God. For so far will one be heard and obtain an answer, as he believes that he is regarded by God, and that God can grant it. For this saying of our Lord cannot be retracted: ”Whatsoever ye ask when ye pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come to you.”

Chapter XXXIII.

An objection that the confidence of being thus heard as described belongs only to saints. Germanus: We certainly believe that this confidence of being heard flows from purity of conscience, but for us, whose heart is still smitten by the pricks of sins, how can we have it, as we have no merits to plead for us, whereby we might confidently presume that our prayers would be heard?

Chapter XXXIV.

Answer on the different reasons for prayer being heard.

Isaac: That there are different reasons for prayer being heard in accordance with the varied and changing condition of souls the words of the gospels and of the prophets teach us. For you have the fruits of an answer pointed out by our Lord's words in the case of the agreement of two persons; as it is said: "If two of you shall agree upon earth touching anything for which they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. You have another in the fulness of faith, which is compared to a grain of mustard-seed. "For," He says, "if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain: Be thou removed, and it shall be removed; and nothing shall be impossible to you. You have it in continuance in prayer, which the Lord's words call, by reason of unwearied perseverance in petitioning, importunity: "For, verily, I say unto you that if not because of his friendship, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as much as he needs. You have it in the fruits of almsgiving: "Shut up alms in the heart of the poor and it shall pray for thee in the time of tribulation. You have it in the purifying of life and in works of mercy, as it is said: "Loose the bands of wickedness, undo the bundles that oppress;

and after a few words in which the barrenness of an unfruitful fast is rebuked, "then," he says, "thou shall call and the Lord shall hear thee; thou shalt cry, and He shall say, Here am I. Sometimes also excess of trouble causes it to be heard, as it is said: "When I was in trouble I called unto the Lord, and He heard me; and again: "Afflict not the stranger for if he crieth unto Me, I will hear him, for I am merciful. You see then in how many ways the gift of an answer may be obtained, so that no one need be crushed by the despair of his conscience for securing those things which are salutary and eternal. For if in contemplating our wretchedness I admit that we are utterly destitute of all those virtues which we mentioned above, and that we have neither that laudable agreement of two persons, nor that faith which is compared to a grain of mustard seed, nor those works of piety which the prophet describes, surely we cannot be without that importunity which He supplies to all who desire it, owing to which alone the Lord promises that He will give whatever He has been prayed to give. And therefore we ought without unbelieving hesitation to persevere, and not to have the least doubt that by continuing in them we shall obtain all those things which we have asked according to the mind of God.

For the Lord, in His desire to grant what is heavenly and eternal, urges us to constrain Him as it were by our importunity, as He not only does not despise or reject the importunate, but actually welcomes and praises them, and most graciously promises to grant whatever they have perseveringly hoped for; saying, "Ask and ye shall receive: seek and ye shall find: knock and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened; and again: "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer believing ye shall receive, and nothing shall be impossible to you. And therefore even if all the grounds for being heard which we have mentioned are altogether wanting, at any rate the earnestness of importunity may animate us, as this is placed in the power of any one who wills without the difficulties of any merits or labours. But let not any suppliant doubt that he certainly will not be heard, so long as he doubts whether he is heard. But that this also shall be sought from the Lord unweariedly, we are taught by the example of the blessed Daniel, as, though he was heard from the first day on which he began to pray, he only obtained the result of his petition after one and twenty days.

Wherefore we also ought not to grow slack in the earnestness of the prayers we have begun, if we fancy that the answer comes but slowly, for fear lest perhaps the gift of the answer be in God's providence delayed, or the angel, who was to bring the Divine blessing to us, may when he comes forth from the Presence of the Almighty be hindered by the resistance of the devil, as it is certain that he cannot transmit and bring to us the desired boon, if he finds that we slack off from the earnestness of the petition made. And this would certainly have happened to the above mentioned prophet unless he had with incomparable steadfastness prolonged and persevered in his prayers until the twenty-first day. Let us then not be at all cast down by despair from the confidence of this faith of ours, even when we fancy that we are far from having obtained what we prayed for, and let us not have any doubts about the Lord's promise where He says: "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive. For it is well for us to consider this saying of the blessed Evangelist John, by which the ambiguity of this question is clearly solved: "This is," he says, "the confidence which we have in Him, that whatsoever we ask according to His will, He heareth us.

He bids us then have a full and undoubting confidence of the answer only in those things which are not for our own advantage or for temporal comforts, but are in conformity to the Lord's will. And we are also taught to put this into our prayers by the Lord's Prayer, where we say "Thy will be done,"-Thine not ours. For if we also remember these words of the Apostle that "we know not what to pray for as we ought" we shall see that we sometimes ask for things opposed to our salvation and that we are most providentially refused our requests by Him who sees what is good for us with greater right and truth than we can. And it is clear that this also happened to the teacher of the Gentiles when he prayed that the messenger of Satan who had been for his good allowed by the Lord's will to buffet him, might be removed, saying: "For which I besought the Lord thrice that he might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for strength is made perfect in weakness. And this feeling even our Lord expressed when He prayed in the character of

man which He had taken, that He might give us a form of prayer as other things also by His example; saying thus: ”Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me:

nevertheless not as I will but as Thou wilt,” though certainly His will was not discordant with His Father’s will, ”For He had come to save what was lost and to give His life a ransom for many; as He Himself says: ”No man taketh my life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again. In which character there is in the thirty-ninth Psalm the following sung by the blessed David, of the Unity of will which He ever maintained with the Father: ”To do Thy will: O My God, I am willing. For even if we read of the Father: ”For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son,” we find none the less of the Son: ”Who gave Himself for our sins. And as it is said of the One: ”Who spared not His own Son, but gave Him for all of us,” so it is written of the other: ”He was offered because He Himself willed it. And it is shown that the will of the Father and of the Son is in all things one, so that even in the actual mystery of the Lord’s resurrection we are taught that there was no discord of operation. For just as the blessed Apostle declares that the Father brought about the resurrection of His body, saying:

”And God the Father, who raised Him from the dead,” so also the Son testifies that He Himself will raise again the Temple of His body, saying: ”Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again. And therefore we being instructed by all these examples of our Lord which have been enumerated ought to end our supplications also with the same prayer, and always to subjoin this clause to all our petitions: ”Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt. But it is clear enough that one who does not pray with attention of mind cannot observe that threefold reverence which is usually practised in the assemblies of the brethren at the close of service.

Chapter XXXV.

Of prayer to be offered within the chamber and with the door shut. Before all things however we ought most carefully to observe the Evangelic precept, which tells us to enter into our chamber and shut the door and pray to our Father, which may be fulfilled by us as follows: We pray within our chamber, when removing our hearts inwardly from the din of all thoughts and anxieties, we disclose our prayers in secret and in closest intercourse to the Lord. We pray with closed doors when with closed lips and complete silence we pray to the searcher not of words but of hearts. We pray in secret when from the heart and fervent mind we disclose our petitions to God alone, so that no hostile powers are even able to discover the character of our petition. Wherefore we should pray in complete silence, not only to avoid distracting the brethren standing near by our whispers or louder utterances, and disturbing the thoughts of those who are praying, but also that the purport of our petition may be concealed from our enemies who are especially on the watch against us while we are praying. For so we shall fulfil this injunction. ”Keep the doors of thy mouth from her who sleepeth in thy bosom.”

Chapter XXXVI.

Of the value of short and silent prayer. Wherefore we ought to pray often but briefly, lest if we are long about it our crafty foe may succeed in implanting something in our heart. For that is the true sacrifice, as "the sacrifice of God is a broken spirit." This is the salutary offering, these are pure drink offerings, that is the "sacrifice of righteousness," the "sacrifice of praise," these are true and fat victims, "holocausts full of marrow," which are offered by contrite and humble hearts, and which those who practise this control and fervour of spirit, of which we have spoken, with effectual power can sing: "Let my prayer be set forth in Thy sight as the incense: let the lifting up of my hands be an evening sacrifice." But the approach of the right hour and of night warns us that we ought with fitting devotion to do this very thing, of which, as our slender ability allowed, we seem to have propounded a great deal, and to have prolonged our conference considerably, though we believe that we have discoursed very little when the magnificence and difficulty of the subject are taken into account.

With these words of the holy Isaac we were dazzled rather than satisfied, and after evening service had been held, rested our limbs for a short time, and intending at the first dawn again to return under promise of a fuller discussion departed, rejoicing over the acquisition of these precepts as well as over the assurance of his promises. Since we felt thatthough the excellence of prayer had been shown to us, still we had not yet understood from his discourse its nature, and the power by which continuance in it might be gained and kept.

Chapter I.

Introduction. Among the sublime customs of the anchorites which by God's help have been set forth although in plain and unadorned style, the course of our narration compels us to insert and find a place for something, which may seem so to speak to cause a blemish on a fair body: although I have no doubt that by it no small instruction on the image of Almighty God of which we read in Genesis will be conferred on some of the simpler sort, especially when the grounds are considered of a doctrine so important that men cannot be ignorant of it without terrible blasphemy and serious harm to the Catholic faith.

Chapter II.

Of the custom which is kept up in the Province of Egypt for signifying the time of Easter.

IN the country of Egypt this custom is by ancient tradition observed that-when Epiphany is past, which the priests of that province regard as the time, both of our Lord's baptism and also of His birth in the flesh, and so celebrate the commemoration of either mystery not separately as in the Western provinces but on the single festival of this day, -letters are sent from the Bishop of Alexandria through all the Churches of Egypt, by which the beginning of Lent, and the day of Easter are pointed out not only in all the cities but also in all the monasteries. In accordance then with this custom, a very few days after the previous conference had been held with Abbot Isaac, there arrived the festal letters of Theophilus the Bishop of the aforesaid city, in which together with the announcement of Easter he considered as well the foolish heresy of the Anthropomorphites at great length, and abundantly refuted it. And this was received by almost all the body of monks residing in the whole province of Egypt with such bitterness owing to their simplicity and error, that the greater part of the Elders decreed that on the contrary the aforesaid Bishop ought to be abhorred by the whole body of the brethren as tainted with heresy of the worst kind, because he seemed to impugn the teaching of holy Scripture by the denial that Almighty God was formed in the fashion of a human figure, though Scripture teaches with perfect clearness that Adam was created in His image.

Lastly this letter was rejected also by those who were living in the desert of Scete and who excelled all who were in the monasteries of Egypt, in perfection and in knowledge, so that except Abbot Paphnutius the presbyter of our congregation, not one of the other presbyters, who presided over the other three churches in the same desert, would suffer it to be even read or repeated at all in their meetings.

Chapter III.

Of Abbot Sarapion and the heresy of the Anthropomorphites into which he fell in the error of simplicity.

Among those then who were caught by this mistaken notion was one named Sarapion, a man of long-standing strictness of life, and one who was altogether perfect in actual discipline, whose ignorance with regard to the view of the doctrine first mentioned was so far a stumbling block to all who held the true faith, as he himself outstripped almost all the monks both in the merits of his life and in the length of time (he had been there). And when this man could not be brought back to the way of the right faith by many exhortations of the holy presbyter Paphnutius, because this view seemed to him a novelty, and one that was not ever known to or handed down by his predecessors, it chanced that a certain deacon, a man of very great learning, named Photinus, arrived from the region of Cappadocia with the desire of visiting the brethren living in the same desert: whom the blessed Paphnutius received with the warmest welcome, and in order to confirm the faith which had been stated in the letters of the aforesaid Bishop, placed him in the midst and asked him before all the brethren how the Catholic Churches throughout the East interpreted the passage in Genesis where it says ”Let us make man after our image and likeness.

And when he explained that the image and likeness of God was taken by all the leaders of the churches not according to the base sound of the letters, but spiritually, and supported this very fully and by many passages of Scripture, and showed that nothing of this sort could happen to that infinite and incomprehensible and invisible glory, so that it could be comprised in a human form and likeness, since its nature is incorporeal and uncompounded and simple, and what can neither be apprehended by the eyes nor conceived by the mind, at length the old man was shaken by the numerous and very weighty assertions of this most learned man, and was drawn to the faith of the Catholic tradition. And when both Abbot Paphnutius and all of us were filled with intense delight at his adhesion, for this reason;

viz., that the Lord had not permitted a man of such age and crowned with such virtues, and one who erred only from ignorance and rustic simplicity, to wander from the path of the right faith up to the very last, and when we arose to give thanks, and were all together offering up our prayers to the Lord, the old man was so bewildered in mind during his prayer because he felt that the Anthropomorphic image of the Godhead which he used to set before

himself in prayer, was banished from his heart, that on a sudden he burst into a flood of bitter tears and continual sobs, and cast himself down on the ground and exclaimed with strong groanings: ”Alas! wretched man that I am! they have taken away my God from me, and I have now none to lay hold of; and whom to worship and address I know not. By which scene we were terribly disturbed, and moreover with the effect of the former Conference still remaining in our hearts, we returned to Abbot Isaac, whom when we saw close at hand, we addressed with these words.

Chapter IV.

Of our return to Abbot Isaac and question concerning the error into which the aforesaid old man had fallen. Although even besides the fresh matter which has lately arisen, our delight in the former conference which was held on the character of prayer would summon us to postpone everything else and return to your holiness, yet this grievous error of Abbot Sarapion, conceived, as we fancy, by the craft of most vile demons, adds somewhat to this desire of ours. For it is no small despair by which we are cast down when we consider that through the fault of this ignorance he has not only utterly lost all those labours which he has performed in so praiseworthy a manner for fifty years in this desert, but has also incurred the risk of eternal death. And so we want first to know why and wherefore so grievous an error has crept into him. And next we should like to be taught how we can arrive at that condition in prayer, of which you discoursed some time back not only fully but splendidly. For that admirable Con- ference has had this effect upon us, that it has only dazzled our minds and has not shown us how to perform or secure it.

Chapter V.

The answer on the heresy described above.

Isaac: We need not be surprised that a really simple man who had never received any instruction on the substance and nature of the Godhead could still be entangled and deceived by an error of simplicity and the habit of a longstanding mistake, and (to speak more truly) continue in the original error which is brought about, not as you suppose by a new illusion of the demons, but by the ignorance of the ancient heathen world, while in accordance with the custom of that erroneous notion, by which they used to worship devils formed in the figure of men, they even now think that the incomprehensible and ineffable glory of the true Deity should be worshipped under the limitations of some figure, as they believe that they can grasp and hold nothing if they have not some image set before them, which they can continually address while they are at their devotions, and which they can carry about in their mind and have always fixed before their eyes. And against this mistake of theirs this text may be used: ”And they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of the image of corruptible man. Jeremiah also says: ”My people have changed their glory for an idol.

Which error although by this its origin, of which we have spoken, it is engrained in the notions of some, yet none the less is it contracted in the hearts also of those who have never been stained with the superstition of the heathen world, under the colour of this passage where it is said ”Let us make man after our image and our likeness,” ignorance and simplicity being its authors, so that actually there has arisen owing to this hateful interpretation a heresy called that of the Anthropomorphites, which maintains with obstinate perverseness that the infinite and simple substance of the Godhead is fashioned in our lineaments and human configuration. Which however any one who has been taught the Catholic doctrine will abhor as heathenish blasphemy, and so will arrive at that perfectly pure condition in prayer which will not only not connect with its prayers any figure of the Godhead or bodily lineaments (which it is a sin even to speak of), but will not even allow in itself even the memory of a name, or the appearance of an action, or an outline of any character.

Chapter VI.

Of the reasons why Jesus Christ appears to each one of us either in His humility or in His glorified condition.

For according to the measure of its purity, as I said in the former Conference, each mind is both raised and moulded in its prayers if it forsakes the consideration of earthly and material things so far as the condition of its purity may carry it forward, and enable it with the inner eyes of the soul to see Jesus either still in His humility and in the flesh, or glorified and coming in the glory of His Majesty: for those cannot see Jesus coming in His Kingdom who are still kept back in a sort of state of Jewish weakness, and cannot say with the Apostle: ”And if we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him so no more; but only those can look with purest eyes on His Godhead, who rise with Him from low and earthly works and thoughts and go apart in the lofty mountain of solitude which is free from the disturbance of all earthly thoughts and troubles, and secure from the interference of all sins, and being exalted by pure faith and the heights of virtue reveals the glory of His Face and the image of His splendour to those who are able to look on Him with pure eyes of the soul.

But Jesus is seen as well by those who live in towns and villages and hamlets, i.e., who are occupied in practical affairs and works, but not with the same brightness with which He appeared to those who can go up with Him into the aforesaid mount of virtues, i.e., Peter, James, and John. For so in solitude He appeared to Moses and spoke with Elias. And as our Lord wished to establish this and to leave us examples of perfect purity, although He Himself, the very fount of inviolable sanctity, had no need of external help and the assistance of solitude in order to secure it (for the fulness of purity could not be soiled by any stain from crowds, nor could He be contaminated by intercourse with men, who cleanses and sanctifies all things that are polluted) yet still He retired into the mountain alone to pray, thus teaching us by the example of His retirement that if we too wish to approach God with a pure and spotless affection of heart, we should also retire from all the disturbance and confusion of crowds, so that while still living in the body we I may manage in some degree to adapt ourselves to some likeness of that bliss which is promised hereafter to the saints, and that ”God may be” to us ”all in all.”

Chapter VII.

What constitutes our end and perfect bliss.

For then will be perfectly fulfilled in our case that prayer of our Saviour in which He prayed for His disciples to the Father saying ”that the love wherewith Thou lovedst Me may be in them and they in us; and again: ”that they all may be one as Thou, Father, in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us,” when that perfect love of God, wherewith” He first loved us” has passed into the feelings of our heart as well, by the fulfilment of this prayer of the Lord which we believe cannot possibly be ineffectual. And this will come to pass when God shall be all our love, and every desire and wish and effort, every thought of ours, and all our life and words and breath, and that unity which already exists between the Father and the Son, and the Son and the Father, has been shed abroad in our hearts and minds, so that as He loves us with a pure and unfeigned and indissoluble love, so we also may be joined to Him by a lasting and inseparable affection, since we are so united to Him that whatever we breathe or think, or speak is God, since, as I say, we attain to that end of which we spoke before, which the same Lord in His prayer hopes may be fulfilled in us: ”that they all may be one as we are one, I in them and Thou in Me, that they also may be made perfect in one;

and again: ”Father, those whom Thou hast given Me, I will that where I am, they may also be with Me. This then ought to be the destination of the solitary, this should be all his aim that it may be vouchsafed to him to possess even in the body an image of future bliss, and that he may begin in this world to have a foretaste of a sort of earnest of that celestial life and glory. This, I say, is the end of all perfection, that the mind purged from all carnal desires may daily be lifted towards spiritual things, until the whole life and all the thoughts of the heart become one continuous prayer.

Chapter VIII.

A question on the training in perfection by which we can arrive at perpetual recollection of God.

Germanus: The extent of our bewilderment at our wondering awe at the former Conference, because of which we came back again, increases still more. For in proportion as by the incitements of this teaching we are fired with the desire of perfect bliss, so do we fall back into greater despair, as we know not how to seek or obtain training for such lofty heights. Wherefore we entreat that you will patiently allow us (for it must perhaps be set forth and unfolded with a good deal of talk) to explain what while sitting in the cell we had begun to revolve in a lengthy meditation, although we know that your holiness is not at all troubled by the infirmities of the weak, which even for this reason should be openly set forth, that what is out of place in them may receive correction. Our notion then is that the perfection of any art or system of training must begin with some simple rudiments, and grow accustomed first to somewhat easy and tender beginnings, so that being nourished and trained little by little by a sort of reasonable milk, it may grow up and so by degrees and step by step mount up from the lowest depths to the heights: and when by these means it has entered on the plainer principles and so to speak passed the gates of the entrance of the profession, it will consequently arrive without difficulty at the inmost shrine and lofty heights of perfection.

For how could any boy manage to pronounce the simplest union of syllables unless he had first carefully learnt the letters of the alphabet? Or how can any one learn to read quickly, who is still unfit to connect together short and simple sentences? But by what means will one who is ill instructed in the science of grammar attain eloquence in rhetoric or the knowledge of philosophy? Wherefore for this highest learning also, by which we are taught even to cleave to God, I have no doubt that there are some foundations of the system, which must first be firmly laid and afterwards the towering heights of perfection may be placed and raised upon them. And we have a slight idea that these are its first principles; viz., that we should first learn by what meditations God may be grasped and contemplated, and next that we should manage to keep a very firm hold of this topic whatever it is which we do not doubt is the height of all perfection. And therefore we want you to show us some material for this recollection, by which we may conceive and ever keep the idea of God in the mind, So that by always keeping it before our eyes, when we find that we have dropped away from

Him, we may at once be able to recover ourselves and return thither and may succeed in laying hold of it again without any delay from wandering around the subject and searching for it.

For it happens that when we have wandered away from our spiritual speculations and have come back to ourselves as if waking from a deadly sleep, and, being thoroughly roused, look for the subject matter, by which we may be able to revive that spiritual recollection which has been destroyed, we are hindered by the delay of the actual search before we find it, and are once more drawn aside from our endeavour, and before the spiritual insight is brought about, the purpose of heart which had been conceived, has disappeared. And this trouble is certain to happen to us for this reason because we do not keep something special firmly set before our eyes like some principle to which the wandering thoughts may be recalled after many digressions and varied excursions; and, if I may use the expression, after long storms enter a quiet haven. And so it comes to pass that as the mind is constantly hindered by this want of knowledge and difficulty, and is always tossed about vaguely, and as if intoxicated, among various matters, and cannot even retain firm hold for any length of time of anything spiritual which has occurred to it by chance rather than of set purpose: while, as it is always receiving one thing after another, it does not notice either their beginning and origin or even their end.

Chapter IX.

The answer on the efficacy of understanding, which is gained by experience. Isaac: Your minute and subtle inquiry affords an indication of purity being very nearly reached. For no one would be able even to make inquiries on these matters,I will not say to look within and discriminate,-except one who had been urged to sound the depths of such questions by careful and effectual diligence of mind, and watchful anxiety, and one whom the constant aim after a well controlled life had taught by practical experience to attempt the entrance to this purity and to knock at its doors. And therefore as I see you, I will not say, standing before the doors of that true prayer of which we have been speaking, but touching its inner chambers and inward parts as it were with the hands of experience, and already laying hold of some pans of it, I do not think that I shall find any difficulty in introducing you now within what I may call its hall, for you to roam about its recesses, as the Lord may direct; nor do I think that you will be hindered from investigating what is to be shown you by any obstacles or difficulties. For he is next door to understanding who carefully recognizes what he ought to ask about, nor is he far from knowledge, who begins to understand how ignorant he is. And therefore I am not afraid of the charge of betraying secrets, and of levity, if I divulge what when speaking in my former discourse on the perfection of prayer I had kept back from discussing, as I think that its force was to be explained to us who are occupied with this subject and interest even without the aid of my words, by the grace of God.

Chapter X.

Of the method of continual prayer.

Wherefore in accordance with that system, which you admirably compared to teaching children (who can only take in the first lessons on the alphabet and recognize the shapes of the letters, and trace out their characters with a steady hand if they have, by means of some copies and shapes carefully impressed on wax, got accustomed to express their figures, by constantly looking at them and imitating them daily), we must give you also the form of this spiritual contemplation, on which you may always fix your gaze with the utmost steadiness, and both learn to consider it to your profit in unbroken continuance, and also manage by the practice of it and by meditation to climb to a still loftier insight. This formula then shall be proposed to you of this system, which you want, and of prayer, which every monk in his progress towards continual recollection of God, is accustomed to ponder, ceaselessly revolving it in his heart, having got rid of all kinds of other thoughts; for he cannot possibly keep his hold over it unless he has freed himself from all bodily cares and anxieties. And as this was delivered to us by a few of those who were left of the oldest fathers, so it is only divulged by us to a very few and to those who are really keen. And so for keeping up continual recollection of God this pious formula is to be ever set before you. "O God, make speed to save me:

O Lord, make haste to help me," for this verse has not unreasonably been picked out from the whole of Scripture for this purpose. For it embraces all the feelings which can be implanted in human nature, and can be fitly and satisfactorily adapted to every condition, and all assaults. Since it contains an invocation of God against every danger, it contains humble and pious confession, it contains the watchfulness of anxiety and continual fear, it contains the thought of one's own weakness, confidence in the answer, and the assurance of a present and ever ready help. For one who is constantly calling on his protector, is certain that He is always at hand. It contains the glow of love and charity, it contains a view of the plots, and a dread of the enemies, from which one, who sees himself day and night hemmed in by them, confesses that he cannot be set free without the aid of his defender. This verse is an impregnable wall for all who are labouring under the attacks of demons, as well as impenetrable coat of mail and a strong shield. It does not suffer those who are in a state of moroseness and anxiety of mind, or depressed by sadness or all kinds of thoughts to despair

of saving remedies, as it shows that He, who is invoked, is ever looking on at our struggles and is not far from His suppliants.

It warns us whose lot is spiritual success and delight of heart that we ought not to be at all elated or puffed up by our happy condition, which it assures us cannot last without God as our protector, while it implores Him not only always but even speedily to help us. This verse, I say, will be found helpful and useful to every one of us in whatever condition we may be. For one who always and in all matters wants to be helped, shows that he needs the assistance of God not only in sorrowful or hard matters but also equally in prosperous and happy ones, that he may be delivered from the one and also made to continue in the other, as he knows that in both of them human weakness is unable to endure without His assistance. I am affected by the passion of gluttony. I ask for food of which the desert knows nothing, and in the squalid desert there are wafted to me odours of royal dainties and I find that even against my will I am drawn to long for them. I must at once say: ”O God, make speed to save me: O Lord, make haste to help me. I am incited to anticipate the hour fixed for supper, or I am trying with great sorrow of heart to keep to the limits of the right and regular meagre fare. I must cry out with groans: ”O God, make speed to save me: O Lord, make haste to help me.

Weakness of the stomach hinders me when wanting severer fasts, on account of the assaults of the flesh, or dryness of the belly and constipation frightens me. In order that effect may be given to my wishes, or else that the fire of carnal lust may be quenched without the remedy of a stricter fast, I must pray: ”O God, make speed to save me: O Lord, make haste to help me. When I come to supper, at the bidding of the proper hour I loathe taking food and am prevented from eating anything to satisfy the requirements of nature: I must cry with a sigh: ”O God, make speed to save me: O Lord, make haste to help me. When I want for the sake of steadfastness of heart to apply myself to reading a headache interferes and stops me, and at the third hour sleep glues my head to the sacred page, and I am forced either to overstep or to anticipate the time assigned to rest; and finally an overpowering desire to sleep forces me to cut short the canonical rule for service in the Psalms: in the same way I must cry out: ”O God, make speed to save me: O Lord, make haste to help me. Sleep is withdrawn from my eyes, and for many nights I find myself wearied out with sleeplessness caused by the devil, and all repose and rest by night is kept away from my eyelids; I must sigh and pray: ”O God, make speed to save me:

O Lord, make haste to help me. While I am still in the midst of a struggle with sin suddenly an irritation of the flesh affects me and tries by a pleasant sensation to draw me to consent while in my sleep. In order that a raging fire from without may not burn up the fragrant blossoms of chastity, I must cry out: ”O God, make speed to save me: O Lord, make haste to help me. I feel that the incentive to lust is removed, and that the heat of passion has died away in my members: In order that this good condition acquired, or rather that this grace of God may continue still longer or forever with me, I must earnestly say: ”O God, make speed to save me: O Lord, make haste to help me. I am disturbed by the pangs of

anger, covetousness, gloominess, and driven to disturb the peaceful state in which I was, and which was dear to me: In order that I may not be carried away by raging passion into the bitterness of gall, I must cry out with deep groans: ”O God, make speed to save me: O Lord, make haste to help me. I am tried by being puffed up by accidie, vainglory, and pride, and my mind with subtle thoughts flatters itself somewhat on account of the coldness and carelessness of others: In order that this dangerous suggestion of the enemy may not get the mastery over me, I must pray with all contrition of heart:

”O God, make speed to save me: O Lord, make haste to help me. I have gained the grace of humility and simplicity, and by continually mortifying my spirit have got rid of the swellings of pride: In order that the ”foot of pride” may not again ”come against me,” and ”the hand of the sinner disturb me,” and that I may not be more seriously damaged by elation at my success, I must cry With all my might, ”O God, make speed to save me: O Lord, make haste to help me. I am on fire with innumerable and various wanderings of soul and shiftiness of heart, and cannot collect my scattered thoughts, nor can I even pour forth my prayer without interruption and images of vain figures, and the recollection of conversations and actions, and I feel myself tied down by such dryness and barrenness that I feel I cannot give birth to any offspring in the shape of spiritual ideas: In order that it may be vouchsafed to me to be set free from this wretched state of mind, from which I cannot extricate myself by any number of sighs and groans, I must full surely tryout: ”O God, make speed to save me: O Lord, make haste to help me.

Again, I feel that by the visitation of the Holy Spirit I have gained purpose of soul, steadfastness of thought, keenness of heart, together with an ineffable joy and transport of mind, and in the exuberance of spiritual feelings I have perceived by a sudden illumination from the Lord an abounding revelation of most holy ideas which were formerly altogether hidden from me: In order that it may be vouch-safed to me to linger for a longer time in them I must often and anxiously exclaim: ”O God, make speed to save me: O Lord, make haste to help me. Encompassed by nightly horrors of devils I am agitated, and am disturbed by the appearances of unclean spirits, my very hope of life and salvation is withdrawn by the horror of fear. Flying to the safe refuge of this verse, I will cry out with all my might: ”O God, make speed to save me: O Lord, make haste to help me. Again, when I have been restored by the Lord’s consolation, and, cheered by His coming, feel myself encompassed as if by countless thousands of angels, so that all of a sudden I can venture to seek the conflict and provoke a battle with those whom a while ago I dreaded worse than death, and whose touch or even approach I felt with a shudder both of mind and body:

In order that the vigour of this courage may, by God’s grace, continue in me still longer, I must cry out with all my powers ”O God, make speed to save me: O Lord, make haste to help me. We must then ceaselessly and continuously pour forth the prayer of this verse, in adversity that we may be delivered, in prosperity that we may be preserved and not puffed up. Let the thought of this verse, i tell you, be conned over in your breast without ceasing. Whatever work you are doing, or office you are holding, or journey you are going, do not

cease to chant this. When you are going to bed, or eating, and in the last necessities of nature, think on this. This thought in your heart maybe to you a saving formula, and not only keep you unharmed by all attacks of devils, but also purify you from all faults and earthly stains, and lead you to that invisible and celestial contemplation, and carry you on to that ineffable glow of prayer, of which so few have any experience. Let sleep come upon you still considering this verse, till having been moulded by the constant use of it, you grow accustomed to repeat it even in your sleep.

When you wake let it be the first thing to come into your mind, let it anticipate all your waking thoughts, let it when you rise from your bed send you down on your knees, and thence send you forth to all your work and business, and let it follow you about all day long. This you should think about, according to the Lawgiver's charge, "at home and walking forth on a journey," sleeping and waking. This you should write on the threshold and door of your mouth, this you should place on the walls of your house and in the recesses of your heart so that when you fall on your knees in prayer this may be your chant as you kneel, and when you rise up from it to go forth to all the necessary business of life it may be your constant prayer as you stand.

Chapter XI.

Of the perfection of prayer to which we can rise by the system described.

This, this is the formula which the mind should unceasingly cling to until, strengthened by the constant use of it and by continual meditation, it casts off and rejects the rich and full material of all manner of thoughts and restricts itself to the poverty of this one verse, and so arrives with ready ease at that beatitude of the gospel, which holds the first place among the other beatitudes: for He says ”Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. And so one who becomes grandly poor by a poverty of this sort will fulfil this saying of the prophet: ”The poor and needy shall praise the name of the Lord. And indeed what greater or holier poverty can there be than that of one who knowing that he has no defence and no strength of his own, asks for daily help from another’s bounty, and as he is aware that every single moment his life and substance depend on Divine assistance, professes himself not without reason the Lord’s bedesman, and cries to Him daily in prayer: ”But I am poor and needy: the Lord helpeth me. And so by the illumination of God Himself he mounts to that manifold knowledge of Him and begins henceforward to be nourished on sublimer and still more sacred mysteries, in accordance with these words of the prophet:

”The high hills are a refuge for the stags, the rocks for the hedgehogs,” which is very fairly applied in the sense we have given, because whosoever continues in simplicity and innocence is not injurious or offensive to any one, but being content with his own simple condition endeavours simply to defend himself from being spoiled by his foes, and becomes a sort of spiritual hedgehog and is protected by the continual shield of that rock of the gospel, i.e., being sheltered by the recollection of the Lord’s passion and by ceaseless meditation on the verse given above he escapes the snares of his opposing enemies. And of these spiritual hedgehogs we read in Proverbs as follows: ”And the hedgehogs are a feeble folk, who have made their homes in the rocks. And indeed what is feebler than a Christian, what is weaker than a monk, who is not only not permitted any vengeance for wrongs done to him but is actually not allowed to suffer even a slight and silent feeling of irritation to spring up within? But whoever advances from this condition and not only secures the simplicity of innocence, but is also shielded by the virtue of discretion, becomes an exterminator of deadly serpents, and has Satan crushed beneath his feet, and by his quickness of mind answers to the figure

of the reasonable stag, this man will feed on the mountains of the prophets and Apostles, i.e., on their highest and loftiest mysteries.

And thriving on this pasture continually, he will take in to himself all the thoughts of the Psalms and will begin to sing them in such a way that he will utter them with the deepest emotion of heart not as if they were the compositions of the Psalmist, but rather as if they were his own utterances and his very own prayer; and will certainly take them as aimed at himself, and will recognize that their words were not only fulfilled formerly by or in the person of the prophet, but that they are fulfilled and carried out daily in his own case. For then the Holy Scriptures lie open to us with greater clearness and as it were their very veins and marrow are exposed, when our experience not only perceives but actually anticipates their meaning, and the sense of the words is revealed to us not by an exposition of them but by practical proof.

For if we have experience of the very state of mind in which each Psalm was sung and written, we become like their authors and anticipate the meaning rather than follow it, i.e., gathering the force of the words before we really know them, we remember what has happened to us, and what is happening in daily assaults when the thoughts of them come over us, and while we sing them we call to mind all that our carelessness has brought upon us, or our earnestness has secured, or Divine Providence has granted or the promptings of the foe have deprived us of, or slippery and subtle forgetfulness has carried off, or human weakness has brought about, or thoughtless ignorance has cheated us of. For all these feelings we find expressed in the Psalms so that by seeing whatever happens as in a very clear mirror we understand it better, and so instructed by our feelings as our teachers we lay hold of it as something not merely heard but actually seen, and, as if it were not committed to memory, but implanted in the very nature of things, we are affected from the very bottom of the heart, so that we get at its meaning not by reading the text but by experience anticipating it.

And so our mind will reach that incorruptible prayer to which in our former treatise, as the Lord vouchsafed to grant, the scheme of our Conference mounted, and this is not merely not engaged in gazing on any image, but is actually distinguished by the use of no words or utterances; but with the purpose of the mind all on fire, is produced through ecstasy of heart by some unaccountable keenness of spirit, and the mind being thus affected without the aid of the senses or any visible material pours it forth to God with groanings and sighs that cannot be uttered.

Chapter XII.

A question as to how spiritual thoughts can be retained without losing them. Germanus: We think that you have described to us not only the system of this spiritual discipline for which we asked, but perfection itself; and this with great clearness and openness. For what can be more perfect and sublime than for the recollection of God to be embraced in so brief a meditation, and for it, dwelling on a single verse, to escape from all the limitations of things visible, and to comprise in one short word the thoughts of all our prayers. And therefore we beg you to explain to us one thing which still remains; viz., how we can keep firm hold of this verse which you have given us as a formula, in such a way that, as we have been by God's grace set free from the trifles of worldly thoughts, so we may also keep a steady grasp on all spiritual ones.

Chapter XIII.

On the lightness of thoughts.

For when the mind has taken in the meaning of a passage in any Psalm, this insensibly slips away from it, and ignorantly and thoughtlessly it passes on to a text of some other Scripture. And when it has begun to consider this with itself, while it is still not thoroughly explored, the recollection of some other passage springs up, and shuts out the consideration of the former subject. From this too it is transferred to sortie other, by the entrance of some fresh consideration, and the soul always turns about from Psalm to Psalm and jumps from a passage in the Gospels to read one in the Epistles, and from this passes on to the prophetic writings, and thence is carried to some spiritual history, and so it wanders about vaguely and uncertainly through the whole body of the Scriptures, unable, as it may choose, either to reject or keep hold of anything, or to finish anything by fully considering and examining it, and so becomes only a toucher or taster of spiritual meanings, not an author and possessor of them. And so the mind, as it is always light and wandering, is distracted even in time of service by all sorts of things, as if it were intoxicated, and does not perform any office properly. For instance, while it is praying, it is recalling some Psalm or passage of Scripture. While it is chanting, it is thinking about something else besides what the text of the Psalm itself contains.

When it repeats a passage of Scripture, it is thinking about something that has to be done, or remembering something that has been done. And in this way it takes in and rejects nothing in a disciplined and proper way, and seems to be driven about by random incursions, without the power either of retaining what it likes or lingering over it. It is then well for us before everything else to know how we can properly perform these spiritual offices, and keep firm hold of this particular verse which you have given us as a formula, so that the rise and fall of our feelings may not be in a state of fluctuation from their own lightness, but may lie under our own control.

Chapter XIV.

The answer how we can gain stability of heart or of thoughts. Isaac: Although, in our former discussion on the character of prayer, enough was, as I think, said on this subject, yet as you want it repeated to you again, I will give you a brief instruction on steadfastness of heart. There are three things which make a shifting heart steadfast, watchings, meditation, and prayer, diligence in which and constant attention will produce steadfast firmness of mind. But this cannot be secured in any other way unless all cares and anxieties of this present life have been first got rid of by indefatigable persistence in work dedicated not to covetousness but to the sacred uses of the monastery, that we may thus be able to fulfil the Apostle's command: "Pray without ceasing." For he prays too little, who is accustomed only to pray at the times when he bends his knees. But he never prays, who even while on his bended knees is distracted by all kinds of wanderings of heart. And therefore what we would be found when at our prayers, that we ought to be before the time of prayer. For at the time of its prayers the mind cannot help being affected by its previous condition, and while it is praying, will be either transported to things heavenly, or dragged down to earthly things by those thoughts in which it had been lingering before prayer.

Thus far did Abbot Isaac carry on his Second Conference on the character of Prayer to us astonished hearers; whose instruction on the consideration of that verse quoted above (which he gave as a sort of outline for beginners to hold) we greatly admired, and wished to follow very closely, as we fancied that it would be a short and easy method; but we have found it even harder to observe than that system of ours by which we used formerly to wander here and there in varied meditations through the whole body of the Scriptures without being tied by any chains of perseverance. It is then certain that no one is kept away from perfection of heart by not being able to read, nor is rustic simplicity any hindrance to the possession of purity of heart and mind, which lies close at hand for all, if only they will by constant meditation on this verse keep the thoughts of the mind safe and sound towards God.

Preface

The obligation, Which was promised to the blessed Pope Castor in the preface to those volumes which with God's help I composed in twelve books on the Institutes of the Coenobia, and the remedies for the eight principal faults, has now been, as far as my feeble ability permitted, satisfied. I should certainly like to see what was the opinion fairly arrived at on this work both by his judgment and yours, whether, on a matter so profound and so lofty, and one which has never yet been made the subject of a treatise, we have produced anything worthy of your notice, and of the eager desire of all the holy brethren. But now as the aforesaid Bishop has left us and departed to Christ, meanwhile these ten Conferences of the grandest of the fathers, viz., the Anchorites who dwelt in the desert of Scete, which he, fired With an incomparable desire for saintliness, had bidden me Write for him in the same style (not considering in the greatness of his affection, what a burden he placed on shoulders too weak to bear it)-these Conferences I have thought good to dedicate to you in particular, O blessed Pope, Leontius, and holy brother Helladius. For one of you was united to him whom I have mentioned, by the ties of brotherhood, and the rank of the priesthood, and (what is more to the point) by fervour in sacred study, and so has an hereditary right to demand the debt due to his brother:

while the other has ventured to follow the sublime customs of the Anchorites, not like some others, presumptuously on his own account, but seizing, at the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, on the right path of doctrine almost before he had been taught and choosing to learn not so much from his own ideas as from their traditions. Wherein just as I had anchored in the harbour of Silence, a wide sea opens out before me, so that I must venture to hand down for posterity some of the Institutes and teaching of these great men. For the bark of my slender abilities will be exposed to the dangers of a longer voyage on the deep, in proportion as the Anchorite's life is grander than that of the Coenobium, and the contemplation of God, to which those inestimable men ever devoted themselves, more sublime than ordinary practical life. It is yours therefore to assist our efforts by your pious prayers for fear lest so sacred a subject that is to be treated in an untried but faithful manner, should be imperilled by us, or lest our simplicity should lose itself in the depths of the subject matter. Let us therefore pass from what is visible to the eye and the external mode of life of the monks, of which we treated in the former books, to the life of the inner man, which is hidden from view;

and from the system of the canonical prayers, let our discourse mount to that continuance in unceasing prayer, which the Apostle enjoins, that whoever has through reading our former work already spiritually gained the name of Jacob by ousting his carnal faults, may now by the reception of the Institutes which are not mine but the fathers', mount by a pure insight to the merits and (so to speak) the dignity of Israel, and in the same way be taught what it is that he should observe on these lofty heights of perfection. And so may your prayers gain from Him, Who has deemed us worthy both to see them and to learn from them and to dwell with them, that He will vouchsafe to grant us a perfect recollection of their teaching, and a ready tongue to tell it, that we may explain them as beautifully and as exactly as we received them from them and may succeed in setting before you the men themselves incorporated, as it were, in their own Institutes, and what is more to the point, speaking in the Latin tongue.

Of this however we wish above all to advertise the reader of these Conferences as well as of our earlier works, that if there chances to be anything herein which by reason of his condition and the character of his profession, or owing to custom and the common mode of life seems to him either impossible or very difficult, he should measure it not by the limits of his own powers but by the worth and perfection of the speakers, whose zeal and purpose he should first consider, as they were truly dead to this worldly life, and so hampered by no feelings for their kinsmen according to the flesh, and by no ties of worldly occupations. Next let him bear in mind the character of the country in which they dwelt, how they lived in a vast desert, and were cut off from intercourse with all their fellow-men, and thus were able to have their minds enlightened, and to contemplate, and utter those things which perhaps will seem impossibilities to the uninitiated and uninstructed, because of their way of life and the commonplace character of their habits. But if any one wants to give a true opinion on this matter, and is anxious to try whether such perfection can be attained, let him first endeavour to make their purpose his own, with the same zeal and the same mode of life, and then in the end he will find that those things which used to seem beyond the powers of men, are not only possible, but really delightful.

But now let us proceed at once to their Conferences and Institutes.

Source. English translation: an older public-domain translation as collected in the Writings-Database (HistoricalChristianFaith), mostly from the Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers and similar nineteenth-century editions. SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Square brackets, Greek or Latin words and footnote-free text are as the source file prints them, and a transcription error may remain. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.