

BASIL OF CAESAREA — THE LONG RULES

Preface

Since by God's grace, we have gathered together in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ—we who have set before ourselves one and the same goal, the devout life—and since you have plainly manifested your eagerness to hear something of the matters pertaining to salvation, I, for my part, am under obligation to proclaim the justifications of God, mindful as I am night and day of the Apostle's words, 'for three years I ceased not with tears to admonish every one of you night and day.' Since, moreover, the present is the most opportune time and this place provides quiet and complete freedom from external disturbances, let us pray together that we may provide for our fellow servants their measure of wheat in due season,² and that you, on your part, may, like fertile soil, receive the word and produce in turn the fruit of justice, perfect and manifold, as it is written. I implore you, then, by the charity of our Lord Jesus Christ who gave Himself for our sins,⁴ let us at length apply our minds to the affairs of our souls and grieve for the vanity of our past life. Let us, on behalf of the rewards which are to come, take up the combat for the glory of God and of His Christ and of the adorable Holy Spirit. Let us not remain in our present state of negligence and passivity and, by ever postponing to the morrow and the future the beginning of the work, fritter away the time at hand by our continued sloth. Then, being taken unprepared, with our hands empty of good works, by Him who demands our souls from us, we shall not be admitted to the joy of the nuptial chamber and we shall then bewail and lament the time of our life wasted in evil doing, when penance is no longer possible. 'Now is the acceptable time,' says the Apostle, 'now is the day of salvation.' This is the time for repentance; the next life, for recompense. Now is the time to endure; then will be the day of consolation. Now, God is the Helper of such as turn aside from the evil way; then, He will be the dread and unerring Inquisitor of the thoughts and words and deeds of men. Now, we enjoy His longanimity; then, we shall know His just judgment, when we have risen, some unto never-ending punishment, others unto life everlasting, and everyone shall receive according to his works.⁶ How long shall we defer our obedience to Christ, who has called us to His heavenly Kingdom? Shall we not rouse ourselves unto sobriety? Why will we not recall ourselves from our

accustomed way of life to the strict observance of the Gospel? Why will we not place before our eyes that fearsome and manifest day of the Lord, when the kingdom of heaven will receive those who, because of their works, take their place on the right hand of the Lord, but the gehenna of fire and eternal darkness will envelop those who, because of their lack of good works, have been rejected and placed at the left hand. 'There,' He says, 'shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

We say, indeed, that we desire the kingdom of heaven, yet we are not solicitous for the means whereby it is attained. Although we suffer no hardship on behalf of the Lord's command, we, in the vanity of our minds, expect to achieve equal honor with those who have resisted sin even unto death. What man who sits at home or slumbers during the sowing ever filled the fold of his garment with sheaves at the harvest? Who has gathered grapes from a vine which he has not planted and tended? They who labor possess the fruits. Rewards and crowns belong to the victors. Who would ever crown one who did not even strip himself for the combat with his adversary? According to the Apostle, indeed, it is necessary not only to conquer but to strive lawfully; that is, not to neglect a small part even of what has been enjoined, but to carry out each detail as we have been commanded; for 'blessed is that servant whom when his lord shall come, he shall find'—not doing anything whatever, but 'so doing'⁹ and again, 'If thou didst make thy offering well but didst not rightly divide it, thou didst sin.' But, if we think that we have fulfilled some one of the commandments (I should not presume to say we actually had done so; for all the commandments form an interconnected whole, according to the valid sense of the Scripture, so that in breaking one commandment we necessarily violate the others also), we do not expect to be visited with wrath on the score of the commandments which we have transgressed, but we anticipate rewards for our alleged observance. The man who withholds one or two, perhaps, of the ten talents entrusted to him, but restores the rest, is not looked upon as generous for paying back the major part of the sum; by his withholding the lesser part he is shown to be unjust and avaricious. Withholding, do I say? When he who was entrusted with one talent subsequently gave back this same talent whole and entire as he had received it, he was condemned for not having added to what had been given him. He who has honored his father for ten years, and later on strikes him once only, is not esteemed as dutiful but is condemned as a parricide. 'Going,'

says the Lord, 'teach ye all nations, teaching them' not to observe some things and neglect others, but 'to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.'¹² And the Apostle writes in a similar vein: 'Giving no offence to any man, that our ministry be not blamed; but in all things let us exhibit ourselves as ministers of God.' Unless all were necessary to attain the goal of salvation, all the commandments would not have been written down, nor would it have been declared that all must be kept. What do all other righteous actions avail me if I am to be liable to hell-fire because I called my brother 'fool'?¹⁴ What profit is there in being free from many masters if I am held in bondage by one? 'Whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin,' says the Scripture. And what gain is there in not being afflicted with many maladies, if my body is being wasted by one?

Well, then, someone will say, will the large number of Christians who do not keep all the commandments practice the observance of some of them in vain? In this connection, it is well to recall blessed Peter, who, after he had performed so many good actions and had been the recipient of such great blessings, was told, upon his being guilty of one lapse only: 'If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part with me.' I shall not point out that his act bore no signs of indifference or contempt but was a demonstration of honor and reverence. But, someone might say, it is written: 'Everyone that shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,' and, therefore, the very invocation of the Name of the Lord is sufficient to save him who invokes it. But let the objector hear also the words of the Apostle: 'How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?'¹⁸ And, if you believe, hearken to the Lord saying: 'Not everyone that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven.' Certainly, whenever anyone does the will of the Lord, but not as God wills nor with dispositions of love for God, his zeal is to no purpose, according to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who says: 'They act to be seen by men. Amen I say to you, they have received their reward.'²⁰ Wherefore, Paul the Apostle was taught to say: 'And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor and if I should deliver my body to be burned and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.' To sum up, I note the following three kinds of disposition which necessarily compel our obedience: we avoid evil through fear of punishment and take the attitude of a slave; or, seeking to obtain the reward, we observe the

commandments for our own advantage and in this we are like hirelings; or else, for the sake of the virtuous act itself and out of love for Him who gave us the law, we rejoice to be deemed worthy to serve a God so good and so glorious and we are thus in the dispositions of sons. Nor will he who observes the commandments in fear and who is ever wary of incurring the penalty for sloth, keep some of the commandments laid upon him and neglect others, but he will regard the punishment of every act of disobedience as equally to be dreaded. For this reason he who is in all things fearful out of pious timidity is called blessed, and he stands firm in the truth who is able to say: 'I set the Lord always in my sight; for he is at my right hand that I be not moved'²³—meaning that he would overlook none of the things that he is obliged to do. Again: 'Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord.' Why? Because 'he shall delight exceedingly in his commandments.' It is not likely, then, that they who fear will overlook any command or execute it carelessly. Yet, neither does the hireling will to disobey orders; how would he receive the pay for his tending of the vine if he did not do all that had been agreed? If by failing to provide one necessary attention he renders the vine profitless to the owner, who would pay a reward, so long as the damage remains, to him who wrought the mischief? The third form of service is that prompted by love. Now, what son, having in view his father's good pleasure and giving joy to his heart in the more important matters, will wish to cause him pain as regards even the most insignificant ones? And this filial devotion he will render even more earnestly when he recalls the words of the Apostle: 'And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby you are sealed.'²⁵

How, therefore, would they who break the greater number of the commandments be classified—they who do not serve God as their Father nor believe that He has promised great rewards, nor submit to Him as Lord? 'If, then, I be a father,' says the Prophet, 'where is my honor? And if I be a master, where is my fear?'—for he that feareth the Lord 'shall delight exceedingly in his commandments.'²⁷ 'By transgression of the law,' says the Apostle, 'thou dishonourest God.' How, then, if we prefer a life of pleasure to the life of obedience to the commandments, can we expect for ourselves a life of blessedness, fellowship with the saints, and the delights of the angelic company in the presence of Christ? Such expectations are truly the fantasies of a foolish mind. How shall I

be worthy of the company of Job—I who do not accept even an ordinary mishap with thanksgiving? How shall I who am lacking in magnanimity toward my enemy stand in the presence of David? Or of Daniel, if I do not seek for God in continual continency and earnest supplication? Or of any of the saints, if I have not walked in their footsteps? What judge of a contest is so uninformed as to think that the victor and he who has not taken part in the contest should receive crowns of equal merit? What general ever summoned to an equal share in the spoils with the conquerors those who were not even present at the battle?

God is good, but He is also just, and it is the nature of the just to reward in proportion to merit, as it is written: ‘Do good, O Lord, to those that are good and to the upright of heart. But such as turn aside into bonds, the Lord shall lead out with the workers of iniquity.’ He is merciful, but He is also a judge, for ‘the Lord loveth mercy and judgment,’ says the psalmist.³⁰ And he therefore also says: ‘Mercy and judgment I will sing to thee, O Lord.’ We have been taught who they are upon whom He has mercy: ‘Blessed are the merciful,’ says the Lord, ‘for they shall obtain mercy.’³² You see with what discernment He bestows mercy, neither being merciful without judgment nor judging without mercy; for, the Lord is merciful and just.’ Let us not, therefore, know God by halves nor make His loving kindness an excuse for our indolence; for this, His thunders, for this, His lightnings—that His goodness may not be held in despite. He who causes the sun to rise³⁴ also strikes men with blindness. He who sends the rain³⁶ also causes the rain of fire. By the one He manifests His goodness; by the other, His severity. For the one let us love Him, for the other let us fear, that it may not be said also to us: ‘Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and patience and longsuffering? Knowest thou not that the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance? But according to thy hardness and impenitent heart, thou treasurest up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath.’³⁸

Since, then, they cannot be saved who do not their works according to the command of God and since no precept may safely be overlooked (for it is great presumption to set ourselves up as critics of the Lawgiver by approving some of His laws and rejecting others), let us who are striving to live the devout life, who value the life of retirement and freedom from worldly distractions as an aid to the

observance of evangelical doctrine, let us make it our common concern and resolve not to allow any precept whatsoever to elude our vigilance. If the man of God must be perfect (as it is written and as our words have already shown), it is all-important that he be made perfect through the observance of every commandment 'unto the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ⁴⁰; for, according to divine law, an offering which is mutilated, even if it be pure, is unacceptable as a sacrifice to God. Whatever each one regards as wanting in himself, therefore, he should refer to the common consideration. That which is obscure can be more easily discerned by the earnest scrutiny of several persons, since, to be sure, God grants issue to the quest under the guidance and counsel of the Holy Spirit, according to the promise of our Lord Jesus Christ. Consequently, as 'a necessity lieth upon me; for woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel,'⁴² so upon you also rests a similar danger if you are remiss in discovering or languid and half-hearted in observing and fulfilling the precepts which have been handed down to us. The Lord says, therefore: 'The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.' Again: 'And the servant who knew not the will of his lord and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes; but he who knew and did not do nor prepared himself, according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.'⁴⁴

Let us pray, therefore, that I may exercise the ministry of the Word blamelessly, and that my teaching may be fruitful in you. Knowing as we do that at the tribunal of Christ the words of the Holy Scripture will confront us (for He says: 'I will reprove thee and set thy sins before thy face'), let us in all soberity attend to the words of the divine teaching and hasten to put them into practice, for we know not the day nor the hour when our Lord will come.⁴⁶

Q. 1. On order and sequence in the Lord's commandments

Since the Scripture has given us leave to propound questions, we require, first of all, to be informed as to whether the commandments of God have a certain order or sequence, as it were, so that one comes first, another, second, and so on; or whether all are interdependent and equal so far as precedence is concerned, so that one may begin at will wherever he likes, as with a circle.

R. Your question is an old one, proposed long ago in the Gospel when the lawyer came to the Lord and said: ‘Master, which is the first commandment in the law?’ And the Lord answered: ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with thy whole strength and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.’ The Lord Himself, then, has established order in His commandments by designating the commandment of the love of God as the first and greatest commandment, and, as second in order and like to the first, but more as a fulfillment of it and as dependent upon it, the love of neighbor. With the aid of these and similar utterances which are handed down to us in the Holy Scripture, we can discover order and sequence in the whole series of the commandments.

Q. 2. Concerning the love of God, and showing that the inclination and the ability to keep the Lord’s commandments belong to man by nature

Speak to us first, therefore, of the love of God; for we have heard that we must love Him, but we would learn how this may be rightly accomplished.

R. The love of God is not something that is taught, for we do not learn from another to rejoice in the light or to desire life, nor has anyone taught us to love our parents or nurses. In the same way and even to a far greater degree is it true that instruction in divine law is not from without, but, simultaneously with the formation of the creature—man, I mean—a kind of rational force was implanted in us like a seed, which, by an inherent tendency, impels us toward love. This germ is then received into account in the school of God’s commandments, where it is wont to be carefully cultivated and skillfully nurtured and thus, by the grace of God, brought to its full perfection. Wherefore, we, also, approving your zeal as essential for reaching the goal, shall endeavor with the help of God and the support of your prayers, and as power is given us by the Spirit, to enkindle the spark of divine love latent within you. Now, it is necessary to know that, although this is only one virtue, yet, by its efficacy, it comprises and fulfills every commandment. ‘If anyone love me,’ says the Lord, ‘he will keep my commandments.’ And again: ‘On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets.’² Yet, we shall not undertake at this time to carry our

discourse to its complete development (for in so doing, we should, inadvertently, make our discussion of one portion of the commandments embrace a full treatment of them), but, insofar as it is fitting and germane to the present purpose, we shall exhort you regarding the love we owe to God. First, however, we shall establish the fact that we have already received from God the power to fulfill all the commandments given us by Him, so that we may not take our obligation in bad part, as though something quite strange and unexpected were being asked of us, and that we may not become filled with conceit, as if we were paying back something more than had been given us. By means of this power, rightly and properly used, we pass our entire lives holily and virtuously, but through a perverted use of it we gradually fall prey to vice. Now, this is the definition of vice: the wrong use, in violation of the Lord's command, of what has been given us by God for a good purpose. Similarly, the definition of the virtue which God requires of us is: the use with a good conscience of these same gifts in accordance with the Lord's command. This being the case, we shall apply the same principle also to charity. Having received, therefore, a command to love God, we have possessed the innate power of loving from the first moment of our creation. Of this, no external proof is required, since anyone can discover it of himself and within himself. We are by nature desirous of the beautiful, even though individual conceptions of the beautiful differ widely. Furthermore, we possess—without being taught—a love for those who are near and dear to us, and we spontaneously render to our benefactors a full measure of good will. Now, what is more admirable than Divine Beauty? What reflection is sweeter than the thought of the magnificence of God? What desire of the soul is so poignant and so intolerably keen as that desire implanted by God in a soul purified from all vice and affirming with sincerity, 'I languish with love.' Totally ineffable and indescribable are the lightning flashes of Divine Beauty. Words do not adequately convey nor is the ear capable of receiving [knowledge of them]. The rays of the morning star, or the brightness of the moon, or the light of the sun—all are more unworthy to be mentioned in comparison with that splendor and these heavenly bodies are more inferior to the true light than is the deep darkness of night, gloomy and moonless, to brightest noonday. This Beauty, invisible to the eyes of the flesh, is apprehended by the mind and soul alone. Whenever it cast its light upon any of the saints, it left them with an intolerable pain of longing, and they would say, weary of life on earth: 'Woe is me

that my sojourning is prolonged,' 'when shall I come and appear before the face of God?';⁵ and again: 'to be dissolved and to be with Christ, a thing by far the better'; also: 'my soul hath thirsted after the strong living God'⁷ and 'Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord.' Since they felt the burden of this present life as an imprisonment, they were scarcely able to contain themselves under the impulses which the touch of Divine Love had made to stir within their souls. Indeed, by reason of their insatiable eagerness to enjoy the vision of Divine Beauty, they prayed that contemplation of the joy of the Lord would last as long as the whole of eternal life. Men are by nature, then, desirous of the beautiful. But, that which is truly beautiful and desirable is the good. Now, the good is God, and, since all creatures desire good, therefore, all creatures desire God.

So then, whatever is rightly done of free choice is also in us naturally, at least, in the case of those who have not perverted their rational faculty by iniquity. The love of God is, therefore, demanded of us as a strict obligation, and for a soul to fail in this is the most unendurable of all evils. Separation and estrangement from God are more unbearable than the punishment reserved for hell and more oppressive to the sufferer than the being deprived of light is to the eye, even if there be no pain in addition, or than the loss of its life is to an animal. If, moreover, the love of children for their parents is a natural endowment and if this love is noticeable in the behavior even of brute beasts, as well as in the affection of human beings in early infancy for their mothers, let us not appear to be less rational than infants or more savage than wild beasts by alienating ourselves from Him who made us and by being unloving toward Him. Even if we did not know what He is from His goodness, yet, from the very fact that we are made by Him, we ought to feel an extraordinary affection for Him and cling to a constant remembrance of Him, as infants do to their mothers. Furthermore, he who is our benefactor is foremost among those whom we naturally love. This gratitude is characteristic not of men only, but it is also felt by almost all animals, so that they attach themselves to those who have conferred some good upon them. 'The ox knoweth his owner,' says the Prophet, 'and the ass his master's crib.' God forbid that what follows these words should be said of us: 'but Israel hath not known me and my people hath not understood.'¹⁰ As for the dog and many other animals, I need not speak of the great affection they show toward those who rear them. Now,

if we bear a natural love and good will toward our benefactors and undergo any kind of hardship to make a return for what was first rendered to us, what words can fitly treat of the gifts of God? So many are they in number as even to defy enumeration; so great and marvelous are they that a single one of them claims for the Giver all our gratitude. Some, therefore, I shall pass over, although these in themselves show forth transcendent greatness and glory, yet, being surpassed by greater ones as are the stars by the rays of the sun, they appear to be of a less striking worth. I have not the leisure, in fact, to leave the surpassing benefits and measure from His lesser gifts the goodness of our Benefactor.

Let us, then, say nothing about the rising of the sun, the phases of the moon, climates, the alternation of the seasons, the water dropping from the clouds, other moisture rising from the earth, the sea itself, the whole earth and its produce, the creatures that live in the waters, those which inhabit the air, the countless varieties of animals—all beings destined to minister to our well-being. But what we may not pass over, even if we wished, that which it is quite impossible for one of sound mind and reason to be silent about—yet to speak of it adequately is more impossible—is the fact that God made man according to His image and likeness, that He deemed him worthy of the knowledge of Himself, that in preference to all the animals He adorned him with rationality, bestowed upon him the opportunity of taking his delight in the unbelievable beauties of paradise, and made him the chief of all the creatures on earth. Then, even after he was seduced by the serpent and fell into sin, and by sin into death and its attendant evils, God did not forsake him. First, He gave to him the Law as an aid, appointed angels to watch over and care for him, sent prophets to refute evil and teach virtue, checked his impulses toward vice by threats, aroused his eagerness for the good by promises, revealed again and again the fate of each of the two classes [the good and the wicked], by making a prejudgment in the case of divers persons so as to warn the rest. In addition to all these and other favors equally great, He did not turn away from man when he persisted in disobedience. We have not been deserted by the Lord's goodness, nor have we impeded His love for us by our stupidity in treating our Benefactor contumeliously through not comprehending the greatness of the favors bestowed—nay, we have even been recalled from death and restored to life again by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Even the manner in which this favor was

granted calls for the greatest wonder: 'Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant.'

He has, moreover, taken upon Himself our infirmities and carried our sorrows. He was crucified for us that we might be healed by His bruises.¹³ He also redeemed us from the curse, 'being made a curse for us, and endured the most ignominious death that He might restore us to the life of glory. Nor was He content with merely bringing back to life those who were dead, but He conferred upon them the dignity of divinity and prepared everlasting rest transcending every human concept in the magnitude of its joy. What, therefore, shall we render to the Lord for all the blessings He has bestowed upon us?¹⁶ He is so good, indeed, that He does not exact a recompense, but is content merely to be loved in return for His gifts. Whenever I call all these things to mind (if I may speak of my own feelings), I am struck by a kind of shuddering fear and a cold terror, lest, through distraction of mind or preoccupation with vanities, I fall away from God's love and become a reproach to Christ. For, he who now deceives us and endeavors by every artifice to induce us to forget our Benefactor through the attraction of worldly allurements, leaping at us and trampling us down unto our soul's destruction, will then, in the presence of the Lord, reproach us with our insolence and will gloat over our disobedience and apostasy. He who neither created us nor died for us will count us, nevertheless, among his followers in disobedience and neglect of the commandments of God. This reproach to the Lord and this triumph of our Enemy appear to me more dreadful than the punishments of hell, because we provide the Enemy of Christ with matter for boasting and with cause for exulting over Him who died for us and rose again. Wherefore, we are in a very special sense His debtors, as it is written. So much, then regarding the love of God. It is not my aim, as I said before, to exhaust the subject, for that is impossible, but to implant in your souls a brief and summary reminder which will keep the divine longing ever astir within them.

Q. 3. Of charity toward one's neighbor

It would be logical to take up next the commandment which is second both in order and emphasis.

R. We have already said above that the law [of God] develops and maintains the powers existing in germ within us. And since we are directed to love our neighbor as ourselves, let us consider whether we have received from the Lord the power to fulfill this commandment also. Who does not know that man is a civilized and gregarious animal, neither savage nor a lover of solitude! Nothing, indeed, is so compatible with our nature as living in society and in dependence upon one another and as loving our own kind. Now, the Lord Himself gave to us the seeds of these qualities in anticipation of His requiring in due time their fruits, for He says: 'A new commandment I give unto you: that you love one another.' Moreover, wishing to animate our soul to the observance of this commandment, He did not require signs or wonders as the means of recognizing His disciples (although He gave the power of working these also in the Holy Spirit), but He says: 'By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another.'² Further, He establishes so close a connection between the two great commandments that benefit conferred upon the neighbor is transferred to Himself: 'For I was hungry,' He says, 'and you gave me to eat,' and so on, adding: 'as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me.'⁴

It is, accordingly, possible to keep the second commandment by observing the first, and by means of the second we are led back to the first. He who loves the Lord loves his neighbor in consequence. 'If anyone love me,' said the Lord, 'he will keep my commandments'; and again, He says: 'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.'⁶ On the other hand, he who loves his neighbor fulfills the love he owes to God, for He accepts this favor as shown to Himself. Wherefore, Moses, that faithful servant of God, manifested such great love for his brethren as to wish his name to be struck off the book of God in which it was inscribed, if the sin of his people were not pardoned. Paul, also, desiring to be, like Christ, an exchange for the salvation of all, dared to pray that he might be an anathema from Christ for the sake of his brethren who were his kinsmen according to the flesh.⁸ Yet, at the same time, he knew that it was impossible for him to be estranged from God through his having rejected His favor for love of Him and for the sake of that great commandment; moreover, he knew that he would receive in return much more than he gave. For the rest, what has been said

thus far offers sufficient proof that the saints did attain to this measure of love for their neighbor.

Q. 4. Of the fear of God

R. For those newly entered upon the way of piety, the basic discipline acquired through fear is more profitable, according to the counsel of Solomon, wisest of men: 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.' But, for you who have, as it were, passed through your infancy in Christ and no longer require milk but are able to be perfected according to the inner man by the solid nourishment of doctrine,² loftier precepts are needed whereby the whole truth of the love which is in Christ is brought to fulfillment. But, manifestly, you must be on your guard lest the superabundance of the gifts of God make you liable to a harsher judgment if you are ungrateful to the Giver; for He says: 'to whom they have committed much, of him they will demand the more.'

Q. 5. On avoiding distraction

R. This, at all events, must be recognized—that we can observe neither the commandment of the love of God itself nor that referring to our neighbor, nor any other commandment, if our minds keep wandering hither and yon. It is not possible to master an art or science if one is always starting on fresh subjects, nor even to excel in any single one without recognizing what pertains to the end in view; for one's action must be consistent with the aim, inasmuch as rational ends are not reached by irrelevant means. It is against the nature of things for one to become a master in metal working by practicing the potter's art, and athletic crowns are not won by enthusiasm for playing the flute. As each kind of mastery demands its own specific and appropriate training, so the discipline for pleasing God in accordance with the Gospel of Christ is practiced by detaching oneself from the cares of the world and by complete withdrawal from its distractions. Therefore does the Apostle, although allowing marriage and deeming it worthy of blessing, oppose to it his own preoccupation with the concerns of God, as if these two interests could not be compatible, saying, 'He that is without a wife is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God. But he that is with a wife is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife.' In the

same manner, the Lord also bore witness to the guileless and single-hearted attitude of His disciples, when He said, 'You are not of this world.'² On the other hand, He declared that it is impossible for the world to have knowledge of God or even to receive the Holy Spirit, saying, 'Just Father, the world hath not known thee' and 'the spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive.'⁴

Whoever, therefore, would be truly a follower of God must sever the bonds of attachment to this life, and this is done through complete separation from and forgetfulness of old habits. Unless we wrest ourselves from both fleshly ties and worldly society, being transported, as it were, to another world in our manner of living, as the Apostle said: 'But our conversation is in heaven,' it is impossible for us to achieve our goal of pleasing God, inasmuch as the Lord said specifically: 'So likewise every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth cannot be my disciple.' And having done this, we should watch over our heart with all vigilance⁷ not only to avoid ever losing the thought of God or sully the memory of His wonders by vain imaginations, but also in order to carry about the holy thought of God stamped upon our souls as an ineffaceable seal by continuous and pure recollection. In this way, we shall excel in the love of God which at the same time animates us to the observance of the Lord's commands, and by this, in turn, love itself will be lastingly and indestructibly preserved. The Lord proves this by saying on one occasion: 'If you love me, keep my commandments,' and again: 'If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love,'⁹ and with still greater importunity: 'as I have kept my Father's commandments and do abide in his love.'

By these words He teaches us always to place before ourselves as our goal, in undertaking a task, the will of Him who has enjoined the work, and to direct our effort toward Him, as He says in another place: 'I came down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him that sent me, the Father.' As the secular arts are directed toward certain specific aims and adapt their particular activities to these aims, so also, inasmuch as our actions have as their rule and guide the keeping of the commandments in a manner pleasing to God, it is impossible to do this with exactitude unless it be done as He wills who gave [the commandments]. And by our painstaking zeal to do the will of God in our work, we shall be united to God through our memory. As the smith, when he is forging an axe, for example, thinks

of the person who commissioned the task, and with him in mind calculates its shape and size, suiting his work to the wish of him who ordered it done (for if he is unmindful of this, he will fashion something quite different from what he was ordered to make), so the Christian directs every action, small and great, according to the will of God, performing the action at the same time with care and exactitude, and keeping his thoughts fixed upon the One who gave him the work to do. In this way, he fulfills the saying, 'I set the Lord always in my sight; for he is at my right hand, that I be not moved,' and he also observes the precept, 'Whether you eat or drink or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God.' But he who departs from the strict observance of the commandment in performing his actions clearly shows that he has given small thought to God. Mindful, therefore, of the voice of Him who said: 'Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?'¹⁴ and again: 'Am I a God at hand and not a God afar off?'; also: 'Where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them,'¹⁶ we should perform every action as if under the eyes of the Lord and think every thought as if observed by Him. Thus, fear will abide constantly within us who hate iniquity, as it is written, contumely, pride, and the ways of the wicked, and charity will be made perfect,¹⁸ fulfilling the words of the Lord: 'I seek not my own will but the will of him that sent me, the Father.' Our soul, also, will continue in the abiding conviction that good actions are acceptable to the Judge and Arbiter of our life and that the opposite conduct receives condemnation from Him. I think, moreover, it must be added that the Lord's commandments themselves cannot be performed with the intent of pleasing men. No one has recourse to an inferior, if he knows his superior is present. On the contrary, if it happen that an action is acceptable and pleasing to some illustrious personage while to one of lower degree it appears ill-advised and blameworthy, far more value is placed upon the approval of the superior and the inferior's disapproval is unheeded. But, if this is so among men, the soul that is truly prudent and sound and that possesses a firm conviction of the presence of God would surely not ever neglect to do what is pleasing to God and concern itself with the glory received from men, nor be careless of God's behests in subservience to human customs,²⁰ nor be ruled by common prejudice and influenced by honors and dignities. Such were the dispositions of him who said: 'The wicked have told me fables but not as thy law, O Lord,' and again: 'And I spoke of thy testimonies before kings, and I was not ashamed.'²²

Q. 6. Concerning the necessity of living in retirement

R. A secluded and remote habitation also contributes to the removal of distraction from the soul. Living among those who are unscrupulous and disdainful in their attitude toward an exact observance of the commandments is dangerous, as is shown by the following words of Solomon: 'Be not a friend to an angry man and do not walk with a furious man; lest perhaps thou learn his ways and take snares to thy soul.' The words of the Apostle, 'Go out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord,'² bear also upon this point. Consequently, that we may not receive incitements to sin through our eyes and ears and become imperceptibly habituated to it, and that the impress and form, so to speak, of what is seen and heard may not remain in the soul unto its ruin, and that we may be able to be constant in prayer, we should before all things else seek to dwell in a retired place. In so doing, we should be able to overcome our former habits whereby we lived as strangers to the precepts of Christ (and it is no mean struggle to gain the mastery over one's wonted manner of acting, for custom maintained throughout a long period takes on the force of nature), and we could wipe away the stains of sin by assiduous prayer and persevering meditation on the will of God. It is impossible to gain proficiency in this meditation and prayer, however, while a multitude of distractions is dragging the soul about and introducing into it anxieties about the affairs of this life. Could anyone, immersed in these cares, ever fulfill that command: 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself'? For, we must deny ourselves and take up the Cross of Christ and thus follow Him. Now, self-denial involves the entire forgetfulness of the past and surrender of one's will—surrender which it is very difficult, not to say quite impossible, to achieve while living in the promiscuity customary in the world. And in addition, the social intercourse demanded by such a life is even an obstacle to taking up one's cross and following Christ. Readiness to die for Christ, the mortification of one's members on this earth, preparedness for every danger which might befall us on behalf of Christ's Name, detachment from this life—this it is to take up one's cross; and we regard the obstacles springing from the habits of life in society as major impediments thereto.

And in addition to all the other obstacles, which are many, the soul in looking at the crowd of other offenders does not, in the first place, have time to become aware of its own sins and to afflict itself by penance for its errors; on the contrary, by comparison with those who are worse, it takes on, besides, a certain deceptive appearance of righteousness. Secondly, through the disturbances and occupations which life in society naturally engenders, the soul, being drawn away from the more worthy remembrance of God, pays the penalty of finding neither joy nor gladness in God and of not relishing the delights of the Lord or tasting the sweetness of His words, so as to be able to say: 'I remembered God and was delighted,' and 'How sweet are thy words to my palate! more than honey to my mouth.'⁵ Worse still, it becomes habituated to a disregard and a complete forgetfulness of His judgments, than which no more fatal misfortune could befall it.

Q. 7. On the necessity of living in the company of those who are striving for the same objective—that of pleasing God—and the difficulty and hazards of living as a solitary

Since your words have convinced us that it is dangerous to live in company with those who hold the commandments of God in light regard, we consider it logical to inquire whether one who retires from society should live in solitude or with brethren who are of the same mind and who have set before themselves the same goal, that is, the devout life.

R. I consider that life passed in company with a number of persons in the same habitation is more advantageous in many respects. My reasons are, first, that no one of us is self-sufficient as regards corporeal necessities, but we require one another's aid in supplying our needs. The foot, to cite an analogy, possesses one kind of power and lacks another, and without the co-operation of the other members of the body it finds itself incapable of carrying on its activity independently for any length of time, nor does it have wherewithal to supply what is lacking. Similarly, in the solitary life, what is at hand becomes useless to us and what is wanting cannot be provided, since God, the Creator, decreed that we should require the help of one another, as it is written, so that we might associate with one another. Again, apart from this consideration, the doctrine of the charity of Christ does not permit the individual to be concerned solely with his own

private interests. 'Charity,' says the Apostle, 'seeketh not her own.' But a life passed in solitude is concerned only with the private service of individual needs. This is openly opposed to the law of love which the Apostle fulfilled, who sought not what was profitable to himself but to many that they might be saved.³ Furthermore, a person living in solitary retirement will not readily discern his own defects, since he has no one to admonish and correct him with mildness and compassion. In fact, admonition even from an enemy often produces in a prudent man the desire for amendment. But the cure of sin is wrought with understanding by him who loves sincerely; for Holy Scripture says: 'for he that loveth correcteth betimes.' Such a one it is very difficult to find in a solitude, if in one's prior state of life one had not been associated with such a person. The solitary, consequently, experiences the truth of the saying, 'Woe to him that is alone, for when he falleth he hath none to lift him up.'⁵ Moreover, the majority of the commandments are easily observed by several persons living together, but not so in the case of one living alone; for, while he is obeying one commandment, the practice of another is being interfered with. For example, when he is visiting the sick, he cannot show hospitality to the stranger and, in the imparting and sharing of necessities (especially when the ministrations are prolonged), he is prevented from giving zealous attention to [other] tasks. As a result, the greatest commandment and the one especially conducive to salvation is not observed, since the hungry are not fed nor the naked clothed. Who, then, would choose this ineffectual and unprofitable life in preference to that which is both fruitful and in accordance with the Lord's command?

Besides, if all we who are united in the one hope of our calling are one body with Christ as our Head, we are also members, one of another.⁷ If we are not joined together by union in the Holy Spirit in the harmony of one body, but each of us should choose to live in solitude, we would not serve the common good in the ministry according to God's good pleasure, but would be satisfying our own passion for self-gratification. How could we, divided and separated, preserve the status and the mutual service of members or our subordinate relationship to our Head which is Christ? It is impossible, indeed, to rejoice with him who receives an honor or to sympathize with him who suffers when, by reason of their being separated from one another, each person cannot, in all likelihood, be kept

informed about the affairs of his neighbor. In addition, since no one has the capacity to receive all spiritual gifts, but the grace of the Spirit is given proportionately to the faith of each,⁹ when one is living in association with others, the grace privately bestowed on each individual becomes the common possession of his fellows. 'To one, indeed, is given the word of wisdom; and to another, the word of knowledge; to another, faith, to another, prophecy, to another, the grace of healing,' and so on. He who receives any of these gifts does not possess it for his own sake but rather for the sake of others, so that, in the life passed in community, the operation of the Holy Spirit in the individual is at the same time necessarily transmitted to all. He who lives alone, consequently, and has, perhaps, one gift renders it ineffectual by leaving it in disuse, since it lies buried within him. How much danger there is in this all of you know who have read the Gospel. On the other hand, in the case of several persons living together, each enjoys his own gift and enhances it by giving others a share, besides reaping benefit from the gifts of others as if they were his own.

Community life offers more blessings than can be fully and easily enumerated. It is more advantageous than the solitary life both for preserving the goods bestowed on us by God and for warding off the external attacks of the Enemy. If any should happen to grow heavy with that sleep which is unto death and which we have been instructed by David to avert with prayer: 'Enlighten my eyes that I never sleep in death, the awakening induced by those who are already on watch is the more assured. For the sinner, moreover, the withdrawal from his sin is far easier if he fears the shame of incurring censure from many acting together—to him, indeed, might be applied the words: 'To him who is such a one, this rebuke is sufficient which is given by many'—and for the righteous man, there is a great and full satisfaction in the esteem of the group and in their approval of his conduct. If in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word shall stand,¹⁴ he who performs a good action will be far more surely corroborated by the testimony of many. Besides these disadvantages, the solitary life is fraught with other perils. The first and greatest is that of self-satisfaction. Since the solitary has no one to appraise his conduct, he will think he has achieved the perfection of the precept. Secondly, because he never tests his state of soul by exercise, he will not recognize his own deficiencies nor will he discover the advance he may have made in his manner of

acting, since he will have removed all practical occasion for the observance of the commandments.

Wherein will he show his humility, if there is no one with whom he may compare and so confirm his own greater humility? Wherein will he give evidence of his compassion, if he has cut himself off from association with other persons? And how will he exercise himself in long-suffering, if no one contradicts his wishes? If anyone says that the teaching of the Holy Scripture is sufficient for the amendment of his ways, he resembles a man who learns carpentry without ever actually doing a carpenter's work or a man who is instructed in metal-working but will not reduce theory to practice. To such a one the Apostle would say: 'Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.' Consider, further, that the Lord by reason of His excessive love for man was not content with merely teaching the word, but, so as to transmit to us clearly and exactly the example of humility in the perfection of charity, girded Himself and washed the feet of the disciples.¹⁶ Whom, therefore, will you wash? To whom will you minister? In comparison with whom will you be the lowest, if you live alone? How, moreover, in a solitude, will that good and pleasant thing be accomplished, the dwelling of brethren together in one habitation which the Holy Spirit likens to ointment emitting its fragrance from the head of the high priest?¹⁸ So it is an arena for the combat, a good path of progress, continual discipline, and a practicing of the Lord's commandments, when brethren dwell together in community. This kind of life has as its aim the glory of God according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, who said: 'So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.' It maintains also the practice characteristic of the saints, of whom it is recorded in the Acts: 'And all they that believed were together and had all things common,'²⁰ and again: 'And the multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but all things were common unto them.'

Q. 8. Of renunciation; whether we ought first of all give up everything and thus enter upon the devout life

R. Our Lord Jesus Christ, coupling elaborate exposition with much forceful demonstration, says to all: 'If any man come to me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.' Again, He says: 'So, likewise, everyone of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be my disciple.'² This precept, we think, involves a number of necessary renunciations. Above all, we renounce the Devil and carnal affections, in having given up the things of our secret shame, ties of physical relationship, human friendships, and a mode of life that is inimical to the perfection of the Gospel of salvation. And what is still more necessary: he that has stripped off the old man with his deeds, 'who is corrupted according to the desire of error,'⁴ renounces himself. Also, he repudiates all worldly affections which could hinder him from reaching the goal of piety. Such a one, moreover, regards as his true parents those who have brought him forth by the Gospel and looks upon as his brethren those who have received the same spirit of adoption, and he will deem all possessions foreign to him, as indeed they are. In short, he who is crucified to the world and to whom for the sake of Christ the whole world is crucified,⁶ can no longer have any part in worldly concerns. Our Lord Jesus Christ depicted hatred of one's life and self-denial in their most vivid form when He said: 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross'; and then He added: 'and follow me.' Again: 'If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life, also, he cannot be my disciple.'⁸ Perfect renunciation, therefore, consists in not having an affection for this life and keeping before our minds the 'answer of death, that we should not trust in ourselves.' But, a beginning is made by detaching oneself from all external goods: property, vainglory, life in society, useless desires, after the example of the Lord's holy disciples. James and John left their father Zebedee and the very boat upon which their whole livelihood depended. Matthew left his counting house and followed the Lord, not merely leaving behind the profits of his occupation, but also paying no heed to the dangers which were sure to befall both himself and his family at the hands of the magistrates because he had left the tax accounts unfinished.¹¹ To Paul, finally, the whole world was crucified, and he to the world.

Thus, a man who is strongly seized with the desire of following Christ can no longer be concerned with anything pertaining to this life, not even with the love of

his parents or other relatives if this runs counter to the precepts of the Lord (for in this case these words apply: 'If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother,' and so on); nor with human respect, so that he omits because of it any profitable act. This fault the saints repudiated when they said: 'We ought to obey God rather than men.'¹⁴ He can no longer pay heed to the profane who jeer at his good works so as to be intimidated by their scorn. But, if a man would know more precisely and clearly the resoluteness united with desire which is characteristic of those who follow the Lord, let him recall the Apostle, who for our instruction related the circumstances of his own case, saying: 'If any thinketh he may have confidence in the flesh, I more, being circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, according to the law, a Pharisee, according to zeal, persecuting the Church of God; according to the justice that is in the law, conversing without blame. But the things that were gain to me, the same I have counted loss for Christ. Furthermore, I count all things to be but loss for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ, my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as dung that I may gain Christ.' If—to say a daring thing, but the truth nevertheless—the Apostle likened to the excrement of the body, which we abominate and dispose of as quickly as possible, the very benefits of the law temporarily given by God, inasmuch as they are obstacles to the knowledge of Christ and that justice which is in Him and our conformation to His death, what could one say regarding the legislation of men? Why, furthermore, need we confirm our assertions by reasoning and by the examples of the saints, when we may quote as evidence the very words of the Lord and thereby put to shame the timorous soul? His testimony is clear and undeniable in the words: 'So likewise every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be my disciple.'¹⁶ And elsewhere, after the words, 'If thou wilt be perfect,' He says first: 'go sell what thou hast and give to the poor,' and then adds: 'come, follow me.' Again, to any thoughtful person, the parable of the merchant points clearly to the same idea. 'The kingdom of heaven,' says Jesus Christ, 'is like to a merchant seeking good pearls. Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went his way and sold all that he had and bought it.'¹⁸ It is evident that the precious pearl is meant to be an image of the heavenly kingdom, which the word of the Lord shows we cannot attain unless we give up in exchange

for it all our possessions alike—wealth, fame, lineage, and anything else that is an object of desire for many.

Then, too, the Lord declared that it is impossible to achieve the wished-for end if the mind is distracted by a variety of cares, when He said: No man can serve two masters'; and again: 'You cannot serve God and mammon.'²⁰ Therefore, we should choose to have treasure in heaven alone, so that we may keep our heart there. 'For,' says Jesus Christ, 'where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also.' If, then, we keep in reserve any earthly possessions or perishable wealth, the mind sinks down as into mire and the soul inevitably becomes blind to God and insensible to the desire for the beauties of heaven and the good things laid up for us by promise. These we cannot gain possession of unless a strong and single-minded desire leads us to ask for them and lightens the labor of their attainment. This, then, is renunciation, as our discourse defines it: the severance of the bonds of this material and transient life and freedom from human concerns, whereby we render ourselves more fit to set out upon the road leading to God. It is the unhindered impulse toward the possession and enjoyment of inestimable goods, 'more to be desired than gold and many precious stones.'²² In short, it is the transference of the human heart to a heavenly mode of life, so that we can say: 'But our conversation is in heaven.' Also—and this is the chief point—it is the first step toward the likeness to Christ, who, being rich, became poor for our sake.²⁴ Unless we attain to this likeness, it is impossible for us to achieve a way of life in accord with the Gospel of Christ. How, indeed, can we gain either contrition of heart or humility of mind or deliverance from anger, pain, anxieties—in a word, from all destructive movements of the soul—if we are entangled in the riches and cares of a worldly life and cling to others by affection and association? To put it briefly, by what process of logic is one who is not permitted to concern himself with necessary matters, such as food and clothing, allowed to be held in constraint by the evil cares of wealth, as if by thorns which prevent the seed planted by the Husbandman of our souls from bearing fruit; for our Lord says: 'that which was sown upon thorns are they who are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life and yield no fruit.'

Q. 9. Whether he who is admitted to the company of those consecrated to the Lord ought, with indifference, to entrust his property to incompetent or unjust relatives

R. The Lord said: 'go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come follow me'; and again: 'Sell what you possess and give alms.'² I think, however, that one who takes leave of his kinsmen for such a purpose need not adopt a careless attitude toward his property, but, aware that it is very dangerous to leave the management of it to relatives or to someone selected at random, he should try to keep a precise accounting of everything as being henceforward consecrated to the Lord and with all piety distribute it either personally, if this is possible and he has the necessary experience, or through the agency of persons chosen after searching inquiry and who have proved their ability to handle the business with fidelity and intelligence. If he who is entrusted with a king's fortune negligently makes no effort at all to increase it when possible, he is not absolved from guilt even though he does not commit repeated thefts from the treasure already amassed. What condemnation, then, ought we to expect to fall upon those who are frivolous and improvident in the management of goods that are already consecrated to the Lord? Are they not liable to the sentence of doom pronounced upon the negligent, as it is written: 'Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord negligently'?

We must everywhere be on our guard lest, under pretext of observing one commandment, we break another. To quarrel or to contend with the unjust ill befits us, for 'a servant of the Lord must not wrangle.' He who has been unfairly treated by his blood relatives ought to be mindful of the words of the Lord: 'There is no man who hath left house or brethren or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands,' and not this merely, but: 'for my sake and for the gospel, who shall not receive an hundred times as much, now in this time and in the world to come, life everlasting.'⁵ Certainly, it is our duty to bear witness against the unjust of their sin of sacrilege, according to the Lord's precept: 'If thy brother shall offend against thee, go and rebuke him.' The rules of piety, however, forbid entering into litigation with such persons before secular tribunals, as the following words show: 'If a man will contend with thee in judgment and take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him,'⁷ and: 'Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to be judged before the unjust and not before the saints?' Before the latter, then, we should hold the trial, taking greater account of our brother's salvation than of the advantage to our fortune; for the Lord also says: 'If he shall hear thee,' and He

adds: 'thou shalt gain,' not wealth, but 'thy brother.'⁹ Sometimes, also, for the sake of manifesting the truth, we agree to an inquiry when the author of the injustice himself issues the challenge to public arbitration, not initiating the matter ourselves but acceding to those who summon us to court, not seizing the opportunity to indulge our own wrathful feelings and our quarrelsomeness but manifesting the truth. In this manner we shall save our adversary also, even against his will, from evil consequences and we ourselves will not violate the commandment of God, being as His ministers, neither contentious nor avaricious, steadily intent upon the manifestation of truth and never overstepping the appointed limits of zeal.

Q. 10. Whether all applicants are to be received or only certain ones, and whether these are to be admitted at once or after probation, and what the nature of this period of trial should be

R. Since our benevolent God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, proclaims and says: 'Come to me, all you that labor and are burdened and I will refresh you,' it is hazardous to reject those who through us approach the Lord, wishing to take upon themselves His mild yoke and the burden of the counsels which lifts us up to heaven. Yet, to be sure, unwashed feet should not be permitted access to holy doctrines. Our Lord Jesus Christ questioned the youth who came to Him as to his previous life and, learning that he had practiced virtue, bade him fulfill that which was still wanting to his perfection; only then did he offer him the opportunity of following Him. Thus, it is clearly our duty to inquire into the past life of candidates, and to those who have already in the past led a good life we should impart the more advanced training in perfection; those, on the other hand, who are turning from an evil life or have set out from a state of indifference toward the strict life of the knowledge of God should be carefully examined to make sure that they are not of unstable character and easily swayed in their decisions.

The fickleness of such persons renders them suspect, for, in addition to their receiving no benefit themselves, they are a cause of injury to the rest by spreading complaints, lies, and wicked slanders of our work. Inasmuch, however, as all things are set right by persevering diligence and since fear of the Lord prevails over all sorts of defects of the soul, these persons are not to be immediately

rejected. They should be directed toward the practice of suitable disciplines, and if, their resolution having been tested by time and laborious probation, we find in them some indication of stability, they may be safely admitted. If this is not the case, they should be sent away while they are still externs, so that their period of trial may not be injurious to the community. But it is necessary to make a close examination to discover whether a man who has previously fallen into sin confesses with deep contrition his most secret sins and becomes an accuser of himself, whereby he both puts to shame the companions of his wickedness and repudiates them in imitation of Him who said: 'Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity'; and in addition he makes his future life secure from a further fall into like sins. For the rest, there is a general method of trying all candidates to see whether they are prepared to undergo without false shame all humiliations, so that they accept even the most menial work if reason sanctions the performance of these tasks as good and useful. After each candidate has been proved a useful instrument for the Lord, so to speak, and ready for every good work by exhaustive scrutiny on the part of those competent to study such matters, let him be enrolled among those who have consecrated themselves to the Lord. To one, moreover, who has enjoyed any of the higher positions in society, and who aspires to imitate the humility of our Lord Jesus Christ, should be given tasks which may appear extremely humiliating to worldlings, to see whether he will prove himself to be a worker for God, wholehearted and unashamed.

Q. 11. Concerning slaves

R. All bound slaves who flee to religious communities for refuge should be admonished and sent back to their masters in better dispositions, after the example of St. Paul who, although he had begotten Onesimus through the Gospel, sent him back to Philemon. The former he had convinced that the yoke of slavery, borne in a manner pleasing to the Lord, would render him worthy of the kingdom of heaven; the latter he not only urged to annul the threat against his servant, mindful of His words who is truly the Lord: 'If you forgive men their offenses, your heavenly Father will forgive you also your offenses,'² but also, in order that he might be more kindly disposed toward him, he writes: 'For perhaps he therefore departed for a season from thee that thou mightest receive him again forever; not

now as a servant but instead of a servant, a most dear brother.' If, however, it should be the case of a wicked master who gives unlawful commands and forces the slave to transgress the command of the true Master, our Lord Jesus Christ, then it is our duty to oppose him, that the Name of God be not blasphemed by that slave's performing an act displeasing to God. This protest is rightly made when the slave concerned is reconciled to bearing the sufferings that afflict him by reason of his obeying God rather than men, as it is written,⁴ or when they who have given him refuge accept in a manner pleasing to God the trials encountered by them on his behalf.

Q. 12. How married persons are to be received

R. Those who are married and who apply for entrance to a life such as this should be asked whether they are doing this by mutual consent, according to the precept of the Apostle ('for,' he says, 'he hath not power of his own body'), and if such be the case, the applicant should be received in the presence of several witnesses. Nothing should be preferred to obedience to God. If the partner should disagree and offer resistance, being less concerned for God's good pleasure, let the words of the Apostle be recalled to mind: 'But God hath called us in peace.'² And let the Lord's precept be fulfilled: 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother and wife and children,' and so on, 'he cannot be my disciple'; for nothing should take precedence over obedience to God. We know of many cases, moreover, where the determination to lead a life of chastity prevailed with the aid of earnest prayer and unremitting penance; the Lord inducing those who had been quite obstinate, even, in many instances, by visiting them with bodily illness to give their consent to the right decision.

Q. 13. That silence is a useful discipline for novices

R. Silence is indeed a good discipline for novices, because, in acquiring control of the tongue, they are at the same time giving sufficient proof of continency and, also, while they are keeping silence they will be earnest and attentive in learning, from those who know how to make use of speech, in what manner one ought to ask a question or make reply in particular cases. There is, indeed, a tone of voice, a moderateness in length, a propriety of time, and a specific appropriateness in the

use of words which are especially characteristic of those leading the devout life, and these qualities cannot be taught to one who has not acquired them by constant practice. By reason of its restful quiet, silence induces forgetfulness of the past and provides leisure for learning what is good. Consequently, silence should be kept, except, of course, for the chanting of the psalms, unless some private need pertaining to the care of one's soul or an emergency in the task at hand should arise or some similar question require an answer.

Q. 14. Of those who consecrate themselves to God and then try to repudiate their promise

R. Surely, everyone who has been admitted to the community and then has retracted his promise should be looked upon as a sinner against God, in whose presence and to whom he pledged his consent to the pact. But 'if a man shall sin against God,' says the Scripture, 'who shall pray for him?'; for, if he has consecrated himself to God and has afterward turned aside to another mode of life, he is guilty of sacrilege, by having committed the theft of himself and stolen an offering made to God. The brethren are justified in never again opening their door to these persons, even if they should apply for shelter on some occasion when they are merely in transit. The apostolic rule clearly directs us to avoid every disorderly and undisciplined person and not to associate with him, in order that he may be put to shame.²

Q. 15. At what age consecration of oneself to God should be permitted and at what time the profession of virginity should be regarded as safe

R. Inasmuch as the Lord says: 'Suffer the little children to come unto me,' and the Apostle praises him who has known the Holy Scripture from infancy² and also directs that children be reared 'in the discipline and correction of the Lord,' we deem every time of life, even the very earliest, suitable for receiving applicants. Indeed, those children who are bereft of their parents we should take in on our own initiative, so that we may become fathers of the orphans in emulation of Job.⁴ Those who are under their parents' care and who are brought to us by them should be received before many witnesses so as not to give occasion [for blame] to those who are desirous of this, but that every unjust tongue uttering blasphemy against us may be stopped. They should be received according to this method, but not

immediately numbered and reckoned with the body of the community, in order that, in the event of their failing to persevere, they may not afterward heap reproaches on the devout life. They should be reared with all piety as children belonging to the entire community, but meals and quarters for both girls and boys should be separate, to avoid their being too familiar or too self-confident with their elders and, also, that through the rarity of their association with them, their reverence for their directors may be preserved. Furthermore, this separation would prevent their developing a readiness to commit faults when they see the more advanced in perfection incurring penalties for omissions in their duties (if at any time these should happen to be off their guard), and also keep them from being imperceptibly filled with conceit when they witness their elders repeatedly delinquent in that which they themselves do aright. There is no difference, indeed, between a child in years and one who is mentally a child; consequently, it is not surprising that the same faults are often discovered in both. Then, too, [by such an arrangement], the young would not, because of close association with older persons, come to act in a precocious and unbecoming manner by doing things which their elders carry off with decorum by reason of their age.

To maintain this economy, then, and to ensure decorous behavior in other respects, the children's quarters should be separate from those of the more advanced in perfection. Along with other advantages, the quarters inhabited by the monks will not be disturbed by the drilling which is necessary for the young in learning their lessons. The prayers assigned for recitation throughout the day should, however, be said in common by young and old. The young, on the one hand, are generally stimulated by the example of the more perfect, and, on the other, their elders are in no small measure assisted in their prayer by the children. But as regards sleep and rising, the hours, the quantity, and the quality of the meals, specific routines and diets appropriate for children should be arranged. Moreover, one who is advanced in years should be placed in charge of these little ones, a person of more than average experience and who has a reputation for patience. Thus, he will correct the faults of the young with fatherly kindness and give wise instruction, applying remedies proper to each fault, so that, while the penalty for the fault is being exacted, the soul may be exercised in interior tranquility. Has one of them, for example, become angry with a companion?

According to the seriousness of his offense, he should be made to care for this comrade and wait on him; for the practice of humility fells, as it were, an angry spirit, while arrogance usually breeds anger within us. Has he partaken of food out of time? Let him fast for most of the day. Has he been accused of eating immoderately or in an unseemly fashion? Let him be deprived of food at meal time and forced to watch the others who know how to eat properly, so that he may be at once punished by abstinence and taught proper decorum. Has he uttered an idle word, or insulted his neighbor, or told a lie, or said anything at all that is forbidden? Let him learn restraint in fasting and silence.

Their studies, also, should be in conformity with the aim in view. They should, therefore, employ a vocabulary derived from the Scriptures and, in place of myths, historical accounts of admirable deeds should be told to them. They should be taught maxims from Proverbs and rewards should be held out to them for memorizing names and facts. In this way, joyfully and with a relaxed mind, they will achieve their aim without pain to themselves and without giving offense. Under the proper guidance, moreover, attentiveness and habits of concentration would readily be developed in such students if they were continually questioned by their teachers as to where their thoughts were and what they were thinking about. A child of tender age, simple, candid, and unskilled in deceit, readily reveals the secrets of his soul; so as not to be continually caught in what is forbidden, he would avoid unsuitable thoughts, and, fearing the shame of a scolding, would instantly recall his mind from its follies.

While the mind is still easy to mold and as pliable as wax, taking the form of what is impressed upon it, it should be exercised from the very beginning in every good discipline. Then, when reason enters in and habits of choice develop, they will take their course from the first elements learned at the beginning and from traditional forms of piety; reason proposing that which is beneficial and habit imparting facility in right action. At this point, also, permission to make the vow of virginity should be granted, inasmuch as it is now to be relied upon, since it is the individual's own choice and the decision follows upon the maturing of reason. After this stage, too, rewards for good deeds and penalties for faults proportioned to the importance of the action are meted out by a fair arbiter. Furthermore,

ecclesiastical officials should be called in as witnesses of the decision, so that through their presence, as well, the consecration of the person as a kind of votive offering to God may be sanctified and the act ratified by their testimony; 'for,' says the Scripture, 'in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word stand.' In this way, also, the fervor of the brethren will suffer no disedification, for those who have so vowed themselves to God and afterward try to revoke such a vow will have no excuse for their shamelessness. On the other hand, one who does not wish to submit to the life of virginity, on the ground that he is incapable of devoting his whole attention to the things of the Lord, should be dismissed in the presence of the same witnesses. He who makes such a vow, however, after a great amount of careful deliberation which he should be allowed to engage in privately for several days, so that we may not appear to be kidnapping him, should be received forthwith and made a member of the community, sharing the dwelling and daily life of the more advanced in perfection. Moreover—to add a point which we had forgotten and which is not out of place here—since certain trades must be practiced even from early childhood, whenever any children appear to have an aptitude for these, we should not oppose their remaining during the day with their instructors in the art. At nightfall, however, we should invariably send them back to their companions, with whom they must also take their meals.

Q. 16. Whether continency is necessary for one who would lead the religious life

R. It is evident that the practice of continency is essential; first, from the fact that the Apostle includes continency among the fruits of the spirit and, second, from his saying that a blameless ministry is achieved through this virtue, in these words: In labors, in watchings, in fastings, in chastity';² and elsewhere: 'in labor, and painfulness, in much watchings, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often'; and again: 'And everyone that striveth for the mastery, refraineth himself from all things.'⁴ Chastisement of the body and bringing it under subjection are achieved by no other means as successfully as by the practice of continency; for the effervescent fires of youth, whose leapings can scarcely be controlled, are held in restraint by continency as with a bridle. According to Solomon, 'Delicacies are not seemly for a fool;' and what is more foolish than for the flesh to indulge itself in delights and for youth to whirl about at will! Wherefore, the Apostle says: 'and

make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences;⁶ likewise: 'she that liveth in pleasures is dead while she is living.' Moreover, the example of the delights enjoyed by the rich man show that continency is necessary for us, that we may never hear what was said to the rich man: 'thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime.'⁸

The Apostle also showed how much incontinency is to be dreaded by including it among the signs of apostasy, when he said: 'in the last days shall come dangerous times. Men shall be lovers of themselves.' Then, after enumerating several forms of iniquity, he adds: 'slanderers, incontinent.'¹⁰ Also, for selling his birthright for one portion of food, Esau was charged with incontinency as the greatest of evils. The first disobedience befell men as a consequence of incontinency. All the saints, on the contrary, were renowned for continency. The whole life of the saints and of the blessed, the example of the Lord Himself while He was with us in the flesh, are aids to us in this matter. Moses, through long perseverance in fasting and prayer,¹² received the law and heard the words of God, 'as a man is wont to speak to his friend,' says the Scripture. Elias was deemed worthy of the vision of God when he also had practiced abstinence in like degree.¹⁴ And what of Daniel? How did he attain to the contemplation of marvels? Was it not after a twenty-day fast? And how did the three children overcome the power of the fire? Was it not through continency?¹⁶ As for John, his whole plan of life was based on the practice of continency. Even the Lord Himself inaugurated His public manifestation with the practice of this virtue.¹⁸ By continency, however, we do not mean complete abstinence from food (for this is to take one's life by violence), but that abstinence from pleasures which aims at the thwarting of the will of the flesh for the purpose of attaining to the goal of piety.

In general, we who are instructed in the devout life are bound to abstain from those pleasures which they enjoy who lead a self-indulgent life. The practice of continency, therefore, does not have to do only with the delights of the table, but extends also to the avoidance of all that represents an impediment to us. One who is perfectly continent does not control his appetite only to fall prey to the desire for human fame. He does not gain mastery over shameful desires and neglect to overcome his attachment to wealth as well as all other base emotions, such as

anger, dejection, and the rest of the vices which are wont to enslave inexperienced souls. We have noticed, indeed, that all the precepts—and this is especially observable with regard to continency—are interconnected and that it is almost impossible to observe one separately from another. Thus, he is humble who is continent regarding worldly glory, and he meets the evangelical standard of poverty who is master of himself with respect to worldly goods. He abstains from anger who exercises control over wrath and indignation. Perfect continency also sets limits for the tongue, boundaries for the eyes, and enjoins upon the ears an avoidance of curiosity in the use of the hearing. Anyone who does not observe these restraints is incontinent and undisciplined. Do you see how all the other precepts cluster about this one and are intertwined with it?

Q. 17. That laughter also must be held in check

R. Those who live under discipline should avoid very carefully even such intemperate action as is commonly regarded lightly. Indulging in unrestrained and immoderate laughter is a sign of intemperance, of a want of control over one's emotions, and of failure to repress the soul's frivolity by a stern use of reason. It is not unbecoming, however, to give evidence of merriment of soul by a cheerful smile, if only to illustrate that which is written: 'A glad heart maketh a cheerful countenance'; but raucous laughter and uncontrollable shaking of the body are not indicative of a well-regulated soul, or of personal dignity, or self-mastery. This kind of laughter Ecclesiastes also reprehends as especially subversive of firmness of soul in the words: 'Laughter I counted error,'² and again: 'As the crackling of thorns burning under a pot, so is the laughter of fools.' Moreover, the Lord appears to have experienced those emotions which are of necessity associated with the body, as well as those that betoken virtue, as, for example, weariness and compassion for the afflicted; but, so far as we know from the story of the Gospel, He never laughed. On the contrary, He even pronounced those unhappy who are given to laughter. And let not the equivocal sense of the word 'laughter' deceive us, for it is a frequent practice in the Scriptures to call joy of spirit and the cheerful feeling which follows upon good actions, 'laughter.' Sara says, for instance: 'God hath made a laughter for me,' and there is another saying: 'Blessed are ye that weep now, for you shall laugh';⁶ likewise, the words of Job: 'And the true mouth he

will fill with laughter.' All these references to gaiety signify merriment of soul instead of hilarity. He, therefore, who is master of every passion and feels no excitement from pleasure, or at least, does not give it outward expression, but is steadfastly inclined to restraint as regards every harmful delight, such a one is perfectly continent—but, clearly, he is also at the same time free from all sin. Sometimes, moreover, even acts of a permissible and necessary kind are to be abstained from, when the abstinence is dictated by consideration of our brother's welfare. Thus, the Apostle says: 'If meat scandalize my brother, I will never eat flesh.' And even though he could have gained his livelihood from preaching the gospel, he did not take advantage of this privilege lest he should offer any hindrance, as it were, to the Gospel of Christ.⁹

Continency, then, destroys sin, quells the passions, and mortifies the body even as to its natural affections and desires. It marks the beginning of the spiritual life, leads us to eternal blessings, and extinguishes within itself the desire for pleasure. Pleasure, indeed, is evil's special allurements, through which we men are most likely to commit sin and by which the whole soul is dragged down to ruin as by a hook. Whoever, then, is neither overcome nor weakened by it successfully avoids all sin through the practice of continency. If, however, a man escape almost all incitements to sin, but falls prey even to one, such a man is not continent, just as he is not in health who is suffering from only one bodily affliction and as he is not free who is under the authority of anyone, it matters not whom. Further, the other virtues are practiced in secret and are rarely displayed to men. But continency makes itself known as soon as we meet a person who practices it. As plumpness and a healthy color betoken the athlete, so leanness of body and the pallor produced by the exercise of continency mark the Christian, for he is the true athlete of the commandments of Christ. In weakness of body, he overcomes his opponent and displays his prowess in the contests of piety, according to the words, 'when I am weak, then am I powerful.' So beneficial is it merely to behold the continent man making a sparing and frugal use of necessities, ministering to nature as if this were a burdensome duty and begrudging the time spent in it, and rising promptly from the table in his eagerness for work, that I think no sermon would so touch the soul of one whose appetites are undisciplined and bring about his conversion as merely his meeting with a continent man. Indeed, the reason we are enjoined to

eat and drink to the glory of God¹¹ is, probably, so that our good works may shine forth even at table to the glory of our Father who is in heaven.

Q. 18. That we should taste everything set before us

R. It should also be laid down as essential that continency is inexorably demanded of combatants for godliness, so that they may bring the body into subjection; ‘for every one that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all things.’ However, to avoid being classed with the enemies of God who are seared in their conscience and, therefore, abstain from food which God has made for the faithful to partake of with thanksgiving, we should taste each dish when occasion offers so as to indicate to those looking on that ‘all things are clean to the clean’³ and that ‘every creature of God is good and nothing to be rejected that is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.’ The aim of continency must nevertheless be kept in mind also, to the extent that we satisfy our need with the plainer foods and those necessary to sustain life, avoiding the evil of taking our fill of them and abstaining absolutely from those foods whose sole purpose is to give delight. By acting thus we shall root out the affection for foods whose end is to give pleasure and we shall also cure those who are seared in their conscience as with a hot iron—at least, insofar as this is possible for us—protecting ourselves, meanwhile, from the suspicion of guilt in either direction; for ‘why,’ says the Apostle, ‘is my liberty judged by another man’s conscience?’ Continency betokens the man who has died with Christ and who mortifies his members that are upon the earth.⁶ This virtue we know as the mother of chastity, the protector of health, the effective remover of obstacles to the fruitfulness of good works in Christ, since, according to the word of the Lord, the cares of this world, the pleasures of life, and other desires choke the word and it is thus rendered unfruitful. From this virtue even the demons fly, as the Lord Himself teaches, saying: ‘This kind is not cast out but by prayer and fasting.’⁸

Q. 19. In what measure continency must be practiced

R. With regard to the affections of the soul, continency has only one rule: complete abstinence from all that tends to harmful pleasure. With reference to food, as individual needs vary according to age, employment, and physical

condition, respectively, so, also, the manner of its use and the amount of it differ. It is not possible, therefore, to include under one rule all who are in the school of the devout life. In setting the norm for healthy ascetics, we allow for appropriate deviation on the part of superiors according to particular circumstances. Nor is it possible for one discourse to cover every individual case, but such only as are amenable to the common and general teaching. As regards nourishment to be given the sick for their relief or to one who is exceptionally weary from strenuous work or who is preparing to undertake a laborious task, such as a journey or some other work, superiors will prescribe according to the need, in conformity with the words: 'Distribution was made to each according as every one had need.' It is also impossible to lay down a rule that the time for taking food as well as the manner of taking it and its quantity be the same for all. The objective, however—satisfying need—must be common to all alike. Filling the stomach to satiety, burdening it with food, is an act deserving of malediction as the Lord says: 'Woe to you that are filled now.'² Besides, such excess renders the body unfit for work, prone to sleep, and more susceptible to harm. Nor, to be sure, ought pleasure to be made an end in taking food, but the aim should be the sustaining of life for those who have renounced intemperate delights. To become a slave to the pleasures of the table is to make the stomach one's god. Since our body, ever being emptied and drained, needs to be filled (and for this reason our appetite for nourishment is natural), right reason dictates as regards the use of food that we replenish by dry or moist nourishment, as the need may be, what has been used up in order to sustain animal life.

In consequence, then, whatever is calculated to relieve our need with the least trouble, this is to be employed. This the Lord Himself made evident on the occasion when He was host to the weary multitude lest they faint on the way, as it is written. Although He could have enhanced the miracle in the desert by using costly appurtenances, so frugal and simple was the repast He prepared for them that the bread was of barley and, besides the bread, there was [only] a little fish.⁴ He does not mention drink, since water which nature provides for all was sufficient for their need. But, according to the advice of Paul to Timothy, even this beverage should be declined if it be injurious to anyone because of physical weakness. Nothing, in fact, that is known to be harmful should be partaken of, for

it is not reasonable to take food for nourishment which from within us would make war upon the body and hinder it in the accomplishment of the precept. This same principle ought to be our guide in accustoming the mind to shun what is harmful, however alluring it may be. Furthermore, we should prefer by all means whatever is most easily procurable and not concern ourselves with costly fare and seek to obtain extravagant foods with expensive sauces on the pretext of continency. On the contrary, we should choose whatever is easy to obtain in each region, cheap, and available for general consumption, and use only those imported foods that are necessary to sustain life, like olive oil and similar products. In addition, if something would be useful for the necessary relief of the sick, this, too, is permitted, if it can be procured without difficulty, disturbance, or distraction.

Q. 20. The rule to be followed in serving meals to guests

R. Vainglory, the desire to please men, and acting for display are strictly forbidden to Christians under all circumstances, because even a man who observes the precept but does it for the purpose of being seen and glorified by men loses the reward for that observance. All manner of vainglory, consequently, is especially to be avoided by those who have embraced every kind of humiliation for the sake of the Lord's command. But, inasmuch as we see men of the world ashamed of the lowliness of poverty and at pains when they entertain guests to have every article of food both abundant and expensive, I fear that, unwittingly, we are being infected by the same vice and that we are ashamed to be found guilty of the poverty called blessed by Christ. Just as it is not proper to provide ourselves with worldly trappings like a silver vessel, or a curtain edged with purple, or a downy couch, or transparent draperies, so we act unfittingly in contriving menus which deviate in any important way from our usual diet. That we should run about searching for anything not demanded by real necessity, but calculated to provide a wretched delight and ruinous vainglory, is not only shameful and out of keeping with our avowed purpose, but it also causes harm of no mean gravity when they who spend their lives in sensual gratification and measure happiness in terms of pleasure for the appetite see us also taken up with the same preoccupations which keep them enthralled. If, indeed, sensual pleasure is evil and to be avoided, we

ought on no occasion indulge in it, for nothing that is condemned can at any time be beneficial. They who live riotously and are anointed with the best ointments and drink filtered wine come under the denunciation of the Scripture. Because she lives in pleasure, the widow is dead while she is living.³ The rich man is debarred from paradise because he lived in luxury upon earth. What, then, have we to do with costly appointments? Has a guest arrived? If he is a brother and follows a way of life aiming at the same objective as ours, he will recognize the fare we provide as properly his own. What he has left at home, he will find with us. Suppose he is weary after his journey. We then provide as much extra nourishment as is required to relieve his weariness.

Is it a secular person who has arrived? Let him learn through actual experience whatever things verbal instruction has not convinced him of, and let him be given a model and pattern of frugal sufficiency in matters of food. Let memories of Christian fare linger in his mind and of a poverty which, because of Christ, gives no cause for shame. If he will not learn this lesson, but adopts a mocking attitude, he will not discommode us a second time. Moreover, when we see the rich placing the enjoyment of sensual delights among the greatest blessings, we should grieve profoundly for them, because they are not aware that, in wasting their whole life in vanities and in making pleasure their god, they have already received their share of blessing in this life and that by living in luxury here they are preparing themselves to burn in the fire reserved for them hereafter. And if occasion ever offers, we should not hesitate to say this to their faces. But, if it should happen that we ourselves are also prone to the same vice of eagerly seeking, insofar as it lies in our power, for what pleases the palate and of making ostentation our aim, I am afraid that we are destroying what we make profession of building up and that we condemn ourselves by the same acts for which we judge others. For we are making a pretense of living in this state of life and have transformed ourselves only in certain respects, unless, to be sure, we even change our outer garb when we associate with distinguished worldlings. If this is a base manner of action, far baser is it to alter our fare to suit the fastidious. The life of the Christian does not vary, inasmuch as its end—the glory of God—is ever the same; for Paul says, speaking in Christ: ‘whether you eat or drink or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God.’ The life of persons in the world, on the contrary, is complex and

varied, adapting itself in diverse ways to gratifying the whims of every chance acquaintance.

If you also change your daily fare, then, for rare quality or abundance in food to please a brother's palate, you imply that he takes delight in sensual pleasure and you heap reproaches upon him for his gluttony by the very preparations you make, since you thus accuse him of finding pleasure in such things. In fact, have we not often guessed who or what sort of guest was expected, upon seeing the appearance and quality of the preparations? The Lord did not praise Martha for being anxious about much serving, but He said: 'Thou art careful and art troubled about many things; few things—nay, one thing only is necessary': 'few things'—that is, for the preparation of the meal, and 'one thing'—that is, the purpose, namely, to satisfy need. You are well aware, also, of what sort of food the Lord Himself placed before the five thousand. Jacob, too, prayed to God as follows: 'If thou shalt give me bread to eat and raiment to put on.'⁷ He did not say: 'If thou wilt give me delicacies and sumptuous appointments.' And what says Solomon, wisest of men? 'Give me neither beggary nor riches; give me only what is necessary and sufficient, lest being filled I should deny and say: 'Who sees me? Or being poor, I should steal and forswear the name of my God'; thus representing riches as satiety, poverty as a complete lack of the necessities of life, and sufficiency as a state both free from want and without superfluity. Sufficiency varies, however, according to physical condition and present need. One, because of his work, requires more substantial food and a larger amount. Another needs a lighter and more digestible diet and suited in other ways to his weakness, but for all alike it should be cheap and easily procured. In every case, care must be taken for a good table, yet without overstepping the limits of the actual need. This should be our aim in giving hospitality—that the individual requirements of our guests may be cared for. The Apostle says: 'as if using this world and not misusing it'; unnecessary expenditure, however, is misuse. Have we no money? So be it. Are not our granaries filled? What of it! We live from day to day. Our livelihood is the work of our hands. Why, then, do we waste food given by God for the poor to gratify the voluptuary, sinning thereby in two ways: by intensifying for the former the sufferings of their poverty and increasing the harmful results of satiety for the latter.

Q. 21. How one ought to conduct oneself with regard to sitting and reclining at the midday meal or at supper

R. Since it is a precept of the Lord, who on all occasions habituates us to humility, that we should take the lowest place in reclining at meals, he who strives to do all according to injunction must not neglect this precept. If any worldlings, therefore, should recline with us, it behooves us to be an example in this matter by not exalting ourselves above others or seeking to have the first place. But when all who thus gather together are in pursuit of the same goal, each one, so that at every opportunity they may give proof of their humility, has an obligation of being beforehand in taking the last place, according to the Lord's command. To engage in rivalry and strife in this matter is unseemly, because it destroys good order and is a cause of tumult. Moreover, if we are not willing to yield to one another and conflict arises over it, we shall be classed with those who quarrel over the first places. In this sphere, also, prudently aware of and attentive to what befits us, we therefore should leave the order of seating to the one entrusted with this duty, as the Lord declared when he said that the arrangement of these matters pertains to the master of the house.² In this way, we shall support one another in charity, doing all things decently and according to order.⁴ Also, we will not give the impression, by stubborn and vigorous opposition, that we are trying to appear humble in order to impress the company or to win popular favor, but rather we will practice humility by being obedient. To engage in altercation, indeed, is a surer sign of pride than to accept the first place when we are directed to do so.

Q. 22. On the garb befitting a Christian

R. Earlier in our discourse it was shown that humility, simplicity, thriftiness, and frugality in all things are necessary, so that we might have rare occasion for distraction on the score of our bodily needs. This end we must keep also before our minds in treating of clothing. If it behooves us to seek to be last of all, clearly the last place is also to be preferred in this connection. If men who are greedy for renown seek glory for themselves even in the garments they wear, striving to attract attention and arouse envy by reason of the splendor of their dress, it is obvious that one who out of humility has chosen to pass his life in the lowliest condition of all ought to prefer for himself even in this particular the last and the

least. Just as the Corinthians were accused of despising, because of their own expenditures for the public feasts, those who had not the means for such expenditure, so, in the case of an ordinary and plain style of dress, he who is turned out with an elaborateness above the ordinary, by contrast, as it were, puts the poor man to shame. In the light of the Apostle's words, 'not minding high things but consenting to the humble,'² let each consider for himself whom the Christian more fittingly resembles—those who live in royal palaces and are clothed in soft garments, or him, the messenger and herald of the Lord's advent, than whom no greater born of woman has arisen, John, I mean, son of Zachary, whose garment was of camel's hair.⁴ The saints of old, moreover, also went about clad in sheepskins and goatskins.

Now, the Apostle sets the standard for the proper use of clothing in one sentence when he says: 'Having food and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content,'—as if mere covering alone were necessary for us. At any rate, let us not fall any more into the forbidden boasting—not to speak of something worse—which accompanies elaborate dress or the vanity that is likewise prompted by it; for these vices creep subsequently into our lives through the pursuit of vain and worthless arts. The use made in the beginning of the clothing which God Himself gave to the needy has been revealed to us; for the Scripture says: 'God made for them garments of skins.' Such garb was sufficient to cover their nakedness. Since, however, another purpose enters in—that of keeping warm by means of clothing—it is necessary to have both uses in mind: covering for decency's sake and for protection against mischief from the air. Yet, inasmuch as even from this point of view some garments are more useful than others, we should prefer whatever can be put to greater use, so that the principle of poverty may in no way be violated. We should, furthermore, not keep in reserve some garments to wear in public and others for use at home, nor, again, some to be worn in the day time, others at night, but we should contrive to have only one garment which can serve for all occasions: for suitable wear during the day and for necessary covering at night. This manner of acting unites us even in our appearance and the Christian is thus identified by the way he dresses as with a kind of special stamp, for all who aim at the same goal are alike in as many ways as possible. This distinctiveness in dress is also useful as giving advance notice of each of us, by proclaiming our profession of

the devout life. Actions in conformity with this profession are, in consequence, expected from us by those whom we meet. The standard of indecorous and unseemly conduct is not the same for ordinary folk as for those who make profession of great aspirations. No one would take particular notice of the man in the street who would inflict blows on a passerby or publicly suffer them himself, or who would use obscene language, or loiter in the shops, or commit other unseemly actions of this kind. These things are accepted as in keeping with the general course of life in the world. On the other hand, everyone takes notice of him who is bound by promise to strive for perfection, if he neglect the least part of his duty, and they heap reproaches upon him for it, fulfilling the words: 'and turning upon you, they tear you.' A mode of dress, therefore, which denotes one's profession serves to fulfill the office of pedagogue, as it were, for the weak, to keep them from wrongdoing even against their will. As one style of dress bespeaks the soldier, another, a senator, a third, some other high position, so that the rank of these dignitaries can generally be inferred, so also it is right and proper that there be some mark of identity for the Christian which would bear out even as to his garments the good order spoken of by the Apostle. In one place, indeed, he directs that a bishop be a man of orderly behavior;⁹ in another, he prescribes that women be clad in decent apparel, the word 'decent' clearly being used in a sense that accords with the specific character of the Christian ideal. This same advice applies also to footwear. On every occasion, a style which is plain, easy to procure, and serviceable should be preferred.

Q. 23. Regarding the cincture

R. The saints long before us have demonstrated the necessity of a cincture. John bound his loins with a leather girdle as did Elias before him, for it is written (as though this article of dress were specifically proper to a man), 'a hairy man with a girdle of leather about his loins.' Peter also is clearly proved to have worn a girdle by the words of the angel who said to him: 'Gird thyself and put on thy sandals.'³ It appears from the prophecy of Agabus that the blessed Paul also used a cincture: 'the man whose girdle this is, they shall so bind in Jerusalem.' Job, too, was commanded by the Lord to gird himself. As if this were a kind of sign of virility and of readiness for action, He says to Job: 'Gird up thy loins like a man.'⁵ That

cinctures were in habitual use among the disciples of the Lord, moreover, is evident from the fact that they were forbidden to carry money in their girdles. It is particularly necessary, also, that one who is about to engage in work be well girt up and unimpeded in his movements. He needs a cincture, therefore, by which his tunic may be gathered close to his body and he will work more comfortably and be more unhampered in his movements when his garment is well wrapped about him. The Lord, also, took a towel and girded Himself when He was preparing to minister to His disciples.⁷ With regard to quantity of clothing we need say nothing, since this phase of the subject has been adequately treated above in the passage on poverty. If he who has two tunics is commanded to share with him who has none,⁹ the possession of several tunics for his own use clearly is not allowed. What relevance is there, then, in laying down precepts on the use of two tunics for those who are forbidden to possess them?

Q. 24. Now that sufficient instruction on these [other] matters has been imparted to us, it would befit us to learn how we ought to live with one another

R. When the Apostle says: 'But let all things be done decently and according to order,' I think that he refers to the decent and well-ordered way of life in the society of the faithful where the relationship which obtains among the members of the body is maintained. Thus, the one to whom general supervision is entrusted, who appraises what has already been accomplished and plans and provides for what is still to be done, exercises the function of the eye, so to speak. Another does the work of the ear or the hand in hearkening to orders and executing them, and so on for each member of the body. It is important to bear in mind, therefore, the analogy of the parts of the body, where heedlessness or failure to use the members for the end for which they were made by God, the Creator, brings each individual member into danger. If the hand and the foot, for instance, would not follow the guidance of the eye, the former would bring inevitable and fatal ruin upon the whole body and the latter would stumble or even be hurled over a cliff. If the eye would close so as not to see, it would necessarily perish along with the other members suffering the misfortune mentioned above. In the same way, it is hazardous for a superior to be delinquent, since he holds the position of arbiter in everything; for the subject it is injurious and detrimental to

be disobedient—especially perilous is it if, in addition, he give scandal to the rest. Each one who shows in his own place a tireless zeal, fulfilling the Apostle's precept, 'In carefulness not slothful,' merits praise for his alacrity; but, for negligence, he deserves the opposite, that is, unhappiness and woe; for the Prophet says, 'Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord negligently.'

Q. 25. That a superior who does not upbraid the sinner is liable to a dreadful judgment

R. He who is charged with general supervision should feel as if he is liable to an account for each individual under his care. He should bear in mind that if one of the brethren falls into sin, not having been forewarned by him of the ordinance of God, or if, having fallen, he remain in that state, uninstructed as to the manner of making amends, the blood of that one will be required at his hands, as it is written;—especially if he neglect that which is pleasing to God, not through ignorance, but for flattery's sake, accommodating himself to each one's vices and relaxing strict discipline. The Scripture says: "They that call thee blessed, the same deceive thee and destroy the way of thy steps," 'but he that troubleth you shall bear the judgment, whosoever he be.'³ In order that this may not be our lot, let us observe the apostolic rule in our conversations with the brethren; 'For neither,' says St. Paul, 'have we used at any time the speech of flattery, as you know; nor taken an occasion of covetousness, God is witness; nor sought we glory of men, neither of you nor of others.'

Whoever, then, is free from these faults may, perhaps, exercise a leadership free from error, at once profitable to himself and salutary for his subjects. He who acts with true charity and not for the sake of any human honors nor to avoid giving offense to sinners, and for that reason seeking to be agreeable and pleasant to them, will hold discourse with them sincerely and candidly, not choosing to adulterate the truth in any respect. The following words therefore, apply also to him: 'but we became little ones in the midst of you, as if a nurse should cherish her children, so desirous of you we would gladly impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own souls.' He who is not such a one is a blind guide, casting himself headlong over the precipice and drawing his followers after him.⁶ From these words it can be seen how serious an evil it is to be the cause of a brother's error instead of bearing the responsibility for guiding him aright. It is also a sign

that the commandment of love is not being observed, for no father abandons his child when he is about to fall into a pit or leaves him to his fate after he has fallen therein. Needless to say, it is far more dreadful to allow the soul to be destroyed after it has fallen into the pit of evils. The superior is obliged, therefore, to be vigilant on behalf of the souls of the brethren and as seriously concerned for the salvation of each one as if he himself were to render an account for him. He should, furthermore, be solicitous in manifesting his zeal for them even unto death, in accordance not only with the general precept of charity addressed to all by the Lord: 'that a man lay down his life for his friends'; but also, in conformity with the special application of it by him who said: 'being desirous of you, we would gladly impart unto you not only the gospel of God, but also our own souls.'⁸

Q. 26. That all matters, even the secrets of the heart, should be placed before the superior

R. Every subject, if he intends to make any progress worth mentioning and to be confirmed in a mode of life that accords with the precepts of our Lord Jesus Christ, ought not conceal within himself any movement of his soul, nor yet utter any thoughtless word, but he should reveal the secrets of his heart to those of his brethren whose office it is to exercise a compassionate and sympathetic solicitude for the weak. In this way, that which is laudable will be ratified and that which is worthy of rebuke will receive the correction it deserves, and by the practice of such co-operative discipline, we shall by a gradual advance attain to perfection.

Q. 27. That the superior himself, if he commit a fault, should be admonished by the more eminent among the brethren

R. Just as it is the superior's duty to be the leader of the brethren in everything, so, in turn, if ever he is himself suspected of being guilty of a fault, it devolves upon the rest to call it to his attention. That good order may not be disturbed, however, those who are eminent by reason of age and sagacity should be assigned the task of giving the admonition. If, then, there be something deserving of correction, we have benefited our brother and ourselves through him, inasmuch as we are restoring to the straight path him who is an embodiment, as it were, of our rule of life and who should, by his own uprightness, be a reproach to our perversity. If, on the other hand, any are baselessly disturbed on his account, they

will be disabused of the bad opinion they had entertained of him, when full information is supplied by a clarification of the matter which had caused groundless suspicions to arise.

Q. 28. What the attitude of all should be toward the disobedient

R. All should certainly be compassionate at first toward one who obeys the Lord's commands reluctantly, as toward an ailing member of their body. The superior, also, should endeavor by private exhortation to cure his weakness; but, if he persists in disobedience and is not amenable to correction, he should be severely reprimanded in the presence of the whole community and a remedy, together with every form of exhortation, should be administered. If he is neither converted after much admonition nor cures himself by his own actions with tears and lamentations, being, as the proverb has it, 'his own destroyer,' we should, as physicians do, cut him off from the body of the brethren as a corrupt and wholly useless member. Physicians, indeed, are wont to remove by cutting or burning any member of the body they find infected with an incurable disease, so that the infection may not spread further and destroy adjacent areas one after the other. This we also must do in the case of those who show hostility or create obstacles to the observance of the Lord's commands, according to the Lord's own precept: 'If thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee.' Benevolence to such persons is like that mistaken kindness of Heli which he was accused of showing his sons, contrary to the good pleasure of God.³ A feigned kindness to the wicked is a betrayal of the truth, an act of treachery to the community, and a means of habituating oneself to indifference to evil, since that saying is not fulfilled: 'Why have ye not rather mourned that he might be taken away from you that hath done this deed.' On the other hand, the saying which follows necessarily comes to pass: 'A little leaven corrupteth the whole lump.'⁵ 'Them that sin, reprove before all,' says the Apostle, and he immediately adds the reason, saying: 'that the rest also may have fear.'

In general, then, whoever refuses the remedy applied by the superior acts inconsistently even with himself; for, if he does not take kindly to being governed and his own will acts as his arbiter, why does he continue to live under a superior? Why does he take him as the director of his life? But, having allowed himself, once

and for all, to be reckoned with the body of the community, if he has been judged a suitable vessel for the ministry, when a command appears to be beyond his strength, leaving the decision regarding this to the one who imposed the command, he should show himself obedient and submissive even unto death, remembering that the Lord became 'obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross.' To rebel and to contradict, however, are indications of many evils: a weak faith, a doubtful hope, and a self-important and arrogant character. His disobedience, indeed, implies that he holds in contempt him who gave the order. On the other hand, one who trusts in the promises of God and keeps his hope fixed on these will never draw back from commands, however difficult to execute they may be, knowing that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the future glory to be revealed. Furthermore, one who is convinced that 'he that humbleth himself shall be exalted'⁹ and bears in mind that 'that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation worketh above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory,' obeys with greater alacrity than he who gives the order expects.

Q. 29. Concerning one who performs his actions in an arrogant or critical spirit

R. The work of a man who is given to murmuring or self-exaltation should certainly not be coupled with works done by the humble of heart and contrite of spirit. In general, the work of the former should have no value for the pious, 'for that which is high to men is an abomination before God.' There is also another precept of the Apostle which reads: 'Neither do you murmur, as some of them murmured and were destroyed by the destroyer';² and again: 'not with sadness or of necessity.' The work of such persons, therefore, even as a blemished sacrifice, should not be accepted, and to include it with the work of the rest is unholy. If those bringing strange fire to the altar were the objects of such mighty wrath,⁴ how is it not perilous to accept with a view to observing the command work which proceeds from a spirit that is hateful to God? 'For what participation,' says the Apostle, 'hath justice with injustice? Or what part hath the faithful with the unbeliever?' Wherefore it is said: 'Wicked is he that slayeth a calf in sacrifice to me, as if he should kill a dog; and he that offereth wheaten flour, as if it were swine's blood.'⁶ Consequently, it is essential that the works of the sluggard and of the

dissenter be rejected by the brethren. The superiors, also, should keep a close watch over this portion of the community that they may not violate the decree of Him who said, 'the man that walked in the perfect way, he served me. He that worketh pride shall not dwell in the midst of my house.' Nor, furthermore, should superiors accept the work of one who allows sin to enter into his observance of the commandment or spoils his work by a lazy shrinking from toil or by the haughtiness which proceeds from exceptional achievement and which emboldens him to persist in his error by not permitting him to become aware of his own wickedness. It is of the greatest importance, then, that the superior be convinced that if he fails to offer his brother the proper guidance he will draw down upon himself heavy and inescapable wrath, for his blood will be required at his hands, as it is written.⁸ The subject also should be prepared not to hesitate before any command, even the most difficult, persuaded that his reward will be great in heaven. Let the hope of glory, therefore, hearten him in his obedience, that the work of the Lord may be done with all joy and patient endurance.

Q. 30. The dispositions which ought to animate the superior in caring for the brethren

R. His rank should not arouse feelings of pride in the superior, lest he himself lose the blessing promised to humility or 'lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the judgment of the devil.'² On the other hand, let him be assured that added responsibility calls for greater service. He who ministers to many wounded persons, wiping away the matter from their wounds and applying medicaments appropriate to the particular injury involved, does not find a motive for pride in his ministrations, but rather for humility, anxiety, and energetic action. Far more thoughtful and solicitous ought he be who, as the servant of all and as being himself liable to an account on their behalf, performs the office of curing the spiritual weakness of his brethren. In this manner he will fulfill the aim which the Lord had in mind when He said: 'If any man desire to be first, he shall be the last of all and the minister of all.'

Q. 31. That ministration from the superior should be accepted

R. Corporal ministration should be accepted by inferiors from those who may hold the first place in the community. True humility imposes the duty of service

upon the superior and shows the subject that to accept such ministration is not unfitting. The example of the Lord Himself, indeed, leads us to this conclusion, since He did not disdain to wash the feet of His disciples and they did not venture to resist Him in this. Peter, to be sure, refused at first because of his great reverence, but, as soon as he learned the penalty of disobedience, he immediately gave way. There is no reason, consequently, why the subject should fear that he is deviating from his ideal of humility if he accepts service from a superior. Many times, in fact, the service is given for his instruction and as a forceful example rather than as a response to some urgent need. He should, therefore, show himself truly humble by his obedience and imitation rather than commit an act of false pride and arrogance by raising objections in feigned humility. Contradiction betokens unruliness and self-will. Even more, it is an indication of pride and disdain, not of humility and obedience in all things. We must, therefore, obey him who said: 'supporting one another in charity.'

Q. 32. On the proper dispositions toward relatives according to the flesh

R. Superiors should not allow those who have been permanently admitted to the community to be distracted in any way—by allowing them either to leave the company of their brethren and live in private on the pretext of visiting their relatives or to be burdened with the responsibility of caring for their relatives according to the flesh. The Scripture absolutely forbids the words 'mine' and 'thine' to be uttered among the brethren, saying: 'And the multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that aught of the things which he possessed was his own.' The parents or brothers of a member of the community, therefore, if they live piously, should be treated by all the brethren as fathers or other relative possessed in common: 'For whosoever shall do the will of my Father that is in Heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother,' says the Lord.² In our opinion, moreover, the care of these persons would devolve upon the superior of the community. If our relatives have become entangled in the usual concerns of the worldly life, we who are intent upon that which is decent and which may give us power to attend upon the Lord without impediment have no common cause with them. In addition to being of no assistance to them, we would fill our own lives with confusion and anxiety and we would invite occasions of sin.

Furthermore, it is not even proper to receive those among our former relatives who come for a visit if they hold the commandments in light esteem and are contemptuous of the works of piety, because they do not love the Lord, who said: 'He that loveth me not, keepeth not my words.' 'But what participation hath justice with injustice? Or what fellowship hath light with darkness?'

Besides, the utmost effort must be made entirely to remove occasions of sin from those still in the training school of virtues—the chief of those occasions being the remembrance of their former life in the world—so that it may never be said of them that in their hearts they have returned to Egypt. This very often happens in prolonged conversations with their relatives according to the flesh. In general, therefore, neither these relatives nor any other extern should be allowed to talk with the brethren unless we are certain that their conversation will bring about the edification and perfection of the soul. If, however, it be necessary to hold discourse with those who have been once admitted, it should be done by those who have the gift of speaking, for the reason that they have the power to speak with understanding and to listen in such a way that their faith may be strengthened. The Apostle clearly teaches, indeed, that ability in speaking is not possessed by all but that this charism is accorded to few, saying: 'To one, indeed, by the Spirit is given the word of wisdom, and to another, the word of knowledge'; and in another place, he says: 'that he may be able to exhort in sound doctrine and to convince the gainsayers.'⁸

Q. 33. On the proper way to converse with consecrated women

R. He who has renounced marriage once and for all will surely repudiate with even greater finality those cares which, the Apostle says, plague the married man, that is, how he may please his wife, and he will liberate himself entirely from all solicitude about giving pleasure to a woman, since he dreads the judgment of Him who said: 'God hath scattered the bones of them that please men.' Nor will he, therefore, cultivate acquaintance even with a man for the purpose of giving him pleasure, but he will hold discourse with him when it is necessary so as to manifest that zeal for his neighbor which every person is obliged to show according to the command of God. Such discourse, however, should not be allowed indiscriminately to all who so desire, nor is every time and place suitable; but if,

according to the Apostle's injunction, we would be without offence to Jews and Gentiles and the church of God³ and would do all things decently and according to order unto edification, it is necessary that the person, the time, the need, and the place be properly chosen and determined upon. By consideration of all these details, every shadow of evil suspicion will be avoided; evidence of dignity and chastity will be exhibited in every way by those permitted to visit with one another and to take counsel regarding the things that are pleasing to God, as these pertain either to the needs of the body or to the care of the soul. There should be, however, no less than two on each side participating in the discourse, for, to say the least, one person alone is easily exposed to suspicion and what is said under such conditions is not so readily corroborated; for the Scripture explicitly declares that every word stands in the presence of two or three. But there should not be more than three, so as not hamper the zeal for energetic action which is inspired by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ.

If it be necessary that some others among the brethren speak of or listen to something bearing on some private matter, the persons concerned should not themselves meet with each other, but chosen representatives, persons of advanced age, should discuss the business with selected older members of the sisterhood and by their mediation the need for conversing should be taken care of. The good order followed when women are to converse with men or vice versa should be also be applied in the case of members of the same sex meeting with one another. In addition to the qualities of gravity and piety to be exhibited under all circumstances, they should be wise in their questions and answers and trustworthy and prudent in treating of the matters under discussion, thus fulfilling the words: 'he shall order his words with judgment.' By so doing they will at once satisfy those who have submitted their business to them and reach a settlement of the matters under consideration. Certain other brethren should minister to the sisters' bodily needs, and these also ought to be chosen after careful deliberation. They should be of advanced age, venerable and grave of aspect and deportment, so as not to afflict the conscience of anyone with evil suspicions, 'for why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience?'⁷

Q. 34. Regarding the character of the persons who care for the needs of the brethren

R. It is of the greatest importance that, of those who distribute necessary articles within the community, there will be some in each department who are able to imitate the conduct described in the Acts: 'Distribution was made to every one, according as he had need.' These should take great pains to be kind and tolerant to all and not give occasion for suspicions of favoritism or partiality, in obedience to the precept of the Apostle, who said: 'doing nothing by declining to either side.' On the other hand, they should not act in a spirit of contentiousness, which the same Apostle condemns as unbecoming Christians, saying: 'If any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom nor the church of God.'³ The result of such contentiousness is that they deprive those with whom they are at variance of articles which they need and allot a superfluous amount to those to whom they happen to feel partial. Now, the former course is an indication of fraternal enmity, the latter, of particular affection, which is especially abhorrent because by it the union of charity among the brethren is torn asunder and is replaced by base suspicions, jealousies, strife, and a distaste for work.

They who have the office of distributing necessary articles to the community, therefore, are duty-bound to be absolutely free from particular affection and from aversion, both for the reasons just given and for many other pertinent ones of similar nature. They are obliged to take cognizance of such tendencies within themselves and to display such zeal—both they and those who engage in other forms of service to the community—as if they were ministering not to men but to the Lord Himself, who, because of His great goodness, regards as offered to Himself the honor and esteem shown to those who are consecrated to Him and who has promised in return the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven, saying: 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, for as long as you did it to one of these, my least brethren, you did it to me.' On the other hand, we must also keep in mind the danger of negligence, recalling him who said: 'Cursed be every man that doth the work of the Lord negligently.'⁵ Not only are these cast out of the kingdom, but they also await that dread and terrible sentence of the Lord pronounced upon such persons: 'Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels.' But, if they who bestow care and service find so much profit in their zeal and receive so harsh a judgment for negligence, how necessary

it is that they who are the objects of their ministrations should strive to show themselves worthy to be called brethren of the Lord! This the Lord teaches us when He says: 'For whosoever shall do the will of my Father, that is in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother.'⁷

That man, indeed, is in danger who does not throughout his whole life place before himself the will of God as his goal, so that in health he shows forth the labor of love by his zeal for the works of the Lord, and in sickness displays endurance and cheerful patience. The first and greatest peril is that, by not doing the will of God, he separates himself from the Lord and cuts himself off from fellowship with his own brethren; secondly, that he ventures, although undeserving, to claim a share in the blessings prepared for those who are worthy. Here, also, we must remember the words of the Apostle: 'And we helping do exhort you that you receive not the grace of God in vain.' And they who are called to be brethren of the Lord should not receive in a wanton spirit so great a divine grace nor fall from so high a dignity through negligence in doing the will of God, but, rather, obey the same Apostle, saying: 'I, a prisoner in the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called.'

Q. 35. Whether there should be several communities in the same parish

R. The example of the members of the body which we have usefully applied so often is appropriate also to the question before us. Our discourse has shown that if the body is to be in good condition and rightly disposed for all its activities, the eyes, the tongue, and the other members which are essential and exercise the highest authority over the body are needed; yet it is difficult and no easy matter to find a soul having the capacity to act as an eye for a number of persons. If good discipline require that the brethren have a superior who is provident, experienced in speaking, sober and kindly, seeking after the justifications of God with a perfect heart, how is it possible for a number of persons of such calibre to be found in the same parish? If it should ever happen, however, that two or three such are found (not an easy thing and we have never known it to happen), it would be far better if they shared responsibility with one another and lightened the burden so that, in the absence of one or the other or in the event of their being engaged or under any other circumstances whereby one superior happens to be absent from the

community, the other might console the brethren for his absence; or, even apart from such emergencies, that one of them may go to another community which is in need of a director. Moreover, in order to reach the goal we have set for ourselves, experience in the ways of the world can help us greatly. As in the world, those skilled in ordinary trades are jealous of their rivals, because the very nature of the situation imperceptibly engenders a spirit of competition, so also, even in a way of life such as ours, the same state of affairs frequently exists. Beginning with a rivalry in doing good and an eagerness to outdo one another either in hospitality to guests or in multiplying the number of their members or other activities of the kind, they, by degrees, fall to wrangling. Thereupon, instead of restful retirement, the brethren who stop at these monasteries enroute suffer great doubt and distress, since they are perplexed as to which group they should lodge with; for, showing preference causes hard feelings and it is impossible to satisfy both contenders, particularly if there happens to be need for haste. Then, too, these rivalries cause great distress to those who are entering upon their life in community, since they must select certain directors and the act of choosing certain ones at all implies rejection of the rest as unfit.

Directly at the start, then, they suffer harm through pride of intellect, because they are not conforming to what is being taught them, but are becoming accustomed to sit as habitual judges and critics of the community. Since, therefore, there is no admitted good and so much that is of an opposite nature in the separation of establishments, this segregation is from all points inexpedient. If there should be such a system already in operation, it should be quickly set to rights—particularly if ill effects have already been felt—for a continuance of such an arrangement will bring open strife. ‘But if any man seem to be contentious,’ says the Apostle, ‘we have no such custom, nor the church of God.’ What objection will be raised to union? The procuring of the necessities? They are far more easily obtained in common, for one lamp and one heart and all such things can suffice for the entire group, and in these matters, if anywhere, facility should in every way be sought, so as to reduce the number of necessary articles to be owned. Under the system of separate establishments, more persons are needed to supply the brethren with necessities from outside, but, when establishments are joined, only half as many are required. And how difficult it is to find a man who will not bring

dishonor upon the Name of Christ and who, when he goes abroad, conducts himself with externs in a manner worthy of his profession is well known to you without any words of mine. Besides, how can they who remain separated and who by their not living in union arouse base suspicions against themselves, edify those who live the common life either by compelling them to live in peace, if this should be necessary, or by exhorting them to the observance of the other commandments? Moreover, we have heard the words of the Apostle to the Philippians: 'Fulfill ye my joy, that you be of one mind, having the same charity, being of one accord, agreeing in sentiment. Let nothing be done through contention, neither by vainglory; but in humility let each one esteem others better than themselves; each one not considering the things that are his own but those that are other men's.'

Now, what greater sign of humility is there than for the superiors of the community to submit to one another? If they are equal in spiritual gifts, their mutual exercise of virtue is the more beautiful. As the Lord Himself has given us the example by sending the disciples two and two, so also, of these, one will be willing to yield joyfully and wholeheartedly to the other, calling to mind the words of the Lord: 'he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.'⁵ But if one be surpassed in spiritual gifts by the other, it is more virtuous for the weaker to be ruled by the stronger. Again, the maintenance of separate establishments would surely constitute manifest disobedience to the precept of the Apostle: 'each one not considering the things that are his own but those that are other men's.' I think, indeed, that it is impossible for this injunction to be observed where there is separation, inasmuch as each section is privately occupied with the care of its own members and is without solicitude for the others, a state of affairs which is, as I said, clearly opposed to the apostolic precept. And since the saints mentioned in the Acts frequently testify to its observance, now by the words: 'And the multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul,'⁷ and again: 'All they that believed were together and had all things common,' there very evidently was no dwelling apart for any of them nor did each individual lead an independent life, but all were governed under one and the same supervision, even though their full number was five thousand; and, perhaps, many factors in their situation appeared in man's judgment to be obstructive of harmonious union. What rational grounds, then,

permit those in a single parish who are so much less numerous to live separated from one another? Would it were possible that not only they who are in the same parish and are living together would remain thus united, but that many more communities of brethren now established in separated places would be governed in the unity of the Spirit and in the bond of peace⁹ under the combined supervision of superiors who could firmly and wisely look after the interests of all.

Q. 36. Of those who leave the brotherhood

R. Certainly, those who have made an irrevocable and reciprocal promise to live together cannot leave at will, inasmuch as their not persevering in what they have pledged comes from one of two causes: either from the wrongs suffered in living the common life or from an unsteadiness of resolution in him who is changing his course. But he who is withdrawing from his brethren because of injury sustained should not keep his motive to himself, but should make an open charge respecting the wrong done him, in the manner taught by the Lord, who said: 'If thy brother shall offend, go and rebuke him between thee and him alone,' and so on. Then, if the amendment he desires is effected, he has gained his brethren and has not dishonored their union. But, if he sees that they persist in the evil and are not willing to make amends, he will report this to those empowered to judge in such cases, and then, after several have given testimony [if he cannot get redress], he may withdraw. In acting thus, he will not be separating himself from brethren but from strangers, for the Lord compares one who persists in evil to a heathen and publican: 'let him be to thee as the heathen and publican.'² If, however, by reason of the fickleness of his nature, he leaves the society of his brethren, let him cure his own weakness, or, if he will not do this, let the brotherhoods refuse to accept him. And if, by the Lord's command, one or another is attracted to some other establishment, such do not sever their relations, but they fulfill the ministry. Reason does not admit any other grounds for the brethren leaving their community; in the first place, because such withdrawal brings dishonor upon the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is the basis of their union; second, because it inevitably creates uneasiness in the conscience of each one as regards his neighbor, and mutual suspicions are aroused—both of which eventualities are clearly opposed to the Lord's precept: 'If thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there

thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave there thy offering before the altar and go first to be reconciled to thy brother; and then, coming, thou shalt offer thy gift.'

Q. 37. Whether prayer and psalmody ought to afford a pretext for neglecting our work, what hours are suitable for prayer, and, above all, whether labor is necessary

R. Our Lord Jesus Christ says: 'He is worthy'—not everyone without exception or anyone at all, but 'the workman, of his meat,' and the Apostle bids us labor and work with our own hands the things which are good, that we may have something to give to him that suffereth need.² It is, therefore, immediately obvious that we must toil with diligence and not think that our goal of piety offers an escape from work or a pretext for idleness, but occasion for struggle, for ever greater endeavor, and for patience in tribulation, so that we may be able to say: 'In labor and painfulness, in much watchings, in hunger and thirst.' Not only is such exertion beneficial for bringing the body into subjection, but also for showing charity to our neighbor in order that through us God may grant sufficiency to the weak among our brethren, according to the example given by the Apostle in the Acts when he says: 'I have showed you all things, how that so laboring you ought to support the weak,' and again: 'that you may have something to give to him that suffereth need.'⁵ Thus we may be accounted worthy to hear the words: 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me to drink.'

But why should we dwell upon the amount of evil there is in idleness, when the Apostle clearly prescribes that he who does not work should not eat. As daily sustenance is necessary for everyone, so labor in proportion to one's strength is also essential. Not vainly has Solomon written in praise: 'and she hath not eaten her bread idle.'⁸ And again, the Apostle says of himself: 'neither did we eat any man's bread for nothing, but in labor and in toil we worked night and day'; yet, since he was preaching the Gospel, he was entitled to receive his livelihood from the Gospel. The Lord couples sloth with wickedness, saying: 'Wicked and slothful servant.'¹⁰ Wise Solomon, also, praises the laborer not only in the words already quoted, but also, in rebuking the sluggard, associating him by contrast with the

tinest of insects: 'Go to the ant, O sluggard.' We have reason to fear, therefore, lest, perchance, on the day of judgment this fault also may be alleged against us, since He who has endowed us with the ability to work demands that our labor be proportioned to our capacity; for He says: 'To whom they have committed much, of him they will demand the more.'¹² Moreover, because some use prayer and psalmody as an excuse for neglecting their work, it is necessary to bear in mind that for certain other tasks a particular time is allotted, according to the words of Ecclesiastes: 'All things have their season.' For prayer and psalmody, however, as also, indeed, for some other duties, every hour is suitable, that, while our hands are busy at their tasks, we may praise God sometimes with the tongue (when this is possible or, rather, when it is conducive to edification); or, if not, with the heart, at least, in psalms, hymns and spiritual canticles, as it is written.¹⁴ Thus, in the midst of our work can we fulfill the duty of prayer, giving thanks to Him who has granted strength to our hands for performing our tasks and cleverness to our minds for acquiring knowledge, and for having provided the materials, both that which is in the instruments we use and that which forms the matter of the arts in which we may be engaged, praying that the work of our hands may be directed toward its goal, the good pleasure of God.

Thus we acquire a recollected spirit—when in every action we beg from God the success of our labors and satisfy our debt of gratitude to Him who gave us the power to do the work, and when, as has been said, we keep before our minds the aim of pleasing Him. If this is not the case, how can there be consistency in the words of the Apostle bidding us to 'pray without ceasing,' with those others, 'we worked night and day.'¹⁶ Nor, indeed, because thanksgiving at all times has been enjoined even by law and has been proved necessary to our life from both reason and nature, should we therefore be negligent in observing those times for prayer customarily established in communities—times which we have inevitably selected because each period contains a reminder peculiar to itself of blessings received from God. Prayers are recited early in the morning so that the first movements of the soul and the mind may be consecrated to God and that we may take up no other consideration before we have been cheered and heartened by the thought of God, as it is written: 'I remembered God and was delighted,' and that the body may not busy itself with tasks before we have fulfilled the words: 'To thee will I pray, O

Lord; in the morning thou shalt hear my voice. In the morning I will stand before thee and will see.’¹⁸ Again at the third hour the brethren must assemble and betake themselves to prayer, even if they may have dispersed to their various employments. Recalling to mind the gift of the Spirit bestowed upon the Apostles at this third hour, all should worship together, so that they also may become worthy to receive the gift of sanctity, and they should implore the guidance of the Holy Spirit and His instruction in what is good and useful, according to the words: ‘Create a clean heart in me, O God, and renew a right spirit within my bowels. Cast me not away from thy face; and take not thy holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation and strengthen me with a guiding spirit.’ Again, it is said elsewhere, ‘Thy good spirit shall lead me into the right land’;²⁰ and having prayed thus, we should again apply ourselves to our tasks.

But, if some, perhaps, are not in attendance because the nature or place of their work keeps them at too great a distance, they are strictly obliged to carry out wherever they are, with promptitude, all that is prescribed for common observance, for ‘where there are two or three gathered together in my name,’ says the Lord, ‘there am I in the midst of them.’ It is also our judgment that prayer is necessary at the sixth hour, in imitation of the saints who say: ‘Evening and morning and at noon I will speak and declare; and he shall hear my voice.’²² And so that we may be saved from invasion and the noonday Devil, at this time, also, the ninetieth Psalm will be recited. The ninth hour, however, was appointed as a compulsory time for prayer by the Apostles themselves in the Acts where it is related that ‘Peter and John went up to the temple at the ninth hour of prayer.’²⁴ When the day’s work is ended, thanksgiving should be offered for what has been granted us or for what we have done rightly therein and confession made of our omissions whether voluntary or involuntary, or of a secret fault, if we chance to have committed any in words or deeds, or in the heart itself; for by prayer we propitiate God for all our misdemeanors. The examination of our past actions is a great help toward not falling into like faults again; wherefore the Psalmist says: ‘the things you say in your hearts, be sorry for them upon your beds.’

Again, at nightfall, we must ask that our rest be sinless and untroubled by dreams. At this hour, also, the ninetieth Psalm should be recited. Paul and Silas,

furthermore, have handed down to us the practice of compulsory prayer at midnight, as the history of the Acts declares: 'And at midnight Paul and Silas praised God.' The Psalmist also says: 'I rose at midnight to give praise to thee for the judgments of thy justifications.'²⁷ Then, too, we must anticipate the dawn by prayer, so that the day may not find us in slumber and in bed, according to the words: "My eyes have prevented the morning; that I might meditate on thy words.' None of these hours for prayer should be unobserved by those who have chosen a life devoted to the glory of God and His Christ. Moreover, I think that variety and diversity in the prayers and psalms recited at appointed hours are desirable for the reason that routine and boredom, somehow, often cause distraction in the soul, while by change and variety in the psalmody and prayers said at the stated hours it is refreshed in devotion and renewed in sobriety.

Q. 38. Now that our discourse has adequately demonstrated that prayer is not to be neglected and that labor is necessary, it remains that we should be taught what sort of trades are suitable to our profession

R. It is not easy to make a selection of certain trades in particular, because different ones are pursued by various persons according to the nature of localities and the opportunities offered in each region. It can be laid down as a general rule, however, that those trades should be chosen which allow our life to be tranquil and undisturbed, involving no difficulty in the procuring of the materials proper to them, nor requiring much exertion in selling the articles produced, nor leading to unsuitable or harmful association with men or women. In all things we must keep in mind that our special aim is simplicity and frugality and we must avoid pampering the foolish and harmful desires of men by working for the ends sought after by them. In the art of weaving we should employ our skill to produce goods which are for common use in daily life, not in making articles which have been devised by persons of lax morals as a trap and a snare for the young. Likewise, in practicing the art of the shoemaker, we should serve by our skill those who seek to satisfy their real needs. As for the arts of building, carpentry, the smith's trade, and farming—these are all in themselves necessary for carrying on life, and they provide much that is useful. They should not, therefore, be repudiated by us for any reason inherent in themselves, but, as soon as they cause us anxiety or sever

our union with the brethren, we must turn away from them, choosing in preference the trades which allow us to lead recollected lives in constant attendance on the Lord and do not cause those who follow the practices of the devout life to be absent from psalmody and prayer or draw them away from other disciplinary practices. Those trades, then, which involve no detriment to the life we have undertaken are to be given a decided preference—agriculture especially, since its proper function is the procuring of necessities and farmers are not obliged to do much traveling or running about hither and thither; but its practice must comply with the condition we have laid down: that it does not cause us disturbance or trouble from neighbors or associates.

Q. 39. The method to be followed in selling our products and the manner in which we should make journeys

R. We should take care not to dispose of our products in a distant market nor should we go about peddling them. Staying in one place is far more seemly and beneficial, both for mutual edification and for the strict observance of daily routine. Thus, we should prefer lowering the price of the articles to traveling about for the sake of a small profit. If experience shows, however, that the former expedient is impossible, we should choose localities and cities inhabited by devout men, so that our sojourn may not be without fruit for us. The brethren, moreover, should travel in groups to the designated fairs, each carrying the fruits of his own toil. They should start out together, so that the journey may be made with the recitation of prayers and psalms and so afford mutual edification. When they have arrived at their destination, they should choose the same lodging in the interest of mutual protection, and so as not to miss any of the hours for prayer, day or night, and also because transactions with persons who are difficult to deal with or avaricious pass off with less damage when handled by a group rather than by one individual. Even persons who are most given to violence do not wish to have many witnesses of their wrong-doing.

Q. 40. Concerning business transactions at public assemblies

R. Reason tells us, however, that commercial transactions are unseemly in places where the shrines of the martyrs are located; for it does not befit Christians

to appear at these shrines or in their environs for any other purpose than to pray and, by recalling to memory the saints' conflict unto death in behalf of piety, to be animated to a like zeal. They should be mindful, also, of the most dread wrath of the Lord, because, even though He is always and everywhere meek and humble of heart, as it is written, yet He threatened with the scourge those—and those only—buying and selling in the temple,² because trafficking in merchandise changed this house of prayer into a den of thieves. Furthermore, when others are setting us an example of disregarding the practice which obtained among the saints, by making the shrines the occasion and place for a market and a fair and common trade instead of praying for one another, adoring God together, imploring His aid with tears, making satisfaction for their sins, thanking Him for His benefactions and strengthening their faith by hearing words of exhortation (practices which we know to have occurred within our own memory), we ought not to imitate them and confirm their unseemly conduct by also participating in such commercial pursuits. We should, on the contrary, imitate those assemblies described in the Gospel as taking place in the time of our Lord Jesus Christ and obey the injunction of the Apostle as complying with the rule established by so illustrious a precedent. He writes as follows: 'When you come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a revelation, hath a tongue, hath an interpretation; let all things be done to edification.'

Q. 41. Of authority and obedience

R. Even in the case of authorized trades, the individual ought not be permitted to follow the one he is skilled in or the one he wishes to learn, but that for which he may be judged suited. He who denies himself and completely sets aside his own wishes does not do what he wills but what he is directed to do. Nor, indeed, does reason permit that he himself make choice of what is good and useful, since he has irrevocably turned over the disposal of himself to others who will appoint the task for which they in the Lord's Name may find him suited. Whoever chooses a task conformed to his personal wish brings accusation against himself; first, of self-gratification; second, of preferring a certain trade for the sake of worldly renown or hope of gain, or some such reason, or of choosing the easier course out of sloth and indifference. To be guilty of such faults, however, is an indication that a man

is not yet free from evil passions. Nor, to be sure, has he practiced self-denial, since in his eagerness to give full play to his own impulses he does not give up the things of this world, being still held captive by prospects of gain and renown. Neither has he mortified his members which are upon the earth, since he does not endure fatigue in his labors, but betrays his own wilfulness by regarding his private judgment as more reliable than the appraisal of him on the part of several others. One who is master of a trade that is in no way objectionable to the community ought not abandon it, however, for to deem of no account that which is at one's immediate disposal is the sign of a fickle mind and an unstable will. And if a man is unskilled, he should not of himself take up a trade, but should accept the one approved by his superiors, so as to safeguard obedience in all things. Now, just as it has been shown to be unfitting that one should rely upon oneself, so it is forbidden also to refuse to submit to the decision of others. And if one is adept in a trade that is unacceptable to the community, he should be ready to renounce it in proof that he has no affection for anything in this world. To follow personal preference is, in the words of the Apostle, the act of one who has no hope;² but to be obedient in all things is worthy of approbation, since the same Apostle praises certain persons because 'they gave their own selves first to the Lord, then also to us, by the will of God.'

For the rest, everyone should be devoted to his own trade, applying himself to it enthusiastically and accomplishing it blamelessly with ready zeal and careful attention, as if God were his overseer, so that he may ever be able to say in all honesty: 'Behold, as the eyes of servants are on the hands of their masters, so are our eyes unto the Lord our God'; but one should not work now at one kind of task, now at another. We are incapable by nature of following successfully a number of pursuits at the same time; to finish one task with diligent care is more beneficial than to undertake many and not complete them. If the mind is distracted by several occupations and passes from one to another, besides the fact that nothing is perfectly finished, such procedure betokens levity of character as already present or, if not that, as being inculcated. In case of necessity, however, one who has the ability may assist in other trades besides his own. Yet this also should not be done of one's own volition, but only upon being summoned, for we should have recourse to this expedient at the call of emergency and not on our own initiative;

just as, in the case of our bodily members, we support ourselves with the hand when the foot is limping. Again, as it is not good to take up a trade on one's personal initiative, so, not to accept one that is appointed deserves censure, to prevent the vice of contumacy from being fostered or the limits of docility and obedience from being transgressed. Furthermore, the care of tools devolves, first of all, upon the artisan of each trade. If it should happen, however, that some oversight occur, those who first notice it should take the proper steps, on the ground that the tools are possessed by all in common; although their use is a private matter, the benefit from them is for all, and to regard the instruments of another's trade with disdainful indifference betrays a want of community spirit. It is not fitting, moreover, for those who follow trades to exercise such authority over their tools as not to permit the superior of the community to use them for whatever purpose he wishes, or that they should of themselves take the liberty of selling or exchanging them, or getting rid of them in any other way, or of acquiring others in addition to those they have. How could he who has irrevocably chosen not to be master even of his own hands and who has consigned to another the direction of their activity, how could he be consistent in maintaining full authority over the tools of his trade, arrogating to himself the dignity of mastership over them?

Q. 42. On the aim and the dispositions with which workmen should perform their tasks

R. This we must also keep in mind—that he who labors ought to perform his task not for the purpose of ministering to his own needs thereby, but that he may accomplish the Lord's command: 'I was hungry and you gave me to eat,' and so on. To be solicitous for oneself is strictly forbidden by the Lord in the words: 'Be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put on,' and He adds thereto: 'for after all these things do the heathens seek.'² Everyone, therefore, in doing his work, should place before himself the aim of service to the needy and not his own satisfaction. Thus will he escape the charge of self-love and receive the blessing for fraternal charity from the Lord, who said: 'As long as you did it to one of these, my least brethren, you did it to me.' Nor should anyone think that the Apostle is at variance with our words when he says: 'that working they would eat their own bread';⁴ this is addressed to the unruly and

indolent, and means that it is better for each person to minister to himself at least and not be a burden to others than to live in idleness. 'For we have heard,' he says, 'there are some among you who walk disorderly, working not at all, but curiously meddling. Now we charge them that are such, and beseech them by the Lord Jesus Christ, that, working with silence, they would eat their own bread.' Again, that saying, 'we worked night and day lest we should be chargeable to any of you' bears on the same point, inasmuch as the Apostle in the name of fraternal charity had burdened himself with labors in excess of those imposed upon him for the purpose of eliminating the disorderly. But, he who is striving eagerly for perfection should work night and day 'that he may have something to give to him that suffereth need.'⁷

A man who relies upon himself, however, or even upon the person whose duty it is to provide for his needs, and thinks that his own activity or that of his associate is a sufficient resource for his livelihood, runs the risk, as he places his hope in man, of falling under the curse which reads: 'Cursed be the man that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm and whose soul departeth from the Lord.' Now, by the words, 'that trusteth in man,' the Scripture forbids a man to place his hope in another, and by the words, 'and maketh flesh his arm,' it forbids him to trust in himself. Either course is termed a defection from the Lord. Further, in adding the final issue of both: 'He shall be like tamaric in the desert and he shall not see when good shall come,'⁹ the Scripture declares that for anyone to place his trust either in himself or in anyone else is to alienate himself from the Lord.

Q. 43. The manner in which tasks should be performed has been adequately set forth unless we should be led by the teaching of actual experience to make further inquiries. We request, however, a thorough analysis of the question as to what sort of persons superiors of the community should be and how they should govern their fellow religious

R. This aspect of the matter has already been treated in a summary way, as it were; but, since you do well in wishing it clarified still further (for as the chief and leader is, so also, as a rule, is the subject wont to be), it is essential that we do not pass over this question in a cursory manner. So, then, the superior, mindful of the Apostle's precept: 'Be thou an example of the faithful,' should make his life a

shining model for the observance of every commandment of the Lord, so that there may be no excuse for those under his guidance to think the Lord's commands impossible or readily to be set aside. To consider first, then, that which is first in importance—he should be, by the love of Christ, so confirmed in humility that, even if he is silent, the example of his actions may afford more effective instruction than any words. If, indeed, the goal of Christianity is the imitation of Christ according to the measure of His Incarnation, insofar as is conformable with the vocation of each individual, they who are entrusted with the guidance of many others are obliged to animate those still weaker than themselves, by their assistance, to the imitation of Christ, as the blessed Paul says: 'Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ.'

Superiors, therefore, should first make of themselves an exact copy of Him by practicing humility according to the standard set by our Lord Jesus Christ, for He says: 'Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart.' Habitual mildness of manner, then, and humility of heart should characterize the superior. If the Lord was not ashamed to minister to His own servants and was willing to be a servant to earth and clay which He Himself had formed and shaped into a man ('For I am,' He says, 'in the midst of you as he that serveth'⁴), what must we do to our equals that we may deem ourselves to have arrived at the imitation of Him? So far, then, there is this one quality with which the superior should be endowed. Second, he should be kind and patient with those who from inexperience fall short in their duty, not failing to reprove them for their sins, but bearing gently with the intractable and applying remedies with all kindness and moderation. He should likewise be competent in determining the kind of treatment required by the disorder, not scolding in a spirit of contempt, but admonishing and instructing with modesty, as it is written. He should be sober in administering worldly goods, provident of the future, knowing how to contend with the strong and how to bear the infirmities of the weak and able to say and do all things unto the perfecting of his brethren. He should not take upon himself the office of superior of himself, but should be chosen by the heads of the other monasteries and he should be one who has in the past given sufficient proof of his character. 'And let these also first be proved,' says the Apostle, 'and so let them minister, having no crime.'⁶ A person of this sort, therefore, ought to hold the office of superior; let him establish good

order among the brethren, making an allotment of tasks according to the fitness of each member.

Q. 44. Who should be permitted to go on journeys and how they ought to be interrogated upon their return

R. Permission for going abroad should be granted to him who is able to accomplish the journey without injury to his soul and with profit to his companions. If a suitable person is not available, it is better to endure every inconvenience and trouble, even to the point of death, in the lack of necessary supplies, rather than to allow certain injury to the soul for the sake of physical comfort ('For it is good for me to die,' says the Apostle, 'rather than that any man should make my glory void'). If this is true with regard to matters in which choice was permitted, how much more applicable is it to those involving a command! Yet, to be sure, the law of charity leaves us some recourse even here; for, if it should happen that in one community there be no one of the brethren who can be sent without risk, neighboring monasteries will supply what is lacking, making journeys in common and without separation from one another, in order that those who are weak in spirit or suffering from bodily illness may be kept safe through close union with their stronger companions. These arrangements should be made in advance by the superior, so that recourse may not be wanting at the very moment of emergency. After the return, moreover, examination should be made of the journey as to the incidents which occurred, the sort of persons met with by the traveler along the way, the discourse held with them, the musings of his soul, and as to whether he passed every day and night in the fear of God or went astray and violated any precept, either by yielding to external circumstances or by giving in to his own natural indolence.

Thereupon, what was rightly done should be accorded the seal of approval, but a fault should be corrected by appropriate and skillful instruction. Travelers will thus be more watchful because they are liable to account, and we shall not appear indifferent to their conduct even when they are separated from us. The history of the Acts, moreover, shows that this was also a customary practice with the saints, when it teaches us that Peter, upon his return to Jerusalem, gave an account to the faithful of his sojourn among the Gentiles and that Paul and Barnabas, after their

arrival, assembled the church and proclaimed all that God had done by them; and again, that the entire throng remained silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul relating the things God had wrought. The chief point for us to keep in mind, however, is that running hither and thither, business transactions, and commercial profits should be entirely shunned by members of religious communities.

Q. 45. That there should be another person after the superior who, should the latter be on a journey or not at leisure, could take charge of the brethren

R. Since it frequently happens by reason of physical weakness, or the necessity of travel, or some other circumstance, that the superior is absent from the community, some other person approved by him and by others who are competent to judge should be selected to take charge of the brethren in his absence, that there may be one person to address words of exhortation and solace to those who remain at home. This will also ensure that, when the superior is away, the brethren will not adopt a popular system of government, as it were, to the abrogation of the rule and traditional discipline, but will preserve established and approved customs unto the glory of God. By this arrangement, too, there will be some one person to give prudent answers to guests, so that they who require discourse may be edified by the admirable presentation of the subject and that the rank and file of the community may not be embarrassed. If all indiscriminately would hasten to seize the opportunity for talking, it would be both a source of distraction and a sign of disorder. The Apostle does not permit several persons to speak on the same occasion, even though they are endowed with the gift of teaching, for he says; 'But if anything be revealed to another, let the first hold his peace.' Again he demonstrates the absurdity of a lack of order in this regard when he says: 'If therefore the whole church come together into one place, and all speak with tongues and there come in unlearned persons or infidels, will they not say that you are mad?'²

Even if a stranger should address his inquiries through ignorance to some other person and although he who is questioned by mistake is able to make a satisfactory reply, yet, for the sake of good order, he should keep silence and direct the stranger to him whose function this is, as did the Apostles when the Lord was

present. In this way, speech will be employed in a well-ordered and fitting manner. If in the treatment of bodily ills it is not permissible for everyone to use the knife for the cure of those who are ill, but the office of him who has learned the art after a long period of instruction, application, and experience in curing the sick, how is it at all reasonable for the ordinary person to be forward in offering his aid in affecting a cure that is wrought by the word? In this kind of ministration, the least defect works very great harm; for, if not even the distribution of bread is allowed to be made by all among the brethren indiscriminately and if this duty belongs to him who has been approved for the office, how much greater need there is that a person of superior competence, carefully and cautiously chosen, dispense spiritual nourishment to those who ask for it? It is, therefore, no venial act of arrogance for anyone to venture to answer casually and with assurance a question which has to do with the judgment of God and not refer it to the person whose function is the ministry of the word, who, being in all things faithful and a wise administrator, has been chosen to give spiritual food in season and order his words in judgment, as it is written.⁴ If, however, something should escape him whose duty it is to give an answer, and another should observe this, he should not take issue with the former on the spot, but privately offer an apposite suggestion; for the former practice gives rise to insolence on the part of inferiors toward superiors. Therefore, even if one should make a helpful response, yet beyond the scope of his office, he is liable to penalties for unruly behavior.

Q. 46. That no one should conceal sins either in his own interest or for a brother's advantage

R. According to the Lord's injunction, every sin must be made known to the superior, either by the sinner himself or by those who are cognizant of his fault, if they themselves are not able to effect a cure; for vice kept secret is a festering wound in the soul. We would not term a benefactor one who would confine deadly poisons inside our body, but him, rather, who draws them out by painful laceration, so that either the noxious matter is ejected by vomiting or, in any case, that the treatment may be readily indicated because the infection is made manifest. By the same token, it is surely clear that concealing sin contributes to the death of the sick man; 'for the sting of death is sin,' says the Scripture, and

also: 'Open rebukes are better than hidden love.'² Let no one, therefore, conceal a sin in behalf of another, lest fratricide take the place of fraternal charity; nor should anyone hide his own sins, 'for he who doth not heal himself in his works,' says the Scripture, 'is brother to him that committeth outrage against himself.'

Q. 47. Of those who do not accept these regulations

R. Anyone who does not approve of the superior's prescriptions should take up the matter with him either publicly or in private, if his objection is a sound one and consonant with the Scriptures; if not, he should hold his peace and do the thing that was enjoined. And if he himself should suffer from embarrassment, he should employ others as his representatives in the matter, so that, if the injunction be in opposition to the Scriptures, he may save both himself and his brethren from harm. If, however, it be proved to be in accord with right reason, he would himself avoid a rash and hazardous dispute—'For he that discerneth,' says the Apostle, 'if he eat is condemned, because not of faith'—and he would not lay a snare of disobedience for simpler souls; 'for it were better,' says the Lord, 'that a millstone should be hanged about his neck and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea than that he should scandalize one of these little ones.'² And if some persist in their disobedience, finding fault in secret and not openly stating their grievance, thus becoming the cause of quarreling in the community and undermining the authority of the commands given, they should be dismissed from the community as teachers of disobedience and rebellion; for the Scripture says: 'Cast out the scoffer from the council and contention shall go out with him,' and also: 'Put away the evil one from among yourselves,' for a little leaven corrupteth the whole lump.'⁴

Q. 48. That the superior's actions should not be curiously scrutinized, but everyone should concern himself with his own work

R. In order that no one may fall readily into this vice of captious quarreling, to his own undoing and that of others, this rule should, in general, be followed in the community: that, in the first place, no one is to concern himself with the superior's method of administration or make curious inquiries about what is being done, with the exception of those who, by reason of their rank and sagacity, are closely

associated with the superior. He, in turn, on his part, is bound to take counsel with these and to deliberate with them on community matters, in obedience to the advice of Him who said: 'Do all things with counsel.' Certainly, if we have entrusted our souls to the guidance of a superior, as to one who is accountable to God, it is wholly absurd for us not to trust him in matters of trivial consequence, and thus become filled² with unbecoming suspicions of our brother and give occasion for suspicion to others also. In order that this may not come to pass, everyone should confine himself to the occupation which has been appointed him and devote himself entirely to his own concerns, not busying himself at all with the doings of others, after the example of the holy disciples of the Lord; for, although the affair of the Samaritan woman might have aroused suspicion, yet 'no man,' the Scripture tells us, 'said: What seekest thou? or, why talkest thou with her?'

Q. 49. Of controversies in the community

R. Now, with regard to disputes which arise among the brethren: Whenever certain individuals are in disagreement on any matter, they should not contend with one another in a wrangling spirit, but refer the settlement to those who are more competent than they. Nevertheless, so that good order may not be disturbed by everyone constantly submitting his problems and so that there may arise no occasion for levity or foolishness, some one approved person should be empowered either to refer the disputed point to the community for general consideration or to bring it to the attention of the superior. In this way, the investigation of the question will be more fittingly and more intelligently carried on, for knowledge and experience are nowhere more essential than in matters of this kind. If no workman would entrust the use of his tools to unskilled persons, it is far more important to restrict the use of words to those who will be able to discern competently the proper time, place, and method of questioning, and who, by disputing reasonably and without rancor and by listening intelligently can make accurate contributions toward solving the problem unto general edification.

Q. 50. On the manner in which the superior should administer a rebuke

R. The superior should not administer a rebuke to wrongdoers when his own passions are aroused; for, by admonishing a brother with anger and indignation, he does not free him from his faults but involves himself in the error. For this reason, the Apostle says: 'With modesty, admonishing them that resist.' Nor should he become vehemently angry even when he himself is treated contumeliously, and, when he sees such treatment inflicted upon another, he should again show himself indulgent toward the sinner; but more than that, he ought, in the latter case, to manifest displeasure at the wrong done. By this difference in his conduct as regards himself and another, he will avoid the suspicion of self-love and prove that he does not hate the sinner but is repelled by the sin. He who shows displeasure in a manner which is the reverse of that which I have indicated clearly proves that he is displeased, not for God's sake, nor because of the offender's peril, but because of his own love of honor and authority. Zeal ought to be exercised for the glory of God, who is dishonored by the violation of His decree, but it is right to show the mercy of fraternal charity on behalf of a brother who is endangering his salvation by sin; for 'the soul that sinneth, the same shall die.' We should, however, be stirred to anger by every sin as sin, reflecting the ardor of our feelings in the severity of the penalty we impose.

Q. 51. Of the manner in which the fault of the offender should be corrected

R. The cure of those afflicted by evil passions should be effected according to the method used by physicians. The superior, therefore, must not become angry with the sick, but he must wage war upon their malady by setting up a counter-irritant to the vice, curing the infirmity of the soul by drastic measures, if need be. For example, vainglory should be corrected by imposing practices of humility, idle talking, by silence, excessive sleep, by watching in prayer, sloth, by physical labor, intemperance at table, by fasting, murmuring, by segregation, so that none of the brethren may desire to work in partnership with the offender and that the work of the others may not be coupled with his, as was said above, unless, to be sure, he shows that he has been freed from his vice by doing penance without shame. In that event, the work which was done in a murmuring spirit should be accepted; yet, not even then should it be put to the service of the brethren but made use of in some other way. The reason for this has been adequately set forth above.

Q. 52. On the dispositions in which punishment should be received

R. If, as we have said, the superior should apply remedies to the weak in a dispassionate manner, so, in turn, those undergoing treatment should not look upon the penalties imposed on them as hostile acts, nor regard as despotic the solicitude shown them by the superior in a spirit of compassion for the salvation of their souls. It is shameful, indeed, that they who are sick in body place so much confidence in physicians that, even if these cut or burn or cause distress by their bitter medicines, they look upon them as benefactors, while we do not share this attitude toward the physicians of our souls when they secure our salvation for us by laborious discipline. The Apostle says, however: 'who is he then who can make me glad, but the same who is made sorrowful by me,' and again: 'For behold this selfsame thing, that you were made sorrowful according to God, how great carefulness it worketh in you.'² It behooves one who looks to the end, therefore, to consider him a benefactor who causes us pain which is according to God.

Q. 53. How instructors in the arts will correct the blunders of the children

R. It is the duty of those themselves who teach the arts to reprimand the faulty technique of their pupils and correct their mistakes. All offenses, however, which arise from perversity of character, such as disobedience and the spirit of contradiction, laziness in performing tasks, idle talking, lying, or any other act forbidden to those who lead a religious life, should be referred to the person in charge of general discipline, so that he may determine the measure and the mode of treatment to be applied. The administering of a reprimand appertains to the cure of the soul; therefore, just as not everyone may practice the medical art, so no one should give a reprimand except he to whom the superior, after careful consideration, gives this permission.

Q. 54. That the superiors of the brotherhoods ought to consult with one another about the problems pertaining to their office

R. It is a good plan that the heads of the communities should meet together occasionally at certain appointed times and places. At these assemblies they should lay before one another for consideration irregular situations, characters

which are exceptionally difficult to deal with, details of their administration, so that, if any of them be delinquent in any respect, this may be revealed in an authoritative manner by the judgment of the group and that what has been rightly done may be ratified by their collective testimony.

Q. 55. Whether recourse to the medical art is in keeping with the practice of piety

R. Each of the arts is God's gift to us, remedying the deficiencies of nature, as, for example, agriculture, since the produce which the earth bears of itself would not suffice to provide for our needs; the art of weaving, since the use of clothing is necessary for decency's sake and for protection from the wind; and, similarly, for the art of building. The same is true, also, of the medical art. In as much as our body is susceptible to various hurts, some attacking from without and some from within by reason of the food we eat, and since the body suffers affliction from both excess and deficiency, the medical art has been vouchsafed us by God, who directs our whole life, as a model for the cure of the soul, to guide us in the removal of what is superfluous and in the addition of what is lacking. Just as we would have no need of the farmer's labor and toil if we were living amid the delights of paradise, so also we would not require the medical art for relief if we were immune to disease, as was the case, by God's gift, at the time of Creation before the Fall. After our banishment to this place, however, and after we had heard the words: 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread,' through prolonged effort and hard labor in tilling the soil we devised the art of agriculture for the alleviation of the miseries which followed the curse, God vouchsafing us the knowledge and understanding of this art. And, when we were commanded to return to the earth whence we had been taken and were united with the pain-ridden flesh doomed to destruction because of sin and, for the same reason, also subject to disease, the medical art was given to us to relieve the sick, in some degree at least.

Now, the herbs which are the specifics for each malady do not grow out of the earth spontaneously; it is evidently the will of the Creator that they should be brought forth out of the soil to serve our need. Therefore, the obtaining of that natural virtue which is in the roots and flowers, leaves, fruits, and juices, or in such metals or products of the sea as are found especially suitable for bodily health, is to be viewed in the same way as the procuring of food and drink.

Whatever requires an undue amount of thought or trouble or involves a large expenditure of effort and causes our whole life to revolve, as it were, around solicitude for the flesh must be avoided by Christians. Consequently, we must take great care to employ this medical art, if it should be necessary, not as making it wholly accountable for our state of health or illness, but as redounding to the glory of God and as a parallel to the care given the soul. In the event that medicine should fail to help, we should not place all hope for the relief of our distress in this art, but we should rest assured that He will not allow us to be tried above that which we are able to bear. Just as in those days the Lord sometimes made clay, and anointed, and bade wash in Siloe, and on other occasions was content with the mere command: 'I will, be thou made clean,'³ whereas He left some to struggle against their afflictions, rendering them more worthy of reward by trial, so it also is with us. He sometimes cures us secretly and without visible means when He judges this mode of treatment beneficial to our souls; and again He wills that we use material remedies for our ills, either to instil in us by the prolonged nature of the cure an abiding remembrance of the favor received, or, as I have said, to provide an example for the proper care of the soul. As in the case of the flesh it is essential to eliminate foreign elements and add whatever is wanting, so also, where the soul is concerned, it behooves us to rid ourselves of that which is alien to it and take unto ourselves that which is in accordance with its nature; for 'God made man right,' and He created us for good works that we might walk in them.

Moreover, as in using the medical art we submit to cutting, burning, and the taking of bitter medicines for the cure of the body, so, also, in caring for our souls we must heal them by accepting the cut of the reproachful word and the bitter medicine of penalties. The prophetic writings, furthermore, utter this remonstrance to those who have not received admonition: 'Is there no balm in Gilead? or is there no physician there? Why then hath not the health of the daughter of my people gone up?' The fact, also, that chronic illnesses persist over a long period and despite varied and painful remedies is a sign that we should amend the sins of the soul by assiduous prayer, prolonged penance, and the severe disciplinary treatment which reason may advise as adequate for the cure. Nor, because some sinners do not make good use of the art of medicine, should we repudiate all the advantages to be derived from it; for we need not straightway

condemn all the arts together merely because undisciplined pleasure-seekers abuse the art of cookery, or baking, or weaving, for the purpose of ministering to their own delight, by overstepping the limits of what is strictly necessary. On the contrary, their abuse of these arts ought to be made evident by our demonstrating the proper use of them. Similarly with the medical art—we ought not commit outrage against a gift of God by putting it to bad use. To place the hope of one's health in the hands of the doctor is the act of an irrational animal. This, nevertheless, is what we observe in the case of certain unhappy persons who do not hesitate to call their doctors their saviors. Yet, to reject entirely the benefits to be derived from this art is the sign of a pettish nature. Just as Ezechias did not regard the lump of figs as a primary cause of his regaining his health⁶ and did not consider this fruit responsible for the cure of his body, but gave glory to God and added thanksgiving for the creation of the figs, so, also, when we suffer the blows of calamity at the hands of God, who directs our life with goodness and wisdom, we first ask of Him understanding of the reason He has inflicted the blows; second, deliverance from our pains or patient endurance of them, to the end that, with the temptation, He may also grant issue so we may be able to bear it.

When the favor of a cure is granted us, whether by means of wine mixed with oil, as in the case of the man who fell among the robbers, or through figs, as with Ezechias, we are to receive it with thanksgiving. Besides, we shall view the watchful care of God impartially, whether it comes to us from some invisible source or by a physical agency, the latter, indeed, frequently engendering in us a livelier perception of the favor as coming from the hands of God. Very often, also, the diseases which we contracted were for our correction and the painful remedies we were obliged to submit to formed part of the instruction. Right reason dictates, therefore, that we demur neither at cutting nor at burning, nor at the pains caused by bitter and disagreeable medicines, nor at abstinence from food, nor at a strict regimen, nor at being forced to refrain from that which is hurtful. Nevertheless, we should keep as our objective (again I say it), our spiritual benefit, in as much as the care of the soul is being taught in the guise of an analogy. There is no small danger, however, that we will fall into the error of thinking that every kind of suffering requires medical relief. Not all sicknesses for whose treatment we observe medicine to be occasionally beneficial arise from natural causes, whether

from faulty diet or from any other physical origin. Illness is often a punishment for sin imposed for our conversion; 'For whom the Lord loveth,' says the Scripture, 'he chastiseth'; again: 'Therefore are there many infirm and weak among you and many sleep. But if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But whilst we are judged, we are chastised by the Lord that we be not condemned with the world.' Consequently, when we who belong to this class have recognized our transgressions, we should bear in silence and without recourse to medicine all the afflictions which come to us, in accordance with the words: 'I will bear the wrath of the Lord because I have sinned against him.'¹¹ We should, moreover, give proof of our amendment by bringing forth fruits worthy of penance, remembering the words of the Lord: 'Behold, thou art made whole; sin no more lest some worse thing happen to thee.'¹³ Sometimes, also, sickness afflicts us at the request of the Evil One—our benevolent Master, condescending to enter into combat with him as if he were a mighty adversary and confounding his boasts by the heroic patience of His servants. This we learn in the case of Job. Then, too, God places those who are able to endure tribulation even unto death before the weak as their model. Lazarus, for example, although afflicted with such painful wounds, never brought a charge against the rich man, nor made any request of him, nor became peevish at the condition of things; consequently, he came to rest in Abraham's bosom as one who had accepted misfortunes in his lifetime.¹⁵ Again, we find another reason for sickness as applying to the saints. In the case of the Apostle, for instance, in order that he might not seem to exceed the limits of human nature and that no one might think him to possess anything exceptional in his nature (this notion the Lycaonians actually entertained and they brought garlands and oxen for sacrifice), he calls attention to his prolonged struggles with an infirmity as a means of demonstrating the fact that he is human.

What profit would there be for such men in having recourse to medicine? Would there not rather be danger that in their solicitude for the body they would be led astray from right reason? Certainly, as was said before, those who have contracted illness by living improperly should make use of the healing of their body as a type and exemplar, so to speak, for the cure of their soul; since abstention from that which is hurtful according to the rules of the medical art, the

choosing of what is beneficial, the observance of prescriptions, are of advantage to us also [in the spiritual life].

Further, the very transformation of the body from sickness to health should be an incentive to us not to despair of the soul, as if it had not power to be restored again through penance from its sinful state to its proper integrity. So, then, we should neither repudiate this art altogether nor does it behoove us to repose all our confidence in it; but, just as in practicing the art of agriculture we pray God for the fruits, and as we entrust the helm to the pilot in the art of navigation, but implore God that we may end our voyage unharmed by the perils of the sea, so also, when reason allows, we call in the doctor, but we do not leave off hoping in God. It seems to me, moreover, that the medical art is no small aid to continency. I observe that this art prohibits sensual indulgence, it is opposed to satiety, it forbids as inexpedient an elaborate diet and an exaggerated liking for condiments. In general, it regards want as the mother of health, so that even in this particular its counsel is not without value for us. Therefore, whether we follow the precepts of the medical art or decline to have recourse to them for any of the reasons mentioned above, we should hold to our objective of pleasing God and see to it that the soul's benefit is assured, fulfilling thus the Apostle's precept: 'Whether you eat or drink or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God.'