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# NICENE AND POST-NICENE FATHERS

VOLUME 6

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**JEROME: LETTERS AND SELECT WORKS**

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*SECOND SERIES*



*Edited by*

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 **HENDRICKSON**  
PUBLISHERS

Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.  
P. O. Box 3473  
Peabody, Massachusetts 01961-3473

ISBN 1-56563-122-6

Printed in the United States of America

*Fourth printing 2004*

This is a reprint edition of the American Edition of the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Volume 6, St. Jerome: Letters and Select Works*, originally published in the United States by the Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1893.

Volume 10 of the *Ante-Nicene Fathers, Bibliography and General Index*, contains a newly prepared *Annotated Index of Authors and Works of the Ante-Nicene, Nicene, and Post-Nicene Fathers, First and Second Series* © 1994 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this work may be used or reproduced in any manner without written permission of the publisher.

# THE PRINCIPAL WORKS OF ST. JEROME.

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## LETTER XVIII.

TO POPE DAMASUS.

This (written from Constantinople in A.D. 381) is the earliest of Jerome's expository letters. In it he explains at length the vision recorded in the sixth chapter of Isaiah, and enlarges upon its mystical meaning. "Some of my predecessors," he writes, "make 'the Lord sitting upon a throne' God the Father, and suppose the seraphim to represent the Son and the Holy Spirit. I do not agree with them, for John expressly tells us 'that it was Christ and not the Father whom the prophet saw.' And again, 'The word seraphim means either 'glow' or 'beginning of speech,' and the two seraphim thus stand for the Old and New Testaments.' 'Did not our heart burn within us,' said the disciples, 'while he opened to us the Scriptures?'" Moreover, the Old Testament is written in Hebrew, and this unquestionably was man's original language." Jerome then speaks of the unity of the sacred books. "Whatever," he asserts, "we read in the Old Testament we find also in the Gospel; and what we read in the Gospel is deduced from the Old Testament." There is no discord between them, no disagreement. In both Testaments the Trinity is preached.

The letter is noticeable for the evidence it affords of the thoroughness of Jerome's studies. Not only does he cite the several Greek versions of Isaiah in support of his argument, but he also reverts to the Hebrew original. So far as the West was concerned he may be said to have discovered this anew. Even educated men like Augustine had ceased to look beyond the LXX., and were more or less aghast at the boldness with which Jerome rejected its time-honored but inaccurate renderings.

The letter also shows that independence of judgment which always marked Jerome's work. At the time when he wrote it he was much under the sway of Origen. But great as was his admiration for the master, he was not afraid to discard his exegesis when, as in the case of the seraphim, he believed it to be erroneous.

## LETTER XIX.

FROM POPE DAMASUS.

A letter from Damasus to Jerome, in which he asks for an explanation of the word "Hosanna" (A.D. 383).

## LETTER XX.

TO POPE DAMASUS.

Jerome's reply to the foregoing. Exposing the error of Hilary of Poitiers, who supposed the expression to signify "redemption of the house of David," he goes on to show that in the gospels it is a quotation from Ps. cxviii. 25 and that its true meaning is "save now" (so A.V.). "Let us," he writes, "leave the streamlets of conjecture and return to the fountain-head. It is from the Hebrew writings that the truth is to be drawn." Written at Rome A.D. 383.

## LETTER XXI.

TO DAMASUS.

In this letter Jerome, at the request of Damasus, gives a minutely detailed explanation of the parable of the prodigal son.

<sup>1</sup> John xii. 47.

<sup>2</sup> Jerome greatly prides himself on this explanation, and frequently reverts to it.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xxiv. 32.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Augustine's dictum: "The New Testament is latent in the Old; the Old Testament is patent in the New."

<sup>5</sup> See Augustine's letters to Jerome, *passim*.

## LETTER XXII.

TO EUSTOCHIUM.

Perhaps the most famous of all the letters. In it Jerome lays down at great length (1) the motives which ought to actuate those who devote themselves to a life of virginity, and (2) the rules by which they ought to regulate their daily conduct. The letter contains a vivid picture of Roman society as it then was—the luxury, profligacy, and hypocrisy prevalent among both men and women, besides some graphic autobiographical details (§§ 7, 30), and concludes with a full account of the three kinds of monasticism then practised in Egypt (§§ 34-36). Thirty years later Jerome wrote a similar letter to Demetrias (CXXX.), with which this ought to be compared. Written at Rome 384 A.D.

1. "Hear, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and thy father's house, and the king shall desire thy beauty." In this forty-fourth psalm God speaks to the human soul that, following the example of Abraham, it should go out from its own land and from its kindred, and should leave the Chaldeans, that is the demons, and should dwell in the country of the living, for which elsewhere the prophet sighs: "I think to see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living." But it is not enough for you to go out from your own land unless you forget your people and your father's house; unless you scorn the flesh and cling to the bridegroom in a close embrace. "Look not behind thee," he says, "neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain lest thou be consumed." He who has grasped the plough must not look behind him or return home from the field, or having Christ's garment, descend from the roof to fetch other raiment. Truly a marvellous thing, a father charges his daughter not to remember her father. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do." So it was said to the Jews. And in another place, "He that committeth sin is of the devil." Born, in the first instance, of such parentage we are naturally black, and even when we have repented, so long as we have not scaled the heights of virtue, we may still say: "I am black but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem." But you will say to me, "I have left the home of my childhood; I have forgotten my father, I am born anew in Christ. What reward do I receive for this?" The context shows—"The king shall desire thy beauty." This, then, is the great mystery. "For this cause shall

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xlv. 20, 21.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xi. 31; xii. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Luke ix. 62.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Joh. iii. 8.

<sup>5</sup> According to the Vulgate.

<sup>6</sup> Ps. xxvii. 23.

<sup>7</sup> Gen. xix. 17.

<sup>8</sup> Joh. viii. 44, R.V.

<sup>9</sup> Cant. i. 5.

a man leave his father and his mother and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be" not as is there said, "of one flesh," but "of one spirit." Your bridegroom is not haughty or disdainful; He has "married an Ethiopian woman." When once you desire the wisdom of the true Solomon and come to Him, He will avow all His knowledge to you; He will lead you into His chamber with His royal hand; He will miraculously change your complexion so that it shall be said of you, "Who is this that goeth up and hath been made white?"

2. I write to you thus, Lady Eustochium (I am bound to call my Lord's bride "lady"), to show you by my opening words that my object is not to praise the virginity which you follow, and of which you have proved the value, or yet to recount the drawbacks of marriage, such as pregnancy, the crying of infants, the torture caused by a rival, the cares of household management, and all those fancied blessings which death at last cuts short. Not that married women are as such outside the pale; they have their own place, the marriage that is honorable and the bed undefiled. My purpose is to show you that you are fleeing from Sodom and should take warning by Lot's wife. There is no flattery, I can tell you, in these pages. A flatterer's words are fair, but for all that he is an enemy. You need expect no rhetorical flourishes setting you among the angels, and while they extol virginity as blessed, putting the world at your feet.

3. I would have you draw from your monastic vow not pride but fear. You walk laden with gold; you must keep out of the robber's way. To us men this life is a race-course: we contend here, we are crowned elsewhere. No man can lay aside fear while serpents and scorpions beset his path. The Lord says: "My sword hath drunk its fill in heaven," and do you expect to find peace on the earth? No, the earth yields only thorns and thistles, and its dust is food for the serpent. "For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." We are hemmed in by hosts of foes, our enemies are upon every side. The weak flesh will soon be ashes: one against many, it fights against tremendous odds. Not till it has been dissolved, not till the

<sup>1</sup> Eph. v. 31, 32.

<sup>2</sup> Cant. viii. 5, LXX.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. xi. 20.

<sup>4</sup> Gen. iii. 24, 28.

<sup>5</sup> Nu. xii. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Heb. xiii. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Isa. xxxiv. 5, R.V.

<sup>8</sup> Eph. vi. 22, R.V.

<sup>9</sup> Cant. i. 4.

<sup>10</sup> Gen. xix. 26.

<sup>11</sup> An allusion to 'Maher-shalal-hash-bar,' Isa. viii. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Hab. i. 16, LXX.

<sup>13</sup> Luke xxii. 31.

<sup>14</sup> Matt. x. 34.

<sup>15</sup> Isa. xiv. 22.

<sup>16</sup> Obad. 4.

<sup>17</sup> Isa. xiv. 23, 26.

Prince of this world has come and found no sin therein, not till then may you safely listen to the prophet's words: "Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the trouble which haunteth thee in darkness; nor for the demon and his attacks at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee." When the hosts of the enemy distress you, when your frame is fevered and your passions roused, when you say in your heart, "What shall I do?" Elisha's words shall give you your answer, "Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." He shall pray, "Lord, open the eyes of thine handmaid that she may see." And then when your eyes have been opened you shall see a fiery chariot like Elijah's waiting to carry you to heaven, and shall joyfully sing: "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken and we are escaped."

4. So long as we are held down by this frail body, so long as we have our treasure in earthen vessels, so long as the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, there can be no sure victory. "Our adversary the devil goeth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour." "Thou makest darkness," David says, "and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. The young lions roar after their prey and seek their meat from God." The devil looks not for unbelievers, for those who are without, whose flesh the Assyrian king roasted in the furnace. It is the church of Christ that he "makes haste to spoil." According to Habakkuk, "His food is of the choicest." A Job is the victim of his machinations, and after devouring Judas he seeks power to sift the [other] apostles. The Saviour came not to send peace upon the earth but a sword. Lucifer fell, Lucifer who used to rise at dawn; and he who was bred up in a paradise of delight had the well-earned sentence passed upon him, "Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord." For he had said in his heart, "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God," and "I will be like the Most High." Wherefore God says

<sup>1</sup> Joh. xiv. 30. The variant is difficult to explain and may be only a slip.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xci. 5-7, Vulg. <sup>3</sup> K. vi. 16.

<sup>4</sup> 2 K. ii. 22; vi. 17. <sup>5</sup> Ps. cxxiv. 7. <sup>6</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 7.

<sup>7</sup> Gal. v. 17. <sup>8</sup> 1 Pet. v. 8. <sup>9</sup> Ps. civ. 20, 21. <sup>10</sup> Jer. xxix. 22.

<sup>11</sup> An allusion to 'Maher-shalal-hash-bar,' Isa. viii. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Hab. i. 16, LXX. <sup>13</sup> Luke xxii. 31. <sup>14</sup> Matt. x. 34.

<sup>15</sup> Isa. xiv. 22. <sup>16</sup> Obad. 4. <sup>17</sup> Isa. xiv. 23, 26.

every day to the angels, as they descend the ladder that Jacob saw in his dream,<sup>1</sup> "I have said ye are Gods and all of you are children of the Most High. But ye shall die like men and fall like one of the princes."<sup>2</sup> The devil fell first, and since "God standeth in the congregation of the Gods and judgeth among the Gods,"<sup>3</sup> the apostle writes to those who are ceasing to be Gods—"Whereas there is among you envying and strife, are ye not carnal and walk as men?"<sup>4</sup>

5. If, then, the apostle, who was a chosen vessel<sup>5</sup> separated unto the gospel of Christ,<sup>6</sup> by reason of the pricks of the flesh and the allurements of vice keeps under his body and brings it into subjection, lest when he has preached to others he may himself be a cast-away;<sup>7</sup> and yet, for all that, sees another law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin;<sup>8</sup> if after nakedness, fasting, hunger, imprisonment, scourging and other torments, he turns back to himself and cries: "Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"<sup>9</sup> do you fancy that you ought to lay aside apprehension? See to it that God say not some day of you: "The virgin of Israel is fallen and there is none to raise her up."<sup>10</sup> I will say it boldly, though God can do all things. He cannot raise up a virgin when once she has fallen. He may indeed relieve one who is defiled from the penalty of her sin, but He will not give her a crown. Let us fear lest in us also the prophecy be fulfilled, "Good virgins shall faint."<sup>11</sup> Notice that it is good virgins who are spoken of, for there are bad ones as well. "Whosoever looketh on a woman," the Lord says, "to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."<sup>12</sup> So that virginity may be lost even by a thought. Such are evil virgins, virgins in the flesh, not in the spirit; foolish virgins, who, having no oil, are shut out by the Bridegroom.<sup>13</sup>

6. But if even real virgins, when they have other failings, are not saved by their physical virginity, what shall become of those who have prostituted the members of Christ, and have changed the temple of the Holy Ghost into a brothel? Straightway shall they hear the words: "Come down and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground; there is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate. Take the mill-

stone and grind meal; uncover thy locks, make bare the legs, pass over the rivers; thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen."<sup>14</sup> And shall she come to this after the bridal-chamber of God the Son, after the kisses of Him who is to her both kinsman and spouse?<sup>15</sup> Yes, she of whom the prophetic utterance once sang, "Upon thy right hand did stand the queen in a vesture of gold wrought about with divers colours,"<sup>16</sup> shall be made naked, and her skirts shall be discovered upon her face.<sup>17</sup> She shall sit by the waters of loneliness, her pitcher laid aside; and shall open her feet to every one that passeth by, and shall be polluted to the crown of her head.<sup>18</sup> Better had it been for her to have submitted to the yoke of marriage, to have walked in level places, than thus, aspiring to loftier heights, to fall into the deep of hell. I pray you, let not Zion the faithful city become a harlot:<sup>19</sup> let it not be that where the Trinity has been entertained, there demons shall dance and owls make their nests, and jackals build.<sup>20</sup> Let us not loose the belt that binds the breast. When lust tickles the sense and the soft fire of sensual pleasure sheds over us its pleasing glow, let us immediately break forth and cry: "The Lord is on my side: I will not fear what the flesh can do unto me."<sup>21</sup> When the inner man shows signs for a time of wavering between vice and virtue, say: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance and my God."<sup>22</sup> You must never let suggestions of evil grow on you, or a babel of disorder win strength in your breast. Slay the enemy while he is small; and, that you may not have a crop of tares, nip the evil in the bud. Bear in mind the warning words of the Psalmist: "Hapless daughter of Babylon, happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones."<sup>23</sup> Because natural heat inevitably kindles in a man sensual passion, he is praised and accounted happy who, when foul suggestions arise in his mind, gives them no quarter, but dashes them instantly against the rock. "Now the Rock is Christ."<sup>24</sup>

7. How often, when I was living in the desert, in the vast solitude which gives to hermits a savage dwelling-place, parched by a burning sun, how often did I fancy myself

among the pleasures of Rome! I used to sit alone because I was filled with bitterness. Sackcloth disfigured my unshapely limbs and my skin from long neglect had become as black as an Ethiopian's. Tears and groans were every day my portion; and if drowsiness chanced to overcome my struggles against it, my bare bones, which hardly held together, clashed against the ground. Of my food and drink I say nothing: for, even in sickness, the solitaries have nothing but cold water, and to eat one's food cooked is looked upon as self-indulgence. Now, although in my fear of hell I had consigned myself to this prison, where I had no companions but scorpions and wild beasts, I often found myself amid beves of girls. My face was pale and my frame chilled with fasting; yet my mind was burning with desire, and the fires of lust kept bubbling up before me when my flesh was as good as dead. Helpless, I cast myself at the feet of Jesus, I watered them with my tears, I wiped them with my hair: and then I subdued my rebellious body with weeks of abstinence. I do not blush to avow my abject misery; rather I lament that I am not now what once I was. I remember how I often cried aloud all night till the break of day and ceased not from beating my breast till tranquillity returned at the chiding of the Lord. I used to dread my very cell as though it knew my thoughts; and, stern and angry with myself, I used to make my way alone into the desert. Wherever I saw hollow valleys, craggy mountains, steep cliffs, there I made my oratory, there the house of correction for my unhappy flesh. There, also—the Lord Himself is my witness—when I had shed copious tears and had strained my eyes towards heaven, I sometimes felt myself among angelic hosts, and for joy and gladness sang: "because of the savour of thy good ointments we will run after thee."<sup>25</sup>

8. Now, if such are the temptations of men who, since their bodies are emaciated with fasting, have only evil thoughts to fear, how must it fare with a girl whose surroundings are those of luxury and ease? Surely, to use the apostle's words, "She is dead while she liveth."<sup>26</sup> Therefore, if experience gives me a right to advise, or clothes my words with credit, I would begin by urging you and warning you as Christ's spouse to avoid wine as you would avoid poison. For wine is the first weapon used by demons against the young. Greed does not shake, nor pride puff up, nor ambition infatuate so

much as this. Other vices we easily escape, but this enemy is shut up within us, and wherever we go we carry him with us. Wine and youth between them kindle the fire of sensual pleasure. Why do we throw oil on the flame—why do we add fresh fuel to a miserable body which is already ablaze. Paul, it is true, says to Timothy "drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake, and for thine often infirmities."<sup>27</sup> But notice the reasons for which the permission is given, to cure an aching stomach and a frequent infirmity. And lest we should indulge ourselves too much on the score of our ailments, he commands that but little shall be taken; advising rather as a physician than as an apostle (though, indeed, an apostle is a spiritual physician). He evidently feared that Timothy might succumb to weakness, and might prove unequal to the constant moving to and fro involved in preaching the Gospel. Besides, he remembered that he had spoken of "wine wherein is excess,"<sup>28</sup> and had said, "it is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine."<sup>29</sup> Noah drank wine and became intoxicated; but living as he did in the rude age after the flood, when the vine was first planted, perhaps he did not know its power of inebriation. And to let you see the hidden meaning of Scripture in all its fulness (for the word of God is a pearl and may be pierced on every side) after his drunkenness came the uncovering of his body; self-indulgence culminated in lust.<sup>30</sup> First the belly is crammed; then the other members are roused. Similarly, at a later period, "The people sat down to eat and to drink and rose up to play."<sup>31</sup> Lot also, God's friend, whom He saved upon the mountain, who was the only one found righteous out of so many thousands, was intoxicated by his daughters. And, although they may have acted as they did more from a desire of offspring than from love of sinful pleasure—for the human race seemed in danger of extinction—yet they were well aware that the righteous man would not abet their design unless intoxicated. In fact he did not know what he was doing, and his sin was not wilful. Still his error was a grave one, for it made him the father of Moab and Ammon,<sup>32</sup> Israel's enemies, of whom it is said: "Even to the fourteenth generation they shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord forever."<sup>33</sup>

9. When Elijah, in his flight from Jezebel,

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xxviii. 12. <sup>2</sup> Ps. lxxxvii. 6, 7. <sup>3</sup> Ps. lxxxvii. 1. <sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 3. <sup>5</sup> Acts ix. 15. <sup>6</sup> Gal. i. 15. <sup>7</sup> 2 Cor. ix. 27. <sup>8</sup> Rom. vii. 23. <sup>9</sup> Rom. vii. 24. <sup>10</sup> Am. v. 2. <sup>11</sup> Am. viii. 13. <sup>12</sup> Matt. v. 28. <sup>13</sup> Matt. xxv. 3, 20.

<sup>14</sup> Isa. xlvii. 1-3. <sup>15</sup> Cant. v. 2, LXXX. <sup>16</sup> Ps. xlv. 10, P.B.V. <sup>17</sup> Jer. xiii. 26. <sup>18</sup> Ezek. xvi. 25. <sup>19</sup> Isa. i. 21. <sup>20</sup> Isa. xxiv. 15; xiii. 22, R.V. <sup>21</sup> Pss. cxviii. 6; lvi. 4. <sup>22</sup> Ps. xlii. 11. <sup>23</sup> Ps. cxxxvii. 9. <sup>24</sup> 1 Cor. x. 4.

<sup>25</sup> Cant. i. 3, 4.

<sup>26</sup> 2 Tim. v. 6.

<sup>27</sup> 1 Tim. v. 23. <sup>28</sup> Eph. v. 18. <sup>29</sup> Rom. xiv. 21. <sup>30</sup> Gen. ix. 20, 21. <sup>31</sup> Ex. xxxii. 6. <sup>32</sup> Gen. xix. 30-38. <sup>33</sup> Deut. xxiii. 3. Jerome substitutes "fourteenth" for "tenth."

lay weary and desolate beneath the oak, there came an angel who raised him up and said, "Arise and eat." And he looked, and behold there was a cake and a cruse of water at his head.<sup>1</sup> Had God willed it, might He not have sent His prophet spiced wines and dainty dishes and flesh basted into tenderness? When Elisha invited the sons of the prophets to dinner, he only gave them field-herbs to eat; and when all cried out with one voice: "There is death in the pot," the man of God did not storm at the cooks (for he was not used to very sumptuous fare), but caused meal to be brought, and casting it in, sweetened the bitter mess<sup>2</sup> with spiritual strength as Moses had once sweetened the waters of Mara.<sup>3</sup> Again, when men were sent to arrest the prophet, and were smitten with physical and mental blindness, that he might bring them without their own knowledge to Samaria, notice the food with which Elisha ordered them to be refreshed. "Set bread and water," he said, "before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master."<sup>4</sup> And Daniel, who might have had rich food from the king's table,<sup>5</sup> preferred the mower's breakfast, brought to him by Habakkuk,<sup>6</sup> which must have been but country fare. He was called "a man of desires,"<sup>7</sup> because he would not eat the bread of desire or drink the wine of concupiscence.

10. There are, in the Scriptures, countless divine answers condemning gluttony and approving simple food. But as fasting is not my present theme and an adequate discussion of it would require a treatise to itself, these few observations must suffice of the many which the subject suggests. By them you will understand why the first man, obeying his belly and not God, was cast down from paradise into this vale of tears;<sup>8</sup> and why Satan used hunger to tempt the Lord Himself in the wilderness;<sup>9</sup> and why the apostle cries: "Meats for the belly and the belly for meats, but God shall destroy both it and them;"<sup>10</sup> and why he speaks of the self-indulgent as men "whose God is their belly."<sup>11</sup> For men invariably worship what they like best. Care must be taken, therefore, that abstinence may bring back to Paradise those whom satiety once drove out.

11. You will tell me, perhaps, that, high-born as you are, reared in luxury and used to lie softly, you cannot do without wine and dainties, and would find a stricter rule of life unendurable. If so, I can only say: "Live,

then, by your own rule, since God's rule is too hard for you." Not that the Creator and Lord of all takes pleasure in a rumbling and empty stomach, or in fevered lungs; but that these are indispensable as means to the preservation of chastity. Job was dear to God, perfect and upright before Him;<sup>1</sup> yet hear what he says of the devil: "His strength is in the loins, and his force is in the navel."<sup>2</sup>

The terms are chosen for decency's sake, but the reproductive organs of the two sexes are meant. Thus, the descendant of David, who, according to the promise is to sit upon his throne, is said to come from his loins.<sup>3</sup> And the seventy-five souls descended from Jacob who entered Egypt are said to come out of his thigh.<sup>4</sup> So, also, when his thigh shrank after the Lord had wrestled with him,<sup>5</sup> he ceased to beget children. The Israelites, again, are told to celebrate the passover with loins girded and mortified.<sup>6</sup> God says to Job: "Gird up thy loins as a man."<sup>7</sup> John wears a leathern girdle.<sup>8</sup> The apostles must gird their loins to carry the lamps of the Gospel.<sup>9</sup> When Ezekiel tells us how Jerusalem is found in the plain of wandering, covered with blood, he uses the words: "Thy navel has not been cut."<sup>10</sup> In his assaults on men, therefore, the devil's strength is in the loins; in his attacks on women his force is in the navel.

12. Do you wish for proof of my assertions? Take examples. Sampson was braver than a lion and tougher than a rock; alone and unprotected he pursued a thousand armed men; and yet, in Delilah's embrace, his resolution melted away. David was a man after God's own heart, and his lips had often sung of the Holy One, the future Christ; and yet as he walked upon his housetop he was fascinated by Bathsheba's nudity, and added murder to adultery.<sup>11</sup> Notice here how, even in his own house, a man cannot use his eyes without danger. Then repenting, he says to the Lord: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight."<sup>12</sup> Being a king he feared no one else. So, too, with Solomon. Wisdom used him to sing her praise,<sup>13</sup> and he treated of all plants "from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall;"<sup>14</sup> and yet he went back from God because he was a lover of women.<sup>15</sup> And, as if to show that near relationship is no safe-

<sup>1</sup> Job ii. 3.    <sup>2</sup> Job xl. 16, of behemoth.    <sup>3</sup> Ps. cxxii. 11.  
<sup>4</sup> Gen. xlviii. 26.    <sup>5</sup> Gen. xx. xii. 24, 25.    <sup>6</sup> Exod. xii. 11.  
<sup>7</sup> Job. xxviii. 3.    <sup>8</sup> Matt. i. 4.    <sup>9</sup> Luke xii. 35.  
<sup>10</sup> Ezek. xvi. 4-6.    <sup>11</sup> 2 Sam. xii.    <sup>12</sup> Ps. li. 4.  
<sup>13</sup> Solomon was the reputed author of the Book of Wisdom.  
<sup>14</sup> 1 K. iv. 33.    <sup>15</sup> 1 K. xi 1-4.

guard, Amnon burned with illicit passion for his sister Tamar.<sup>1</sup>

13. I cannot bring myself to speak of the many virgins who daily fall and are lost to the bosom of the church, their mother: stars over which the proud foe sets up his throne,<sup>2</sup> and rocks hollowed by the serpent that he may dwell in their fissures. You may see many women widows before wedded, who try to conceal their miserable fall by a lying garb. Unless they are betrayed by swelling wombs or by the crying of their infants, they walk abroad with tripping feet and heads in the air. Some go so far as to take potions, that they may insure barrenness, and thus murder human beings almost before their conception. Some, when they find themselves with child through their sin, use drugs to procure abortion, and when (as often happens) they die with their offspring, they enter the lower world laden with the guilt not only of adultery against Christ but also of suicide and child murder. Yet it is these who say: "Unto the pure all things are pure;"<sup>3</sup> my conscience is sufficient guide for me. A pure heart is what God looks for. Why should I abstain from meats which God has created to be received with thanksgiving?<sup>4</sup> And when they wish to appear agreeable and entertaining they first drench themselves with wine, and then joining the grossest profanity to intoxication, they say: "Far be it from me to abstain from the blood of Christ." And when they see another pale or sad they call her "wretch" or "manichæan;"<sup>5</sup> quite logically, indeed, for on their principles fasting involves heresy. When they go out they do their best to attract notice, and with nods and winks encourage troops of young fellows to follow them. Of each and all of these the prophet's words are true: "Thou hast a whore's forehead; thou refusest to be ashamed."<sup>6</sup> Their robes have but a narrow purple stripe,<sup>7</sup> it is true; and their head-dress is somewhat loose, so as to leave the hair free. From their shoulders flutters the lilac mantle which they call "maforte;" they have their feet in cheap slippers and their arms tucked up tight-fitting sleeves. Add to these marks of their profession an easy gait, and you have all the virginity that they possess. Such may have eulogizers of their own, and may fetch a higher price in the market of perdition, merely because they are called virgins. But to such virgins as these I prefer to be displeasing.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Sam. xiii.    <sup>2</sup> Isa. xiv. 13.    <sup>3</sup> Tit. i. 25.    <sup>4</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 3.  
<sup>5</sup> The Manichæans believed evil to be inseparable from matter. Hence they inculcated a rigid asceticism.    <sup>6</sup> Jer. iii. 3.  
<sup>7</sup> Plebeians wore a narrow stripe, patricians a broad one.

14. I blush to speak of it, it is so shocking; yet though sad, it is true. How comes this plague of the *agapetæ*<sup>1</sup> to be in the church? Whence come these unwedded wives, these novel concubines, these harlots, so I will call them, though they cling to a single partner? One house holds them and one chamber. They often occupy the same bed, and yet they call us suspicious if we fancy anything amiss. A brother leaves his virgin sister; a virgin, slighting her unmarried brother, seeks a brother in a stranger. Both alike profess to have but one object, to find spiritual consolation from those not of their kin; but their real aim is to indulge in sexual intercourse. It is on such that Solomon in the book of proverbs heaps his scorn. "Can a man take fire in his bosom," he says, "and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals and his feet not be burned?"<sup>2</sup>

15. We cast out, then, and banish from our sight those who only wish to seem and not to be virgins. Henceforward I may bring all my speech to bear upon you who, as it is your lot to be the first virgin of noble birth in Rome, have to labor the more diligently not to lose good things to come, as well as those that are present. You have at least learned from a case in your own family the troubles of wedded life and the uncertainties of marriage. Your sister, Blæsilla, before you in age but behind you in declining the vow of virginity, has become a widow but seven months after she has taken a husband. Hapless plight of us mortals who know not what is before us! She has lost, at once, the crown of virginity and the pleasures of wedlock. And, although, as a widow, the second degree of chastity is hers, still can you not imagine the continual crosses which she has to bear, daily seeing in her sister what she has lost herself; and, while she finds it hard to go without the pleasures of wedlock, having a less reward for her present continence? Still she, too, may take heart and rejoice. The fruit which is an hundredfold and that which is sixtyfold both spring from one seed, and that seed is chastity.<sup>3</sup>

16. Do not court the company of married ladies or visit the houses of the high-born. Do not look too often on the life which you despised to become a virgin. Women of the world, you know, plume themselves because their husbands are on the bench or in other

<sup>1</sup> Beloved ones, viz., women who lived with the unmarried clergy professedly as spiritual sisters, but really (in too many cases) as mistresses. The evil custom was widely prevalent and called forth many protests. The councils of Elvira, Ancyra, and Nicea passed canons against it.    <sup>2</sup> Prov. vi. 27, 28.    <sup>3</sup> Matt. xiii. 8.

high positions. And the wife of the emperor always has an eager throng of visitors at her door. Why do you, then, wrong your husband? Why do you, God's bride, hasten to visit the wife of a mere man? Learn in this respect a holy pride; know that you are better than they. And not only must you avoid intercourse with those who are puffed up by their husbands' honors, who are hedged in with troops of eunuchs, and who wear robes inwrought with threads of gold. You must also shun those who are widows from necessity and not from choice. Not that they ought to have desired the death of their husbands; but that they have not welcomed the opportunity of continence when it has come. As it is, they only change their garb; their old self-seeking remains unchanged. To see them in their capacious litters, with red cloaks and plump bodies, a row of eunuchs walking in front of them, you would fancy them not to have lost husbands but to be seeking them. Their houses are filled with flatterers and with guests. The very clergy, who ought to inspire them with respect by their teaching and authority, kiss these ladies on the forehead, and putting forth their hands (so that, if you knew no better, you might suppose them in the act of blessing), take wages for their visits. They, meanwhile, seeing that priests cannot do without them, are lifted up into pride; and as, having had experience of both, they prefer the license of widowhood to the restraints of marriage, they call themselves chaste livers and nuns. After an immoderate supper they retire to rest to dream of the apostles.<sup>1</sup>

17. Let your companions be women pale and thin with fasting, and approved by their years and conduct; such as daily sing in their hearts: "Tell me where thou feedest thy flock, where thou makest it to rest at noon,"<sup>2</sup> and say, with true earnestness, "I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ."<sup>3</sup> Be subject to your parents, imitating the example of your spouse.<sup>4</sup> Rarely go abroad, and if you wish to seek the aid of the martyrs seek it in your own chamber. For you will never need a pretext for going out if you always go out when there is need. Take food in moderation, and never overload your stomach. For many women, while temperate as regards wine, are intemperate in the use of food. When you rise at night to pray, let your breath be that of an empty and not that of an overfull

stomach. Read often, learn all that you can. Let sleep overcome you, the roll still in your hands; when your head falls, let it be on the sacred page. Let your fasts be of daily occurrence and your refreshment such as avoids satiety. It is idle to carry an empty stomach if, in two or three days' time, the fast is to be made up for by repletion. When cloyed the mind immediately grows sluggish, and when the ground is watered it puts forth the thorns of lust. If ever you feel the outward man sighing for the flower of youth, and if, as you lie on your couch after a meal, you are excited by the alluring train of sensual desires; then seize the shield of faith, for it alone can quench the fiery darts of the devil.<sup>5</sup> "They are all adulterers," says the prophet; "they have made ready their heart like an oven."<sup>6</sup> But do you keep close to the footsteps of Christ, and, intent upon His words, say: "Did not our heart burn within us by the way while Jesus opened to us the Scriptures?"<sup>7</sup> and again: "Thy word is tried to the uttermost, and thy servant loveth it."<sup>8</sup> It is hard for the human soul to avoid loving something, and our mind must of necessity give way to affection of one kind or another. The love of the flesh is overcome by the love of the spirit. Desire is quenched by desire. What is taken from the one increases the other. Therefore, as you lie on your couch, say again and again: "By night have I sought Him whom my soul loveth."<sup>9</sup> "Mortify, therefore," says the apostle, "your members which are upon the earth."<sup>10</sup> Because he himself did so, he could afterwards say with confidence: "I live, yet not I, but Christ, liveth in me."<sup>11</sup> He who mortifies his members, and feels that he is walking in a vain show,<sup>12</sup> is not afraid to say: "I am become like a bottle in the frost." Whatever there was in me of the moisture of lust has been dried out of me." And again: "My knees are weak through fasting; I forget to eat my bread. By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin."<sup>13</sup>

18. Be like the grasshopper and make night musical. Nightly wash your bed and water your couch with your tears.<sup>14</sup> Watch and be like the sparrow alone upon the housetop.<sup>15</sup> Sing with the spirit, but sing with the understanding also.<sup>16</sup> And let your song be that of the psalmist: "Bless the

<sup>1</sup> Eph. vi. 16. <sup>2</sup> Hos. vii. 4, 6, R.V. <sup>3</sup> Luke xxiv. 32. <sup>4</sup> Gal. cxix. 140, P.B.V. <sup>5</sup> Cant. iii. 1. <sup>6</sup> Col. iii. 5. <sup>7</sup> Gal. ii. 20. <sup>8</sup> Ps. xxxix. 6, Vulg. That is, who knows that the world is vanity. <sup>9</sup> Ps. cxix. 83, Vulg. <sup>10</sup> Ps. cix. 24; cii. 5. <sup>11</sup> Ps. vi. 6, P.B.V. <sup>12</sup> Ps. cii. 7. <sup>13</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

Lord, O my soul; and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction."<sup>17</sup> Can we, any of us, honestly make his words our own: "I have eaten ashes like bread and mingled my drink with weeping?"<sup>18</sup> Yet, should we not weep and groan when the serpent invites us, as he invited our first parents, to eat forbidden fruit, and when after expelling us from the paradise of virginity he desires to clothe us with mantles of skins such as that which Elijah, on his return to paradise, left behind him on earth?<sup>19</sup> Say to yourself: "What have I to do with the pleasures of sense that so soon come to an end? What have I to do with the song of the sirens so sweet and so fatal to those who hear it?" I would not have you subject to that sentence whereby condemnation has been passed upon mankind. When God says to Eve, "In pain and in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children," say to yourself, "That is a law for a married woman, not for me." And when He continues, "Thy desire shall be to thy husband,"<sup>20</sup> say again: "Let her desire be to her husband who has not Christ for her spouse." And when, last of all, He says, "Thou shalt surely die,"<sup>21</sup> once more, say, "Marriage indeed must end in death; but the life on which I have resolved is independent of sex. Let those who are wives keep the place and the time that properly belong to them. For me, virginity is consecrated in the persons of Mary and of Christ."

19. Some one may say, "Do you dare detract from wedlock, which is a state blessed by God?" I do not detract from wedlock when I set virginity before it. No one compares a bad thing with a good. Wedded women may congratulate themselves that they come next to virgins. "Be fruitful," God says, "and multiply, and replenish the earth."<sup>22</sup> He who desires to replenish the earth may increase and multiply if he will. But the train to which you belong is not on earth, but in heaven. The command to increase and multiply first finds fulfilment after the expulsion from paradise, after the nakedness and the fig-leaves which speak of sexual passion. Let them marry and be given in marriage who eat their bread in the sweat of their brow; whose land brings forth to them thorns and thistles,<sup>23</sup> and whose crops are choked with briars. My seed produces fruit a hundredfold.<sup>24</sup> "All men cannot receive

God's saying, but they to whom it is given."

Some people may be eunuchs from necessity; I am one of free will.<sup>25</sup> "There is a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing. There is a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together."<sup>26</sup> Now that out of the hard stones of the Gentiles God has raised up children unto Abraham,<sup>27</sup> they begin to be "holy stones rolling upon the earth."<sup>28</sup> They pass through the whirlwinds of the world, and roll on in God's chariot on rapid wheels. Let those stitch coats to themselves who have lost the coat woven from the top throughout,<sup>29</sup> who delight in the cries of infants which, as soon as they see the light, lament that they are born. In paradise Eve was a virgin, and it was only after the coats of skins that she began her married life. Now paradise is your home too. Keep therefore your birthright and say: "Return unto thy rest, O my soul."<sup>30</sup> To show that virginity is natural while wedlock only follows guilt, what is born of wedlock is virgin flesh, and it gives back in fruit what in root it has lost. "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a flower shall grow out of his roots."<sup>31</sup> The rod is the mother of the Lord—simple, pure, unsullied; drawing no germ of life from without but fruitful in singleness like God Himself. The flower of the rod is Christ, who says of Himself: "I am the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys."<sup>32</sup> In another place He is foretold to be "a stone cut out of the mountain without hands,"<sup>33</sup> a figure by which the prophet signifies that He is to be born a virgin of a virgin. For the hands are here a figure of wedlock as in the passage: "His left hand is under my head and his right hand doth embrace me."<sup>34</sup> It agrees, also, with this interpretation that the unclean animals are led into Noah's ark in pairs, while of the clean an uneven number is taken.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, when Moses and Joshua were bidden to remove their shoes because the ground on which they stood was holy,<sup>36</sup> the command had a mystical meaning. So, too, when the disciples were appointed to preach the gospel they were told to take with them neither shoe nor shoe-latchet,<sup>37</sup> and when the soldiers came to cast lots for the garments of Jesus<sup>38</sup> they found no boots that they could take away.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xix. 21, 22. <sup>2</sup> Eccles. iii. 5. <sup>3</sup> Matt. iii. 9. <sup>4</sup> Zech. ix. 16, LXX. <sup>5</sup> Joh. xix. 23. <sup>6</sup> Ps. cxix. 7. <sup>7</sup> Isa. xi. 1, LXX. <sup>8</sup> In the Latin there is a play on words here between virga and virgo. <sup>9</sup> Cant. ii. 7. <sup>10</sup> Dan. ii. 45. <sup>11</sup> Cant. ii. 6. <sup>12</sup> Gen. vii. 2. <sup>13</sup> Ex. iii. 5; Josh. v. 15. <sup>14</sup> Matt. x. 10. According to Letter XXVIII. <sup>15</sup> <sup>16</sup> <sup>17</sup> <sup>18</sup> <sup>19</sup> <sup>20</sup> <sup>21</sup> <sup>22</sup> <sup>23</sup> <sup>24</sup> <sup>25</sup> <sup>26</sup> <sup>27</sup> <sup>28</sup> <sup>29</sup> <sup>30</sup> <sup>31</sup> <sup>32</sup> <sup>33</sup> <sup>34</sup> <sup>35</sup> <sup>36</sup> <sup>37</sup> <sup>38</sup> these typify dead works. <sup>39</sup> Joh. xix. 23, 24.

<sup>1</sup> Cena dubia. The allusion is to Terence, Phormio, 342. <sup>2</sup> Cant. i. 7, R.V. <sup>3</sup> Phil. i. 23. <sup>4</sup> Luke ii. 51.

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cii. 2-4. <sup>2</sup> Ps. cii. 9. <sup>3</sup> 2 K. ii. 23. <sup>4</sup> Gen. iii. 15. <sup>5</sup> Gen. ii. 17. <sup>6</sup> Gen. i. 26. <sup>7</sup> Gen. iii. 18, 19. <sup>8</sup> See Letter XLVIII. §§ 2, 3.

For the Lord would not Himself possess what He had forbidden to His servants.

20. I praise wedlock, I praise marriage, but it is because they give me virgins. I gather the rose from the thorns, the gold from the earth, the pearl from the shell. "Doth the plowman plow all day to sow?"<sup>1</sup> Shall he not also enjoy the fruit of his labor? Wedlock is the more honored, the more what is born of it is loved. Why, mother, do you grudge your daughter her virginity? She has been reared on your milk, she has come from your womb, she has grown up in your bosom. Your watchful affection has kept her a virgin. Are you angry with her because she chooses to be a king's wife and not a soldier's? She has conferred on you a high privilege; you are now the mother-in-law of God. "Concerning virgins," says the apostle, "I have no commandment of the Lord."<sup>2</sup> Why was this? Because his own virginity was due, not to a command, but to his free choice. For they are not to be heard who feign him to have had a wife; for, when he is discussing continence and commending perpetual chastity, he uses the words, "I would that all men were even as I myself." And farther on, "I say, therefore, to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I."<sup>3</sup> And in another place, "have we not power to lead about wives even as the rest of the apostles?"<sup>4</sup> Why then has he no commandment from the Lord concerning virginity? Because what is freely offered is worth more than what is extorted by force, and to command virginity would have been to abrogate wedlock. It would have been a hard enactment to compel opposition to nature and to extort from men the angelic life; and not only so, it would have been to condemn what is a divine ordinance.

21. The old law had a different ideal of blessedness, for therein it is said: "Blessed is he who hath seed in Zion and a family in Jerusalem;"<sup>5</sup> and "Cursed is the barren who beareth not;"<sup>6</sup> and "Thy children shall be like olive-plants round about thy table."<sup>7</sup> Riches too are promised to the faithful and we are told that "there was not one feeble person among their tribes."<sup>8</sup> But now even to eunuchs it is said, "Say not, behold I am a dry tree,"<sup>9</sup> for instead of sons and daughters you have a place forever in heaven. Now the poor are blessed, now Lazarus is set before Dives in his purple.<sup>10</sup> Now he who is weak is counted strong. But in those days

the world was still unpeopled; accordingly, to pass over instances of childlessness meant only to serve as types, those only were considered happy who could boast of children. It was for this reason that Abraham in his old age married Keturah;<sup>1</sup> that Leah hired Jacob with her son's mandrakes,<sup>2</sup> and that fair Rachel—a type of the church—complained of the closing of her womb.<sup>3</sup> But gradually the crop grew up and then the reaper was sent forth with his sickle. Elijah lived a virgin life, so also did Elisha and many of the sons of the prophets. To Jeremiah the command came: "Thou shalt not take thee a wife."<sup>4</sup> He had been sanctified in his mother's womb,<sup>5</sup> and now he was forbidden to take a wife because the captivity was near. The apostle gives the same counsel in different words. "I think, therefore, that this is good by reason of the present distress, namely that it is good for a man to be as he is."<sup>6</sup> What is this distress which does away with the joys of wedlock? The apostle tells us, in a later verse: "The time is short: it remaineth that those who have wives be as though they had none."<sup>7</sup> Nebuchadnezzar is hard at hand. The lion is bestirring himself from his lair. What good will marriage be to me if it is to end in slavery to the haughtiest of kings? What good will little ones be to me if their lot is to be that which the prophet sadly describes: "The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst; the young children ask for bread and no man breaketh it unto them."<sup>8</sup> In those days, as I have said, the virtue of continence was found only in men: Eve still continued to travail with children. But now that a virgin has conceived<sup>9</sup> in the womb and has borne to us a child of which the prophet says that "Government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called the mighty God, the everlasting Father,"<sup>10</sup> now the chain of the curse is broken. Death came through Eve, but life has come through Mary. And thus the gift of virginity has been bestowed most richly upon women, seeing that it has had its beginning from a woman. As soon as the Son of God set foot upon the earth, He formed for Himself a new household there; that, as He was adored by angels in heaven, angels might serve Him also on earth. Then chaste Judith once more cut off the head of Holofernes.<sup>11</sup> Then Haman—whose name means iniquity—was once

more burned in fire of his own kindling.<sup>1</sup> Then James and John forsook father and net and ship and followed the Saviour: neither kinship nor the world's ties, nor the care of their home could hold them back. Then were the words heard: "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."<sup>2</sup> For no soldier goes with a wife to battle. Even when a disciple would have buried his father, the Lord forbade him, and said: "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head."<sup>3</sup> So you must not complain if you have but scanty house-room. In the same strain, the apostle writes: "He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: but he that is married careth for the things that are of the world how he may please his wife. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she that is married careth for the things of the world how she may please her husband."<sup>4</sup>

22. How great inconveniences are involved in wedlock and how many anxieties encompass it I have, I think, described shortly in my treatise—published against Helvidius<sup>5</sup>—on the perpetual virginity of the blessed Mary. It would be tedious to go over the same ground now; and any one who pleases may draw from that fountain. But lest I should seem wholly to have passed over the matter, I will just say now that the apostle bids us pray without ceasing,<sup>6</sup> and that he who in the married state renders his wife her due<sup>7</sup> cannot so pray. Either we pray always and are virgins, or we cease to pray that we may fulfil the claims of marriage. Still he says: "If a virgin marry she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh."<sup>8</sup> At the outset I promised that I should say little or nothing of the embarrassments of wedlock, and now I give you notice to the same effect. If you want to know from how many vexations a virgin is free and by how many a wife is fettered you should read Tertullian "to a philosophic friend,"<sup>9</sup> and his other treatises on virginity, the blessed Cyprian's noble volume, the writings of Pope Damasus<sup>10</sup> in prose and verse, and the treatises recently

written for his sister by our own Ambrose.<sup>1</sup> In these he has poured forth his soul with such a flood of eloquence that he has sought out, set forth, and put in order all that bears on the praise of virgins.

23. We must proceed by a different path, for our purpose is not the praise of virginity but its preservation. To know that it is a good thing is not enough: when we have chosen it we must guard it with jealous care. The first only requires judgment, and we share it with many; the second calls for toil, and few compete with us in it. "He that shall endure unto the end," the Lord says, "the same shall be saved,"<sup>2</sup> and "many are called but few are chosen."<sup>3</sup> Therefore I conjure you before God and Jesus Christ and His elect angels to guard that which you have received, not readily exposing to the public gaze the vessels of the Lord's temple (which only the priests are by right allowed to see), that no profane person may look upon God's sanctuary. Uzzah, when he touched the ark which it was not lawful to touch, was struck down suddenly by death.<sup>4</sup> And assuredly no gold or silver vessel was ever so dear to God as is the temple of a virgin's body. The shadow went before, but now the reality is come. You indeed may speak in all simplicity, and from motives of amiability may treat with courtesy the veriest strangers, but unchaste eyes see nothing aright. They fail to appreciate the beauty of the soul, and only value that of the body. Hezekiah showed God's treasure to the Assyrians,<sup>5</sup> who ought never to have seen what they were sure to covet. The consequence was that Judea was torn by continual wars, and that the very first things carried away to Babylon were these vessels of the Lord. We find Belshazzar at his feast and among his concubines (vice always glories in defiling what is noble) drinking out of these sacred cups.<sup>6</sup>

24. Never incline your ear to words of mischief. For men often say an improper word to make trial of a virgin's steadfastness, to see if she hears it with pleasure, and if she is ready to unbend at every silly jest. Such persons applaud whatever you affirm and deny whatever you deny; they speak of you as not only holy but accomplished, and say that in you there is no guile. "Behold," say they, "a true handmaid of Christ; behold entire singleness of heart. How different from that rough, un-

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xxviii. 24. <sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 25.  
<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 7, 8. <sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 5. <sup>5</sup> Isa. xxxi. 9, LXX.  
<sup>6</sup> Isa. liv. 1, LXX. (?) <sup>7</sup> Ps. cxxviii. 3. <sup>8</sup> Ps. cv. 37.  
<sup>9</sup> Isa. lvi. 3. <sup>10</sup> Cf. Luke xvi. 19 1977.

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xxv. 1. <sup>2</sup> Gen. xxx. 14-16.  
<sup>3</sup> Gen. xxx. 1, 2. <sup>4</sup> Jer. xvi. 2.  
<sup>5</sup> Jer. i. 5. <sup>6</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 26, R.V. <sup>7</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 20.  
<sup>8</sup> Lam. iv. 4. <sup>9</sup> Isa. vii. 14. <sup>10</sup> Isa. ix. 6. <sup>11</sup> Judith xiii.

<sup>1</sup> Esther vii. 10. <sup>2</sup> Mark viii. 34. <sup>3</sup> Matt. viii. 20-22.  
<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 32-34. <sup>5</sup> See the treatise "Against Helvidius," in this volume. <sup>6</sup> 1 Thess. v. 17. <sup>7</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 3, R.V. <sup>8</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 28.  
<sup>9</sup> Not extant. <sup>10</sup> Jerome alludes to it again in his treatise against Jovinian. <sup>11</sup> See Migne's "Patrologia," xiii., col. 347-418.

<sup>1</sup> Ambrose de Virg. Migne's "Patrologia," xvi., col. 187.  
<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxiv. 13. <sup>3</sup> Matt. xx. 16; xxii. 14. <sup>4</sup> 2 Sam. vi. 6, 7.  
<sup>5</sup> 2 Kings xx. 12, 13. <sup>6</sup> Dan. v. 1-3.

sightly, cour. I fright, who most likely never married because she could never find a husband." Our natural weakness induces us readily to listen to such flatterers; but, though we may blush and reply that such praise is more than our due, the soul within us rejoices to hear itself praised.

Like the ark of the covenant Christ's spouse should be overlaid with gold within and without; she should be the guardian of the law of the Lord. Just as the ark contained nothing but the tables of the covenant,<sup>1</sup> so in you there should be no thought of anything that is outside. For it pleases the Lord to sit in your mind as He once sat on the mercy-seat and the cherubims.<sup>2</sup> As He sent His disciples to loose Him the foal of an ass that he might ride on it, so He sends them to release you from the cares of the world, that leaving the bricks and straw of Egypt, you may follow Him, the true Moses, through the wilderness and may enter the land of promise. Let no one dare to forbid you, neither mother nor sister nor kinswoman nor brother: "The Lord hath need of you."<sup>3</sup> Should they seek to hinder you, let them fear the scourges that fell on Pharaoh, who, because he would not let God's people go that they might serve Him,<sup>4</sup> suffered the plagues described in Scripture. Jesus entering into the temple cast out those things which belonged not to the temple. For God is jealous and will not allow the father's house to be made a den of robbers.<sup>5</sup> Where money is counted, where doves are sold, where simplicity is stifled, where, that is, a virgin's breast glows with cares of this world; straightway the veil of the temple is rent,<sup>6</sup> the bridegroom rises in anger, he says: "Your house is left unto you desolate."<sup>7</sup> Read the gospel and see how Mary sitting at the feet of the Lord is set before the zealous Martha. In her anxiety to be hospitable Martha was preparing a meal for the Lord and His disciples; yet Jesus said to her: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things. But few things are needful or one."<sup>8</sup> And Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her."<sup>9</sup> Be then like Mary; prefer the food of the soul to that of the body. Leave it to your sisters to run to and fro and to seek how they may fitly welcome Christ. But do you, having once for all cast away the burden of the world, sit at the Lord's feet and say: "I have found him

whom my soul loveth; I will hold him, I will not let him go."<sup>10</sup> And He will answer: "My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her."<sup>11</sup> Now the mother of whom this is said is the heavenly Jerusalem.<sup>12</sup>

25. Ever let the privacy of your chamber guard you; ever let the Bridegroom sport with you within.<sup>13</sup> Do you pray? You speak to the Bridegroom. Do you read? He speaks to you. When sleep overtakes you He will come behind and put His hand through the hole of the door, and your heart<sup>14</sup> shall be moved for Him; and you will awake and rise up and say: "I am sick of love."<sup>15</sup> Then He will reply: "A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed."<sup>16</sup>

Go not from home nor visit the daughters of a strange land, though you have patriarchs for brothers and Israel for a father. Dinah went out and was seduced.<sup>17</sup> Do not seek the Bridegroom in the streets; do not go round the corners of the city. For though you may say: "I will rise now and go about the city: in the streets and in the broad ways I will seek Him whom my soul loveth," and though you may ask the watchmen: "Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?"<sup>18</sup> no one will deign to answer you. The Bridegroom cannot be found in the streets: "Strait and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life."<sup>19</sup> So the Song goes on: "I sought him but I could not find him: I called him but he gave me no answer."<sup>20</sup> And would that failure to find Him were all. You will be wounded and stripped, you will lament and say: "The watchmen that went about the city found me: they smote me, they wounded me, they took away my veil from me."<sup>21</sup> Now if one who could say: "I sleep but my heart waketh,"<sup>22</sup> and "A bundle of myrrh is my well beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts";<sup>23</sup> if one who could speak thus suffered so much because she went abroad, what shall become of us who are but young girls; of us who, when the bride goes in with the Bridegroom, still remain without? Jesus is jealous. He does not choose that your face should be seen of others. You may excuse yourself and say: "I have drawn close my veil, I have covered my face and I have sought Thee there and have said: 'Tell me, O Thou whom my soul

loveth, where Thou feedest Thy flock, where Thou makest it to rest at noon. For why should I be as one that is veiled beside the flocks of Thy companions?"<sup>24</sup> Yet in spite of your excuses He will be wroth, He will swell with anger and say: "If thou know not thyself, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock and feed thy goats beside the shepherd's tents."<sup>25</sup> You may be fair, and of all faces yours may be the dearest to the Bridegroom; yet, unless you know yourself, and keep your heart with all diligence,<sup>26</sup> unless also you avoid the eyes of the young men, you will be turned out of My bride-chamber to feed the goats, which shall be set on the left hand.<sup>27</sup>

26. These things being so, my Eustochium, daughter, lady, fellow-servant, sister—these names refer the first to your age, the second to your rank, the third to your religious vocation, the last to the place which you hold in my affection—hear the words of Isaiah: "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation of the Lord 'be overpast.'" Let foolish virgins stray abroad, but for your part stay at home with the Bridegroom; for if you shut your door, and, according to the precept of the Gospel,<sup>28</sup> pray to your Father in secret, He will come and knock, saying: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man . . . open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."<sup>29</sup> Then straightway you will eagerly reply: "It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled." It is impossible that you should refuse, and say: "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?"<sup>30</sup> Arise forthwith and open. Otherwise while you linger He may pass on and you may have mournfully to say: "I opened to my beloved, but my beloved was gone."<sup>31</sup> Why need the doors of your heart be closed to the Bridegroom? Let them be open to Christ but closed to the devil according to the saying: "If the spirit of him who hath power rise up against thee, leave not thy place."<sup>32</sup> Daniel, in that upper story to which he withdrew when he could no longer continue below, had his windows open toward Jerusalem.<sup>33</sup> Do you too keep your windows open,

but only on the side where light may enter and whence you may see the eye of the Lord. Open not those other windows of which the prophet says: "Death is come up into our windows."<sup>34</sup>

27. You must also be careful to avoid the snare of a passion for vainglory. "How," Jesus says, "can ye believe which receive glory one from another?"<sup>35</sup> What an evil that must be the victim of which cannot believe! Let us rather say: "Thou art my glorying,"<sup>36</sup> and "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord,"<sup>37</sup> and "If I yet pleased men I should not be the servant of Christ,"<sup>38</sup> and "Far be it from me to glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world hath been crucified unto me and I unto the world;"<sup>39</sup> and once more: "In God we boast all the day long; my soul shall make her boast in the Lord."<sup>40</sup> When you do alms, let God alone see you. When you fast, be of a cheerful countenance.<sup>41</sup> Let your dress be neither too neat nor too slovenly; neither let it be so remarkable as to draw the attention of passers-by, and to make men point their fingers at you. Is a brother dead? Has the body of a sister to be carried to its burial? Take care lest in too often performing such offices you die yourself. Do not wish to seem very devout nor more humble than need be, lest you seek glory by shunning it. For many, who screen from all men's sight their poverty, charity, and fasting, desire to excite admiration by their very disdain of it, and strangely seek for praise while they profess to keep out of its way. From the other disturbing influences which make men rejoice, despond, hope, and fear I find many free; but this is a defect which few are without, and he is best whose character, like a fair skin, is disfigured by the fewest blemishes. I do not think it necessary to warn you against boasting of your riches, or against priding yourself on your birth, or against setting yourself up as superior to others. I know your humility; I know that you can say with sincerity: "Lord, my heart is not haughty nor mine eyes lofty;"<sup>42</sup> I know that in your breast as in that of your mother the pride through which the devil fell has no place. It would be time wasted to write to you about it; for there is no greater folly than to teach a pupil what he knows already. But now that you have despised the boastfulness of the world, do not let the fact inspire you with new boastfulness. Harbor

<sup>1</sup> Ex. xxv. 11.      <sup>2</sup> K. viii. 9.  
<sup>3</sup> Ex. xxv. 22.      <sup>4</sup> Matt. xxi. 1-3.  
<sup>5</sup> Ex. vii. 16.      <sup>6</sup> Matt. xxi. 12, 13, R.V.      <sup>7</sup> Matt. xxvii. 51.  
<sup>8</sup> Matt. xxiii. 38.      <sup>9</sup> R.V. marg.      <sup>10</sup> Luke x. 41, 42.

<sup>11</sup> Cant. iii. 4.      <sup>12</sup> Cant. vi. 9.      <sup>13</sup> Gal. iv. 26.  
<sup>14</sup> Cf. Gen. xxvi. 8.      <sup>15</sup> R.V.      <sup>16</sup> Cant. v. 2, 4, 8.  
<sup>17</sup> Cant. iv. 22.      <sup>18</sup> Gen. xxxiv.      <sup>19</sup> Cant. iii. 2, 3.  
<sup>20</sup> Matt. vii. 14.      <sup>21</sup> Cant. iii. 2; v. 6.      <sup>22</sup> Cant. v. 7.  
<sup>23</sup> Cant. v. 2.      <sup>24</sup> Cant. i. 23.

<sup>25</sup> Cant. i. 7, R.V.      <sup>26</sup> Cant. i. 8, LXX.      <sup>27</sup> Prov. iv. 23-  
<sup>28</sup> Matt. xxv. 33.      <sup>29</sup> Isa. xxvi. 20.      <sup>30</sup> Matt. vi. 6.  
<sup>31</sup> Rev. iii. 20.      <sup>32</sup> Cant. v. 2, 3.      <sup>33</sup> Cant. v. 6.  
<sup>34</sup> Eccles. x. 4, A.V.      <sup>35</sup> "the spirit of the ruler."  
<sup>36</sup> Dan. vi. 10, LXX.

<sup>37</sup> Jer. ix. 21.      <sup>38</sup> Joh. v. 44, R.V.      <sup>39</sup> Gal. i. 10.  
<sup>40</sup> Jer. ix. 24.      <sup>41</sup> 1 Cor. i. 31.      <sup>42</sup> Psa. xlv. 8; xxxiv. 2.  
<sup>43</sup> Gal. vi. 24, R.V. marg.      <sup>44</sup> Psa. cxvii. 1.  
<sup>45</sup> Matt. vi. 3, 16-18.

not the sea thought that having ceased to court attention in garments of gold you may begin to do so in mean attire. And when you come into a room full of brothers and sisters, do not sit in too low a place or plead that you are unworthy of a footstool. Do not deliberately lower your voice as though worn out with fasting; nor, leaning on the shoulder of another, mimic the tottering gait of one who is faint. Some women, it is true, disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast.<sup>1</sup> As soon as they catch sight of any one they groan, they look down; they cover up their faces, all but one eye, which they keep free to see with. Their dress is sombre, their girdles are of sackcloth, their hands and feet are dirty; only their stomachs—which cannot be seen—are hot with food. Of these the psalm is sung daily: "The Lord will scatter the bones of them that please themselves."<sup>2</sup> Others change their garb and assume the mien of men, being ashamed of being what they were born to be—women. They cut off their hair and are not ashamed to look like eunuchs. Some clothe themselves in goat's hair, and, putting on hoods, think to become children again by making themselves look like so many owls.<sup>3</sup>

28. But I will not speak only of women. Avoid men, also, when you see them loaded with chains and wearing their hair long like women, contrary to the apostle's precept,<sup>4</sup> not to speak of beards like those of goats, black cloaks, and bare feet braving the cold. All these things are tokens of the devil. Such an one Rome groaned over some time back in Antimus; and Sophronius is a still more recent instance. Such persons, when they have once gained admission to the houses of the high-born, and have deceived "silly women laden with sins, ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth,"<sup>5</sup> feign a sad mien and pretend to make long fasts while at night they feast in secret. Shame forbids me to say more, for my language might appear more like invective than admonition. There are others—I speak of those of my own order—who seek the presbyterate and the diaconate simply that they may be able to see women with less restraint. Such men think of nothing but their dress; they use perfumes freely, and see that there are no creases in their leather shoes. Their curling hair shows traces of the tongs; their fingers glisten with rings; they walk on tiptoe across a damp

road, not to splash their feet. When you see men acting in this way, think of them rather as bridegrooms than as clergymen. Certain persons have devoted the whole of their energies and life to the single object of knowing the names, houses, and characters of married ladies. I will here briefly describe the head of the profession, that from the master's likeness you may recognize the disciples. He rises and goes forth with the sun; he has the order of his visits duly arranged; he takes the shortest road; and, troublesome old man that he is, forces his way almost into the bedchambers of ladies yet asleep. If he sees a pillow that takes his fancy or an elegant table-cover—or indeed any article of household furniture—he praises it, looks admiringly at it, takes it into his hand, and, complaining that he has nothing of the kind, begs or rather extorts it from the owner. All the women, in fact, fear to cross the news-carrier of the town. Chastity and fasting are alike distasteful to him. What he likes is a savory breakfast—say off a plump young crane such as is commonly called a cheeper. In speech he is rude and forward, and is always ready to bandy reproaches. Wherever you turn he is the first man that you see before you. Whatever news is noised abroad he is either the originator of the rumor or its magnifier. He changes his horses every hour; and they are so sleek and spirited that you would take him for a brother of the Thracian king.<sup>6</sup>

29. Many are the stratagems which the wily enemy employs against us. "The serpent," we are told, "was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made."<sup>7</sup> And the apostle says: "We are not ignorant of his devices."<sup>8</sup> Neither an affected shabbiness nor a stylish smartness becomes a Christian. If there is anything of which you are ignorant, if you have any doubt about Scripture, ask one whose life commends him, whose age puts him above suspicion, whose reputation does not belie him; one who may be able to say: "I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." Or if there should be none such able to explain, it is better to avoid danger at the price of ignorance than to court it for the sake of learning. Remember that you walk in the midst of snares, and that many veteran virgins, of a chastity never called in question, have, on the very threshold of death, let their crowns fall from their hands.

If any of your handmaids share your vocation, do not lift up yourself against them or pride yourself because you are their mistress. You have all chosen one Bridegroom; you all sing the same psalms; together you receive the Body of Christ. Why then should your thoughts be different? You must try to win others, and that you may attract the more readily you must treat the virgins in your train with the greatest respect. If you find one of them weak in the faith, be attentive to her, comfort her, caress her, and make her chastity your treasure. But if a girl pretends to have a vocation simply because she desires to escape from service, read aloud to her the words of the apostle: "It is better to marry than to burn."<sup>9</sup>

Idle persons and busybodies, whether virgins or widows; such as go from house to house calling on married women and displaying an unblushing effrontery greater than that of a stage parasite, cast from you as you would the plague. For "evil communications corrupt good manners,"<sup>10</sup> and women like these care for nothing but their lowest appetites. They will often urge you, saying, "My dear creature, make the best of your advantages, and live while life is yours," and "Surely you are not laying up money for your children." Given to wine and wantonness, they instill all manner of mischief into people's minds, and induce even the most austere to indulge in enervating pleasures. And "when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ they will marry, having condemnation because they have rejected their first faith."<sup>11</sup>

Do not seek to appear over-elloquent, nor trifle with verse, nor make yourself gay with lyric songs. And do not, out of affectation, follow the sickly taste<sup>12</sup> of married ladies who, now pressing their teeth together, now keeping their lips wide apart, speak with a lisp, and purposely clip their words, because they fancy that to pronounce them naturally is a mark of country breeding. Accordingly they find pleasure in what I may call an adultery of the tongue. For "what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial?"<sup>13</sup> How can Horace go with the psalter, Virgil with the gospels, Cicero with the apostle?<sup>14</sup> Is not a brother made to stumble if he sees you sitting at meat in an idol's temple? Although "unto the pure all things are

pure,"<sup>15</sup> and "nothing is to be refused if it be received with thanksgiving,"<sup>16</sup> still we ought not to drink the cup of Christ, and, at the same time, the cup of devils.<sup>17</sup> Let me relate to you the story of my own miserable experience.

30. Many years ago, when for the kingdom of heaven's sake I had cut myself off from home, parents, sister, relations, and—harder still—from the dainty food to which I had been accustomed; and when I was on my way to Jerusalem to wage my warfare, I still could not bring myself to forego the library which I had formed for myself at Rome with great care and toil. And so, miserable man that I was, I would fast only that I might afterwards read Cicero. After many nights spent in vigil, after floods of tears called from my inmost heart, after the recollection of my past sins, I would once more take up Plautus. And when at times I returned to my right mind, and began to read the prophets, their style seemed rude and repellent. I failed to see the light with my blinded eyes; but I attributed the fault not to them, but to the sun. While the old serpent was thus making me his plaything, about the middle of Lent a deep-seated fever fell upon my weakened body, and while it destroyed my rest completely—the story seems hardly credible—it so wasted my unhappy frame that scarcely anything was left of me but skin and bone. Meantime preparations for my funeral went on; my body grew gradually colder, and the warmth of life lingered only in my throbbing breast. Suddenly I was caught up in the spirit and dragged before the judgment seat of the Judge; and here the light was so bright, and those who stood around were so radiant, that I cast myself upon the ground and did not dare to look up. Asked who and what I was I replied: "I am a Christian." But He who presided said: "Thou liest, thou art a follower of Cicero and not of Christ. For where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also."<sup>18</sup> Instantly I became dumb, and amid the strokes of the lash—for He had ordered me to be scourged—I was tortured more severely still by the fire of conscience, considering with myself that verse, "In the grave who shall give thee thanks?"<sup>19</sup> Yet for all that I began to cry and to bewail myself, saying: "Have mercy upon me, O Lord: have mercy upon me." Amid the sound of the scourges this cry still made itself heard. At last the bystanders, falling

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vi. 16. <sup>2</sup> Ps. llii. 5, according to the Roman Psalter.  
<sup>3</sup> Cunctis benefactis, ut ad infantiam redeant, imitantur noctuans et bubones. <sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 14. <sup>5</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 6, 7.

<sup>1</sup> Diomed. See Lucretius, v. 31, and Virgil, A. i. 752.  
<sup>2</sup> Gen. iii. 1. <sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. ii. 11.

<sup>1</sup> Cur mens diversa sit. The ordinary text has "menda."  
<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 9. <sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 33. <sup>4</sup> 1 Tim. v. 11, 12.  
<sup>5</sup> Persius i. 104. <sup>6</sup> 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15.  
<sup>7</sup> 12, the epistles of St. Paul. In like manner the Psalter was often called David. <sup>8</sup> 1 Cor. viii. 10.

<sup>1</sup> Tit. i. 15. <sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 4. <sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. x. 21.  
<sup>4</sup> Matt. vi. 21. <sup>5</sup> Ps. vi. 5.

down before th. es of Him who presided, prayed that He would give pity on my youth, and that He would give me space to repent of my error. He might still, they urged, inflict torture on me, should I ever again read the works of the Gentiles. Under the stress of that awful moment I should have been ready to make even still larger promises than these. Accordingly I made oath and called upon His name, saying: "Lord, if ever again I possess worldly books, or if ever again I read such, I have denied Thee." Dismissed, then, on taking this oath, I returned to the upper world, and, to the surprise of all, I opened upon them eyes so drenched with tears that my mistress served to convince even the incredulous. And that this was no sleep nor idle dream, such as those by which we are often mocked, I call to witness the tribunal before which I lay, and the terrible judgment which I feared. May it never, hereafter, be my lot to fall under such an inquisition! I profess that my shoulders were black and blue, that I felt the bruises long after I awoke from my sleep, and that thenceforth I read the books of God with a zeal greater than I had previously given to the books of men.

31. You must also avoid the sin of covetousness, and this not merely by refusing to seize upon what belongs to others, for that is punished by the laws of the state, but also by not keeping your own property, which has now become no longer yours. "If ye have not been faithful," the Lord says, "in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?" "That which is another man's" is a quantity of gold or of silver, while "that which is our own" is the spiritual heritage of which it is elsewhere said: "The ransom of a man's life is his riches."<sup>2</sup> "No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."<sup>3</sup> Riches, that is; for in the heathen tongue of the Syrians riches are called mammon. The "thorns" which choke our faith<sup>4</sup> are the taking thought for our life.<sup>5</sup> Care for the things which the Gentiles seek after<sup>6</sup> is the root of covetousness.

But you will say: "I am a girl delicately reared, and I cannot labor with my hands. Suppose that I live to old age and then fall sick, who will take pity on me?" Hear Jesus speaking to the apostles: "Take no thought what ye shall eat; nor yet for your

body what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them."<sup>1</sup> Should clothing fail you, set the lilies before your eyes. Should hunger seize you, think of the words in which the poor and hungry are blessed. Should pain afflict you, read "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities," and "There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure."<sup>2</sup> Rejoice in all God's judgments; for does not the psalmist say: "The daughters of Judah rejoiced because of thy judgments, O Lord?"<sup>3</sup> Let the words be ever on your lips: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither;"<sup>4</sup> and "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out."<sup>5</sup>

32. To-day you may see women cramming their wardrobes with dresses, changing their gowns from day to day, and for all that unable to vanquish the moths. Now and then one more scrupulous wears out a single dress; yet, while she appears in rags, her boxes are full. Parchments are dyed purple, gold is melted into lettering, manuscripts are decked with jewels, while Christ lies at the door naked and dying. When they hold out a hand to the needy they sound a trumpet;<sup>6</sup> when they invite to a love-feast<sup>7</sup> they engage a crier. I lately saw the noblest lady in Rome—I suppress her name, for I am no satirist—with a band of eunuchs before her in the basilica of the blessed Peter. She was giving money to the poor, a coin apiece; and this with her own hand, that she might be accounted more religious. Hereupon a by no means uncommon incident occurred. An old woman, "full of years and rags,"<sup>8</sup> ran forward to get a second coin, but when her turn came she received not a penny but a blow hard enough to draw blood from her guilty veins.

"The love of money is the root of all evil,"<sup>9</sup> and the apostle speaks of covetousness as being idolatry.<sup>10</sup> "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you."<sup>11</sup> The Lord will never allow a righteous soul to perish of hunger.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vi. 25, 26. <sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 10, 7. <sup>3</sup> Ps. xxvii. 8.  
<sup>4</sup> Job i. 21. <sup>5</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 7. <sup>6</sup> Matt. vi. 2. <sup>7</sup> Terence, Eunu. 236.  
<sup>8</sup> The eucharist was at first preceded, but at a later date was more usually followed, by the *agape* or love-feast. The materials of this were contributed by the members of the congregation, all of whatever station sat down to it as equals, and the meal was concluded with psalmody and prayer." (Robertson, C. H., i. p. 235.)  
Scandals arose in connection with the practice, and it gradually fell into disuse, though even at a later date allusions to it are not infrequent. <sup>9</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 10. <sup>10</sup> Col. iii. 5. <sup>11</sup> Matt. vi. 33.

<sup>1</sup> Luke xvi. 12. <sup>2</sup> Prov. xiii. 8, R.V. <sup>3</sup> Matt. vi. 24.  
<sup>4</sup> Matt. xiii. 7, 22. <sup>5</sup> Matt. vi. 25. <sup>6</sup> Matt. vi. 32.

I have been young," the psalmist says, "and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread."<sup>1</sup> Elijah is fed by ministering ravens.<sup>2</sup> The widow of Zarephath, who with her sons expected to die the same night, went without food herself that she might feed the prophet. He who had come to be fed then turned feeder, for, by a miracle, he filled the empty barrel.<sup>3</sup> The apostle Peter says: "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ rise up and walk."<sup>4</sup> But now many, while they do not say it in words, by their deeds declare: "Faith and pity have I none; but such as I have, silver and gold, these I will not give thee."<sup>5</sup> "Having food and raiment let us be therewith content."<sup>6</sup> Hear the prayer of Jacob: "If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, then shall the Lord be my God."<sup>7</sup> He prayed only for things necessary; yet, twenty years afterwards, he returned to the land of Canaan rich in substance and richer still in children.<sup>8</sup> Numberless are the instances in Scripture which teach men to "Beware of covetousness."<sup>9</sup>

33. As I have been led to touch on the subject—it shall have a treatise to itself if Christ permit—I will relate what took place not very many years ago at Nitria. A brother, more thrifty than covetous, and ignorant that the Lord had been sold for thirty pieces of silver,<sup>10</sup> left behind him at his death a hundred pieces of money which he had earned by weaving linen. As there were about five thousand monks in the neighborhood, living in as many separate cells, a council was held as to what should be done. Some said that the coins should be distributed among the poor; others that they should be given to the church, while others were for sending them back to the relatives of the deceased. However, Macarius, Pambo, Isidore and the rest of those called fathers, speaking by the Spirit, decided that they should be interred with their owner, with the words: "Thy money perish with thee."<sup>11</sup> Nor was this too harsh a decision; for so great fear has fallen upon all throughout Egypt, that it is now a crime to leave after one a single shilling.

34. As I have mentioned the monks, and know that you like to hear about holy things, lend an ear to me for a few moments.

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xxxvii. 25. <sup>2</sup> 1 Kings xvii. 4, 6.  
<sup>3</sup> 1 Kings xvii. 9-16. <sup>4</sup> Acts iii. 6.  
<sup>5</sup> Gen. xxviii. 20, 21. <sup>6</sup> Gen. xxxii. 5, 10. <sup>7</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 8.  
<sup>8</sup> Matt. xxvi. 15. <sup>9</sup> Luke xii. 15. <sup>10</sup> Acts viii. 20.

There are in Egypt three classes of monks. First, there are the cœnobites,<sup>1</sup> called in their Gentile language Sauses,<sup>2</sup> or, as we should say, men living in a community.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, there are the anchorites,<sup>4</sup> who live in the desert, each man by himself, and are so called because they have withdrawn from human society. Thirdly, there is the class called Remoboth,<sup>5</sup> a very inferior and little regarded type, though in my own province<sup>6</sup> it is the chief if not the only sort. These live together in twos and threes, but seldom in larger numbers, and are bound by no rule, but do exactly as they choose. A portion of their earnings they contribute to a common fund, out of which food is provided for all. In most cases they reside in cities and strongholds; and, as though it were their workmanship which is holy, and not their life, all that they sell is extremely dear. They often quarrel because they are unwilling, while supplying their own food, to be subordinate to others. It is true that they compete with each other in fasting; they make what should be a private concern an occasion for a triumph. In everything they study effect: their sleeves are loose, their boots bulge, their garb is of the coarsest. They are always sighing, or visiting virgins, or sneering at the clergy; yet when a holiday comes, they make themselves sick—they eat so much.

35. Having then rid ourselves of these as of so many plagues, let us come to that more numerous class who live together, and who are, as we have said, called Cœnobites. Among these the first principle of union is to obey superiors and to do whatever they command. They are divided into bodies of ten and of a hundred, so that each tenth man has authority over nine others, while the hundredth has ten of these officers under him. They live apart from each other, in separate cells. According to their rule, no monk may visit another before the ninth hour;<sup>7</sup> except the deans<sup>8</sup> above mentioned, whose office is to comfort, with soothing words, those whose thoughts disquiet them. After the ninth hour they meet together to sing psalms and read the Scriptures according to usage. Then when the prayers have ended and all have sat down, one called the

<sup>1</sup> From κοινός βίος (koinos bios), a common life.  
<sup>2</sup> Apparently an Egyptian word. It does not occur elsewhere.  
<sup>3</sup> In commune vivent.  
<sup>4</sup> From ἀναχωρεῖν (anachorein), to withdraw.  
<sup>5</sup> These were monks who lived under no settled rule, but collected in little groups of two and three, generally in some populous place. They seem to have practised all the arts whereby a reputation for sanctity may be won, while they disparaged those who led more regular lives. Cassian (Collat. xviii. 7) draws an unfavorable picture of them. See Bingham, Antiquities, vii. ii. 4, and Dict. Xt. Ant., s. v. Sarabaites. <sup>6</sup> Pannonia, or possibly Syria. <sup>7</sup> I.e. three o'clock. <sup>8</sup> Decani, "leaders of ten."

father stand among them and begins to expound the portion of the day. While he is speaking the silence is profound; no man ventures to look at his neighbor or to clear his throat. The speaker's praise is in the weeping of his hearers.<sup>1</sup> Silent tears roll down their cheeks, but not a sob escapes from their lips. Yet when he begins to speak of Christ's kingdom, and of future bliss, and of the glory which is to come, every one may be noticed saying to himself, with a gentle sigh and uplifted eyes: "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away and be at rest."<sup>2</sup> After this the meeting breaks up and each company of ten goes with its father to its own table. This they take in turns to serve, each for a week at a time. No noise is made over the food; no one talks while eating. Bread, pulse and greens form their fare, and the only seasoning that they use is salt. Wine is given only to the old, who with the children often have a special meal prepared for them to repair the ravages of age and to save the young from premature decay. When the meal is over they all rise together, and, after singing a hymn, return to their dwellings. There each one talks till evening with his comrade thus: "Have you noticed so-and-so? What grace he has! How silent he is! How soberly he walks!" If any one is weak they comfort him; or if he is fervent in love to God, they encourage him to fresh earnestness. And because at night, besides the public prayers, each man keeps vigil in his own chamber, they go round all the cells one by one, and putting their ears to the doors, carefully ascertain what their occupants are doing. If they find a monk slothful, they do not scold him; but, dissembling what they know, they visit him more frequently, and at first exhort rather than compel him to pray more. Each day has its allotted task, and this being given in to the dean, is by him brought to the steward. This latter, once a month, gives a scrupulous account to their common father. He also tastes the dishes when they are cooked, and, as no one is allowed to say, "I am without a tunic or a cloak or a couch of rushes," he so arranges that no one need ask for or go without what he wants. In case a monk falls ill, he is moved to a more spacious chamber, and there so attentively nursed by the old men, that he misses neither the luxury of cities nor a mother's kindness. Every Lord's day they spend their whole time in prayer and reading; in-

deed, when they have finished their tasks, these are their usual occupations. Every day they learn by heart a portion of Scripture. They keep the same fasts all the year round, but in Lent they are allowed to live more strictly. After Whitsuntide they exchange their evening meal for a midday one; both to satisfy the tradition of the church and to avoid overloading their stomachs with a double supply of food.

A similar description is given of the Essenes by Philo,<sup>3</sup> Plato's imitator; also by Josephus,<sup>4</sup> the Greek Livy, in his narrative of the Jewish captivity.

36. As my present subject is virgins, I have said rather too much about monks. I will pass on, therefore, to the third class, called anchorites, who go from the monasteries into the deserts, with nothing but bread and salt. Paul<sup>5</sup> introduced this way of life; Antony made it famous, and—to go farther back still—John the Baptist set the first example of it. The prophet Jeremiah describes one such in the words: "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him. He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him, he is filled full with reproach. For the Lord will not cast off forever."<sup>6</sup> The struggle of the anchorites and their life—in the flesh, yet not of the flesh—I will, if you wish, explain to you at some other time. I must now return to the subject of covetousness, which I left to speak of the monks. With them before your eyes you will despise, not only gold and silver in general, but earth itself and heaven. United to Christ, you will sing, "The Lord is my portion."<sup>7</sup>

37. Farther, although the apostle bids us to "pray without ceasing,"<sup>8</sup> and although to the saints their very sleep is a supplication, we ought to have fixed hours of prayer, that if we are detained by work, the time may remind us of our duty. Prayers, as every one knows, ought to be said at the third, sixth and ninth hours, at dawn and at evening.<sup>9</sup> No meal should be begun without prayer, and before leaving table thanks should be returned to the Creator. We should rise two or three times in the night, and go over the parts of Scripture which we know by heart. When we leave the roof which shelters us, prayer should be our armor; and

<sup>1</sup> See Letter LXX. § 3, De Vir. III. xi.  
<sup>2</sup> Josephus, The Jewish War, ii. 8.  
<sup>3</sup> I.e. the hermit of that name. See his Life in vol. iii. of this series.  
<sup>4</sup> Lam. iii. 27, 28, 29, 31.    <sup>5</sup> Lam. iii. 24.    <sup>6</sup> 1 Thess. v. 17.  
<sup>7</sup> In Jerome's time the seven canonical hours of prayer had not yet been finally fixed. He mentions, however, six which correspond to the later, Mattins, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Nocturns. Cp. Letters CVII. § 9, CVIII. § 20, and CXXX. § 35.

when we return from the street we should pray before we sit down, and not give the frail body rest until the soul is fed. In every act we do, in every step we take, let our hand trace the Lord's cross. Speak against nobody, and do not slander your mother's son.<sup>1</sup> "Who art thou that judgest the servant of another? To his own lord he standeth or falleth; yea, he shall be made to stand, for the Lord hath power to make him stand."<sup>2</sup> If you have fasted two or three days, do not think yourself better than others who do not fast. You fast and are angry; another eats and wears a smiling face. You work off your irritation and hunger in quarrels. He uses food in moderation and gives God thanks.<sup>3</sup> Daily Isaiah cries: "Is it such a fast that I have chosen, saith the Lord?"<sup>4</sup> and again: "In the day of your fast ye find your own pleasure, and oppress all your laborers. Behold ye fast for strife and contention, and to smite with the fist of wickedness. How fast ye unto me?"<sup>5</sup> What kind of fast can his be whose wrath is such that not only does the night go down upon it, but that even the moon's changes leave it unchanged?

38. Look to yourself and glory in your own success and not in others' failure. Some women care for the flesh and reckon up their income and daily expenditure: such are no fit models for you. Judas was a traitor, but the eleven apostles did not waver. Phygellus and Alexander made shipwreck; but the rest continued to run the race of faith.<sup>6</sup> Say not: "So-and-so enjoys her own property, she is honored of men, her brothers and sisters come to see her. Has she then ceased to be a virgin?" In the first place, it is doubtful if she is a virgin. For "the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh upon the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."<sup>7</sup> Again, she may be a virgin in body and not in spirit. According to the apostle, a true virgin is "holy both in body and in spirit."<sup>8</sup> Lastly, let her glory in her own way. Let her override Paul's opinion and live in the enjoyment of her good things. But you and I must follow better examples.

Set before you the blessed Mary, whose surpassing purity made her meet to be the mother of the Lord. When the angel Gabriel came down to her, in the form of a man, and said: "Hail, thou that art highly favored; the Lord is with thee,"<sup>9</sup> she was

terror-stricken and unable to reply, for she had never been saluted by a man before. But, on learning who he was, she spoke, and one who had been afraid of a man conversed fearlessly with an angel. Now you, too, may be the Lord's mother. "Take thee a great roll and write in it with a man's pen Maher-shalal-hash-baz."<sup>10</sup> And when you have gone to the prophetess, and have conceived in the womb, and have brought forth a son,<sup>11</sup> say: "Lord, we have been with child by thy fear, we have been in pain, we have brought forth the spirit of thy salvation, which we have wrought upon the earth."<sup>12</sup> Then shall your Son reply: "Behold my mother and my brethren."<sup>13</sup> And He whose name you have so recently inscribed upon the table of your heart, and have written with a pen upon its renewed surface<sup>14</sup>—He, after He has recovered the spoil from the enemy, and has spoiled principalities and powers, nailing them to His cross<sup>15</sup>—having been miraculously conceived, grows up to manhood; and, as He becomes older, regards you no longer as His mother, but as His bride. To be as the martyrs, or as the apostles, or as Christ, involves a hard struggle, but brings with it a great reward.

All such efforts are only of use when they are made within the church's pale;<sup>16</sup> we must celebrate the passover in the one house,<sup>17</sup> we must enter the ark with Noah,<sup>18</sup> we must take refuge from the fall of Jericho with the justified harlot, Rahab.<sup>19</sup> Such virgins as there are said to be among the heretics and among the followers of the infamous Manes<sup>20</sup> must be considered, not virgins, but prostitutes. For if—as they allege—the devil is the author of the body, how can they honor that which is fashioned by their foe? No; it is because they know that the name virgin brings glory with it, that they go about as wolves in sheep's clothing.<sup>21</sup> As antichrist pretends to be Christ, such virgins assume an honorable name, that they may the better cloak a discreditable life. Rejoice, my sister; rejoice, my daughter; rejoice, my virgin; for you have resolved to be, in reality, that which others insincerely feign.

<sup>1</sup> Isa. viii. 1, l.c. "the spoil speedeth, the prey hasteth;" or, in Jerome's rendering, "quickly carry away the spoils."

<sup>2</sup> Isa. viii. 3. Jerome should have substituted "prophet" for "prophetess." As it stands the quotation is meaningless.

<sup>3</sup> Isa. xxvi. 28, Vulg.    <sup>4</sup> Matt. xii. 49.

<sup>5</sup> Prov. vii. 3; Jer. xxxi. 33.    <sup>6</sup> Col. ii. 14, 15.

<sup>7</sup> Cp. the maxim of Cyprian: "Extra ecclesiam nulla salus," "Outside the church there is no salvation."

<sup>8</sup> Exod. xii. 46.    <sup>9</sup> 1 Peter iii. 20, 21.    <sup>10</sup> James ii. 25.

<sup>11</sup> Founder of the widely prevalent sect of Manichæans, which at one time numbered Augustine among its adherents. One of its leading tenets was that matter as such was essentially evil.

<sup>12</sup> Matt. vii. 15.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Letter LII. § 8.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. lv. 6.

<sup>1</sup> Ps. i. 20.    <sup>2</sup> Rom. xiv. 4, R.V.    <sup>3</sup> Rom. xiv. 6, R.V.  
<sup>4</sup> Isa. lviii. 5.    <sup>5</sup> Isaiah lviii. 3, 4, R.V. marg.  
<sup>6</sup> 1 Tim. i. 20, 20; 2 Tim. i. 15.    <sup>7</sup> 1 Sam. xvi. 7.  
<sup>8</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 34.    <sup>9</sup> Luke i. 28.

39. The things that I have here set forth will seem hard to her who loves not Christ. But one who has come to regard all the splendor of the world as off-scourings, and to hold all things under the sun as vain, that he may win Christ,<sup>1</sup> one who has died with his Lord and risen again, and has crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts;<sup>2</sup> he will boldly cry out: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" and again: "I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord."<sup>3</sup>

For our salvation the Son of God is made the Son of Man.<sup>4</sup> Nine months He awaits His birth in the womb, undergoes the most revolting conditions,<sup>5</sup> and comes forth covered with blood, to be swathed in rags and covered with caresses. He who shuts up the world in His fist<sup>6</sup> is contained in the narrow limits of a manger. I say nothing of the thirty years during which he lives in obscurity, satisfied with the poverty of his parents.<sup>7</sup> When He is scourged He holds His peace; when He is crucified, He prays for His crucifiers. "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me? I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."<sup>8</sup> The only fitting return that we can make to Him is to give blood for blood; and, as we are redeemed by the blood of Christ, gladly to lay down our lives for our Redeemer. What saint has ever won his crown without first contending for it? Righteous Abel is murdered. Abraham is in danger of losing his wife. And, as I must not enlarge my book unduly, seek for yourself: you will find that all holy men have suffered adversity. Solomon alone lived in luxury and perhaps it was for this reason that he fell. For "whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth."<sup>9</sup> Which is best—for a short time to do battle, to carry stakes for the palisades, to bear arms, to faint under heavy bucklers, that ever afterwards we may rejoice as victors? or to become slaves forever, just because we cannot endure for a single hour?<sup>10</sup>

40. Love finds nothing hard; no task is difficult to the eager. Think of all that Jacob bore for Rachel, the wife who had been promised to him. "Jacob," the Scripture says, "served seven years for Rachel. And they seemed unto him but a few days for the love he had to her."<sup>1</sup> Afterwards he himself tells us what he had to undergo. "In the day the drought consumed me and the frost by night."<sup>2</sup> So we must love Christ and always seek His embraces. Then everything difficult will seem easy; all things long we shall account short; and smitten with His arrows,<sup>3</sup> we shall say every moment: "Woe is me that I have prolonged my pilgrimage."<sup>4</sup> For "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."<sup>5</sup> For "tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed."<sup>6</sup> When your lot seems hard to bear read Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians: "In labors more abundant; in stripes above measure; in prisons more frequent; in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one; thrice was I beaten with rods; once was I stoned; thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness."<sup>7</sup> Which of us can claim the veriest fraction of the virtues here enumerated? Yet it was these which afterwards made him bold to say: "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day."<sup>8</sup>

But we, if our food is less appetizing than usual, get sullen, and fancy that we do God a favor by drinking watered wine. And if the water brought to us is a trifle too warm, we break the cup and overturn the table and scourge the servant in fault until blood comes. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force."<sup>9</sup> Still, unless you use force you will never seize the kingdom of heaven. Unless you knock importunately you will never receive the sacramental bread.<sup>10</sup> Is it not truly violence,

think you, when the flesh desires to be as God and ascends to the place whence angels have fallen<sup>1</sup> to judge angels?

41. Emerge, I pray you, for a while from your prison-house, and paint before your eyes the reward of your present toil, a reward which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man."<sup>1</sup> What will be the glory of that day when Mary, the mother of the Lord, shall come to meet you, accompanied by her virgin choirs! When, the Red Sea past and Pharaoh drowned with his host, Miriam, Aaron's sister, her timbrel in her hand, shall chant to the answering women: "Sing ye unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea."<sup>2</sup> Then shall Thecla<sup>3</sup> fly with joy to embrace you. Then shall your Spouse himself come forward and say: "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away, for lo! the winter is past, the rain is over and gone."<sup>4</sup> Then shall the angels say with wonder: "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun?"<sup>5</sup> "The daughters shall see you and bless you; yea, the queens shall proclaim and the concubines shall praise you."<sup>6</sup> And, after these, yet another company of chaste women will meet you. Sarah will come with the wedded; Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, with the widows. In the one band you will find your natural mother and in the other your spiritual.<sup>7</sup> The one will rejoice in having borne, the other will exult in having taught you. Then truly will the Lord ride upon his ass,<sup>8</sup> and thus enter the heavenly Jerusalem. Then the little ones (of whom, in Isaiah, the Saviour says: "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me"<sup>9</sup>) shall lift up palms of victory and shall sing with one voice: "Hosanna in the highest, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, hosanna in the highest."<sup>10</sup> Then shall the "hundred and forty and four thousand" hold their harps before the throne and before the elders and shall sing the new song. And no man shall have power to learn that song save those for whom it is appointed. "These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."<sup>11</sup> As often as this life's idle show tries to charm you; as often as you see in the world some vain

pomp, transport yourself in mind to Paradise, essay to be now what you will be hereafter, and you will hear your Spouse say: "Set me as a sunshade in thine heart and as a seal upon thine arm."<sup>12</sup> And then, strengthened in body as well as in mind, you, too, will cry aloud and say: "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it."<sup>13</sup>

## LETTER XXIII.

TO MARCELLA.

Jerome writes to Marcella to console her for the loss of a friend who, like herself, was the head of a religious society at Rome. The news of Lea's death had first reached Marcella when she was engaged with Jerome in the study of the 73d psalm. Later in the day he writes this letter in which, after extolling Lea, he contrasts her end with that of the consul-elect, Vettius Agorius Prætextatus, a man of great ability and integrity, whom he declares to be now "in Tartarus." Written at Rome in 384 A.D.

1. To-day, about the third hour, just as I was beginning to read with you the seventy-second psalm<sup>1</sup>—the first, that is, of the third book—and to explain that its title belonged partly to the second book and partly to the third—the previous book, I mean, concluding with the words "the prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended,"<sup>2</sup> and the next commencing with the words "a psalm of Asaph"<sup>3</sup>—and just as I had come on the passage in which the righteous man declares: "If I say, I will speak thus; behold I should offend against the generation of thy children,"<sup>4</sup> a verse which is differently rendered in our Latin version:<sup>5</sup>—suddenly the news came that our most saintly friend Lea had departed from the body. As was only natural, you turned deadly pale; for there are few persons, if any, who do not burst into tears when the earthen vessel breaks.<sup>6</sup> But if you wept it was not from doubt as to her future lot, but only because you had not rendered to her the last sad offices which are due to the dead. Finally, as we were still conversing together, a second message informed us that her remains had been already conveyed to Ostia.

2. You may ask what is the use of repeating all this. I will reply in the apostle's words, "much every way."<sup>7</sup> First, it shows that all must hail with joy the release of a soul which has trampled Satan under foot, and won for itself, at last, a crown of

<sup>1</sup> Phil. iii. 8. <sup>2</sup> Rom. vi. 4; Gal. v. 24.  
<sup>3</sup> Rom. viii. 35, 38, 39. <sup>4</sup> An echo of the Nicene Creed.  
<sup>5</sup> Cp. Virgil, *Ecl.* iv. 61. <sup>6</sup> Cp. Ps. xcv. 4, 5; Isa. xl. 22.  
<sup>7</sup> Luke ii. 51, 52. <sup>8</sup> Ps. cxvii. 12, 13, 15.  
<sup>9</sup> Heb. xii. 6. <sup>10</sup> Cp. Matt. xxvi. 40.

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xxix. 20. <sup>2</sup> Gen. xxxi. 40.  
<sup>3</sup> Ps. xxxviii. 2. <sup>4</sup> Pa. cxx. 9, Vulg.  
<sup>5</sup> Rom. viii. 18. <sup>6</sup> Rom. v. 3-5. <sup>7</sup> 2 Cor. xi. 23-27.  
<sup>8</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. <sup>9</sup> Matt. xi. 12. <sup>10</sup> Luke xi. 5-8.

<sup>1</sup> Is. xiv. 12, 13. <sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 9. <sup>3</sup> Ex. xv. 20, 21.  
<sup>4</sup> A legendary virgin of Iconium said to have been converted by Paul. <sup>5</sup> Cant. ii. 10, 11. <sup>6</sup> Cant. vi. 10. <sup>7</sup> Cant. vi. 9.  
<sup>8</sup> Viz. Paula, for whom see Letter CVIII., and Marcella, for whom see Letter CXXVII.  
<sup>9</sup> Matt. xxi. 1-9, literally "she-ass."  
<sup>10</sup> Isa. viii. 18. <sup>11</sup> Matt. xxi. 9. <sup>12</sup> Rev. xiv. 1-4.

<sup>1</sup> Cant. viii. 6; the variant is peculiar to Jerome.  
<sup>2</sup> Cant. viii. 7. <sup>3</sup> In the English Version Ps. lxxiii.  
<sup>4</sup> Ps. lxxii. 20. <sup>5</sup> Ps. lxxiii. title.  
<sup>6</sup> Ps. lxxiii. 15.  
<sup>7</sup> Cp. the Old Latin Version superseded by Jerome's Vulgate.  
<sup>8</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 7.  
<sup>9</sup> Rom. iii. 2.