

"They shall declare the memory of the abundance of youth sweetness" (Ps 144:7). The fourth contemplation, which forgets what is past, rests wholly in the expectation of what is promised (Phil 3:13), which nourishes patience and nerves the arm of perseverance, for what is promised is eternal. I think it is now easy to compare our four terms with those of the Apostle. For meditation on the promises covers length; remembrance of blessing, width; contemplation of majesty, height; examination of judgments, depth (Eph 3:18). He must still be sought who has not yet been found (Mt 7:7) fully, but he is perhaps sought more worthily and found more easily by prayer than discussion. So let this be the end of the book but not of the search.

ON LOVING GOD

Aimeric, cardinal deacon of the Church of Rome from 1121 and chancellor from 1126, was a good friend to Clairvaux. Bernard wrote him more than a dozen letters. At some time between 1125, when Bernard wrote the letter to the Carthusians with which he ends his treatise, and Aimeric's death in 1141, Aimeric asked him for a book on loving God.

Early in the 1120s Bernard had already written on the love of God in the context of the monastic life, in a letter to the monks of the Grande Chartreuse, written at their request. His thinking in the *De Diligendo Deo* is close to what he said there, although developed in more detail. He had evidently been pleased with the way he had expressed the central ideas in this letter, for he instructed that it be copied at the end of the new treatise. The whole treatise, including the letter, is translated here as Bernard himself would have wished. The letter is integral to what he has to say.¹

PROLOGUE

To the illustrious lord Aimeric, cardinal deacon and chancellor of the See of Rome, Bernard, called abbot of Clairvaux,¹ wishes that he may live for the Lord and die in the Lord.

¹ See Introduction to this volume.

¹ In referring to himself modestly in this way Bernard is following a convention of classical and medieval rhetoric.

You usually ask me for prayers, not answers to questions. And indeed I confess that I am not worthy to offer either. Yet prayer is my profession, even if I do not live as though it were. As to the task you have given me, to tell the truth it seems to me that I lack the diligence and ability it requires. Still, I assure you that I am glad that you are asking for spiritual in return for worldly gifts (1 Cor 9:11). It is only that you could have asked someone richer in spiritual gifts than I.

Because it is the habit both of the educated and of the uneducated to make this sort of excuse, you would be hard put to it to know whether it is prompted by genuine inability or self-excusing modesty, were it not that the execution of the task will make it plain. Accept from my poverty what I have, or I shall be thought a philosopher because of my silence.

I do not promise to answer everything you ask—only to tell you what God will give me to say about loving him. This subject tastes sweeter, and is treated with more confidence, and is more profitable to whoever hears, than any other. Your other questions you must keep for those better qualified to answer them.

I.1. You wish then to hear from me why and how God ought to be loved. I answer: The cause of loving God is God himself.² The way only for the wise. Yet I owe something to the unwise, too (Rom 1:14), and it is usual to add something for their benefit to what is sufficient for the wise man.⁴ And so, for the sake of those who are slower, I shall not find it tedious to go into each point at length, if not more deeply. For two reasons, then, I say that God is to be loved for his own sake. No one can be more justly loved, or with greater benefit. Indeed, when it is asked why God ought to be loved, the question has two possible meanings. We may wonder which is the real question: whether God is to be loved because he deserves it, or because it is for our good. I give the same answer to both: There seems to me no good reason to love him which does not lie in himself.

So let us first see how he deserves our love.

2. Cf. William of St. Thierry, *The Nature and Dignity of Love*, 3, PL 184, 382.

3. This pun makes use of a phrase in a letter to Augustine. See Letter 109 from Serenus, PL 33, 419.

4. *Sat est dictum sapienti*, "a word to the wise" is a commonplace in classical authors. See Plautus, *Persa*, 4, 7(19); Terence, *Phormio*, 3, 3(8), for examples.

HOW GOD IS TO BE LOVED FOR HIS OWN SAKE

He who gave himself to us when we did not deserve it certainly deserves a great deal from us (Gal 1:4). What better thing could he give us than himself? And so if we bring God's deserving into question in asking why God should be loved, we have the chief reason for loving him in this, "That he first loved us" (1 Jn 4:9–10). Surely he deserves to be loved in return when we think of who loves, whom he loves, how much he loves. Is it not he whom every spirit confesses (1 Jn 4:2) saying, "You are my God for you do not need the goods I have" (Ps 15:2)?

This divine love is true love, for it is the love of one who wants nothing for himself (1 Cor 13:5). To whom is such pure love shown?⁵ "When we were still his enemies," it says, "he reconciled us to himself" (Rom 5:10). So, in utmost generosity, God loved even his enemies.

But how much did he love? St. John says, "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son" (Jn 3:16). St. Paul says, "He did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us" (Rom 8:32). The Son, too, said of himself, "No one has greater love than the man who lays down his life for his friends" (Jn 15:13). Thus the righteous deserved to be loved by the wicked, the highest and all-powerful by the weak (Rom 5:6–7).

But someone says, "That is true for men but not for angels." It is true; he who came to man's help in his great need preserved the angels from that need. he who did not allow men to remain as they were, out of an equal love gave the angels the grace not to fall into such a need.⁷

II.2. To those who see these things clearly, I think it will be evident why God is to be loved—and why he deserves to be loved. But if unbelievers hide these facts, God is always able to make their ingratitude plain by the innumerable kindnesses he showers on men for their benefit and which are quite obviously his gifts. For who else provides food for everyone who eats, light for seeing, air to breathe? It would be foolish to want to list them when I have just said that they are innumerable. Let it be enough to give the chief ones, bread, sun, and air, as examples. I say "chief" not because they are more excellent than

5. The Latin text has *puritas*, but the reference is clearly to purity of love.

6. This device of the pretended interruption was often used by lecturers in the twelfth century.

7. Cf. Gra 29, LTR III, 187.

other gifts, but because they are more necessary, for they are bodily necessities.

You must look for higher goods in the higher part of yourself, that is, the soul. These higher goods are dignity, knowledge, virtue. Man's dignity is his free will, which is the gift by which he is superior to the animals and even rules them (Gn 1:26). Man's knowledge is that by which he recognizes that he possesses this dignity, but that it does not originate in himself. His virtue is that by which he seeks eagerly for his Creator, and when he finds him, holds to him with all his might.

II.3. Each of these three has two aspects.

Dignity is not only a natural privilege. It is also the power of dominion, for all living things on earth can be seen to stand in fear of man (Gn 9:2). Knowledge, too, is twofold, for we know both that we possess this dignity and whatever else we have that is good, and that they do not originate in ourselves. Virtue can equally be seen to have two aspects. By it we seek our Maker and when we have found him we cling to him so that we cannot be separated from him.

Dignity is nothing without knowledge, and knowledge can even be a stumbling-block without virtue. This is the reason for both these things. What glory is it to have what you do not know you have? And you is to have glory, but not before God (Rom 4:2). To him who glories in himself the Apostle says, "What do you have that you have not received? But if you have received it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?" (1 Cor 4:7). He does not simply say, "Why do you boast?" He adds, "As if you had not received," so as to emphasize that the guilt lies not in boasting of something, but in doing so as if it was not a gift which had been received. This sort of thing is rightly called vainglory, because it does not rest on a solid foundation of truth. St. Paul points out the difference between truth and vainglory. "He who boasts, let him boast in the Lord" (1 Cor 1:31; 2 Cor 10:17; cf. Jer 9:23-24), that is, in the truth. For the Lord himself is truth (Jn 14:6).

II.4. There are two things you should know first, what you are; second, that you are not what you are by your own power. Then you will boast, but not in vain. It says that if you do not know yourself, you should go and follow the flocks of your companions (Sg 1:6-7).⁸ This is what actually happens. When man has a high honor bestowed on him

but does not appreciate it, he is deservedly compared with the beasts with whom he shares his present mortality and state of corruption (Jn 14:6).

It happens, too, when a man does not appreciate the gift of reason and spends his time with herds of unreasoning beasts; and when he ignores the glory which is within him, and models himself on the outward things his senses perceive; and when he is so carried away by curiosity⁹ that he becomes no different from any other animal, because he does not see that he has received anything more than they have.

And so we should greatly fear that ignorance which makes us think less of ourselves than we should. But no less, indeed rather more, should we fear that ignorance which makes us think ourselves better than we are. This is what happens when we are deceived into thinking that some good in us originates with ourselves.

But you should avoid and detest even more than these two that presumption¹⁰ by which, in full knowledge and deliberately, you dare to seek your own glory in good things which are not your own and which you know perfectly well are not yours by any power of your own. Thus you unashamedly steal another's glory. For the first ignorance has no glory. The second has a glory, but not in God's eyes (Rom 4:2). But this third evil which is committed knowingly is an act of treason against God.

This arrogance¹¹ born of the last ignorance is worse and more dangerous because while the second kind of ignorance causes us to ignore God, this leads us to despise him. And it is worse and more disgusting than the first because while the first makes us the companions of beasts, this throws us into fellowship with demons. It is pride, the greatest sin, to use gifts you have been given as though you were born with them, and to arrogate to yourself the glory which belongs to the generous giver.

II.5. With these two, dignity and knowledge, must go virtue, which is the fruit of both. Through virtue we seek and cling to the Giver of all good things and give him the glory he deserves for all that he has given. But he who knows how to do what is right and does not do it will receive many lashes (Lk 12:47). Why? Because "He did not want to understand how to behave well" (Ps 35:4). More than that, "He

8. Cf. SC 32:10; LTR 1.233.

9. For Bernard curiosity is the first step of pride (Hum 26).

10. For Bernard presumption is the seventh step of pride (Hum 44).

11. For Bernard arrogance is the sixth step of pride (Hum 43).

plotted wickedness upon his bed" (Ps 35:5). He endeavors like a wicked servant to snatch and steal away the good Lord's glory for himself, the glory due for the good qualities which he knows quite certainly do not originate with himself, because God has given him that knowledge.

It is perfectly obvious then that without knowledge dignity is utterly useless, and that knowledge without virtue is to be condemned. Truly the man of virtue, in whom knowledge is not to be condemned, and dignity is not fruitless, cries to God and freely confesses, "Not to us, Lord, but to your name be the glory" (Ps 113:9). That is, "We credit for it all comes from you."

II.6. We have wandered too far from our subject in striving to show that those who do not know Christ are without excuse: for they are taught enough by natural law (cf. Rom 1:19ff.; 2:14-5) and the good perceptions of their bodily senses to oblige them to love God for his own sake. To sum up what has been said: Is there anyone, even an unbeliever, who does not know that he has received the necessities of bodily life in this world which we mentioned earlier—by means of which he survives, sees and breathes—from no other but him who gives food to all flesh (Ps 135:25), who causes his sun to rise on the good and the wicked alike, and the rain to fall on the just and the unjust (Mt 5:45)? Again, what man however wicked would think that that human dignity which shines in his soul came from any Author but he who says in Genesis, "Let us make man in our own image and likeness" (Gn 1:26)? Who can think that the Giver of knowledge is anyone but he who teaches man knowledge (Ps 93:10)? And who either thinks he has received the gift of virtue from any but the hand of that same Lord of virtues, hopes to have it from any other source?

And so God deserves to be loved for himself, even by the unbeliever (Rom 3:2), for even if he does not know Christ, he knows himself.¹² No one, not even an unbeliever, can be excused, if he does not love God with all his heart, all his mind, and all his strength (Mk 12:30). An inborn sense of justice in him, which reason recognizes, cries out that he ought to love him with all his powers, for he knows that he owes him everything.¹³

Yet it is difficult for anyone, once he has received from God the

power to will freely, to give up his will wholly to God and not rash to will things for himself. Perhaps it is impossible: he is tempted to the what he has been given as his own, and clutch it to himself; as it is written, "Everyone seeks his own" (Phil 2:21), and again, "The thought and feelings of men are inclined to evil" (Gn 8:21).

III.7. On the contrary, the faithful know how utterly they stand in need of Jesus and him crucified (1 Cor 2:2). They wonder at and reach out to that supreme love of his which passes all knowledge (Eg 3:19).¹⁴ They are ashamed not to respond to such love and deserveth with the little they have to give.

The more surely you know yourself loved, the easier you will find it to love in return. Those to whom less has been given love less (1 Cor 7:47). The Jew and the pagan are not moved by such wounds of love as the Church experiences. She says, "I am wounded by love" (Sg 2:4) and again, "Surround me with flowers, pile up apples around me, I am sick with love" (Sg 3:11). The Church sees King Solomon in the crown which his mother had placed on his head (Sg 3:11).¹⁵ She sees the Father's only Son carrying his Cross (Jn 19:17). She sees the Lord of majesty (1 Cor 2:8)¹⁶ struck and spat upon. She sees the Author of life and glory (Acts 3:15) transfixed by nails, wounded by a lance (Lk 19:34), smeared with abuse (Lam 3:30), and finally laying down his precious life for his friends (Jer 12:7; Jn 15:13). She sees these things, and she says, "Surround me with flowers, pile up apples around me, for I am sick with love" (Sg 2:5).

WHERE DO THE POMEGRANATES COME FROM?

These are beyond a doubt the pomegranate fruits which the Bride brought into her Beloved's garden (Sg 6:10). They were picked from the Tree of Life (Gn 2:22), and their taste had been transmuted to that of the heavenly bread, and their color to that of Christ's blood. At last she sees the death of death and death's author defeated (Heb 2:14). She sees captivity led captive (Eph 4:8) from hell to earth and from earth to heaven, so that at the name of Jesus every knee may bow, in heaven

12. On *scio teipsum*, see the introduction to *Peter Abelard's Ethics*, ed D. Luscombe (Oxford, 1971).

13. The play on *debeat/debere* is lost in English.

14. Cf. Csi 5:28; LTR 3:491.

15. Cf. Div 50; LTR 6: 270-71.

16. Bernard uses the Old Latin translation of the Bible here.

on earth, and in hell (Phil 2:10). Under the ancient curse (Heb 6:8) the earth had produced thorns and thistles; now she sees it burst into bloom again under the renewed grace of a new blessing. And as she beholds all this, she remembers the verse "My flesh has bloomed again, and willingly shall I praise him" (Ps 27:7).¹⁷ She desires to add to the pomegranate fruits which she gathered from the tree of the Cross some of the flowers of the resurrection whose fragrance more than anything else invites the Bridegroom to visit her more often.

III.8. Next she says, "You are fair, my Beloved, and beautiful. Our bed is strewn with flowers" (Sg 1:15). By the mention of the bed she makes it plain enough what she desires; and when she says that it is strewn with flowers she indicates clearly why she hopes to be granted her desire: not for her own merits,¹⁸ but for the sake of flowers from the field the Lord has blessed (Gn 27:27). Christ delighted in flowers. He wanted to be conceived and to grow up in Nazareth (Lk 1:26ff.).¹⁹ The heavenly Bridegroom takes such pleasure in these fragrances that he comes often and willingly to the chamber of the heart in which he finds such fruits piled up and such flowers strewn. Where, that is, he sees constant reflection on the grace of the Passion and the glory of the resurrection. There he is present constantly and willingly.

The tokens of the Passion are like last year's fruits, the fruits that is of all the time past which was spent under the dominion of sin and death (cf. Rom 5:21). In the fullness of time they appear (Gal 4:4). But see, the signs of the resurrection are like the flowers of a new age, blooming in a new summer of grace; and their fruit will be the general resurrection which is to come at the last, and which will last for ever. "Now," it says, "winter is over. The rain is past and gone. Flowers appear in our land" (Sg 2:11-12). This means that summer has come, with him who changed the coldness of death into the warm spring of a new life. "Behold," he says, "I will make all things new" (Rv 21:5). His flesh was sown in death; it flowered again in the resurrection (1 Cor 15:42). His fragrance makes the dry grass grow green again in the fields of our "valley." What was cold becomes warm again. What was dead comes to life again.

17. *Venialitas*: Bernard is not referring to a "verse" in quite the modern sense. The Bible was divided into verses by Stephen Langton at the end of the twelfth century.

18. Bernard discusses merits in SC 68, 6; LTR 2:200.

19. Nazareth was traditionally derived etymologically from "flower." Cf. Tpl 13; LTR 3:225.

20. On the fruits of the Passion and resurrection, see Ann 1:4; LTR 5:15.

III.9. In the freshness of these flowers and fruits and the beauty of the field which gives off so sweet a scent, the Father himself takes delight in the Son who is making all things new, so that he says, "Behold the odor of my Son is like that of a rich field which the Lord has blessed" (Gn 27:27): a rich field indeed, of whose fullness we have all received (Jn 1:16).

The Bride enjoys a greater freedom, for she may gather fruit and pick the flowers when she wishes (Sg 7:13). With these she strews her conscience within, so that when the Bridegroom comes the couch of her heart may give off a sweet fragrance.

It befits us, too, to fortify our own hearts with the testimony of faith, if we want Christ to be a frequent guest (Eph 3:17): faith both in the mercy of him who died for us, and in the power of him who rose again, as David said, "I have heard these two things: Power is of God and mercy is yours, Lord" (Ps 61:12-13). And so "the testimonies" of both these things "are utterly believable" (Ps 92:5). Christ died for our sins and rose again to make us righteous (Rom 4:25). For our protection he ascended (Mk 16:19) and sent the Holy Spirit to be our Comforter (Jn 16:7; Acts 9:31). He will one day return to bring us fulfillment (cf. Acts 1:11). He showed his mercy in dying, his power in the resurrection, and both in the remainder of his actions.

III.10. With these fruits and flowers the Bride begs to be surrounded and nourished now. I believe that she does so sensing that the warmth of her love can easily cool if it is not encouraged and supported until she is led into the chamber (Sg 2:5; 3:4), where she will be held in the long-desired embrace (Prv 7:18), so that she can say, "His left hand is under my head and his right hand has embraced me" (Sg 2:6).

Then she will know and experience indeed all the testimonies of love which she has received at his first coming,²¹ as though from the left hand of the Beloved, and far less sweet and of less worth than the embrace of his right hand (Ps 30:20). She will experience what she has heard, "The flesh is of no value; it is the spirit which gives life" (Jn 6:64). She will prove in reality what she has heard, "My spirit is sweeter than honey, and my inheritance than honey and the honeycomb" (Sir 24:27), and what follows: "The memory of me will endure forever" (Sir 24:28). This means that as long as this world lasts, in which one generation is succeeded by another (Eccl 1:4), God's chosen ones will not be without

21. Cf. Adv. 4:9; LTR 4:182.

the consolation of memory until they can enjoy the feast of God's presence. Thus it is written, "They will broadcast the memory of your sweetness" (Ps 144:7), referring undoubtedly to those of whom it is said just before this passage, "Generation after generation will praise your works" (Ps 144:4). And so memory is for the generations of this world; presence belongs to the kingdom of heaven. Those who are chosen already enjoy the glory of his presence there; the generation which is still on its pilgrimage is comforted in the meantime by memory.

IV. 11. It is important to note which generation takes comfort in remembering God. It is not the wicked and stubborn generation (Ps 77:8), to whom it is said, "Woe to you who are rich; you have your consolation" (Lk 6:24), but rather the generation which can say, "My soul refused to be comforted" (Ps 76:3). This is truly our attitude if we add what follows, "I remembered the Lord and rejoiced" (Ps 76:4). It is indeed right that those who take no delight in present things should be sustained by the recollection of what is to come, and those who refuse to be consoled by plentiful but mutable things should find joy in thinking of eternity. This is the generation of those who seek the Lord (Ps 23:6), who do not look for their own advantage (1 Cor 13:15), but seek the face of the God of Jacob.

In the meantime memory is sweet for those who long for God's presence. It does not satisfy their longing but intensifies it (cf. Mt 5:6). He himself bears witness to the manner of his feeding, "He who eats me will hunger for more" (Sir 24:29). And he who is fed by God says, "I shall be satisfied at the sight of your glory" (Ps 16:15).

Blessed are those who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness now (Mt 5:6), for they alone will be satisfied one day. Woe to you, wicked and perverse generation! Woe to you, stupid and foolish people (Jer 4:22; 5:21), who do not trouble to think of the past, and who fear the future! Not even now do you want to be freed from the snare of the hunters (Ps 90:3, 123:7), for those who wish to become rich in this world fall into the devil's net (1 Tm 6:9). Even then you cannot avoid the harsh words (cf. Jn 6:61). Oh, the harsh and cruel sentence, "Go, you who are cursed, into everlasting fire!" (Mt 25:41). These words are harsher and more dreadful than that which is repeated every day for us in Church in the memorial of his Passion, "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life" (Jn 6:55). That is, "He who remembers my death and mortifies his members on earth after my example (Col 3:5) has eternal life" (Jn 3:36). That means, "If we suffer together, you shall reign with me" (Rom 8:17; 2 Tm 2:12).

And yet many today shrink back at these words and desert him (Jn 6:67; 18:6), and answer not in words but by their actions, "This is a hard saying. Who can listen to it?" (Jn 6:61). The generation which did not discipline its heart and whose spirit is not in good credit with God (Ps 77:8), but which hopes instead in unreliable riches (1 Tm 6:17), feels oppressed by the story of the Cross (1 Cor 1:18), and thinks it burdensome to remember the Passion. How will it ever bear the weight of his words when it actually hears them, "Go, you who are cursed, into everlasting fire, which is prepared for the Devil and his angels" (Mt 25:41)? This stone will crush him on whom it falls (Mt 21:44).

But truly the generation of the righteous (Ps 111:2) will be blessed, those who, whether away from him or in his presence (2 Cor 5:9), strive with the Apostle to please God. They will hear, "Come, you blessed of my Father," and so forth (Mt 25:34).

Then the generation which did not discipline its heart (Ps 77:8) will learn too late how easy and sweet in comparison with that sorrow was Christ's burden (Mt 11:30), from which they withdrew their stiff necks (Dt 9:13, 31:27) as if it were a rough hard load.

O wretched slaves of mammon (Mt 6:24), you cannot simultaneously glory in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ (Gal 6:14) and hope for a treasury of money or chase after gold (1 Tm 6:17), and taste how sweet the Lord is (Ps 33:9). So then, you will doubtless find him whom you did not find sweet to remember severe indeed when you stand before him in person.

IV. 12. By contrast the faithful soul sighs deeply for his presence and rests peacefully in the thought of him, and until it is fit to have the glory of God revealed to it face to face (2 Cor 3:18), it glories in the ignominy of the Cross (Gal 6:14). So then does the Bride and Dove of Christ wait. In the meantime she rests upon her inheritance; for there fall to her lot (Ps 67:14) now in the present, in the recollection of the abundance of your sweetness (Ps 144:7) Lord Jesus, silvery wings (Ps 67:14), candid with innocence and purity. She places her hope in the joy she will feel at the sight of your face (Ps 15:11). Then even her back will gleam gold (Ps 67:4), when she is led with delight into the splendor of the saints (Ps 109:3). There the rays of wisdom will illuminate her more brightly still.

Rightly indeed does she glory now and say, "His left hand is beneath my head and his right hand embraces me" (Sg 2:6). His left hand stands for the recollection of his love, than which nothing is greater, for he laid down his life for his friends (Jn 15:13). His right hand signifies

the blessed vision which he promised to his friends, and the joys of the presence of his majesty. Rightly, too, that vision of God which makes us resemble him, that inestimable delight in the divine presence is thought of as the "right hand," of which the Psalmist sings in delight, "In your right hand are everlasting joys" (Ps 15:11). In the "left hand" we rightly "place" that wonderful love which is recollected and is always to be remembered, for the Bride leans upon it and rests until evil is past (Ps 56:2).

IV.13. Rightly then is the left hand of the Bridegroom under the Bride's head, upon which he supports her leaning head. This leaning is the intention of her mind, and he supports it so that it may not bend or incline toward fleshly and worldly desires (Gal 5:16; Ti 2:12). For the body, which is corruptible, weighs down the soul, and the earthly dwelling of the soul hems it in and keeps it preoccupied with many thoughts (Wis 9:15).²²

What is the result of contemplating such great mercy and mercy so undeserved, such generous and proven love, such unlooked-for condescension, such persistent gentleness, such astonishing sweetness? To what, I ask, will all these wonderfully draw and deeply attract the thoughtful mind when it considers them carefully and is wholly set at liberty from unworthy love? It will despise everything else, everything which will get in the way of that desire. The Bride surely runs eagerly in the odor of these perfumes, and loves ardently (Sg 1:3). Yet even when she has fallen wholly in love she thinks she loves too little because she is loved so much. And she is right. What can repay so great a love and such a lover? It is as if a little speck of dust (Is 40:15) were to marshal itself to return a love which is ever before it in Majesty and which can be seen to bend all its power on the work of salvation. The words "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son" (Jn 3:16) were certainly spoken of the Father, and, "He gave himself up to death" (Is 53:12) was undoubtedly said of the Son (Jn 14:26). And it is said of the Holy Spirit, "The Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom my Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and will cause you to remember all that I have said to you" (Jn 14:26). God, then, loves, and loves with all his being, for the whole Trinity loves—if the word "whole" can be used of the infinite, the incomprehensible, absolute Being.

22. Wis 9:15; cf. Gra 37.41; LTR 3.192-93; Comv 30; LTR 4.106.

V.14. I believe that he who understands this will recognize clearly enough why God is to be loved, that is, why he deserves to be loved. Because the Son is not his, the unbeliever has neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit (1 Jn 5:12). For "He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him" (Jn 5:53). Nor does he honor the Holy Spirit whom the Son sent (Jn 15:26, 16:7). And so it is not surprising that a man should love the less someone whom he knows less well (cf. Lk 7:47). Nevertheless, the unbeliever is aware that he owes him everything, because he knows that he is the Author of everything.

But then what of me? What do I owe, who hold my God to be not only the generous Giver of my life, its beneficent Governor, its holy Comforter, its careful Director, and above all these its most liberal Redeemer, everlasting Protector, Defender, Glorifier? It is written, "With him is plentiful redemption" (Ps 129:7), and again, "He entered the sanctuary once and for all, when he had won eternal salvation" (Heb 9:12). And, on conversion, "He will not forsake his own; they shall be kept safe forever" (Ps 36:28). And the Gospel says about the riches he brings, "They will pour into your lap good measure and full and pressed down and running over" (Lk 6:38). And again, "eye has not seen or ear heard, nor has it entered the mind of man, what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor 2:9). And about glorification, "We wait for the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, who will renew the body of our lowliness and make it like his glorified body" (Phil 3:20-21). And that, "The sufferings of this time are not to be compared with the glory which is to come, which will be revealed in us" (Rom 8:18), and again, "That which is but a brief and light trouble in this present life will work in us beyond its weight, for eternal life, as we contemplate not the things which are seen but the things which are unseen" (2 Cor 4:17-18).

IV.5. What shall I give to God in return for all these things (Ps 115:12)? Reason and natural justice press the unbeliever to give himself up wholly to him from whom he has everything, and to love him with all his heart. Faith urges me to love more than that him whom I know to have given me not only myself but his own self. When the age of faith had not yet come God had not made himself known in the flesh, died on the Cross, risen from the tomb, returned to the Father, or proved his great love for us (Rom 5:8), about which I have said so much; when he had not yet commanded man to love the Lord his God with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his strength (Dt 6:5; Mt 12:30), that is, with all he is, all he knows, all he can do.

God is not unjust when he claims his works and his gifts for himself (Heb 6:10). Why should the work of an artist not love its master, if it has the ability to do so? Why should it not love him with all its might, since it can do nothing except by his gift?

In addition, the fact that man was created gratuitously, out of nothing—and in such dignity—makes the duty of love still clearer and demonstrates further the justice of God's demand. Besides, think of the greatness of the additional kindness when he saved man and beast (Ps 35:7-8). How did God multiply his mercy then? We, I emphasize, exchanged our glory for the likeness of a calf which eats grass (Ps 105:20), and have become like brute beasts through our sins (Ps 48:13, 21). If I owe all that I am in return for my creation, what am I to add in return for being remade, and remade in this way? For I was not remade as easily as I was made. It is written not only of me, but of everything that was made (Jn 1:3), "He spoke and they were made" (Ps 148:5). But he who made me by speaking once said a great deal more to remake me, and did miracles, and endured hardship, and not only hardship but humiliation. "What then shall I give the Lord for all that he has given me? (Ps 115:2)? In the first act he gave me myself; in the second he gave himself; and when he did that he gave me back myself. Given and given again, I owe myself in return for myself, twice over. What am I to give God in return for himself? For even if I could give myself a thousand times over, what am I to God (cf. Jb 9:3, 9:14)?

How GOD SHOULD Be LOVED

VI.16. First see in what measure God deserves to be loved by us, and how he deserves to be loved without measure. For (to repeat briefly what I have said) "he first loved us" (1 Jn 4:10). He loved—with such love, and so much and so generously—us who are so insignificant and who are what we are. I remember that I said at the beginning that the way to love God was to love without measure. Now since the love which is directed to God is directed to something immense, something infinite (for God is both immense and infinite)—who, I ask, ought to draw a line to our love or measure it out? And what about the fact that our love itself is not freely given but given in payment for a debt? So immensely loves; eternity loves; the love which passes knowledge gives itself (Eph 3:19); God loves, whose greatness knows no bounds (Ps 114:3), whose wisdom cannot be counted (Ps 146:5), whose peace

passes all understanding (Phil 4:7), and do we measure out our response?

"I will love you, Lord, my strength, my fortress, my refuge, my deliverer" (Ps 17:2-3), you who are everything I can desire and love. My God, my Helper, I shall love you in proportion to your gift and my capacity, less indeed than is just, but to do that is beyond me. Ever though I cannot love you as much as I ought, still I cannot love you more than I am able. I shall be able to love you more only when you deign to give me more; and even then you can never find my love worthy. "Your eyes have seen my imperfection," and "all shall be written down in your book" (Ps 138:16), all who do what they can, even if they cannot do all that they should. It is clear, I think, how much God ought to be loved, and for what merit in him. For his own merit, I say, but to whom is it really clear how great that is? Who can say? Who can fee it?

VII.17. Now let us see how he is to be loved for our benefit. How far does our perception of him fall short of what he is? We must not keep silent about what we can see clearly, even if all is not clear to us. Above, when we proposed to seek why and how God is to be loved, said that there were two meanings of the question with which we began. We asked why he should be loved, meaning by what merit of his or for what benefit of ours. Both questions can, it seems, be asked. After speaking of God's merit, not as he deserves, but as well as I am able, it remains for me to say something about the reward, as far as I will be given to me to do.

THAT GOD IS NOT LOVED WITHOUT REWARD

God is not loved without reward, even though he should be loved without thought of reward. True charity cannot be empty, but it does not seek profit, "For it does not seek its own benefit" (1 Cor 13:5). It is a affection, not a contract. It is not given or received by agreement. It is given freely; it makes us spontaneous. True love is content. It has its reward in what it loves. For if you seem to love something, but really love it for the sake of something else, you actually love what you are pursuing as your real end, not that which is a means to it. Paul did not preach in order to eat; he ate in order to preach. He loved not the food but the Gospel (1 Cor 9:18).

True love does not ask for a reward but it deserves it. A reward

offered to him who does not yet love; it is owed to him who loves; it is given to him who perseveres. When we are trying to persuade people about lesser matters, it is not the willing but the unwilling that we woo with promises and rewards. Who would think a man ought to be paid for doing what he wants to do? No one, for example, pays a hungry man to eat, or a thirsty man to drink, or a mother to feed the child of her womb (Is 49:15). Who would think of getting someone to fence his vine or dig round his tree or build himself a house by begging him to do it, or paying him a fee? How much more does the soul that loves God ask for no reward but God? Certainly, if that is not all it asks, it does not love God.

VI.18. It is always natural for every rational being to desire what it sees to be finer and to direct its energies toward it. It is never satisfied with anything which lacks what it judges it should have. For example, a man who has a beautiful wife looks at a lovelier woman with a discontented eye or mind. He who is dressed in fine clothes wants better. He who is very rich envies a richer man.

Today you see many men who already have great wealth and possessions still laboring day by day to add one field to another (Is 5:8) and to extend their boundaries (Ex 34:24)—with greed which knows no bounds. And you see those who have houses worthy of a king and vast palaces, nevertheless adding house to house every day (Is 5:8), and building with a restless love of novelty, knocking down what they build, altering rectangles to rounds.²³ And what of men in high positions? Do we not see them striving with all their might to reach still higher positions; their ambition is never satisfied. There is no end to it all because the highest and the best is not to be found in any of these things. If a man cannot be at peace until he has the highest and best, is it surprising that he is not content with inferior and worse things? It is folly and extreme madness always to be longing for things which cannot only never satisfy but cannot even blunt the appetite; however much you have of such things you still desire what you have not yet attained; you are always restlessly sighing after what is missing.

When the wandering mind is always rushing about in empty effort among the various and deceptive delights of the world, it grows weary and remains dissatisfied. It is like a starving man who thinks that what-

23. Horace, *Ep.* 1.1(100), ed. H. Rushton Fairclough (London, 1970).

ever he is stuffing himself with is nothing in comparison with what remains to be eaten; he is always anxiously wanting what he has not got rather than enjoying what he has. For who can have everything? That little which a man obtains by all his effort, he possesses in fear. He does not know what he will lose and when.

Thus the perverted will which is aiming for the best and trying to make speed toward that which will fully satisfy it fails in its endeavor. Vanity makes fun of it, bringing it into these twisted paths; sin deceives itself with lies (Ps 26:12). If you really wish to have what you desire, that is, if you wish to lay hold of that which leaves nothing further to be desired, what need is there to bother with these other things? If you do, you are running along winding roads, and you will be dead long before you reach what you desire by this route.

VI.19. The wicked therefore walk round in this circle (Ps 11:9), naturally wanting what will satisfy their wants, and foolishly thrusting away the means of attaining it—that is, of attaining not consumption but consummation. In this way they wear themselves out with pointless effort and do not reach the end of happy fulfillment. They delight in the beauty of the creature rather than of the Creator (Rom 1:23). They lust for each and every experience more than they desire to come to the Lord of all. And indeed if they could ever do all they set themselves to do, they would succeed—if anyone could indeed obtain everything without the Source of all things.

For by that law of human desire which causes man to hunger more for the things he does not have than for the things he has, and to spurn what he has for the sake of things he does not possess, soon he has obtained and cast aside everything in heaven and on earth (Eph 1:10). In the end, I do not doubt that he will rush toward the only thing he now lacks—the God of all. There he will rest, for just as there is no rest this side of heaven, so on the other side, nothing can disturb his rest.

Then he will surely say, "It is good for me to cling to God" (Ps 72:28). He will say, "What is there for me in heaven, and what have I desired on earth?" (Ps 72:25). And again, "God of my heart, God, my lot for ever" (Ps 72:26). So therefore as I said, whoever desires the greatest good can reach it, if he can first gain all the other things he wants which fall short of it.

VI.20. But that is quite impossible. Life is too short. Our strength is insufficient. There are too many temptations. Those who struggle on are exhausted by the length of the roads and the uselessness of their

efforts. They wish to obtain all they want, but they are unable to reach the end of their desires. If they would only be content with reaching it all in thought and not insist on experiencing it! That they can easily do, and it would not be pointless, for man's mind is quicker than his senses and it sees further and the senses dare not touch anything which the mind has not already examined and approved. I think this is what is meant by the text "Test everything, and hold on to what is good" (1 Thes 5:21). The mind looks ahead, and if it does not give permission the senses must not pursue what they want. If they did, you would not go up the mountain of the Lord, nor stand in his holy place (Ps 23:3-4), and you would have received your rational soul in vain; you would be following your sense like a dumb beast without any resistance from your lazy reason. Those whose reason does not keep ahead of their feet run, but not on the road (cf. Is 59:8). They spurn the Apostle's advice. They do not run to win (1 Cor 9:24). When will they reach him whom they put off coming to until they have tried everything else? The desire to possess everything first is a winding road and a circle to go round and round forever.

V1.21. The just man is not like that. When he hears about the wicked behavior of those who are going round and round (Ps 30:14)—for there are many traveling the wide road which leads to death (Mt 7:13)—he chooses for himself the royal road and turns neither to right nor to left (Nm 20:17, 21:22). Finally, the prophet bears witness, "The path of the just is straight and straightforward to walk on" (Is 26:7). It is men such as this who take the shortcut to salvation and avoid the troublesome and unrewarding roundabout way, choosing the brief and abbreviating word (Rom 9:28). They do not want to have everything they see. On the contrary, they sell all they have and give it to the poor (Mt 19:21). "Blessed are the poor," indeed, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:3). Everyone runs (1 Cor 9:24), but we must distinguish between the runners. For "the Lord knows the way of the just; the way of the wicked will perish" (Ps 1:6). So a little is better to the just than all their wealth is to the wicked (Ps 36:16), for indeed—as Wisdom says and the foolish man discovers—"He who loves money will not be satisfied by money" (cf. Eccl 5:9). But those who hunger and thirst after righteousness will be satisfied (Mt 5:6).

Righteousness is the natural and vital food of the rational soul. Money cannot diminish the mind's hunger; more than air is needed to satisfy that of the body. If a hungry man opens his mouth to the wind

and you see him blow out his cheeks with air in the hope of satisfying his hunger, will you not think he is mad? So it is no less a madness if you think the rational soul can be satisfied and not merely "puffed up" by bodily things. What do bodily things mean to the soul? The body cannot feed on spiritual things or the soul on bodily things. "Bless the Lord, my soul. He satisfies your desire with good things" (Ps 102:1, 5). He satisfies it with good things, stirs it to goodness, keeps it in goodness, anticipates, sustains, fulfills. He causes you to desire and he himself satisfies your desire.

V1.22. I said before that God is the cause of loving God. I spoke the truth, for he is both the efficient and the final cause. He himself provides the occasion. He himself creates the longing. He himself fulfills the desire. He himself causes himself to be (or rather, to be made) such that he should be loved. He hopes to be so happily loved that no one will love him in vain. His love both prepares and rewards ours (cf. 1 Jn 4:19). Kindly, he leads the way. He repays us justly. He is our sweet hope. He is riches to all who call upon him (Rom 10:12). There is nothing better than himself. He gave himself in merit. He keeps himself to be our reward. He gives himself as food for holy souls (Wis 3:13). He sold himself to redeem the captives (Lam 3:25).

Lord, you are good to the soul which seeks you. What are you then to the soul which finds? But this is the most wonderful thing, that no one can seek you who has not already found you. You therefore seek to be found so that you may be sought for, sought so that you may be found. You can be sought, and found, but not fore-stalled. For even if we say "In the morning my prayer will forestall you" (Ps 87:14), it is certain that every prayer which is not inspired is half-hearted.

Now let us see where our love begins, for we have seen where it finds its end.

VIII.23 Love is one of the four natural passions.²⁴ They are well enough known; there is no need to name them. It is clearly right that what is natural should be at the service of the Lord of nature. That is why the first and great commandment is, "You shall love the Lord your God" (Mt 22:37).

²⁴ Cf. SV 85.5; LTR 2.310; OH 14.19; LTR 4.414; Div 50.2; LTR 6^s.271; Quad 2.3; LTR 4.321; cf. Juvenal, *Satires*, 1:85-86, ed. W. V. Clausen (Oxford, 1959).

THE FIRST DEGREE OF LOVE: WHEN MAN LOVES HIMSELF FOR HIS OWN SAKE

But because nature has become rather frail and weak, man is driven by necessity to serve nature first. This results in bodily love, by which man loves himself for his own sake. He does not yet know anything but himself, as it is written, "First came what is animal, then what is spiritual" (1 Cor 15:46). This love is not imposed by rule but is spiritual nature. For who hates his own flesh (Eph 5:29)? But if that same love begins to get out of proportion and headstrong, as often happens, and it ceases to be satisfied to run in the narrow channel of its needs, and floods out on all sides into the fields of pleasure, then the overflow can be stopped at once by the commandment "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt 22:39).

It is wholly right that he who is your fellow in nature (2 Pt 1:4) should not be cut off from you in grace, especially in that grace which is innate in nature. If a man feels it a heavy burden to help his brothers in their need and to share in their pleasures, let him keep his desires in check all by himself if he does not want to fall into sin. He can indulge himself as much as he likes as long as he remembers to show an equal tolerance to his neighbor. O man, the law of life and discipline impose restraint (Sir 45:6) to prevent you chasing after your desires until you perish (Sir 18:30), and to save you from making of nature's good things a way to serve the soul's enemy through lust.

Is it not much more right and honest to share nature's goods with your fellow man, that is, your neighbor, than with an enemy? If you take the advice of Wisdom and turn away from your pleasures (Sir 18:30) and make yourself content with food and clothing as the Apostle teaches (1 Tm 6:8), soon you will find that your love is not impeded by carnal desires which fight against the soul (1 Pt 2:11). I think you will not find it a burden to share with your fellow man what you withhold from the enemy of your soul. Then will your love be sober and just, when you do not deny your brother what he needs from the pleasures you have denied yourself. It is in this way that bodily love is shared, when it is extended to the community.

VIII.24. But what are you to do if when you share with your neighbor you yourself are left without something you need? What but ask in full faith (Acts 4:29, 28:31) from him who gives generously to everyone and does not grudge (as 1:5), who opens his hand and pours blessing on every creature (Ps 144:16). There is no doubt that he will

come to your aid generously when you are in need, since he is so generous in time of plenty. Scripture says, "First seek the Kingdom of God and his justice and all these things will be added to you" (Mt 6:33; Lk 12:31). He promises without being asked to give what is needed to whoever is not greedy for himself and loves his neighbor. This is to seek the kingdom of God and to implore his help against the tyranny of sin, to take on the yoke of chastity and sobriety rather than to let sin rule in your mortal body (Rom 6:12). More: This is righteousness, to share what is common to your nature with him who has the same gift of nature.

VIII.25. But to love one's neighbor with perfect justice it is necessary to be prompted by God. How can you love your neighbor with purity if you do not love him in God? But he who does not love God cannot love in God. You must first love God, so that in him you can love your neighbor too (Mk 12:30-31).

God therefore brings about your love for him, just as he causes other goods. This is how he does it: He who made nature also protects it. For it was so created that it needs its Creator as its Protector, so that what could not have come into existence without him cannot continue in existence without him. So that no rational creature might be in ignorance of this fact and (dreadful thought) claim for himself the gifts of the Creator, that same Creator willed by a high and saving counsel that man should endure tribulation; then when man falls and God comes to his aid and sets him free, man will honor God as he deserves. For this is what he says, "Call upon me in the day of tribulation. I will deliver you, and you shall honor me" (Ps 49:15). And so in that way it comes about that man who is a bodily animal (1 Cor 2:14), and does not know how to love anything but himself, begins to love God for his own benefit, because he learns from frequent experience that in God he can do everything which is good for him (Phil 4:13), and that without him he can do nothing (Jn 15:5).

THE SECOND DEGREE OF LOVE, WHEN MAN LOVES GOD FOR HIS OWN GOOD

IX.26. Man therefore loves God, but as yet he loves him for his own sake, not God's. Nevertheless the wise man ought to know what he can do by himself and what he can do only with God's help: then you will avoid hurting him who keeps you from harm.

If a man has a great many tribulations and as a result he frequently turns to God and frequently experiences God's liberation, surely even if he had a breast of iron or a heart of stone (Ez 11:19; 36:26), he must soften toward the generosity of the Redeemer and love God not only for his own benefit, but for himself?

THE THIRD DEGREE OF LOVE: WHEN MAN LOVES GOD FOR GOD'S SAKE

Man's frequent needs make it necessary for him to call upon God often, and to taste by frequent contact, and to discover by tasting how sweet the Lord is (Ps 33:9). It is in this way that the taste of his own sweetness leads us to love God in purity more than our need alone would prompt us to do. The Samaritans set us an example when they said to the woman who told them the Lord was there, "Now we believe, not because of your words, but because we have heard him for ourselves and we know that truly he is the Savior of the world" (Jn 4:42). In the same way, I urge, let us follow their example and rightly say to our flesh, "Now we love God not because he meets your needs; but we have tasted and we know how sweet the Lord is" (Ps 33:9).

There is a need of the flesh which speaks out, and the body tells by its actions of the kindnesses it has experienced. And so it will not be difficult for the man who has had that experience to keep the commandment to love his neighbor (Mk 12:31). He truly loves God, and therefore he loves what is God's. He loves chastely, and to the chaste it is no burden to keep the commandments; the heart grows purer in the obedience of love, as it is written (1 Pt 1:22). Such a man loves justly and willingly keeps the just law.

This love is acceptable because it is given freely. It is chaste because it is not made up of words or talk, but of truth and action (1 Jn 3:18). It is just because it gives back what it has received. For he who loves in this way loves as he is loved. He loves, seeking in return not what is his own (1 Cor 13:5), but what is Jesus Christ's, just as he has sought not his own but our good, or rather, our very selves (2 Cor 12:14). He who says, "We trust in the Lord for he is good" (Ps 117:1) loves in this way. He who trusts in the Lord not because he is good to him but simply because he is good truly loves God for God's sake and not for his own. He of whom it is said, "He will praise you when you do him favors" (Ps 48:19) does not love in this way.

That is the third degree of love, in which God is already loved for his own sake.

THE FOURTH DEGREE OF LOVE: WHEN MAN LOVES HIMSELF FOR THE SAKE OF GOD

X.27. Happy is he who has been found worthy to attain to the fourth degree, where man loves himself only for God's sake. "O God, your justice is like the mountains of God" (Ps 35:7). That love is a mountain, and a high mountain of God. Truly, "a rich and fertile mountain" (Ps 67:16). "Who will climb the mountain of the Lord" (Ps 23:3)? "Who will give me wings like a dove, and I shall fly there and rest" (Ps 54:7)? That place was made a place of peace and it has its dwelling-place in Zion (Ps 75:3). "Alas for me, my exile has been prolonged!" (Ps 119:5). When will flesh and blood (Mt 16:17), this vessel of clay (2 Cor 4:7), this earthly dwelling (Wis 9:15), grasp this? When will it experience this kind of love, so that the mind, drunk with divine love and forgetting itself, making itself like a broken vessel (Ps 30:13), throw itself wholly on God and, clinging to God (1 Cor 6:17), become one with him in spirit and say, "My body and my heart have faintcd, O God of my heart; God, my part in eternity" (Ps 72:26)? I should call him blessed and holy to whom it is given to experience even for a single instant something which is rare indeed in this life. To lose yourself as though you did not exist and to have no sense of yourself, to be emptied out of yourself (Phil 2:7) and almost annihilated, belongs to heavenly not to human love.

And if indeed any mortal is rapt for a moment or is, so to speak, admitted for a moment to this union, at once the world presses itself on him (Gal 1:4), the day's wickedness troubles him, the mortal body weighs him down, bodily needs distract him, he fails because of the weakness of his corruption and—more powerfully than these—brotherly love calls him back. Alas, he is forced to come back to himself, to fall again into his affairs, and to cry out wretchedly, "Lord, I endure violence; fight back for me" (Is 38:14), and, "Unhappy man that I am, who will free me from the body of this death?" (Rom 7:24).

IX.28. But since Scripture says that God made everything for himself (Prv 16:4; Rv 4:11) there will be a time when he will cause everything to conform to its Maker and be in harmony with him. In the meantime, we must make this our desire: that as God himself willed that everything should be for himself, so we, too, will that nothing, not

even ourselves, may be or have been except for him, that is according to his will, not ours. The satisfaction of our needs will not bring us happiness, not chance delights, as does the sight of his will being fulfilled in us and in everything which concerns us. This is what we ask every day in prayer when we say, "Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Mt 6:10). O holy and chaste love! O sweet and tender affection! O pure and sinless intention of the will—the more pure and sinless in that there is no mixture of self-will in it, the more sweet and tender in that everything it feels is divine.

To love in this way is to become like God.²⁵ As a drop of water seems to disappear completely in a quantity of wine, taking the wine's flavor and color; as red-hot iron becomes indistinguishable from the glow of fire and its own original form disappears; as air suffused with the light of the sun seems transformed into the brightness of the light, as if it were itself light rather than merely lit up; so, in those who are holy, it is necessary for human affection to dissolve in some ineffable way, and be poured into the will of God. How will God be all in all (1 Cor 15:26) if anything of man remains in man? The substance remains, but in another form, with another glory, another power.

When will this be? Who will see this? Who will possess it? "When shall I come and when shall I appear in God's presence" (Ps 41:3)? O Lord my God, "My heart said to you, 'My face has sought you. Lord, I will seek your face'" (Ps 26:8). Shall I see your holy temple (Ps 26:4)? IX.29. I think that cannot be until I do as I am bid: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Mk 12:30). Then the mind will not have to think of the body. The soul will no longer have to give the body life and feeling, and its power will be set free of these ties and strengthened by the power of God. For it is impossible to draw together all that is in you and turn toward the face of God as long as the care of the weak and miserable body demands one's attention. So it is in a spiritual and immortal body, a perfect body, beautiful and at peace and subject to the spirit in all things, that the soul hopes to attain the fourth degree of love, or rather, to be caught up to it; for it lies in God's power to give to whom he will. It is not to be obtained by human effort. That, I say, is when a man will easily reach the fourth degree: when no entanglements of the flesh

hold him back and no troubles will disturb him, as he hurries with great speed and eagerness to the joy of the Lord (Mt 25:21; 25).

But do we not think that the holy martyrs received this grace while they were still in their victorious bodies—at least in part? They were so moved within by the great force of their love that they were able to expose their bodies to outward torments and think nothing of them. The sensation of outward pain could do no more than whisper across the surface of their tranquility; it could not disturb it.

XI.30. But what of those who are already free of the body? We believe that they are wholly immersed in that sea of eternal light and bright eternity.

WHAT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR SOULS BEFORE THE RESURRECTION

It is not in dispute that they want their bodies back; if they thus desire and hope for them, it is clear that they have not wholly turned from themselves, for it is evident that they are still clinging to something which is their own, even if their desires return to it only a very little. Until death is swallowed up in victory (1 Cor 15:54), and the everlasting light invades the farthest bounds of night and shines everywhere—so that heavenly glory gleams even in bodies—these souls cannot wholly remove themselves and transport themselves to God. They are still too much bound to their bodies, if not in life and feeling, certainly in natural affection. They do not wish to be complete without them, and indeed they cannot.

And so before the restoration of their bodies souls will not lose themselves, as they will when they are perfect and reach their highest state. If they did so the soul would be complete without its body, and would cease to want it.

The body is not laid down nor resumed except for the good of the soul. "Precious in God's sight is the death of his saints" (Ps 115:15).

If death is precious, what must life be, and life such as that? It need not be surprising that the glorified body should seem to confer something on the soul, for it was of use to it when it was weak and mortal. Oh, how truly did he speak who said that all things work together for good to those who love God (Rom 8:28)! Its weak body helps the soul to love God; it helps it when it is dead; it helps it when it is resurrected, first in producing fruits of patience, secondly in bringing peace, thirdly

²⁵ On *deificatio*, see Augustine, Letter 10:2, ed. A. L. Goldbacher, CSEL 34 (Vienna), pp. 4-5.

in bringing completeness. Truly the soul does not want to be perfected without that which it feels has served it well in every condition.

XI.31. It is clear that the flesh is a good and faithful companion to the good spirit. It helps it if it is burdened, or if it does not help, it relieves it; at any rate, it is an aid and not a burden. The first state is full of labor, but fruitful (Mt 3:8); the second is a time of waiting, but without weariness; the third is glorious. Listen to the Bridegroom in the Song holding out this threefold invitation: "Eat," he says, "and drink, friends; be intoxicated, dearest" (Sg 5:1).²⁶ He calls those who are laboring in the body to eat. Those who have set aside their bodies he calls to drink. Those who have resumed their bodies, he encourages to drink their fill. These he calls "dearest," for they are filled to overflowing with love. For there is this difference between these and those others he calls "friends," not "dearest," so that those who groan because they are still laboring in the flesh are held dear for the love they have; those who are free from the weight of the flesh (2 Cor 5:4) are more dear because they are made more ready and quicker to love. More than dear are they called "dearest" (and so they are) (1 Jn 3:1) who, having received the second garment, are in their resurrected bodies in glory. They burn the more eagerly and fiercely with love for God because nothing is now left to them which can trouble them or hold them back in any way. Neither of the first two states can claim that. For in the first the body is born along with labor, and in the second, too, it is awaited with no small desire.

XI.32. First, then, the faithful soul eats its bread, but alas, in the sweat of its brow (Gn 3:19). While in the flesh the soul moves by faith (2 Cor 5:7), which must act through love (Gal 5:6), for if it does not, it is dead (Jas 2:20).

This work is food, as the Lord says, "My food is to do the will of my Father" (Jn 4:34). When it is free of the flesh, the soul no longer feeds on the bread of sorrow (Ps 126:2), but having eaten it is allowed to drink deeply of the wine of love, but not the pure wine, for as it says in the Song of Songs in the person of the Bride, "I drank my wine mixed with milk" (Sg 5:1). The soul mixes the sweetness of natural affection with the wine of divine love when it desires to resume its glorified body. The soul therefore burns when it has drunk the wine of holy charity.

26. Cf. Gra 9; LTR 3.172; Div 41.12, 87.4; LTR 61.253, 331.

but not to the point of intoxication, for the admixture of this milk tempers it for the moment. Intoxication overthrows minds and makes them forget everything. The soul which is still concerned with the restoration of its body is not forgetting itself completely. But after it finds the only thing it needs, what is to prevent it from taking leave of itself altogether and going to God, and becoming as much unlike itself as it is given to it to be like God? Then only is the soul allowed to drink from the goblet of wisdom, of which we read, "How splendid is my cup which intoxicates me" (Ps 22:5). Is it surprising if the soul is then intoxicated by the riches of God's dwelling (Ps 35:9)? No longer tormented by worldly cares, it safely drinks the pure new wine with Christ in his Father's house (Mt 26:29; Mk 14:25).

XI.33. Wisdom presides over this threefold banquet (Prv 9:1ff.) of love, feeding those who labor, giving drink to those at rest, and intoxicating those who rule. As at a banquet in this world, food is served before drink, as the order of nature requires, and Wisdom keeps to it. First, up to the time of our death, we eat the work of our hands (Ps 127:2), when we chew effortfully what has to be swallowed. After death, in the spiritual life, we drink with ease whatever we are offered. Then, when our bodies are resurrected, we are intoxicated by immortal life, abounding in wonderful plenty. This is what the Bridegroom means in the Song, "Eat and drink, friends; be intoxicated, dearest" (Sg 5:1).

Dearest indeed, who are intoxicated with love. Intoxicated indeed, who deserve to be present at the wedding feast of the Lord (Rv 19:9), eating and drinking at his table in his kingdom (Lk 22:30), when he takes his Church to him in glory, without blemish or wrinkle or any defect (Eph 5:27). Then will he intoxicate his dearest ones with the torrent of his delight (Ps 35:9), for in the most passionate and most chaste embrace of Bridegroom and Bride, the rush of the river makes glad the city of God (Ps 45:5). I think this is no other than that which the Son of God, who waits on us as he goes (Lk 12:37), promised: "The just are feasting and rejoicing in the sight of God, and they delight in their gladness" (Ps 67:4). Here is fullness without disgust, insatiable curiosity which is not restless, an eternal and endless desire which knows no lack, and lastly, that sober intoxication (Acts 2:15) which does not come from drinking too much, which is no reeking of wine, but a burning for God.

From this point that fourth degree of love can be possessed forever, when God is loved alone and above all, for now we do not love ourselves

except for his sake; he is himself the reward of those who love him, the eternal reward of those who love him for eternity.²⁷

PROLOGUE TO THE LETTER WHICH FOLLOWS²⁸

XII.34. I remember that some time ago I wrote a letter to the holy Carthusian brothers in which, among other matters, I discussed these same four degrees. Perhaps I said other things in it about love, much as I have talked of it here. For that reason I think it may be helpful to include it here, especially since it is easier to transcribe what I have already in hand, ready dictated, than to compose something new.

HERE BEGINS THE LETTER ON LOVE WRITTEN
TO THE HOLY BROTHERS OF LA CHARREUSE

True and sincere charity, I say, must be said to proceed wholly from a pure heart, a good conscience, unfeigned faith (1 Tm 1:5), by which we love our neighbor's good as our own. For he who loves himself most, or solely, does not love the good purely, because he loves it for his sake, not for its own. And such a man cannot obey the prophet who says, "Praise the Lord, for he is good" (Ps 117:1). He praises the Lord perhaps, because he is good to him, but not simply because he is good. Let him take note that the same prophet utters a reproach to him, "He will acknowledge you when you do him good" (Ps 48:19).

There are some who praise God for his power, some who praise him for his goodness to them, and some who praise him simply because he is good. The first is a slave, fearful on his own account. The second is mercenary, and desires profit for himself. The third is a son who honors his father. Both he who is fearful and he who is greedy act for themselves. Only he who loves like a son does not seek his own (1 Cor 13:5). I think this text speaks of this kind of love. "The law of the Lord is spotless. It converts souls" (Ps 18:8), for it alone can turn the mind from love of itself and the world and direct it to God. Neither fear nor love of self can convert the soul. They change the appearance of one's deeds

27. SC 83.4; LTR 2.300.
28. Ep. 11.3-9.

from time to time, but never one's character. A slave can sometimes do God's work, but because he does not do it of his own free will he remains in his former state of hard-heartedness. The hireling can do it, too, but because he does not do it for nothing he can be convicted of being led by his own desire. Where there is self-interest there is the desire to be allowed special terms.²⁹ Where that is present there is a corner, and in corners you will find rust and dirt (Ez 24:12-13).³⁰ Let the slave, then, have his law (Rom 2:14), the very fear by which he is constrained. Let the mercenary have his greed, by which he is held back when he is enticed and tugged at by temptation (Jas 1:14). But neither of these is without spot, and they cannot convert souls. Love truly converts souls because it makes them willing.

XII.35. I have called love "unspotted" because it keeps nothing for itself. For if a man holds nothing as his own, all he has belongs to God. What belongs to God cannot be unclean. Therefore love is the immaculate law of God, and it seeks not its own profit but what benefits many (1 Cor 10:33; 13:5). It is called the law of the Lord because he himself lives by it, and also because no one can possess it except by his gift. It does not seem absurd for me to say that even God lives by the law, for I have said that the law is nothing else but love. For what preserves the supreme and ineffable unity in the blessed Trinity but love? Love is the law then, and the law of the Lord, which in some manner holds and unites the Trinity in unity in the bond of peace (Eph 4:3). But let no one think that I am taking this love as a quality, or an accident. If I did, I should be saying—perish the thought—that there is something in God which is not God. But it is that divine substance which is in no way other than itself, as John says, "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8).

It is love indeed, then, and it is God, and it is the gift of God (Eph 2:8). And so love gives love; the substance gives rise to the accident. Where it signifies the giver, it is the name of a substance. Where it signifies the gift, it is a quality. This is the eternal law, creating and governing the universe. All things were made in weight and measure and number (Wis 11:20), according to this law. Nothing is left outside this law. Even the Law of all is not outside this law, for the law is nothing but itself, by which even if it does not create itself, yet it rules itself.

XIII.36. The slave and the mercenary have a law which is not

29. The fifth step of pride. Humn 42; LTR 3.48-49.
30. LTR 5.208; sermon for the sixth Sunday after Pentecost.

from God. One does not love God. The other loves something more than God. They have a law which is not of the Lord (Rom 2:14). And indeed each of us can make his own law, but no one can cause it to be independent of the changeless order of the eternal law. I should say that someone had made his own law when he puts his own will before the common and eternal law, wickedly wishing to imitate his Creator, so that just as God is a law unto himself, he too wants to rule himself and make his own will law. Alas! A heavy and unendurable burden lies on all the sons of Adam (Sir 40:1; Acts 15:10), bowing our necks and bending them, bringing our life to hell (Ps 87:4). "Unhappy man that I am, who will free me from the body of this death?" (Rom 7:24), by which I am made to tremble and am almost crushed, so that, "If the Lord did not help me, my soul would soon be in hell" (Ps 93:17).

Weighed down by this burden groaned he who said, "Why have you set me against you? I have become a burden to myself" (Jb 7:20). Where he said, "So that I have become a burden to myself" (Jb 7:20), that he had been his own law, and that no one but himself had brought that about. But he said, first, addressing himself to God, "Why have you set me against you?" indicating that he had not escaped the law of God.

It is the property of the everlasting and just law of God that he who is not willing to be ruled gently is ruled painfully by himself, and he who is not willing of his own free will to take up the gentle yoke and light burden of love (Mt 11:30) will bear against his will the insupportable burden of his own will (Mt 23:4). And so in a wonderful and just way, the everlasting law has captured him who runs from it and set him in opposition to it, and at the same time it has kept him in subjection to it. Yet he does not remain with God in his light and rest and glory, because he is subject to force and exiled from happiness. O Lord my God, "why do you not take away my sin, and why do you not remove my wickedness?" (Jb 7:21) so that, freed from the heavy burden of my own will, I may breathe freely under the light load of love, and not be coerced by slavish fear or attracted by mercenary greed, but be moved by your spirit (Rom 7:21), the spirit of freedom (2 Cor 3:17) by which your children live, and which bears witness to my spirit that I, too, am one of your sons (Rom 8:14-16), that there is the same law for us both, and I may be myself what you are in this world (1 Jn 4:17). Those who do what the Apostle says, "Owe no one anything but the debt of love" (Rom 13:8)—they are undoubtedly as God is and in this world they are neither slaves nor hirelings, but sons.

XIV. 37. And so the sons are not outside the law, unless perhaps someone wants to put a different interpretation on the text "The law is not made for the righteous" (1 Tm 1:9). But you must know that law given in a spirit of slavery by fear is different from the law of freedom given in gentleness. Children are not under fear, but they cannot survive without love.

Do you wish to hear why there is no law for those who are good? Scripture says, "You have not received the spirit of slavery again in fear" (Rom 8:15). Hear then the just man saying of himself that he is not under the law and yet not free of the law. "I have become," he says, "as if I were under the law with those who are bound by the law, although I am not outside the law of God but bound by that of Christ" (1 Cor 9:20-21). So it is not right to say, "The just have no law," or, "The just are outside the law," but "The law is not made for the just," that is, it is not imposed on them against their will, but freely given to them when they are willing, and inspired by goodness (1 Tm 1:9). So the Lord says beautifully, "Take my yoke upon you" (Mt 11:29), as if he said, "I do not impose it on the unwilling; but you take it if you want to; otherwise you will find not rest but labor for your souls."

XIV. 38. The law of love is good and sweet. It is not only borne lightly and easily, but it also makes bearable the laws which make men into slaves and hirelings. It does not destroy them; it fulfills them. As the Lord says, "I have not come to take away the law, but to fulfill it" (Mt 5:17). It tempers the slave's law and makes the hireling's law orderly. It lightens both. For there will never be any love without fear but chaste love. There will never be love without greed unless it is kept within bounds. Therefore love fulfills the slave's law when it overflows in devotion. It fulfill's the hireling's law when it sets limits to greed.

Devotion mixed with fear does not remove the fear but purifies it. Punishment is lifted, for while law was servitude it could not function without it. Fear remains forever, but a pure and filial fear (Ps 18:10). For we read that "perfect love casts out fear" (1 Jn 4:18). This is to be understood to refer to the punishment which is never absent from servile fear, as I have said—by that mode of speaking by which the cause is often given for the effect.³¹

Greed is brought to order when love overshadows it and evils are condemned and what is better is preferred to what is merely good, and

31. *Usus loquenti* is a favorite expression of Augustine and of Anselm of Canterbury.

the good is desired only for the sake of what is better. When by the grace of God this is fully achieved, the body is loved, and all the goods of the body for the sake of the soul, and the goods of the soul for the sake of God, and God for his own sake.

XV. 39. But truly, since we are carnal and born of carnal desire (Rom 7:14), it is unavoidable that our desire and love should begin with the body and if it is rightly directed, it will then proceed by grace through certain stages, until the spirit is fulfilled (Gal 3:3). For "The spiritual does not come first but the animal, and then the spiritual" (1 Cor 15:46). And first it is necessary for us to bear an earthly likeness, before we have a heavenly likeness (1 Cor 15:49). In the first instance therefore man loves himself for himself. He is a bodily creature, and he cannot see beyond himself. But since he sees that he cannot be the author of his own existence he begins to inquire after God by faith (Heb 11:6) because he needs him, and he begins to love him. And so he comes to love God in the second degree, but still for himself and not for God's sake. But then when he begins to worship him, and to keep coming to him because he needs him, God gradually begins to make himself known to him through his thinking, reading, prayer, and obedience. By this growing familiarity God causes him truly to feel his sweetness. In this way, when he has tasted how sweet the Lord is (Ps 33:9), he passes to the third stage, where he loves God, not now for himself, but for God's sake. Truly he remains for a long time in that state, and I do not know whether the fourth stage, where a man comes to love himself only for God's sake, is fully attained by anyone in this life.

If anyone has experienced it, let him say so. To me it seems impossible. But I have no doubt that that is how it will be when the good and faithful servant is led into the joy of his Lord (Mt 25:21) and intoxicated by the riches of the house of God (Ps 35:9). It will be as though in some miraculous way he forgets himself and as though going out of himself altogether comes wholly to God, and afterward holds fast to him, one with him in spirit (1 Cor 6:17). I think this is what the prophet felt when he said, "I shall enter into the power of the Lord. Lord, I shall be mindful of your justice" (Ps 70:16). He knew well that when he entered into the spiritual power of the Lord he would have cast off all the weaknesses of the flesh. He would no longer need to give it a thought. In the spirit, he would have eyes for nothing but God's justice.

Then surely the individual members of Christ (1 Cor 6:15) can say for themselves what Paul said of their Head, "And if we have known Christ according to the flesh we have not known him" (1 Cor 5:16). No

one knows himself according to the flesh, for "Flesh and blood will not possess the kingdom of God" (1 Cor 15:50). That is not because the flesh will not exist as a substance in the future, but because every need of the flesh will vanish and fleshly love will be absorbed in the love of the spirit, and the weak human affections we have now will be changed into divine affections.

Then the net of love, which ceaselessly drags every kind of fish from the great wide sea, will be drawn in to shore; the bad will be cast out and he will keep only the good (Mt 13:47-48). If in this life he enfolds every kind of fish within the folds of his wide-ranging love, and for the time being it wraps itself round them all (1 Cor 9:19), drawing all in, both those who are against him and those who are for him. Making them in some way all his own he does not only rejoice with those who rejoice. He weeps with those who weep (Rom 12:15). But when the net is drawn to shore, all that has been suffered in sadness will be thrown out like rotten fish, and he will keep only what pleases him and is a joy.

But surely even then Paul (to take an example) will either be made weak with the weak or burn for those who are made to suffer when scandal and weakness no longer exist (2 Cor 11:29; cf. 1 Cor 9:22)? Will he grieve for those who do not repent, when there is neither sinner nor penitent (2 Cor 12:21)? Perish the thought that he should weep for those who have been condemned to eternal fire with the devil and his angels (Mt 25:41) when he is in that city the rush of whose river brings joy (Ps 45:5) and whose gates the Lord loves more than all the tents of Jacob (Ps 86:2). Even if there is now sometimes rejoicing in victory, yet there is strain in battle and life is in danger. Yet in that land which is home there is no more sorrow or adversity, as the song says, "Just as the dwelling-place of all who rejoice is in you" (Ps 86:7), and again, "Everlasting joy will be theirs" (Ps 61:7). Finally, how can mercy be remembered when the only thought is of God's justice (Ps 70:16)? There will be no place for wretchedness, no time for mercy; there will then surely be no feeling of compassion.³²

32. See the concluding passages of Augustine's *City of God*, CCSL 47 (Turnholt, 1955), 2 vols.