

All these, whom I call God's servants and chosen friends, although at times through frailty or ignorance they may take pleasure in impulses of vain glory, do not commit mortal sin by this pleasure because the pleasure that they feel prevents their reason and will from recognizing these impulses. For the general intention established in their hearts to please God and forsake all sin when they recognize it preserves them during these impulses, as in all others that spring from frailty, and it will preserve them as long as they firmly maintain this intention.

CHAPTER 61: *How different states in the Church have different rewards in heaven: of two rewards, supreme and secondary*

FOR your consolation and that of all who have embraced the state of an enclosed anchoress, as well as those who by the grace of God have entered any Religious Order approved by Holy Church, I will say further that all those who by the mercy of God shall be saved will have an especial glory and reward for their lives in the joys of heaven, a reward above that of other souls, however holy, who did not share their state in Holy Church. This glory is incomparably greater than all the glories of this world, and if you could but see it, you would not exchange it for all the glory of the world even if you could enjoy it without sin, nor would you wish to change your state of anchoress or Religious, or lessen your especial reward in heaven. This is called an accidental reward, but lest others misunderstand what I mean, I will define it more clearly. You should understand that amid the joys of heaven there are two rewards which God gives to chosen souls. One is supreme and principal, and consists in loving and knowing Him in proportion to the degree of charity granted by God to the soul while living in this mortal body. This is the best and supreme reward, for it is God Himself, and is granted to all souls that are saved, whatever

their status and calling in Holy Church, and is proportionate to the greatness of their charity. For he who loves God with the greatest charity in this life, whatever his status, whether simple or learned, secular or religious, will have the highest reward in the glory of heaven, for he will have the deepest love and knowledge of God, and this is the supreme reward. As to this reward, it may happen that some man or woman of the world, lord or lady, knight or squire, merchant or ploughman will have a higher reward than some priest or friar, monk or canon, or enclosed anchoress. And why? Surely because he has a greater love for God.

The other reward is secondary, and God gives this for special good works which a man does voluntarily over and above what he is bound to do. The doctors of the Church mention three things in particular: martyrdom, preaching, and virginity. These three things are excellent, and since they surpass all others, they will have a special reward known as an aureole. This is an exceptional honour special sign ordained by God to reward outstanding achievements, and it is given in addition to the supreme reward of the love of God, which is given to them and to others alike. This applies to other exceptional good works, which if they are done sincerely, are specially acceptable in the sight of God and commended by Holy Church. Such include the enclosure of an anchoress by the authority of Holy Church, and the entering of an approved religious Order. In the judgement of the Church, the stricter the Order the better. After and beneath these comes the taking of priestly orders, either to care for men's souls and to administer the Sacraments of Holy Church, or from a personal desire to please God and to help one's fellow-Christians by the Sacrifice of the precious Body of our Lord Jesus Christ. When these are done sincerely for God's sake, these are special and excellent works, approved by Holy Church and acceptable in the sight of God, and everyone will receive the particular reward that is his due. On account of

his status a bishop and prelate will receive a higher accidental reward than all others, as is shown in Holy Scripture by the prophet Daniel, when he says: *Tu autem vade ad praefinitum tempus, et requiesces, et stabis in sorte tua in finem dierum* (Daniel xii, 13). That is to say, when the angel had shown Daniel the secrets of God, he said: Go to the rest of your bodily death, and you shall stand in your place as a prophet at the last day. And as Daniel will assuredly stand as a prophet at the day of judgement, and enjoy the honour and precedence of a prophet as well as the supreme reward of the love and sight of God, so you will stand in your own place as an anchoress, a Religious as a Religious, and so with other high callings, and will receive honour above others at the day of judgement.

CHAPTER 62: *A short address on humility and charity*

NOW from what I have said, if I have made it clear, you will find it a comfort in your way of life and a help in learning humility. For although it be true that if you come to heaven you will receive the special reward for your state of life, there may be many a wife and woman living in the world who will be nearer to God than you, and who will love Him more and know Him better than you despite your way of life. This will put you to shame unless you labour to acquire as full and perfect a degree of charity as anyone living in the world. For if by the gift of God you attain only the same degree of charity as one who remains in a worldly occupation, you will have the same degree of the supreme reward; but in addition to this you will receive the particular reward and honour belonging to your own calling, which he will not have. If, then, you wish to grow in grace, forget your calling – for it is nothing in itself – and direct all your desires and efforts to acquiring charity, humility, and other virtues. All depends on this.

CHAPTER 63: *How one may learn the extent of one's pride*

IHAD nearly forgotten this image, but I will now return to it. If you wish to learn the extent of your pride, you may test yourself in this way. Consider truthfully and without sparing yourself whether the praise, respect, and favour of worldly men and others is enjoyable to you. Does it fill you with vain pleasure and self-satisfaction? Do you secretly think that men should praise your life and respect your opinions above those of others? And if, on the contrary, people criticize and belittle you, thinking you a fool or a hypocrite, or if they slander and libel you falsely, or trouble you unreasonably in any other way, do you feel a hearty dislike for them and a great unwillingness to endure shame or disgrace in the eyes of the world? If so, this is proof that you have great pride in this dark image, however holy you may appear in the eyes of men. For although these impulses are only slight and venial, they show clearly that great pride lies hidden in your inmost heart, as a fox lurks in his earth. These and many other impulses arise from this image, and so much is this so that you can hardly do anything good without some admixture of pride or self-conceit. Thus pride spoils all your good deeds and makes them displeasing in the sight of God. I do not say that they are rendered useless by this element of pride, but they are not so pleasing to God as they would be were they inspired by simple and sincere humility. Therefore if you wish to attain to the love of God with purity of heart, you must refuse to allow yourself to take pleasure in vain glory through a deliberate assent to pride, and check any involuntary pleasure in it arising from natural frailty. You must strive to eradicate every trace of it. But you cannot do this unless you are prompt and ready to guard your heart, as I will tell you later.

CHAPTER 64: *On anger and envy, and their branches*

EXAMINE this image closely, and you will find two limbs attached to it, envy and anger. From these spring many branches, which obstruct the love and charity that you should have toward your fellow-Christian. The branches of anger and envy are these: hatred, evil suspicion, false and rash judgement, resentment, disdain, calumny, wrongful accusation, unkindness, backbiting, dislike, anger, resentment against those who despise or speak evil of you, pleasure at their troubles, animosity against sinners and those who will not act as you think they should, together with a strong desire — disguised as charity and righteousness — that they should be well punished and chastised for their sins. Such feelings may appear good, but if you examine them closely, you will find them directed against the individual rather than his sin. But you must love the man, however sinful he may be, and hate the sin, in whomsoever it appears. Many are misled in this matter because they prefer the bitter to the sweet, and darkness to light. As the prophet says: *Vae vobis, qui dicitis malum bonum, et bonum malum; ponentes lucem tenebras et amarum in dulce* (Isa. v, 20). Woe to those who say that evil is good and good is evil, and mistake light for darkness and bitter for sweet. This is what people do when instead of hating the sin of the fellow-Christian and loving him as a person, they hate the person instead of the sin and think that they hate the sin. This calls for discernment in those who wish to act rightly.

CHAPTER 65: *That it is a great achievement to love men sincerely while hating their sin*

IT is no achievement to watch and fast until your head aches and your body sickens, nor to go to Rome and Jerusalem on your bare feet, nor to rush about preaching as though you ex-

pected to convert everybody. Nor is it an achievement to build churches and chapels, to feed the poor, or to build hospitals. But it is a great achievement for a man to be able to love his fellow-Christian in charity, and to be discerning enough to hate his sin and yet love the sinner. For although all the above actions are good in themselves, they are done by good men and bad alike, for everyone could do them if he had the desire and the means. So I do not consider it any achievement to do what everyone can do. But only a good man can love his fellow-Christian in charity while hating his sin, and he can only do it by the grace of God and not through his own efforts. As Saint Paul says: *Caritas Dei diffusa est in cordibus nostris per Spiritum Sanctum, qui datus est nobis* (Rom. v, 5). The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given to us. It is therefore the more precious and the more difficult to come by. Without this all other good actions do not make a man good or worthy of heaven: this alone can make him good and his actions worthy of reward. All other gifts of God are common to good and bad alike, but this gift of charity is granted only to good and chosen souls.

CHAPTER 66: *That men will have different rewards for the same actions*

FOR love of God a good man fasts, watches, goes on pilgrimage, and renounces worldly pleasures sincerely and without pretence. He will have his reward in heaven. A hypocrite does the same things out of empty self-esteem, and receives his reward in this life. Similarly, a true preacher of God's word, filled with charity and humility, sent by God and commissioned by Holy Church, will have a special reward for his preaching known as the aureole. But a hypocrite or a heretic, who has neither humility nor charity, and is not sent by God or Holy

Church, will receive the reward for his preaching here. And a good man living in the world builds churches, chapels, abbeys, and hospitals and does other good acts of mercy for the love of God. He will have his reward in heaven, not for these actions in themselves, but for the goodwill and charity given him by God which moved him to do them. Another man may do the same good actions out of vanity, to win honour and praise from the world and to gain a good name for himself; he also has his reward here. In all these instances the determining factor is that one has charity and the other has none. Which is the one and which the other God knows, and He alone.

CHAPTER 67: *That all seemingly good actions should be regarded as such, excepting those of heretics and excommunicates*

HEREFORE we should love and respect all men in our hearts, and approve all their actions that seem good, although in God's sight those who do them may be bad. But it is otherwise in the case of an avowed heretic or of a person who has been publicly excommunicated. We should be careful to avoid meeting or speaking with them, and we should condemn their doings however good they may appear, so long as they remain rebels against God and Holy Church. Therefore should an excommunicated man of the world build a church, or give food to the poor, regard his action as unprofitable, for so it is. And should an avowed heretic, who is a rebel against the Church, preach and teach, then although he may convert an hundred thousand souls, he gains no merit from it. For such people are openly out of charity, and without it no actions have any merit. It is for this reason that I say that it is a great achievement for a man to love his fellow-Christian in charity. This is shown clearly in Saint Paul's words: *Si linguis hominum loquar et angelorum, caritatem non habuero, nihil sum; et si habuero omnem*

fidem, ita ut montes transferam, caritatem non habeam, nihil sum. Et si novetiam mysteria omnia, nihil sum; et si distribuero omnes facultates meas in cibos pauperum, et tradidero corpus meum ita ut ardeam, caritatem autem non habuero, nihil mihi prodest (1 Cor. xiii, 1). In praise of charity Saint Paul said: If I speak the languages of all men and of angels and have no charity, I am nothing. And if I have such great faith that I can move mountains and carry them away and have no charity, I am nothing. And if I understand all mysteries, without charity I am nothing. And if I give all that I have to the poor and my body to the fire to be burned and have no charity, I have no profit in it. Saint Paul's words make it clear that a man may perform all kinds of corporal good works without possessing charity, and that charity is nothing else but the love of God and of our fellow-Christian.

CHAPTER 68: *That no good deed can assure a man's salvation without charity, and that God only grants His gift of charity to the humble*

HOW can any sinner alive, whoever he may be, take any pleasure or feel any confidence in himself on account of anything that he can achieve through his bodily powers or natural reason? For nothing is of any value without love and charity towards his fellow-Christian, and this charity cannot be acquired by any personal efforts. It is the free gift of God granted to humble souls; as Saint Paul says: Who can presume to say, 'I have charity', or 'I am in charity'? Indeed, no one can say it with certainty unless he is perfectly and sincerely humble. Other people may think and hope that they are in charity by various indications, but one who is perfectly humble knows it, and can truthfully say so. Saint Paul had this humility for he said of himself: *Quis separabit nos a caritate Dei? Tribulatio? An angustia?* etc. (Rom. viii, 35). Who shall separate us

from the love of God? Tribulation or anguish? And he answers himself, saying: No created thing shall separate us from the charity of God which we have in Christ Jesus. Many do deeds of charity without possessing charity, as I have said; for to prove a sinner at the right moment to bring about his amendment is a deed of charity, but to hate the sinner instead of his sin is contrary to charity. One who is truly humble can distinguish one from the other, but no one else. Even a man with all the moral virtues of the philosophers could not do it. He would hate the sin in other men – for he hates it in himself – but he could not love the sinner in charity for all his philosophy. And if a man had great knowledge of theology but lacked true humility, he would make mistakes and confuse one with the other. Only humility is worthy to receive this gift from God, but it is one which cannot be acquired through human knowledge.

But perhaps you find my statement charity cannot be acquired by any action that you can perform somewhat alarming, and say: 'What can I do then?' On this point I say that it is true that there is nothing so hard to acquire by your own efforts as charity: on the other hand, there is no gift of God that can be so readily obtained as charity, for God gives no gift so freely, so gladly, and so frequently as charity. 'How then shall I obtain it?' you may say. Be meek and humble in spirit, and you shall have it; and what is easier than to be humble? Surely, nothing. So it is clear that there is nothing more readily obtained than charity, and you have therefore no reason to fear. Be humble, and you shall receive it.

Saint James the Apostle says: *Deus superbis resistit, humilibus dat gratiam* (Jas. iv, 6). God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. This grace is in fact charity, for you will receive charity in proportion to your humility. If your humility is imperfect – in your will, and not merely in your feelings – then your charity will be imperfect. Yet this is good, for it is suffi-

cient for salvation; as David says: *Imperfectum mentem videntem oculi tui* (Ps. cxxxix, 16). Lord, your merciful eyes saw my imperfection. But if your humility is perfect, you will receive perfect charity, and this is best. We must needs have humility if we are to be saved, and we must desire it. So if you ask me who is perfectly humble, I can only say that a man is humble when he truly knows and feels himself to be what he is.

CHAPTER 6g: *How we may know much anger and envy is hidden in our hearts*

Now turn again to this image, if you wish to know how much anger and envy is hidden in your heart unknown to yourself. When impulses of anger and envy against your fellow-Christian rise up in your heart, examine and watch yourself closely. The stronger these feelings and the more you are moved to gloomy bitterness or ill-will, the greater is this image. For the more impatiently you grumble, whether against God because of any trouble, sickness, or infirmity He sends you, or against your fellow-Christian, the less is the likeness of Jesus reformed in you. I do not say that such grumbings and instinctive reactions are mortal sins, but I do say that they prevent purity of heart and quietness of conscience. As a result you cannot attain to perfect charity, which is essential to the contemplative life. My purpose in all that I say is that you should not only cleanse your heart from all mortal sins, but also as far as possible from venial sins, so that by the grace of Jesus Christ the sources of sin within you may be in part removed. For although you may feel no ill-will towards your fellow-Christian for a time, you cannot be sure that the sources of sin within you are destroyed, because you are not yet in full possession of the virtue of charity. Let him only annoy you by an angry or shrewd word, and then see whether your heart is fully rooted

in charity. The more you are moved to ill-will against him, the further you are from perfect charity towards your fellow-Christian; the less you are moved, the nearer you are to charity.

CHAPTER 70 : *How to ascertain whether you love your fellow-Christian, and how to follow Christ's example in this matter*

IF you are not moved to anger and open dislike of a person, and feel no secret hatred which makes you despise, humiliate, or belittle him, then you are in perfect charity with your fellow-Christian. And if, the more he shames or harms you in word or act, the more pity and compassion you feel towards him, as you would feel towards one who was out of his right mind, then you are in perfect charity. And if you feel that you cannot find it in your heart to hate him, knowing love to be good in itself, but pray for him, help him, and desire his amendment — not only in words as hypocrites can do, but with heartfelt love — then you are in perfect charity with your fellow-Christian. St Stephen possessed this perfect charity when he prayed for those who stoned him to death. And Christ called for this charity in all who desire to follow Him perfectly when He said : *Diligite inimicos vestros, benefacite his qui odierunt vos, orate pro persecutoribus et calumniatoribus* (Matt. v, 44). Love your enemies and do good to those who hate you; pray for those who persecute and slander you. Therefore, if you desire to follow Christ, imitate Him in this matter. Learn to love your enemies and all sinners, for they are all your fellow-Christians. Remember how Christ loved Judas, who was both His deadly enemy and a wicked man. How patient Christ was with him, how kindly, how courteous and humble to one whom He knew to be worthy of damnation. Despite this He chose him to be His apostle, and sent him to preach with the other apostles. He gave him power to work miracles, He showed him the same loving

friendship in word and deed as the other apostles. He washed his feet, He fed him with His precious Body, and taught him as He did the other apostles. He did not openly expose or rebuke him, nor did He despise or speak ill of him, although He might justly have done all these things. And to crown his crimes, at Jesus' arrest Judas kissed Him and called Him his friend. Christ showed all this charity to one whom He knew to be a traitor; yet in everything that He did there was no pretence or insincerity, but pure love and true charity. For although Judas, because of his wickedness, was unworthy to receive any gift from God or any sign of love, it was nevertheless right and fitting that our Lord should show Himself in His true nature. For He is love and goodness, and therefore shows love and goodness towards all His creatures as He did towards Judas. I do not say that He loved Judas for his sins, or that He loved him as one of His chosen, as He loved Saint Peter. But He loved him inasmuch as he was His creature, and gave him proofs of His love, if only he could have responded to them and amended.

Follow Jesus in this matter if you can, for although your body is enclosed in a cell, nevertheless in your heart, which is the seat of love, you should be able to attain some degree of this love for your fellows of which I have spoken. Anyone who thinks himself a perfect follower of Christ's teaching and way of life — as some do, inasmuch as they preach and teach and are poor in worldly goods as Christ was — but who cannot follow Christ in having love and charity towards all, both good and bad, friends and foes, without pretence or flattery, contempt, anger, or spiteful criticism, is indeed deceiving himself. The more closely that he thinks he is following the way of Christ, the further he is from it; for Christ Himself said to those who wished to be His disciples : *Hoc est praeceptum meum, ut diligatis invicem sicut dilexistis vos* (S. John xiii, 34). This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. For if you love as I loved, then you are My disciples.

But now you may ask, 'How am I to love the bad as well as the good?' I reply that you must love both good and bad with charity, although not for the same reason; and I will now explain how you are to love your fellow-Christian as yourself. Now you must love yourself only in God and for God. You love yourself in God when you are in a state of grace: but you love yourself solely because you love the goodness and virtue that God gives you. Then you love yourself in God, because you do not love yourself, but God. You love yourself because God loves you, and were you in a state of mortal sin and longed to be made good and virtuous, you would not love yourself as you are, but as you would wish to be. It is exactly in this way that you should love your fellow-Christians. If they are good and holy, you must love them in God with charity, for the reason that they *are* good and holy; for then you love God's goodness and righteousness in them, and you love them more than if they were in a state of mortal sin. As for your enemies, and others who are clearly not in a state of grace, you must love them too, not for what they are, nor as if they were good and holy, for they are not; but you must love them for God's sake, hoping that they will become good and holy. You are not to hate anything in them except whatever is contrary to righteousness, and that is sin. This, as I understand it, is the teaching of Saint Augustine. Only one who is sincerely humble, or desires to be, is capable of loving his fellow-Christian.

CHAPTER 71: *How to discover the extent of your inward covetousness*

TAKE this image and examine it thoroughly; you will discover that although it had seemed small, covetousness and love of worldly things form a large part of it. You have renounced riches and great possessions in this world, and are

vowed to enclosure; but have you renounced all love for these things? I do not suppose that you have yet succeeded, for it is easier to renounce worldly goods than to renounce all love for them. It is possible that you have not yet rid yourself of covetousness, and that it affects you in little ways, so that you want a penny instead of a pound, and a halfpenny instead of silver. This is a naive exchange, and you are not much good at business. This is a childish example, but it has a deeper significance. If you do not believe me, test yourself and find out whether you still take delight in possessing and keeping any small things that you still have, and whether such pleasure sometimes fills your heart. Or do you have a longing for something that you do not possess, and does this longing occupy your mind so that it prevents a pure desire for virtue and for God? If so, it is proof that there is covetousness in this image. And should you require more definite proof, see what happens when anything is taken from you, whether by force, or borrowing, or in some other way, so that you cannot recover it. Are you vexed, angry, or disgruntled because you want the thing and cannot have it? And are you angry with the person who has it, because he could return it but will not? This is proof that you love worldly property, for this is how worldly people behave. When their property and money are taken from them they are distressed and angry, and they take all possible action against those who have taken it. You do this secretly in your heart, but God knows of it, and you are more guilty than a man of the world, because you have formally renounced all love of worldly things; but he has not, and it is therefore permissible for him to try to regain his property by all lawful means. You may perhaps point out that you must have certain necessities in your way of life as well as a man in the world. I readily grant this, but you should not depend on them, take pleasure in possessing them, or be distressed if you lose them. For as Saint Gregory says: 'The extent of your distress at losing a thing reveals the extent of your love

for it when you possessed it.' Therefore, if you were pure in heart and had a true desire for spiritual things, accompanied by a small degree of spiritual insight, you would free yourself from dependence on earthly things and would not cling to them. To desire and to possess more than you reasonably require is a serious fault. And to desire something that you require is also a fault, although less serious. But to possess and use what you need is no fault provided that you are not attached to it. Many who are vowed to a state of poverty are blind to this fact, and it cripples their love of God. I do not accuse any particular individuals, nor do I blame any particular occupation, for there are good and bad in every walk of life. But there is one thing that I would like to say to all who are vowed to a life of voluntary poverty, whether Religious or secular, and whatever their rank: So long as their affections are bound up with and dependent on any earthly thing that they may possess or wish to possess, they cannot possess or experience a pure love and vision of spiritual things.

Saint Augustine, speaking to God, says: 'Lord, a man loves Thee but little if he loves anything as well as Thee.' (*Confessions* x, 29.) For the more you love and desire any earthly thing, the less is the love of God in your heart; for although this love of earthly things does not exclude charity unless it is so strong that it stifles the love of God and their fellow-men, it certainly obstructs and diminishes the fervour of charity in them, and deprives them of that special reward for perfect poverty that would be theirs in heaven. This is a great loss if only they could realize it. For one who can recognize how good, how precious, how noble, and how permanent this reward is would not wish to lessen the least reward that he might obtain in heaven in exchange for all earthly pleasures and possessions, even if he could enjoy them without sin. God knows I am speaking of things in which I myself fail, but I beg you and others to strive after them by the grace of God, for it would be a comfort to my heart to

know that, though I do not attain this degree of charity myself, I might see in you or in others who have received more plentifully of His grace than I. But since deep-rooted covetousness is so serious an obstacle to feeling the love of God in the soul, consider how much greater an obstacle it is in men and women of the world, whose minds and activities are constantly devoted to making money and amassing worldly possessions. They can find no pleasure except in earthly things, nor do they wish to do so, because they do not look for it elsewhere. I will say no more of them at present, because I am not addressing them in this book. But I do say that if they could and would understand what they are doing, they would not behave in this way.

CHAPTER 72: On gluttony, sloth, and lust

ALTHOUGH this image is obscure, you can see still more in it; carnal self-love revealed in gluttony, spiritual indolence, and lust. These carnal desires make men like beasts, and debar them from the inward enjoyment of God's love and the clear perception of spiritual things. You may object that since food, drink, and sleep are necessities and you cannot use them without pleasure, this pleasure cannot be sinful. I reply that if you use food, drink, and such like with moderation and take no more pleasure in them than is natural, employing them to support your spiritual life, I certainly agree that there is no question of sin: you know how to use these things rightly, and need have no scruples. I myself am very far from this knowledge, and further still from using it rightly, for nature requires one to eat, but the knowledge of how to eat rightly can only be acquired by grace. Saint Paul possessed this knowledge through grace, as he says himself: *Ubiq̄ue in omnibus institutus sum; et satiare, et esurire, et abundare, et penuriam pati. Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat* (Phil. iv, 12). I am guided in all things, knowing when

to go hungry and when to eat; I can face plenty and poverty alike. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. And Saint Augustine says to God: 'Lord, You have taught me to use food as a medicine.' (*Confessions* x, 31.) Hunger is due to the weakness of nature, therefore in so far as the pleasure that accompanies food is natural and necessary, it is not sinful. But when this pleasure deteriorates into gluttony and wilful craving, it becomes sinful. So the secret of self-mastery lies in having the wisdom to distinguish necessity from gluttony. These are so intermingled that one accompanies the other, and it is difficult to allow one as necessary and to denounce the other as wilful gluttony, since the latter often has the appearance of necessity. Were a man able to take food and drink as he would take a medicine in sickness, he would have the knowledge to distinguish between gluttony and necessity. Nevertheless, since necessity is the root of this sin, and necessity itself is not sinful — for however holy a man may be, he must eat, drink, and sleep — the desire for pleasure that passes for necessity but goes beyond it is not so serious a sin. For a man seldom commits mortal sin through gluttony unless he is already guilty of other mortal sins: when this is the case, the lesser sin may easily become mortal. For this much is certain, that one whose sole aim and object is to gratify his bodily desires, who loves food and drink, who seeks no other form of happiness, and who would if possible always occupy himself with these carnal pleasures, is in a state of mortal sin. Such a person loves his own body more than he loves God. One who lives in a state of mortal sin through pride or envy is blind, and is such a slave to the devil that for the time being he has lost the full use of his free will. Consequently he cannot effectively resist his bodily desires, but devotes himself to them like a beast to carrion. Being in mortal sin, his will is not directed firstly toward God, and the gluttonous desires to which he yields may easily become mortal sins because he makes no general or particular effort to resist them.

But the will and intention of one who is in a state of grace and charity is always directed toward God, whether asleep or awake, eating or drinking, or whatever he is doing, as long as it is not something sinful in itself, and in his will he chooses God before all else. Such is his love for God that rather than displease Him he would forgo all the pleasures of this world. And although this intention is only general, the grace of our Lord Jesus is so powerful that even if his frailty causes him to fall into a desire and liking for food and drink — either by eating too much, too often, with too much gusto, too daintily, or before the appointed time — yet it preserves him from mortal sin. This remains true as long as he remains in charity in other matters, and maintains his general intention in all that he does. Especially is it true if he confesses his weakness, asks for mercy, and sets his will to resist all such desires of the flesh. God is good and merciful, and He is quick to forgive these venial sins of gluttony in a soul that is humble; for temptations to gluttony, inasmuch as they arise from natural bodily needs, are the hardest sins to avoid, and are more excusable and less dangerous than others. Consequently you cannot attack the root of this sin as you must that of all others. For the root of this sin is simple necessity, which cannot be escaped unless you go to extremes and destroy the need, as some foolish folk do, when they should instead avoid the thief and spare the honest man; in other words, avoid unreasonable desire and wilful love of pleasure while maintaining the body that nature gave them. But against other sins you must take resolute action, in order to destroy not only the mortal and graver venial sins, but also, as far as possible, the roots from which they spring.

CHAPTER 73: *How the roots of lust must be destroyed by spiritual means rather than physical*

PURSuing this reasoning, bear in mind that although you cannot live without food and drink, you can if you are resolved to live without lust, and be all the better for it. You must not only shun the act, which is mortal sin, but also any deliberate inward pleasure in it; for while this venial sin, it can sometimes become mortal. You must also attack its roots in order to destroy all sinful impulses and desires of the body. But this attack on the roots of sin must be made by spiritual means, by prayer and spiritual virtue, and not by bodily penance alone. For you can be certain that although you may watch and fast, use the scourge and do all that you can, you will never acquire purity and chastity except by the help of God and His grace of humility. Indeed, you might kill yourself before you could destroy your sinful inclinations and feelings in mind or body by physical penance. But by the grace of Jesus working in a humble soul the roots of sin can be cut and destroyed, and its source dried up. And this is true chastity of body and soul.

CHAPTER 74: *How a man must exert himself to overcome all sinful impulses, especially those to spiritual sins*

THE same may be said of pride, covetousness, and other sins of this nature, for you could live without any need to be proud or covetous; you must therefore destroy all tendencies to them as far as you can. But in attacking gluttony you must set yourself to prune away all temptations to excess, while sparing their natural origin. A man is half-blind if he attempts to

resist temptations to bodily pleasure in food and drink with greater energy and zeal than he resists temptations to pride - which is treated lightly because it seems harmless - or to envy, anger, covetousness, and lust. For he does not realize the depravity of such spiritual wickedness as pride and covetousness in the sight of God. Could a man but realize how depraved pride and covetousness are in the sight of God, and how contrary they are to His will, I am sure that he would have a greater loathing for all impulses of pride and for the vain pleasure that men take in them. He would fear and fight more strongly against envy and anger towards his fellow-men than against temptations to gluttony and lust. However, people do not always realize this, for they are usually more afraid of a temptation to bodily sin, and are more sorry and grieved about it, than of temptations to vainglory and other spiritual sins. But they are wrong in this matter, for if they would only understand what Holy Scripture and the great teachers say, they would find it as I say. However, I cannot cite their statements now.

CHAPTER 75: *How hunger and physical distress greatly hinder spiritual progress*

I AM not saying that those who indulge in gluttony and lust are guiltless of sin, since I am fully aware that all these are sins to a greater or less degree according to the measure of willful indulgence, together with other circumstances. But I wish you to recognize and assess every sin as it is; that is, recognize all spiritual sins as grave, and carnal sins as less grave. But you must hate and avoid all sins, whether spiritual or carnal, with all your strength. For be assured of this, that bodily desires and unbridled pleasure in food and drink, or in any other pleasures that exceed our reasonable needs, are a serious obstacle to the soul that desires purity and spiritual joy in God, although they

are not always great sins in one who is in a state of charity. You must therefore guard against them at all costs. The soul cannot experience true inward joy until the body has been largely deprived of its sensual pleasures. So if you desire to attain purity of heart, you must resist unreasonable bodily desires, but you should not attack their natural origin, such as hunger, which you are bound to feel and to satisfy at proper times. You must strengthen yourself against it by taking the medicine of food in the same way as you would take the proper medicine against a bodily ailment, so that you may serve God in greater freedom of body and soul.

You can be sure that unless he is given abundant grace, anyone who wishes to devote himself to the spiritual life will find himself greatly hindered in his attempt to attain spiritual knowledge and experience if he deliberately allows himself to suffer the pangs of hunger; and if he goes to extremes in fasting, it will be his own fault if he suffers from stomach complaints, headache and similar bodily ailments. For bodily pain, whether due to penance, illness or overwork, does not always prevent fervour towards God in devotion, but often increases it; nevertheless, I am sure that it prevents fervour of love in contemplation, because this cannot be acquired or experienced of set purpose, and is only possible in great tranquility of body and soul. Therefore act reasonably in all that you do, and treat your body sensibly; then let God send what He pleases, whether it be health or sickness. Accept everything with cheerfulness, and do not willingly complain against God.

CHAPTER 76: *Remedies against indiscreet eating and drinking*

ACCEPT my advice, then, and take your food as it comes; make reasonable provision for it if necessary, and take it cheerfully as you need it. But beware lest greed accompanies

need, and avoid excess as well as deficiency of food. And if, when you have fed, your conscience warns you that you have eaten too much or too little, and you become troubled or discouraged on that account, lift up your heart to our Lord Jesus, confessing yourself a wretched creature, and asking His forgiveness. When you have done this, the more shortly the better, do not trouble yourself any further about it. And do not strain yourself in an effort to destroy these impulses completely; it is not worth your while, for you will never succeed. Turn instead to some other occupation, physical or spiritual, as you feel disposed, so that you may make greater progress in other virtues such as humility and charity.

You can be certain that anyone who directs all his desires and efforts to nothing except humility and charity, and is always longing to acquire them, will by so doing grow in all the other virtues such as chastity and abstinence, although he may give them little thought at the time. He will grow stronger in them in a single year than he would do in seven without this desire, although he were to strive continually against gluttony, lust, and the like, and scourge himself daily from dawn to dusk.

CHAPTER 77: *How the ardent desire and pursuit of humility and charity enable a man the sooner to acquire all other virtues*

ACQUIRE humility and charity, then, and if you devote all your efforts to this end, you will be fully occupied. If you acquire them, they will be an inward rule and guide, so controlling your food, drink, and other bodily needs that you will need no advice from anyone. You will have no doubts or fears, nor will you be troubled by anger, depression, lust, or folly, and you will enjoy the peace of an easy conscience and a tranquil mind. I have said more than I intended on this subject, but act