

THE STEPS OF HUMILITY

BY BERNARD, ABBOT OF CLAIRVAUX

TRANSLATED, WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES,
AS A STUDY OF HIS EPISTEMOLOGY BY
GEORGE BOSWORTH BURCH



CHOIR NOVITIATE
GETHSEMANI, KY.

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS

1950

COPYRIGHT, 1940
BY THE PRESIDENT AND FELLOWS OF HARVARD COLLEGE
PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Third Printing

LONDON: GEOFFREY CUMBERLEGE
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION. AN ANALYSIS OF BERNARD'S EPISTEMOLOGY	I
PART I. THE SUBJECT OF KNOWLEDGE	3
SEC. 1. The Human Being	3
1. Human capacity for knowledge	3
2. Body and soul	3
SEC. 2. The Human Soul	5
1. Definition of the soul	5
2. The "soul" of the soul	6
3. Faculties of the soul	10
4. Functions of the soul	23
PART II. THE OBJECT OF KNOWLEDGE	36
SEC. 1. Truths	36
1. Why we should know	36
2. What we should know	39
SEC. 2. Truth	41
1. Our knowledge of God's existence	41
2. Our knowledge of God's essence	41
3. Our knowledge of God	46
PART III. THE METHOD OF KNOWLEDGE	49
SEC. 1. Humility	49
1. Definition of humility	49
2. Cause of humility	52
3. Steps of humility	53
4. Fruits of humility	54
SEC. 2. Love	58
1. Definition of love	58
2. Objects of love	63
3. Cause of love	68
4. Fruits of love	72

SEC. 3. Contemplation	77
1. Definition of contemplation	77
2. Objects of contemplation	77
3. Cause of contemplation	84
4. Nature of contemplation	87
5. Bernard's own experience	95
6. Fruit of contemplation	98
7. The anagogic path	101
8. The descent into the cave	107
9. Summary	108
MABILLON'S PREFACE TO THE BENEDICTINE EDITION	115
RETRACTATION	119
AUTHOR'S PREFACE	121
CHAP. 1. Humility, the Way to Truth	123
CHAP. 2. The Banquets of Wisdom	127
CHAP. 3. The Steps of Truth	133
CHAP. 4. The First Step of Truth, Knowing Yourself	147
CHAP. 5. The Second Step of Truth, Knowing Your Neighbor	153
CHAP. 6. The Third Step of Truth, Knowing God	157
CHAP. 7. The Anagogic Path	161
CHAP. 8. The Rapture of St Paul	167
CHAP. 9. The Steps of Humility	173
CHAP. 10. The First Step of Pride, Curiosity	181
CHAP. 11. The Second Step of Pride, Frivolity	199
CHAP. 12. The Third Step of Pride, Foolish Mirth	201
CHAP. 13. The Fourth Step of Pride, Boastfulness	205
CHAP. 14. The Fifth Step of Pride, Singularity	209
CHAP. 15. The Sixth Step of Pride, Conceit	211
CHAP. 16. The Seventh Step of Pride, Audacity	213
CHAP. 17. The Eighth Step of Pride, Excusing Sins	215
CHAP. 18. The Ninth Step of Pride, Hypocritical Con- fession	217
CHAP. 19. The Tenth Step of Pride, Defiance	221
CHAP. 20. The Eleventh Step of Pride, Freedom to Sin	223

CONTENTS

xi

CHAP. 21. The Twelfth Step of Pride, Habitual Sinning .	225
CHAP. 22. Conclusion	227
NOTES	235
APPENDIX A. THE METAPHYSICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS OF CISTERCIAN MYSTICISM ACCORDING TO ISAAC OF STELLA	259
APPENDIX B. BERNARD'S CRITICISM OF PETER ABELARD'S THEOLOGY	268
BIBLIOGRAPHY	275
INDEX	281

CAPUT 2

QUO FRUCTU ASCENDANTUR GRADUS HUMILITATIS

3. Hanc itaque legem, qua reditur ad veritatem, beatus Benedictus per duodecim gradus disponit: ut sicut post decem praecepta legis ac geminam circumcisionem (in quo duodenarius numerus impletur) ad Christum venit; ita his duodecim gradibus ascensis, veritas apprehendatur. Illud quoque quod in scala illa, quae in typo Jacob humilitatis monstrata est, Dominus desuper innixus apparuit,¹ quid nobis aliud innuit, nisi quod in culmine humilitatis cognitio constituitur veritatis? Dominus quippe de summitate scalae prospiciebat super filios hominum tanquam Veritas, cujus oculi sicut fallere nolunt, ita falli non norunt; ut videret si sit intelligens, aut requirens Deum.² An non tibi de alto videtur clamare ac dicere requirentibus se (novit enim qui sunt ejus³), *Transite ad me, omnes qui concupiscitis me, et a generationibus meis implemini?*⁴ et illud, *Venite ad me, qui laboratis et onerati estis, et ego vos reficiam.*⁵ Venite, inquit. Quo? Ad me veritatem. Qua? Per humilitatem. Quo fructu? Ego vos reficiam. Sed quae est refectio, quam Veritas ascendentibus promittit, pervenientibus reddit? An forte ipsa est charitas? Ad hanc quippe, ut ait beatus Benedictus, ascensis omnibus humilitatis gradibus monachus mox perveniet.⁶ Vere dulcis et suavis cibus charitas, quae fessos allevat, debiles roborat, moestos laetificat. Jugum denique Veritatis facit suave, et onus leve.

4. Bonus cibus charitas, quae media in ferculo Salomonis consistens,¹ diversarum odore virtutum, velut diversi generis

¹ *ad me, omnes qui concupiscitis*, Mab. et Vulg. l. c.; *ad me, qui cupiscitis*, Ed. Cant. sine nota.

² Gen. 28. 13.

³ 2 Tim. 2. 19.

⁴ Matth. 11. 28.

⁵ Ps. 13. 2.

⁶ Eccles. 24. 26.

⁷ Benedictus, *Regula*, cap. 7.

⁸ Cant. 3. 9, 10.

ego sum
refectio
charitas

media
in ferculo

CHAPTER 2

THE BANQUETS OF WISDOM

3. This law, therefore, which leads to truth, St Benedict arranges in twelve steps, in order that, just as we come to Christ after the ten commandments and the double circumcision ⁽¹⁰⁾ (which make twelve), so we may apprehend truth by the ascent of these twelve steps. Moreover, what else is signified to us by the fact that the Lord was seen standing above the ladder which appeared to Jacob as a symbol of humility, but the fact that knowledge of truth is established at the summit of humility? For the Lord looked down from the top of the ladder upon the children of men, like Truth whose eyes neither deceive nor are deceived, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. Does he not seem to you to be crying from above and saying to those who seek him (for the Lord knoweth them that are his), *Come over to me, all ye that desire me, and be filled with my fruits; and also, Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you?* Come, he says. Whither? Unto me, Truth. How? Through humility. Why? I will refresh you. But what is the refreshment which Truth promises to those who are climbing and gives to those who reach the top? Is it love, perhaps? To this, as St Benedict says, the monk will soon attain when he has mounted all the steps of humility. A truly sweet and pleasant food is love, which sustains the weary, strengthens the weak, rejoices the sad. It makes the yoke of Truth easy, and its burden light. ⁽¹¹⁾

4. Love is a good food. Placed in the midst of Solomon's palanquin, it both refreshes the hungry and gives pleasure to those who serve the refreshment, with its odor of various virtues, like the fragrance of different kinds of spices. Peace, patience, kindness, long-suffering, joy in the Holy Ghost are served with it; and all other fruits of truth and wisdom are

fragrantia pigmentorum, esurientes reficit, jucundat reficientes. Ibi siquidem apponitur pax, patientia, benignitas, longanimitas, gaudium in Spiritu sancto: ² et si quae sunt aliae veritatis seu sapientiae generationes, apponuntur in illa. Habet et humilitas in eodem ferculo suas epulas, panem scilicet doloris et vinum compunctionis, quas primo Veritas incipientibus offert, quibus utique dicitur: *Surgite postquam sederitis, qui manducatis panem doloris.*³ Habet ibidem contemplatio ex adipe frumenti solidum cibum sapientiae, cum vino quod laetificat cor hominis,⁴ ad quem Veritas perfectos invitat, dicens: *Comedite, amici mei, et bibite; et inebriamini, charissimi.*⁵ *Media, inquit, charitate constravit propter filias Jerusalem;*⁶ propter imperfectas videlicet animas, quae dum adhuc solidum illum cibum minus capere possunt, lacte interim charitatis pro pane, oleo pro vino nutriendae sunt. Quae recte *media* describitur, quia ejus suavitas nec incipientibus praesto est, prohibente timore; nec perfectis satis est, pro abundantiori contemplationis dulcedine. Hi adhuc a noxiis carnalium delectationum humoribus, timoris amarissima potione purgandi, nondum lactis dulcedinem experiuntur: illi jam avulsi a lacte, epulari ab introitu gloriae gloriosius delectantur: solis mediis, id est proficientibus, ita jam melleas quasdam sorbitiunculas charitatis expertis, ut illis interim pro sui teneritudine contenti sint.

5. Primus ergo cibus est humilitatis, purgatorius cum amaritudine: secundus charitatis, consolatorius cum dulcedine: tertius contemplationis, solidus cum fortitudine. Heu mihi, *Domine Deus virtutum! quousque irasceris super orationem servi tui, cibabis me pane lacrymarum, et potum dabis mihi in lacrymis?*¹ Quis me invitabit ad illud vel medium ac dulce charitatis convivium: ubi justi epulantur in conspectu Dei, et delectantur in laetitia, ut jam non *loquens in amaritudine animae meae, dicam Deo, Noli me condemnare:*² sed ^a epulando in azymis sinceritatis et veritatis,³ laetus cantem in viis

² Gal. 5. 22.⁴ Ps. 103. 15.³ Ps. 126. 2.⁵ Cant. 5. 1.⁶ Cant. 3. 10.^a sed, deest in Ed. Cant. et uno MS.¹ Ps. 79. 5. 6.² Job 10. 2.³ 1 Cor. 5. 8.

correct wrong
note b. 241.

included in the banquet of love. Humility too has its banquet in the same palanquin, the bread of sorrow, namely, and the wine of remorse, which Truth offers first to the beginners, to whom it is said, *Rise ye after you have sitten, you that eat the bread of sorrow*. And there too contemplation has the solid food of wisdom, made from the fat of the grain, with wine that maketh glad the heart of man, to which Truth bids the perfect, saying, *Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved*. *The midst thereof*, he says, *is spread with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem*, that is to say, for the imperfect souls which, not yet able to take that solid food, must meanwhile be nourished with the milk of love instead of bread, oil instead of wine. It is rightly said to be in the *midst*, because its sweetness is not given to the beginners, whose fear prevents them, and does not satisfy the perfect, who have the more abundant sweetness of contemplation. The former, still to be purged of the noxious humors of carnal pleasures by the bitter potion of fear, have not yet tasted the sweetness of the milk; the latter, already weaned from the milk, as soon as they enter into glory, enjoy more glorious feasting. Only those in the midst, that is, those who are on the way, taste those honey-sweet sips of love, with which they must be satisfied for the present, because of their weakness.

5. The first food, therefore, is that of humility, bitter and purging; second, that of love, sweet and consoling; third, that of contemplation, solid and strengthening. Ah me, *Lord God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy servant? Thou feedest me with the bread of tears, and givest me tears to drink*. Who will bid me even to that half-way but sweet banquet of love,⁽¹²⁾ where the just are feasted in the sight of God and gladdened with pleasure, so that no longer *speaking in the bitterness of my soul will I say unto God, Do not condemn me*; but keeping the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, I may sing joyfully in the ways of the Lord, that great is the glory of the Lord? Nevertheless the way of humility is good, by which we turn to truth, learn to love, and partake of the fruits of wisdom.⁽¹³⁾

Domini, quoniam magna est gloria Domini? ⁴ Bona tamen via humilitatis, qua veritas inquiritur, charitas acquiritur, generationes sapientiae participantur. Denique sicut finis legis Christus, sic perfectio humilitatis, cognitio veritatis. Christus cum venit attulit gratiam: Veritas quibus innotuerit, dat charitatem. Innotescit autem humilibus: humilibus ergo dat charitatem.^b

^b *charitatem*, conjicio legendum; *gratiam*, omnia MSS et Edd.

⁴ Ps. 137. 5.

Therefore, just as Christ is the end of the law,⁽¹⁴⁾ so knowledge of truth is the perfection of humility. Christ brought grace when he came; Truth gives love to those to whom it is revealed. But it is revealed to the humble, and so it gives love⁽¹⁵⁾ to the humble.

CAPUT 3

QUO ORDINE GRADUS HUMILITATIS AD PROPOSITUM BRAVIUM VERITATIS PERDUCANT: ET QUOMODO CHRISTUS PER PASSIONEM DIDICIT MISERICORDIAM

6. Dixi, ut potui, quo fructu humilitatis gradus ascendi debeant: dicam, ut potero, quo ordine ad propositum bravium veritatis perducant. Sed quia ipsa quoque veritatis agnitio in tribus gradibus consistit; ipsos breviter distinguo, si possum: quatenus ex hoc clarius innotescat, ad quem trium veritatis, duodecimus humilitatis pertingat. Inquirimus namque veritatem in nobis, in proximis, in sui natura. In nobis, nosmetipsos dijudicando: in proximis, eorum malis compatiendo: in sui natura, mundo corde contemplando. Observa sicut numerum, ita et^a ordinem. Primo te doceat Veritas ipsa, quod prius in proximis, quam in sui debeat inquiri natura. Post haec accipies, cur prius in te, quam in proximis inquirere debeas. In numero siquidem beatitudinum, quas suo sermone distinxit, prius misericordes, quam mundicordes posuit.¹ Misericordes quippe cito in proximis veritatem deprehendunt, dum suos affectus in illos extendunt: dum sic per charitatem se illis conformant, ut illorum vel bona, vel mala, tanquam propria sentiant. Cum infirmis infirmantur, cum scandalizatis uruntur.² Gaudere cum gaudentibus, flere cum flentibus³ consueverunt. Hac charitate fraterna cordis acie mundata, veritatem delectantur in sui contemplari natura, pro cuius amore mala tolerant aliena. Qui vero se ita fratribus non consociant, sed e contrario aut flentibus insultant, aut gaudentibus derogant; dum quod in illis est, in se non sentiunt, quia similiter affecti non sunt, veritatem in proximis qualiter deprehendere possunt? Bene namque convenit illis illud vulgare proverbium: Nescit

^a et ita, Ed. Cant. et unum MS.

¹ Matth. 5. 7, 8.

² 2 Cor. 11. 29.

³ Rom. 12. 15.

infirmis

gaudentibus

CHAPTER 3

THE STEPS OF TRUTH

6. I have shown, so far as I could, to what end the steps of humility should be ascended; I will show, so far as I can, in what order they lead to the promised prize of truth. But since the knowledge of truth consists itself of three steps, I will briefly distinguish them, if I can, that it may thus appear more clearly to which of the three of truth the twelfth of humility leads. For we seek truth in ourselves, in our neighbors, and in its own nature: in ourselves, judging ourselves; in our neighbors, sympathizing with their ills; in its own nature, contemplating with pure heart. Observe not only the number but the order. First let Truth itself teach you that you should seek it in your neighbors before seeking it in its own nature. Later you will see why you should seek it in yourself before seeking it in your neighbors. For in the list of Beatitudes which he distinguished in his sermon, he placed the merciful before the pure in heart. The merciful quickly grasp truth in their neighbors, extending their own feelings to them and conforming themselves to them through love, so that they feel *their* joys or troubles as their own. They are weak with the weak; they burn with the offended. They *rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep*. After the spiritual vision has been purified by this brotherly love, they enjoy the contemplation of truth in its own nature, and then bear others' ills for love of it. But those who do not unite themselves with their brethren in this way, but on the contrary either revile those who weep or disparage those who do rejoice, not feeling in themselves that which is in others, because they are not similarly affected — how can they grasp truth in their neighbors? For the popular proverb well applies to them: The healthy do not know how the sick feel, nor the full how the hungry suffer. But sick sympathize with

for aspirations of "truth."

Let
not which
would be my/et...

sanus quid sentiat aeger, aut plenus quid patiatur jejunos. Et aeger aegro, et jejunos jejuno quanto propinquius, tanto familiarius compatiuntur. Sicut enim pura veritas non nisi puro corde videtur: sic miseria fratris verius misero corde sentitur. Sed ut ob alienam miseriam cor miserum habeas, oportet tuam prius agnoscas: ut proximi mentem in tua invenias, et ex te noveris, qualiter illi subvenias, exemplo scilicet Salvatoris nostri, qui pati voluit, ut compati sciret; miser fieri, ut misereri disceret, ut quomodo de ipso scriptum est, *Et didicit ex his quae passus est obedientiam*,⁴ ita disceret et misericordiam. Non quod ante misereri nesciret, cujus misericordia ab aeterno, et usque in aeternum:⁵ sed quod natura sciebat ab aeterno, temporali didicit experimento.

7. Sed forte durum tibi videtur, quod dixi Dei sapientiam Christum didicisse misericordiam; quasi is per quem omnia facta sunt, aliquid aliquando ignorasset ex iis^a quae sunt: maxime cum illud quod ex Epistola ad Hebraeos ad id comprobandum commemoravi, alio sensu, qui non ita videatur absurdus, possit intelligi; ut hoc quod dictum est, *didicit*, non ad ipsum caput referatur in sui persona, sed ad corpus ejus, quod est Ecclesia; et sit ita sensus, *Et didicit ex his quae passus est obedientiam*, hoc est, obedientiam didicit in suo corpore ex his quae passus est in capite. Nam illa mors, illa crux, opprobria, sputa, flagella, quae omnia caput nostrum Christus pertransiit, quid aliud corpori ejus, id est nobis, quam praeclara obedientiae documenta fuerunt? *Christus enim, ait Paulus, factus est obediens Patri usque ad mortem.*¹ Qua necessitate? Respondeat apostolus Petrus: *Christus passus est pro nobis, vobis relinquens exemplum, ut sequamini, inquit, vestigia ejus*,² id est, ut imitemini obedientiam ejus. Ex his ergo quae passus est, discimus quanta nos, qui puri homines sumus, oporteat pro obedientia perpeti, pro qua is, qui et Deus erat, non dubitaverit mori. Et hoc modo, inquis, inconveniens non erit, si dicitur Christus vel obedientiam, vel misericordiam, seu aliquid aliud

⁴ Heb. 5. 8.⁵ Ps. 102. 17.^a iis, Mab.; his, Ed. Cant. sine nota.¹ Phil. 2. 8.² 1 Petr. 2. 21.

is first
question -
the body
learned from
what he had
suffered.

obedience.

sick, and hungry with hungry,⁽¹⁶⁾ the more closely the more they are alike. For just as pure truth is seen only with a pure heart, so a brother's misery is truly felt with a miserable heart.⁽¹⁷⁾ But in order to have a miserable heart because of another's misery, you must first know your own; so that you may find your neighbor's mind in your own and know from yourself how to help him, by the example of our Savior, who willed his passion in order to learn compassion;⁽¹⁸⁾ his misery, to learn commiseration. For, just as it is written of him, *Yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered*, so also he learned mercy in the same way. Not that he did not know how to be merciful before, he whose mercy is from everlasting to everlasting; he knew it by nature from eternity, but learned it in time by experience.

7. But perhaps you object to my saying that Christ, the wisdom of God, learned mercy, as if he through whom all things are made should ever be ignorant of anything that is, especially since that which I cited from the Epistle to the Hebrews in proof of this can be understood in another sense which does not seem so absurd. Perhaps the phrase *Yet learned he* refers not to the head in his own person but to his body, which is the Church, and so the meaning would be, *It learned obedience by the things which he suffered*, that is, the body learned obedience from the things which the head suffered. For that death, that cross, the mocking, spitting, flagellation, all that Christ, our head, went through — what else were they to his body, that is, ourselves, but magnificent examples of obedience? For Christ, says Paul, *became obedient to the Father, even unto death*. What was the necessity? Let the apostle Peter answer. *Christ also suffered for us*, he says, *leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps*, that is, that ye should imitate his obedience. From the things which he suffered, therefore, we learn how we who are mere men ought to suffer patiently for the sake of obedience, for which he who was also God did not hesitate to die. And in this way, you think, it will not be unfitting to say that Christ learned obedience or mercy or anything else in his body, while at

God.

in suo corpore didicisse: dum tamen sibi in sua persona nil, quod se ante latuerit, credatur ex tempore potuisse accedere. Sicque ipse sit qui misereri aut obedire doceat, ipse qui discat: quia caput et corpus unus est Christus.

8. Non nego hunc intellectum, quin rectus sit: sed ex alio loco ipsius Epistolae, superior interpretatio videtur approbari, ubi dicitur: *Nusquam enim Angelos apprehendit, sed semen Abrahae apprehendit: unde debuit fratribus per omnia similari, ut misericors fieret.*¹ Puto quod haec verba sic ad caput referenda sint, ut corpori penitus aptari non possint. De Verbo utique Dei dictum est quod *non Angelos apprehendit*, hoc est, non in unam sibi personam assumpsit, *sed semen Abrahae*. Neque enim legitur, Verbum angelus factum^a est, sed *Verbum caro factum est*,² et caro de carne Abrahae, juxta promissionem, quae illi primum^b facta est. *Unde*, id est ex qua seminis assumptione, *debuit per omnia fratribus similari*; id est, oportuit ac necesse fuit, ut similis nobis passibilis,³ nostrarum omnia, excepto peccato, genera miseriarum percurreret. Si quaeris, qua necessitate? *Ut misericors, inquit, fieret*. Et hoc, ais, cur non recte ad corpus referri potest? Sed audi quod paulo post sequitur: *In eo enim, in quo passus est ipse et tentatus, potens est et eis qui tentantur auxiliari.*⁴ In quibus verbis quid melius intelligi possit non video; nisi quod ideo pati ac tentari, omnibusque, absque peccato, humanis voluit communicare miseriis (quod est per omnia fratribus similari), ut similiter passis ac tentatis misereri ac^c compati ipso disceret experimento.

9. Quo quidem experimento non dico ut sapientior efficere-
tur, sed propinquior videretur: quatenus infirmi filii Adam, quos suos fieri et appellari fratres non dedignatus est, suas illi

^a factum, Mab.; factus, Ed. Cant. cum nota, *This is the unaltered reading of one of the primary manuscripts and the correction to "factum" in the other was made by a later hand. The reading is supported by the nearly contemporary manuscript at Montpellier. If it is really what Bernard wrote, it is explained by the fact that "verbum" is the personal Word, and therefore masculine. Cf. Leon. Magn. Sermon. XXI. c. 2 ad init.: "Verbum igitur Dei Deus, Filius Dei . . . factus est homo."*

^b primum, deest in Ed. Cant. et duobus MSS.

^c ac, Mab.; et, Ed. Cant. sine nota.

¹ Heb. 2. 16, 17.

² Joan. 1. 14.

³ Jac. 5. 17.

⁴ Heb. 2. 18.

the same time we believe that nothing formerly hidden could be revealed in time to him in his own person. And thus he who teaches mercy or obedience may be the same as he who learns it, for the head and the body are one same Christ.

8. I do not deny that this sense is right; but the former interpretation seems to be approved by another passage of that very epistle, where it is said: *For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be merciful.* I think that these words refer to the head so peculiarly that they cannot apply to the body. It is concerning the Word of God that it is said that *he took not on him the nature of angels*, that is, did not assume that nature in one person with himself, *but the seed of Abraham*. For we do not read that the Word was made angel, but that *the Word was made flesh*, and flesh of the flesh of Abraham, according to the promise originally made to him. *Wherefore*, that is, from this assumption of the seed, *in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren*; that is, it was fitting and necessary that, subject to like passions as we are, he should experience all the kinds of our miseries, except sin. If you ask what was the necessity, it is answered, *That he might be merciful*. And why, you ask, cannot this rightly refer to the body? But hear what follows directly: *For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.* I do not see what can better be understood from these words, than that he wished to partake of the same suffering and temptation and all human miseries except sin (which is being made like unto his brethren), in order to learn by his own experience how to commiserate and sympathize with those who are similarly suffering and tempted.

9. I do not say he became any wiser through this experience, but he seemed to be nearer, so that the feeble sons of Adam, whom he was not ashamed to make and call his brethren, should not hesitate to commit their infirmities to him who could cure them, being God; wanted to cure them, being their

infirmittates committete non dubitarent, qui sanare illas et posset ut Deus, et vellet ut proximus, et cognosceret ut eadem passus. Unde Isaias *virum eum appellat dolorum, et scientem infirmitatem*:¹ et Apostolus, *Non enim habemus, inquit, Pontificem, qui non possit compati infirmitatibus nostris*. Unde autem possit, indicans adjungit: *Tentatum autem per omnia pro similitudine, absque peccato*.² Beatus quippe Deus, beati Dei Filius, in ea forma, qua non rapinam arbitratus est esse se aequalem Patri, procul dubio impassibilis, priusquam se exinanisset formam servi accipiens,³ sicut miseriam vel subjectionem expertus non erat, sic misericordiam vel obedientiam experimento non noverat. Sciebat quidem per naturam, non autem sciebat per experientiam. At ubi minoratus est non solum a se ipso, sed etiam paulo minus ab Angelis, qui et ipsi impassibiles sunt per gratiam, non per naturam, usque ad illam formam, in qua pati et subjici posset, quod utique (sicut dictum est) in sua non posset; et in passione expertus est misericordiam, et in subjectione obedientiam. Per quam tamen experientiam, non illi (ut dixi) scientia, sed nobis fiducia crevit, dum ex hoc misero genere cognitionis, is a quo longe erraveramus, factus est propior nobis. Quando enim illi appropinquare auderemus, in sua impassibilitate manenti? Nunc autem, Apostolo suadente, monemur cum fiducia adire thronum gratiae ipsius,⁴ quem nimirum, sicut alibi scriptum est, languores nostros tulisse, et dolores portasse⁵ cognoscimus, et in eo quo passus est ipse,⁶ nobis compati posse non dubitamus.

10. Non ergo debet absurdum videri, si dicitur, Christum non quidem aliquid scire coepisse, quod aliquando nescierit; scire tamen alio modo misericordiam ab aeterno per divinitatem, et aliter in tempore didicisse per carnem. Vide ne et simili locutionis modo illud dictum sit, quod Dominus requiruntibus discipulis de die ultimo se nescire respondit. Nam quomodo diem illum ille nesciebat, *in quo omnes thesauri sapientiae et scientiae absconditi sunt*?¹ Cur ergo se scire

¹ Is. 53. 3.³ Phil. 2. 6, 7.⁵ Is. 53. 4.² Heb. 4. 15.⁴ Heb. 4. 16.⁶ Heb. 2. 18.³ Col. 2. 3.

neighbor; and understood them, having suffered the same things. Wherefore Isaiah calls him *a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*. And the apostle says, *For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities*, and explains this by adding, *But was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin*. For the blessed God, Son of the blessed God, in that form in which he thought it not robbery to be equal with the Father, that is, passionless, before he had made himself of no reputation and taken upon him the form of a servant, as he had not undergone misery or submission, did not know mercy or obedience by experience. He knew them intuitively, but not empirically. But when he had made himself not only lower than his own dignity but even a little lower than the angels, who are themselves passionless by grace, not nature, even to that form in which he could undergo suffering and submission, which he could not do in his own form, as was said; then he learned mercy in suffering and obedience in submission. Through this experience, however, not his knowledge, as I said, but our boldness was increased, when he from whom we had long been astray was brought nearer to us by this sort of worldly wisdom. For when should we dare to approach him, remaining in his impassivity? But now we are urged by the apostle to *come boldly unto the throne of grace* of him who, we know from another verse, *bath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows*; and because of his own passion we are sure of his compassion for us.

10. Therefore it should not seem absurd to say, not that Christ began to know anything which he did not know before, but that he knows mercy eternally in one way through his divinity, and learned it temporally in another way through the flesh. Observe whether the Lord did not use a similar figure of speech when he replied, to the disciples asking about the last day, that he did not know. For how could he, *in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*, not know the last day? Why then did he say he did not know that which he certainly must have known? Did he perhaps wish to conceal from them, by lying, that which it was not

negabat, quod certum est quia nescire non poterat? Numquid forte mendaciter eis voluit celare, quod utiliter non valuit innotescere? Absit. Sicut nil ignorare poterat, cum sapientia sit: sic nec mentiri, cum veritas sit. Sed volens discipulos ab inutilis inquisitionis curiositate compescere, quod inquirebant, se scire negavit: non omnimodo quidem, sed tali quodam modo, quo negare veraciter potuit. Nam etsi suae divinitatis intuitu aequae omnia, praeterita scilicet, praesentia atque futura per-lustrando, diem quoque illum palam habebat; non tamen ullis carnis suae sensibus experiendo agnoverat.* Alioquin jam spiritu oris sui Antichristum interfecerat, jam auribus sui corporis archangelum vociferantem, et tubam sonantem, in quo strepitu mortui suscitandi sunt, audierat: jam oculis suae carnis oves haedosque, qui ab invicem segregandi sunt, perspexerat.

11. Denique ut intelligas, quod illa tantum cognitione, quae per carnem fit, se illum diem nescire perhibuerit, vigilanter respondens, non ait, Nec ego scio, sed *nec ipse*, inquit, *Filius hominis scit*.¹ Quid est Filius hominis, nisi nomen assumptae carnis? Quo siquidem nomine intelligi datur, quia dicens se aliquid nescire, non juxta quod Deus est, sed secundum hominem loquitur. Alias quippe loquens de se secundum suam deitatem, non Filius, vel Filium hominis; sed Ego, vel Me, saepius ponere consuevit, ut ibi: *Amen, amen dico vobis, antequam Abraham fieret, ego sum*.² *Ego sum*, ait: non, Filius hominis est. Nec dubium, quin de illa essentia diceret, qua ante Abraham et sine initio est, non qua post Abraham et ex Abraham factus est. Alibi quoque hominum de se opinionem a discipulis inquirens, *Quem dicunt*, inquit, *homines esse*, non me, sed *Filium hominis*? Rursus eosdem, quid de se ipsi quoque sentirent, interrogans: *Vos autem*, non quem Filium hominis; sed *quem me*, ait, *esse dicitis*? Carnalis videlicet populi sententiam de carne inquirens, nomen carnis, quod proprie est *Filius hominis*, posuit: spirituales vero discipulos de sua deitate interrogans, non Filium hominis, sed signanter *me* dixit. Quod

* agnoverat, Mab.; noverat, Ed. Cant. sine nota.

¹ Marc. 13. 32.

² Joan. 8. 58.

expedient to reveal? Hardly. Just as he could not be ignorant, being wisdom, so neither could he lie, being truth. But wishing to check the disciples' curiosity and useless questions, he said he did not know what they asked; not absolutely, but in such a way that he could say so truthfully. For although in his divine intuition he apprehended clearly and completely all things past, present, and future, and that day as well; still he did not know it by any sensible experience of the flesh. Otherwise he would already have killed Antichrist by the breath of his mouth, and already have heard with the ears of his body the thundering archangel and the sounding trumpet by which the dead are to be aroused, and already have seen with the eyes of the flesh the sheep and goats which are to be separated from each other.

11. And, that you may see it was only by that knowledge which is acquired through the body that he claimed not to know the day, he replies carefully, not saying, Nor do I know, but, *Nor does the Son of Man himself know*. What is the "Son of Man" but the name of the assumed flesh? By this name it is given to understand that, in saying he does not know anything, he is speaking not as God but as man. In speaking elsewhere about himself according to his deity he was accustomed to say, not Son of Man, but I or me. For example, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am. I am*, he says; not, The Son of Man is. He was undoubtedly speaking of that essence by which he is, before Abraham and without beginning; not of that by which he was made after Abraham and from Abraham. In another place also, inquiring the opinion of men about himself, he asks his disciples, *Whom do men say, not, that I am? but, that the Son of Man is?* Asking the same persons again how they themselves feel about him, he says, *But whom say ye, not, that the Son of Man is? but, that I am?* In seeking the opinion of a carnal people about his body he used the name of his body, which is rightly *the Son of Man*; but in questioning his spiritual disciples about his deity he expressly said, not Son of Man, but *I*. Peter understood this and showed by his reply what they had been

something

denique Petrus intelligens, quid per hoc quod dixerat, *me*, requisiti fuissent, sua responsione aperuit: *Tu es*, inquit, non Jesus filius Virginis, sed *Christus Filius Dei*.³ Quod utique si respondisset, nihilo minus veritatem dixisset: sed in verbis interrogationis sensum interrogantis prudenter advertens, competenter proprieque ad interrogata respondit, dicens, *Tu es Christus Filius Dei*.

12. Cum igitur videas Christum in una quidem persona duas habere naturas, unam qua semper fuit, alteram qua esse coepit; et secundum sempiternum quidem suum esse, semper omnia nosse; secundum temporale vero, multa temporaliter expertum fuisse: cur fateri dubitas, ut esse ex tempore coepit in carne, sic carnis quoque miseras scire coepisse, illo duntaxat modo cognitionis, quem docet defectio carnis? Quod utique genus scientiae protoplasti sapientius feliciusque nescirent, quando id attingere nisi stulte misereque non poterant. Sed plasmator eorum Deus requirens quod perierat, opus suum miseratus persecutus est, descendens et ipse misericorditer, quo illi ceciderant miserabiliter. Voluit experiri in se, quod illi faciendo contra se merito paterentur, non simili quidem curiositate, sed mirabili charitate: non ut miser cum miseris remaneret, sed ut misericors factus miseros liberaret. Factus, inquam, misericors, non illa misericordia, quam felix manens habuit ab aeterno: sed quam mediante miseria reperit in habitu nostro. Porro pietatis opus, quod per illam coepit, in ista perfecit: non quod sola illa non posset perficere; sed quia nobis non potuit absque ista sufficere. Utraque siquidem necessaria; sed nobis haec magis congrua fuit. O ineffabilis pietatis excogitatio! Quando nos illam miram misericordiam cogitaremus, quam praecedens miseria non informat? Quando illam adverteremus incognitam nobis compassionem, quae non passione praeventa, cum impassibilitate perdurat? Attamen si illa, quae miseriam nescit misericordia non praecessisset, ad hanc, cujus miseria mater est, non accessisset. Si non accessisset, non attraxisset: si non attraxisset, non extraxisset. Unde autem ex-

³ Matth. 16. 13-16.

importance
of
humility

asked by his saying *I. Thou art*, he said, not Jesus the son of the Virgin, but *the Christ, the Son of God*. Had he given the other answer, he would still have spoken the truth; but shrewdly interpreting the questioner's meaning from the wording of the question, he answered the question suitably and properly, saying, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of God*.

12. Since, then, you see that Christ in one person has two natures, one by which he always was, the other by which he began to be, and always knew everything in his eternal essence but temporally experienced many things in his temporal essence; why do you hesitate to grant that, as he began in time to be in the flesh, so also he began to know the ills of the flesh by that kind of knowledge which the weakness of the flesh teaches? Our first parents would have been wiser and happier to have remained ignorant of that kind of knowledge, since they could only attain it by folly and misery. But God their maker, seeking again what had perished, accompanied his creatures in pity. There whither they had fallen so pathetically, he also came down sympathetically, willing to experience in himself what they justly suffered for defying him, not because of a similar curiosity but because of marvelous love, not to remain miserable with the miserable but to become pitiful and free the pitiable. Become pitiful, I say, not with that pity which he, ever blessed, had from eternity, but with that which he learned through sorrow when in our form. And the labor of love which he began through the former, he consummated in the latter, not because he could not consummate it in the one, but because he could not fulfill our needs without the other.⁽¹⁹⁾ Each was necessary, but the latter was more human. Device of ineffable love! How could we conceive that marvelous pity produced by no previous pain? How could we imagine that superhuman compassion⁽²⁰⁾ not preceded by passion but coexisting with impassivity? Yet if that pity free from pain had not come first,⁽²¹⁾ he would never have thought of this pity which is born of pain. Had he not thought of it, he would not have sought it; had he not

trahit, nisi *de lacu miseriae, et de luto faecis*?¹ Nec illam tamen misericordiam deseruit, sed hanc inseruit: non mutavit, sed multiplicavit, sicut scriptum est, *Homines et jumenta salvabis, Domine, quemadmodum multiplicasti misericordiam tuam, Deus*.²

¹ Ps. 39. 3.

² Ps. 35. 7, 8.

sought it out, he would not have brought it out. And has he not brought it *out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay*? Yet he nowise departed from the older mercy when he imparted the newer; not exchanging but excelling, as it is written, *O Lord, thou preservest man and beast. How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God!*

Pharisaeus se solum decipit, quem solum ^a excipit, dum caeteros damnat. Propheta se non excipit a communi miseria, ne excipiatur a misericordia: Pharisaeus exsufflat misericordiam, dum dissimulat miseriam. Propheta affirmat tam de omnibus, quam de se, *Omnis homo mendax*: Pharisaeus confirmat de omnibus praeter se, *Non sum*, inquit, *sicut caeteri hominum*. Et gratias agit, non quia bonus, sed quia solus: non tam de bonis quae habet, quam de malis quae in aliis videt. Nondum de suo trabem ejecerat, et festucas in oculis fratrum enumerat. Nam subdit, *Injusti, raptores*. Non frustra, ut arbitror, excessum a proposito feci, si utriusque excessus differentiam intellexisti.

18. Jam ad propositum redeundum est. Quos itaque veritas sibi jam innotescere, ac per hoc vilescere fecit; necesse est, ut cuncta, quae amare solebant, et ipsi sibi amarescant. Statuentes nimirum se ante se, tales se videre cogunt, quales vel a se videri erubescunt. Dumque sibi displicet quod sunt, et ad id suspirant quod non sunt, quod utique per se fore diffidunt; vehementer sese lugentes, id solum consolationis inveniunt, ut severi iudices sui, qui scilicet amore veri esuriant et sitiant justitiam, usque ad contemptum sui districtissimam de se exigant satisfactionem, et de caetero emendationem. Sed cum se ad id sufficere non posse conspiciunt (cum enim fecerint omnia quae mandata fuerint sibi, servos se inutiles dicunt ¹), de justitia ad misericordiam fugiunt. Ut autem illam consequantur, consilium Veritatis sequuntur: *Beati misericordes, quoniam ipsi misericordiam consequentur*.² Et hic est secundus gradus veritatis, quo eam in proximis inquirunt; dum de suis aliorum necessitates exquirunt; dum ex his quae patiuntur, patientibus compati sciunt.

^a *decipit, quem solum*, Mab.; desunt in Ed. Cant. sine nota.

¹ Luc. 17. 10.

² Matth. 5. 7.

of himself, *All men are false*; the Pharisee complains of all, except himself, saying, *I am not as other men are*. And he gives thanks, not that he is good, but that he is different; not so much because of his own virtues as because of the vices which he sees in others. He has not yet cast out the beam out of his own eye, yet he points out the motes in his brothers' eyes. For he adds, *Unjust, extortioners*. This digressing passage is not in vain, I think, if you have learned to distinguish the different kinds of passage.

18. Now to return to the thesis. Those whom truth has caused to know, and so condemn, themselves must now find distasteful those things they used to love, even their own selves. Standing before themselves, they are forced to see that they are such as they blush to appear, even to themselves. Displeased with what they are, they aspire to what they are not and have no hope of becoming through themselves. Loudly mourning their lot, they find only this comfort, that, severe judges of themselves, who love truth and hunger and thirst after justice, contemptuous even of themselves, they require of themselves the strictest expiation and, what is more, emendation. But when they see that they are not sufficient for this (for when they have done all those things which are commanded them, they say, *We are unprofitable servants*), they flee from justice to mercy.⁽²⁵⁾ In order to obtain this they follow the precept of Truth: *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy*. And this is the second step of truth, when they seek it in their neighbors, when they learn others' wants from their own, when they know from their own miseries how to commiserate with others who are miserable.

impenderet.² Alter miserabiliter, alter misericorditer, ambo inculpabiliter. Tu quoque si locum, tempus et causam considerans, tua vel fratris necessitate oculos levas; non solum non culpo, sed et plurimum laudo. Hoc enim excusat miseria, illud commendat misericordia. Sin alias, non Prophetæ, non Domini, sed Dinae aut Evæ, imo ipsius satanæ imitorem te dixerim. Dina namque dum ad pascendos hædos egreditur, ipsa patri, et sua sibi virginitas rapitur.³ O Dina, quid necesse est ut videas mulieres alienigenas? Qua necessitate? qua utilitate? An sola curiositate? Etsi tu otiose vides, sed non otiose videris. Tu curiose spectas, sed curiosius spectaris. Quis crederet tunc illam tuam curiosam otiositatem, vel otiosam curiositatem, fore post sic non otiosam, sed tibi, tuis, hostibusque tam perniciosam?

30. Tu quoque, o Eva, in paradiso posita es, ut cum viro tuo opereris et custodias illum: si injunctum perfeceris, quandoque transitura ad melius, ubi nec opus sit te in aliquo opere occupari, nec de custodia sollicitari. Omne lignum paradisi ad vescendum tibi conceditur, præter illud, quod dicitur *scientiæ boni et mali*.¹ Si enim caetera bona sunt, et sapiunt bonum, quid opus est edere de ligno, quod sapit etiam malum? *Non plus sapere, quam oportet sapere*.² Sapere enim malum, sapere non est, sed desipere. Serva ergo commissum, exspecta promissum; cave prohibitum, ne perdas concessum. Quid tuam mortem tam intente intueris? Quid illo tam crebro vagantia lumina jasis? Quid spectare libet, quod manducare non licet? Oculos, inquis, tendo, non manum. Non est interdictum ne videam, sed ne comedam. An non licet oculos quo volo levare, quos Deus in mea posuit potestate? Ad quod Apostolus: *Omnia mihi licent, sed non omnia expediunt*.³ Etsi culpa non est, culpæ tamen indicium est. Nisi enim mens minus se curiose servaret, tua curiositas tempus vacuum non haberet. Etsi culpa non est, culpæ tamen occasio est, et indicium com-

² Joan. 6. 5.

³ Gen. 34. 1, 2.

¹ Gen. 2. 15-17.

² Rom. 12. 3.

³ 1 Cor. 6. 12.

pitiablely, the other pitifully, both blamelessly. If you also, considering the time, place, and cause, lift up your eyes because of your own or your brother's necessity, not only I do not condemn but I highly approve. For affliction excuses the one, while affection commends the other. But if for any other reason, then I will call you an imitator not of the prophet or the Lord but of Dinah or Eve or even Satan. For when Dinah goes out to feed her kids, her father loses his maid and she her maidenhood. O Dinah, why must thou go out to see the daughters of the land? What is the need? What is the use? Mere curiosity? Though thou seest them idly, thou art not idly seen. Thou lookest curiously, but art looked at more curiously. Who would then suppose that this curious idleness or idle curiosity would prove to be not idle but suicidal for thee, thy friends, and thy foes?

30. Thou too, O Eve, wast put into the Garden of Eden *to dress it and to keep it* with thy husband; destined, hadst thou fulfilled thy task, to pass on to a better, where there should be no need for thee to be occupied with any dressing or concerned with any keeping. Every tree of the garden is given thee to eat, save that which is called *of the knowledge of good and evil*. For if the others are good and of good sapor, why eat of the tree which has also the sapor of evil? *Not to be more sapient than it behoveth to be sapient*. For to be sapient of evil is not to be sapient but to be insipid. So keep the trust, trusting in the promise; forsake the forbidden, lest thou lose the allowed. Why regard so intently thy bane? Why cast wandering glances so frequently thither? Why does sight of it delight thee, when to bite is not allowed thee? It is my eyes, thou sayest, not my hand, which I reach out. Nor am I forbidden to see, but to eat. May I not lift up whither I will the eyes which God has placed in my power? To which the Apostle says: *All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient*. Though it be no crime, yet it is the mark of a crime. For were not thy mind too careless of itself, thou wouldst have no free time for curiosity. Though it be no crime, yet it is the occasion of crime, the mark of one com-

CAPUT 11

DE SECUNDO GRADU SUPERBIAE, QUI EST LEVITAS ANIMI

39. Monachus enim, qui sui negligens, alios curiose circumspicit, dum quosdam suspicit superiores, quosdam despicit inferiores: et in aliis quidem videt quod invidet, in aliis quod irridet. Inde fit ut pro mobilitate oculorum levigatus animus, nulla utique sui cura aggravatus, modo per superbiam ad alta se erigat, modo per invidiam in ima demergat: nunc per invidiam nequiter tabescit, nunc pro excellentia pueriliter hilarescit. In altero nequam, in altero vanus, in utroque superbus existit: quia et quod superari se dolet, et quod superare se gaudet, amor propriae excellentiae facit. Has autem animi vicissitudines nunc pauca et mordacia, nunc multa et inania; nunc risu, nunc luctu plena, semper vero irrationabilia indicant verba. Compara, si vis, hos duos primos superbiae gradus summis duobus humilitatis: et vide si non in ultimo curiositas, in penultimo levitas cohibetur. Id ipsum in caeteris reperies, si alterutrum comparentur. Sed jam ad tertium docendo, non descendendo veniamus.

11 on dig

CHAPTER 11

THE SECOND STEP OF PRIDE, FRIVOLITY (55)

39. For the monk who neglects himself to become curious about other men; respects some as superior, rejects others as inferior; sees in some cause for envy, in others cause for ridicule. Thus it comes about that the soul, made frivolous by its wandering eyes and not sobered by any self-examination, first is exalted to the pinnacle of pride, then is plunged into the depths of envy. Now it is consumed with sinful envy; now it rejoices childishly in its own excellence. In one case it is found sinful, in the other silly, in both proud; for love of its own excellence makes it both grieve to be surpassed and rejoice to surpass others. These vicissitudes of the soul are marked by speech first brief and biting, then lengthy and empty; now full of merriment, now of sadness; but always uncalled for. Compare, if you will, these first two steps of pride with the last two of humility, and see if curiosity is not repressed on the last, frivolity on the next to the last. You will find the same thing in the others, if they are compared respectively. But now let us come to the third — in our argument, not in our action.

D. Lord

CAPUT 12

DE TERTIO GRADU SUPERBIAE, QUI EST INEPTA LAETITIA

40. Proprium est superborum, laeta semper appetere, et tristia devitare, juxta illud: *Cor stultorum ubi laetitia*.¹ Unde et monachus, qui duos jam superbiae gradus descendit, dum per curiositatem ad animi levitatem devenit, cum gaudium quod semper appetit, frequenti videt interpolari tristitia, quam de bonis alterius contrahit; impatiens suae humiliationis, fugit ad consilium falsae consolationis. Ex illa denique parte, qua sua sibi vilitas, et aliena excellentia monstratur, restringit curiositatem, ut totum se transferat in contrariam partem: quatenus in quo ipse videtur praecellere, curiosius notet; in quo alter praecellit, semper dissimulet: ut dum devitat quod triste putatur, laetitia continuetur. Sicque fit ut quem sibi vicissim vindicabant gaudium et tristitia, sola possidere incipiat inepta laetitia. In hac autem tertium tibi gradum constituo: accipe quibus eam^a signis vel in te deprehendas,^b vel in altero. Illum qui ejusmodi est, aut raro, aut nunquam gementem audies, lacrymantem videbis. Putes, si attendas, aut sui oblitum, aut ablutum a culpis. In signis scurrilitas, in fronte hilaritas, vanitas apparet in incessu. Pronus ad jocum, *facilis ac promptus in risu*.² Cunctis quippe quae in se contemptibilia, et ideo tristia noverat, a memoria rasis; bonisque, si qua sentit in se, adunatis vel simulatis ante oculos mentis, dum nil cogitat nisi quod libet, nec attendit si licet; jam risum tenere, jam ineptam laetitiam dissimulare non valet. Ut enim vesica collecto turgida vento, punctoque forata exiguo, si stringitur, crepitat dum detumescit; ac ventus egrediens non passim effusus, sed stric-tim emissus crebros quosdam sonitus reddit: sic monachus, ubi

^a eam, Mab.; eum, Ed. Cant. sine nota.

^b deprehendas, Mab.; apprehendas, Ed. Cant. sine nota.

¹ Eccl. 7. 5.

² Benedictus, *Regula*, cap. 7.

CAPUT 12

DE TERTIO GRADU SUPERBIAE, QUI EST INEPTA LAETITIA

40. Proprium est superborum, laeta semper appetere, et tristia devitare, juxta illud: *Cor stultorum ubi laetitia*.¹ Unde et monachus, qui duos jam superbiae gradus descendit, dum per curiositatem ad animi levitatem devenit, cum gaudium quod semper appetit, frequenti videt interpolari tristitia, quam de bonis alterius contrahit; impatiens suae humiliationis, fugit ad consilium falsae consolationis. Ex illa denique parte, qua sua sibi vilitas, et aliena excellentia monstratur, restringit curiositatem, ut totum se transferat in contrariam partem: quatenus in quo ipse videtur praecellere, curiosius notet; in quo alter praecellit, semper dissimulet: ut dum devitat quod triste putatur, laetitia continuetur. Sicque fit ut quem sibi vicissim vindicabant gaudium et tristitia, sola possidere incipiat inepta laetitia. In hac autem tertium tibi gradum constituo: accipe quibus eam^a signis vel in te deprehendas,^b vel in altero. Illum qui ejusmodi est, aut raro, aut nunquam gementem audies, lacrymantem videbis. Putes, si attendas, aut sui oblitum, aut ablutum a culpis. In signis scurrilitas, in fronte hilaritas, vanitas apparet in incessu. Pronus ad jocum, *facilis ac promptus in risu*.² Cunctis quippe quae in se contemptibilia, et ideo tristia noverat, a memoria rasis; bonisque, si qua sentit in se, adunatis vel simulatis ante oculos mentis, dum nil cogitat nisi quod libet, nec attendit si licet; jam risum tenere, jam ineptam laetitiam dissimulare non valet. Ut enim vesica collecto turgida vento, punctoque forata exiguo, si stringitur, crepitat dum detumescit; ac ventus egrediens non passim effusus, sed stric-tim emissus crebros quosdam sonitus reddit: sic monachus, ubi

^a eam, Mab.; eum, Ed. Cant. sine nota.

^b deprehendas, Mab.; apprehendas, Ed. Cant. sine nota.

¹ Eccl. 7. 5.

² Benedictus, *Regula*, cap. 7.

CHAPTER 12

THE THIRD STEP OF PRIDE, FOOLISH MIRTH ⁽⁵⁶⁾

10th step

40. It is the custom of the proud always to seek what is cheerful and avoid what is gloomy, as it is written, *The heart of fools is in the house of mirth*. Thus the monk who has already descended two steps of pride, falling through curiosity to frivolity, finds the pleasure he is always seeking frequently interrupted by the sorrow he derives from another man's good. Not being able to bear his own humiliation, he takes refuge in false consolation. Henceforth he restrains his curiosity from the direction which reveals his own weakness and another's excellence, to give himself over entirely to the opposite direction. He takes careful notice of that in which he himself seems to be preeminent, but always overlooks that in which another is preeminent, so that everything unpleasant may be avoided and his mirth may be uninterrupted. And thus it comes about that he whom joy and sadness were contending for now begins to be possessed solely by foolish mirth. This, however, I consider the third step; learn by what signs you may detect it either in yourself or in another. He who is in this way seldom or never will be heard sighing or seen weeping. You would think, to watch him, that he either had no conscience or else had no sins to be conscious of. Facetiousness appears in his gestures, merriment in his face, vanity in his stride. He likes to make jokes; he is *easily and quickly moved to laughter*. Everything contemptible, and therefore unpleasant, which he knows in himself is erased from memory. He gathers together the good things, if he finds any in himself, or else creates them in the mind's eye. Thinking only of what pleases him, without regard to whether it be proper, he can no longer restrain his laughter or conceal his foolish mirth. For just as a windbag with a small vent, if compressed when it is distended with air, will whistle as it deflates, and

★

assertion, using a different metaphor, at the beginning of Chapter 9. Unless he is guilty of excessive humility, this indicates that, to say nothing of the second banquet, he is not yet partaking of the third — that is, at the time of writing the *Steps of Humility* ~~he has not yet experienced mystical contemplation~~. He already, however, has a clear understanding of the path which leads to it. (But cf. Mabillon's note to Misc. Sermon 46, in which he argues that Bernard's self-deprecations are not always to be taken as applying literally to himself.)

13. (5) *Turn to truth, learn to love, and partake of the fruits of wisdom.*

The three rewards of humility are (1) truth — as was explained in the first chapter; (2) love — as is explained in this chapter; and (3) those "fruits of wisdom" which are served in the first banquet, namely the bread of sorrow and the wine of remorse.

14. (5) *Christ is the end of the law.*

Rom. 10. 4. Historically Truth incarnate as Christ was the end of the Mosaic Law. Mystically knowledge of truth in yourself, as will be explained in the next chapter, is the end of the Benedictine ladder of humility. Historically Christ introduced the era of grace. Mystically knowledge of truth in yourself makes you receptive of the grace of love.

15. (5) *Love.*

Even if the slip of the pen which wrote *gratiam* instead of *charitatem* was made by the author himself, it cannot be what he meant. The last two sentences are a syllogism: Truth gives love to those to whom it is revealed; it is revealed to the humble; ergo it gives love to the humble. Furthermore, the whole point of the chapter, of which these sentences are a summary, is that humility leads to love. To write *grace* instead of *love* not only invalidates the syllogism but deprives the chapter of all sense. The psychological explanation of the slip of the pen is obvious, since *Humilibus autem dat gratiam* (Jac. 4. 6; 1 Pet. 5. 5) is a favorite text with Bernard. (Mills, although he did not emend this passage in his critical text, found it impossible to render it literally in his English translation. But instead of changing *grace* to *love*, he changed *love* to *grace* in the preceding sentence — which makes an equally valid syllogism but not equally good sense.)

16. (6) *Sick sympathize with sick, and hungry with hungry.*

These are simple examples of the fundamental principle of Bernard's epistemology, that like knows like. He proceeds to make a more profound application of this principle.

17. (6) *Just as pure truth is seen only with a pure heart, so a brother's misery is truly felt with a miserable heart.*

These two propositions, examples of the principle that like knows like, are an epitome of Bernard's epistemology. Pure truth, or Truth in itself, which is God, is directly known, that is contemplated, not merely known about, only when the spiritual vision has been purified by humility and love. A brother's misery, that is a neighbor as he actually is in the state of sin, is directly known, that is loved and literally sympathized with, only when the knower has become himself subjectively miserable by the awareness of his own objectively miserable state.

18. (6) *Who willed his passion in order to learn compassion.*

X 8.1.64

erroneous. It seems to be based, not on any intuition or argument or authority, but merely on a fanciful attempt to carry out the association, suggested by the relation of the Son to humility and of the Holy Ghost to love, to its obvious but untenable conclusion. Certainly no cogent argument can be derived from the three not very relevant scriptural citations given in the preceding section. The correct relation is to associate humility, love, and contemplation with the incarnate Word, the Holy Ghost, and the eternal Word respectively. Christ teaches us humility by his example, and gives us, through his own doctrine in the gospels and through that of his body the Church, the faith by which our reason is enlightened. The Holy Ghost, entering our hearts, infuses love. The divine Word, not incarnate, is contemplated in mystical ecstasy. But the Father transcends all human comprehension, at least before the resurrection.*

This point, which is of fundamental importance for the epistemology of Christian mysticism, may receive some light from modern philosophy. Hume demonstrated that science is impossible because scientific knowledge is knowledge of the laws governing the external object, and the subject, limited to its own experience, has no means of discovering the laws of that which is outside its experience. Kant refuted Hume by showing that, although Hume's argument was sound, he was wrong in concluding that it invalidated scientific knowledge, because he did not understand what science is. It is necessary to go beyond the Cartesian analysis of the all into subject and object. It is necessary to subdivide the object into reality and appearance. With regard to the reality, or thing in itself, Hume's argument is sound, and no knowledge is possible. But with regard to the appearance, or phenomenon, knowledge is possible, because its laws are determined by the subject, as Kant undertook to demonstrate. Science is possible because it is concerned, with the objective world to be sure, but with its appearance, not its reality. But in demonstrating the possibility of science Kant at the same time demonstrated the impossibility of mysticism. Mysticism, however variously it may be described, is essentially, by definition, knowledge of reality, as contrasted with the knowledge of mere appearance, which, the mystics maintain, is all that is given in ordinary or scientific knowledge. But reality, the thing in itself, is just what Kant showed to be unknowable. If the mystics have forms of intuition and categories of understanding different from those of other people, then no doubt the world appears to them differently than it appears to the others, but this peculiar world of the mystics is only a different appearance, a different phenomenal world, and could at best claim only equal validity with the ordinary phenomenal world. Mysticism, therefore, defined as knowledge of reality, seems to be impossible, just as science, defined as knowledge of the external object, seemed to be impossible before Kant's explanation of it. Ouspensky demonstrated the possibility of mysticism in a manner similar to that in which Kant demonstrated the possibility of science. He undertook to demonstrate that the world as it appears to the mystics, differing from the world as it appears to others

* Cf. Sermon 4 for All Saints', 3 (XB 631); Misc. Sermon 41, 12 (XB 902); Sermon 31 on Canticles, 2 (*Opera* 2863).

But the theologians also describe the divine Word or Wisdom. Unlike the Holy Ghost, which moves in this temporal phenomenal world, it is eternally immovable, and so transcends this world and cannot be known by the knowledge of this world. Unlike the Father, it does not transcend the knowledge of those pure souls who apprehend the objective world not in space and time but *sub specie aeternitatis*. It is the proximate reality which man is capable of knowing but because of his corruption does not know ordinarily. The Word, not the Father or the Holy Ghost, although all three are one same Truth, is the object of mystical contemplation, and because it is apprehended by love, not by concepts, it is rightly called the Bridegroom of the soul.

42. (21) *If thou know not thyself, go feed thy kids.*

The whole verse reads: *If thou know not thyself, O fairest among women, go forth, and follow after the steps of the flocks, and feed thy kids beside the tents of the shepherds.* Cant. 1. 7 (Douai trans.) Bernard interprets it as follows: "Man made in honor, when he understands not this honor, deserves by such ignorance to be likened to the sheep, as sharers in his present corruption and mortality. So it comes to pass that by not knowing himself the creature marked off by the gift of reason begins to be herded with the flocks of irrational beings, when, ignorant of his own glory which is within, he is led away by his own curiosity to be conformed outwardly to sensible things; and he becomes one of the rest, because he understands not that he has received something beyond the rest. And so we must greatly beware of this ignorance, by which we may think of ourselves less than ourselves; but not less, nay even more, of that by which we attribute more to ourselves." (*Loving God* 2, 4, *Opera* 1332.) Humility, knowing yourself, means to know that you are in a state of sin. To be in a state of sin means to be potentially blessed but actually miserable. Neither the angels, who are actually blessed, nor the animals, who are not even potentially blessed, are in a state of sin. To acquire humility through learning by faith that you are in a state of sin, means to lower yourself in your own estimation only if you formerly thought you were an angel. If you were a materialist and so thought you were an animal, to learn that you are in a state of sin means to raise yourself in your own estimation. The doctrine of sin is that we are capable of being better than we are. It is the only ground of hope and optimism.

43. (21) *The hearts of its neighbors.*

This sentence shows the three steps of the purifying process: (1) the school of humility, where the soul learns to know itself; (2) the leadership of the Holy Ghost, by which it overcomes willfulness, weakness, and ignorance; (3) the introduction into the hearts of its neighbors by love. Only after it has been introduced into the hearts of its neighbors by love, as well as adorned with good habits and holy virtues, is it capable of contemplation.

44. (21) *The chamber of the King.*

Cf. Sermon 23 on Canticles, 9: "The chamber of the King is to be sought in the mystery of mystical contemplation (*in theoricæ contemplationis arcano*)."
(*Opera* 2799.)

45. (21) *About half an hour.*

This phrase, taken from Scripture, may not be intended to indicate liter-

ally the approximate duration of a mystical ecstasy. It is, however, the only suggestion concerning this subject in Bernard's works. Cf. Pascal: "From about half past ten in the evening till about half an hour after midnight, Fire." (*Mémorial, Oeuvres*, IV, p. 4.) Cf. William James: "Mystical states cannot be sustained for long. Except in rare instances, half an hour, or at most an hour or two, seems to be the limit beyond which they fade into the light of common day." (*Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 381.)

46. (21) *Searches out the secrets of truth.*

Cf. William James: "Although so similar to states of feeling, mystical states seem to those who experience them to be also states of knowledge. They are states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect. They are illuminations, revelations, full of significance and importance, all inarticulate though they remain; and as a rule they carry with them a curious sense of authority for after-time." (*Ibid.*, p. 380.)

47. (21) *That it may feed on the memory of them when it returns to itself.*

Cf. William James: "Mystical states, strictly so called, are never merely interruptive. Some memory of their content always remains, and a profound sense of their importance. They modify the inner life of the subject between the times of their recurrence." (*Ibid.*, p. 381.)

48. (21) *Hears unspeakable words.*

Cf. William James: "The handiest of the marks by which I classify a state of mind as mystical is negative. The subject of it immediately says that it defies expression, that no adequate report of its contents can be given in words." (*Ibid.*, p. 380.)

In these two sentences Bernard describes all four of James's "marks" of mystical experience: ineffability, noetic quality, transiency, passivity.

49. (22) *He does nothing.*

Cf. William James: "Although the oncoming of mystical states may be facilitated by preliminary voluntary operations, as by fixing the attention, or going through certain bodily performances, or in other ways which manuals of mysticism prescribe; yet when the characteristic sort of consciousness once has set in, the mystic feels as if his own will were in abeyance, and indeed sometimes as if he were grasped and held by a superior power." (*Ibid.*, p. 381.)

50. (26) *Alas that I ever descended from it!*

This refers not to original sin but to the descent of the steps of pride, as is clear from the sequel. There is something illogical in Bernard's statement that no one reaches either the top or the bottom except by passing all the steps. Where then does one begin? Benedict seems to assume that the monk starts from a state of utter depravity and proceeds upward, slowly or rapidly, by the steps of humility. Bernard, in saying that the upward path can be recognized as the same path which has been descended, indicates that a monk is more apt to be perfectly humble at the beginning of his monastic career, and that lack of humility should be attributed to a fall. With regard to himself, he may be looking back to his days as a humble monk at Citeaux as the period before his own fall.

Bernard considers a monk's actual spiritual state to be less important than

the direction of his progress. It is better to be on the fourth step of humility than on the fourth step of pride, although the monk on the latter is much more humble than the one on the former.

51. (28) *The First Step of Pride, Curiosity.*

"The twelfth step of humility is reached when a monk not only has humility in his heart, but even shows it also exteriorly to all who behold him. Thus, whether he be in the oratory at the 'Work of God,' in the monastery, or in the garden, on a journey, or in the fields, or wheresoever he be, sitting, standing, or walking, always let him, with head bent and eyes fixed on the ground, bethink himself of his sins and imagine that he is arraigned before the dread judgment of God." (Benedict, *Rule*, chap. 7. The quotations from the *Rule* are from Gasquet's translation.)

52. (30) *Because we are in mortal sin before we are born.*

Literally: Because first we die before we are born. That is, the soul dies before the body is born. The soul dies when it is separated from its "soul," which is God; just as the body dies when it is separated from its soul, which is an image of God. The death of the soul is effected by sin; that of the body, by the penalty of sin. We are spiritually dead when we are physically born. The soul is restored to life when it is reunited with its "soul," God, that is, Truth; just as the body is restored to life when it is reunited with its soul at the resurrection. The resurrection of the soul is effected by Christ's first coming; that of the body, by his second coming. (Misc. Sermon 116, XB 1012.)

53. (31) *A familiar master breeds contemptuous servants. Privatus dominus temerarios nutrit.*

This is a form of the common proverb, *Familiarity* (that is, condescension) *breeds contempt*. The meaning is made clear by the following section, which shows that Satan's contempt of God is particularly reprehensible because it was due to God's excessive kindness, the very thing which should have aroused love instead of contempt.

This proverb occurs in the Vulgate: *Qui delicate a pueritia nutrit servum suum, postea sentiet eum contumacem.* (Prov. 29. 21.) Also in the *Scala Paradisi* or *Scala Claustralium* of Guigo the Carthusian: *Vulgare proverbium est, quod nimia familiaritas parit contemptum.* (8, 9, *Bernardi Opera*, Vol. II, 654.) Bernard himself says elsewhere, and with a similar reference to ingratitude toward God: *Hoc nempe est, quod vulgari proverbio dicitur: Familiaris dominus fatuum nutrit servum.* (Misc. Sermon 27, 5, XB 842.)

A 12th century example of the use of *privatus* in the sense of *familiaris* is found in the rhymed book of etiquette called *Facetus*, couplet 15:

Noli privatus nimis aut affabilis esse;
qui nimis est privatus, eum vitare necesse.*

The second verse shows that *privatus* is a synonym, not an antonym, of *affabilis*, as it is hardly necessary to avoid one who is too shy.

54. (33) *Not passing wrath but everlasting hate.*

According to Bernard, the devil's sin, which was attempting to usurp

* Carl Schroeder, *Der deutsche Facetus* (*Palaestra*, Band 86, Berlin, 1911), p. 15. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 300.