

PRAYER

by Tertullian

Chapter 1

Jesus Christ our Lord the Spirit of God and the Word of God and the Reason of God--the Word (which expresses) the Reason, and the Reason (which possesses) the Word, and the Spirit of both--has prescribed for His new disciples of the New Testament a new form of prayer. For in this matter, also, it was fitting that new wine be stored in new wine skins and that a new patch be sewed upon a new garment. Whatever had prevailed in days gone by was either abolished, like circumcision, or completed, like the rest of the Law, or fulfilled, like the prophecies, or brought to its perfection, like faith itself.

Everything has been changed from carnal to spiritual by the new grace of God which, with the coming of the Gospel, has wiped out the old completely; and in this grace it has been proved there is the Spirit of God and the Word of God and the Reason of God, Jesus Christ our Lord; as the Spirit wherein He prevailed, the Word whereby He taught, and the Reason or which He came. Consequently, the prayer formulated by Christ consists of three elements: the spirit whereby it can have such power, the word by which it is expressed, and the reason why it produces reconciliation.

John, too, had taught his disciples to pray, but everything that John did was a preparation for Christ, until He would increase--even as John himself announced that He (Christ) must increase, but he himself must decrease--and the entire work of the servant would pass over, along with the spirit itself, to the Master. Hence it is that the words in which John taught men to offer their prayer are not extant, for the earthly have given place to the heavenly. 'He who is from the earth,' He says, 'of the earth speaks, and he who comes from heaven bears witness to that which he has seen.' And what that is of Christ the Lord is not of heaven, as is also this instruction concerning prayer?

Let us then, my blessed ones, consider His heavenly wisdom, in the first place with regard to the admonition to pray in secret. By this, He demanded of man the faith to believe that he is seen and heard by Almighty God even when he is within the house and out of sight; and He desired a modest reserve in the manifestation of his faith so that he would offer his homage to God alone who he believed was listening and observing everywhere.

The next recommendation in the following precept would, then, pertain to faith and the proper display of faith; we should not think that the Lord is to be approached with a barrage of words since we are certain that of His own accord He has regard for His creatures.

Yet, that concise phrase which forms the third point of His teaching rests for support upon a profound and effective figure of speech: the thought compressed within such few words carries a flood of meaning to the mind. For not only does it embrace the proper duties of prayer, namely, worship of God and man's act of supplication, but practically every word of the Lord, the whole content of His teaching, so that, really, in (the Lord's) Prayer, there is contained an abridgment of the entire Gospel.

Chapter 2

It begins with a proof of (our belief in) God and a meritorious act of faith when we say, 'Father, who art in heaven.' For we adore God and prove our faith, of which this form of address is the result. It is written: 'To them that believe in God He gave the power to be called the sons of God.'

Our Lord very frequently spoke to us of God as a Father; in fact, He even taught us to call none on earth 'father,' but only the one we have in heaven. Therefore, when we pray like this we are observing this precept, too.

Happy they who know the Father! This is the reproach made against Israel, when the Spirit calls heaven and earth to witness saying: 'I have begotten sons and they have not known me.'

Moreover, when we say 'Father,' we also add a title to God's name. This form of address is one of filial love and at the same time one of power.

In the Father, the Son is also addressed. For Christ said, 'I and the Father are one.'

Nor is Mother Church passed over without mention, for in the Son and the Father the Mother is recognized, since upon her the terms 'Father' and 'Son' depend for their meaning. With this one form, then, or word, we honor God with His own, we heed His precept, and we reproach those who are unmindful of the Father.

Chapter 3

The title 'God the Father' had not been revealed to anyone. Even Moses who had inquired about God's name had heard a different one. It has been revealed to us in His Son. For, before the Son (came) the name of the Father did not exist. 'I have come,' said Christ, 'in the name of my Father.' And again: 'Father, glorify thy name.' And, more explicitly: 'I have manifested thy name to men.'

We ask that this name be hallowed; not that it would be the proper thing for men to wish God well as if He were (just) another man and we could express some wish in his regard; or as if it would hurt Him if we did not express the wish. Certainly it is right that God should be blessed in all places and at all times because it is every man's duty to be ever mindful of His benefits, but this wish takes the form of a benediction.

Moreover, when is the name of God not holy and blessed in itself, when of itself it makes others holy? To Him the attending hosts of angels cease not to say: 'Holy, holy, holy!' Therefore, we, too--the future comrades of the angels, if we earn this reward--become familiar even while here on this earth with that heavenly cry of praise to God and the duty of our future glory.

So much for the glory we give to God. Over and above that, there is reference to our own petition when we say 'Hallowed be thy name.' We are asking that it be sanctified in us who are in Him, as well as in all other men for whom the grace of God is still waiting. In this, too, we obey the precept by praying for all men, even our enemies. And thus, by an ellipsis, we say, not: 'May Thy name be hallowed among us,' but, we say: 'Among all men.'

Chapter 4

Next, we add this phrase: 'Thy will be done in heaven and on earth.' Not that anyone could prevent the fulfillment of God's will and we should pray that His will be successfully accomplished, but we pray that in everything His will may be done. For, by a figure of speech, under the symbol of flesh and spirit we represent

heaven and earth.

But, even if this is to be understood literally, the sense of the petition is the same, namely, that the will of God be done in us on earth, in order that it may be done (by us) also in heaven. Now, what does God will but that we walk according to His teaching? We ask, therefore, that He grant us the substance and riches of His will, for our salvation both in heaven and on earth, since the sum total of His will is the salvation of those whom He has adopted as His children.

This is the will of God which our Lord accomplished by His teaching, His works, and His sufferings. For, if He Himself said that He did not His own will, but the will of His Father, without a doubt what He did was the will of His Father, to which we are now summoned as to a model, that we, too, may teach and work and suffer even unto death. That we may accomplish this there is need of God's will.

Likewise, when we say: 'Thy will be done,' we thereby wish well to ourselves because there is no evil in God's will, even if some adversity be inflicted upon one according to his deserts.

Now, by this phrase we forearm ourselves for patient endurance since our Lord, too, willed to point out in His own flesh under the intensity of His Passion the weakness of the flesh. 'Father,' He said, 'remove this cup from Me,' and then, after reflection, He added: 'Yet not my will but thine be done.' He Himself was the will and power of the Father, yet He surrendered Himself to the will of His Father to indicate the patient endurance which is rightly due.

Chapter 5

The phrase, 'Thy kingdom come,' also refers to the same end as 'Thy will be done,' namely, (May Thy kingdom come) in ourselves. For, when does God not reign, 'in whose hand is the heart of every king'? But, whatever we wish for ourselves, we direct our hope toward Him, and we attribute to Him what we expect from Him. Well, then, if the realization of our Lord's kingdom has reference to the will of God and to our uncertain condition, how is it that some ask for an extension of time, as it were, for this world, since the kingdom of God--for the coming of which we pray--tends toward the consummation of the world? Our hope is that we may sooner reign, and not be slaves any longer.

Even if it were not prescribed to ask in prayer for the coming of His kingdom, we would, of our own accord, have expressed this desire in our eagerness to embrace the object of our hope.

With indignation the souls of the martyrs beneath the altar cry aloud to the Lord: 'How long, O Lord, dost thou refrain from avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?' For, at least from the end of the world vengeance for them is ordained.

Indeed, as quickly as possible, O Lord, may Thy kingdom come! This is the prayer of Christians; this shall bring shame to the heathens; this shall bring joy to the angels; it is for the coming of this kingdom that we are harassed now, or rather, it is for this coming that we pray.

Chapter 6

With what exquisite choice has divine Wisdom arranged the order of this prayer that, after the matters which pertain to heaven--that is, after the name of God, the will of God, and the kingdom of God--it should make a

place for a petition for our earthly needs, too! For our Lord has taught us: 'Seek first the kingdom, and then these things shall be given you besides.'

However, we should rather understand 'Give us this day our daily bread' in a spiritual sense. For Christ is 'our bread,' because Christ is Life and the Life is Bread. 'I am,' said He, 'the bread of life.' And shortly before: 'The bread is the word of the living God who hath come down from heaven.' Then, because His Body is considered to be in the bread: 'This is my body.' Therefore, when we ask for our daily bread, we are asking to live forever in Christ and to be inseparably united with His Body.

But, since there is admitted also an interpretation of this phrase according to the flesh, it cannot be devoid of religious sense and spiritual instruction. Christ commands that we ask for bread, which, for the faithful, is the only thing necessary, for the pagans seek all other things. Thus, too, He impresses His teaching by examples and He instructs by parables, saying, for example: 'Does a father take bread from his children and cast it to the dogs?' And again: 'If his son asks him for a loaf, will he hand him a stone?' He indicates what children expect from their father. That caller, too, who knocked upon the door in the night was asking for bread.

Moreover, He has rightly added: 'Give us this day' in view of what He had previously said: 'Do not be anxious about tomorrow, what you shall eat.' To this idea He also referred in the parable of that man who, when his crops were plentiful, laid plans for an addition to his barns and a long-range program of security--though he was destined to die that very night.

Chapter 7

Having considered God's generosity, we pray next for His indulgence. For, of what benefit is food if, in reality, we are bent on it like a bull on his victim? Our Lord knew that He alone was without sin. Therefore, He taught us to say in prayer: 'Forgive us our trespasses.' A prayer for pardon is an acknowledgment of sin, since one who asks for pardon confesses his guilt. Thus, too, repentance is shown to be acceptable to God, because God wills this rather than the death of the sinner.

Now, in Scripture, 'debt' is used figuratively to mean sin, because of this analogy: When a man owes something to a judge and payment is exacted from him, he does not escape the just demand unless excused from the payment of the debt, just as the master forgave the debt to that servant. Now, this is the point of the whole parable: Just as the servant was freed by his lord, but failed in turn to be merciful to his debtor and therefore, when brought before his lord, was handed over to the torturer until he paid the last penny, that is, the least and last of his faults, (Christ) intended by this parable to get us, also, to forgive our debtors.

This is expressed elsewhere under this aspect of prayer; 'Forgive,' He said, 'and you shall be forgiven.' And when Peter asked if one should forgive his brother seven times, our Lord said, 'Rather, seventy times seven times,' that He might improve upon the Law, for in Genesis vengeance was demanded of Cain seven times, of Lamech seventy times seven.

Chapter 8

To complete the prayer which was so well arranged, Christ added that we should pray not only that our sins be forgiven, but that they be shunned completely: 'Lead us not into temptation,' that is, do not allow us to be led by the Tempter.

God forbid that our Lord should seem to be the tempter, as if He were not aware of one's faith or were eager to upset it!

That weakness and spitefulness belongs to the Devil. For, even in the case of Abraham, God had ordered the sacrifice of his son not to tempt his faith, but to prove it, that in him He might set forth an example for His precept whereby He was later to teach that no one should hold his loved ones dearer than God.

Christ Himself was tempted by the Devil and pointed out the subtle director of the temptation.

This passage He confirms (by His words to His Apostles) later when He says: 'Pray that you may not enter into temptation.' They were so tempted to desert their Lord because they had indulged in sleep instead of prayer.

Therefore, the phrase which balances and interprets 'Lead us not into temptation' is 'But deliver us from evil.'

Chapter 9

How many utterances of the Prophets, Evangelists, and Apostles; how many of our Lord's sermons, parables, examples, and precepts are touched in the brief compass of a few little words! How many duties are fulfilled!

The honor due to God in the word 'Father'; a testimony of faith in the very title used; the offering of obedience in the mention of God's will; the remembrance of hope in the mention of His kingdom; a petition for life in the mention of bread; the confession of sins in asking for pardon; solicitude regarding temptation in the request for protection.

Yet, why be surprised? God alone could teach us how He would have us pray. The homage of prayer, then, as arranged by Him and animated by His Spirit at the very moment it went forth from His divine lips, because of the prerogative granted to Him, ascends to heaven, recommending to the Father what the Son has taught.

Chapter 10

Since, however, our Lord, who saw the needs of men, after giving them the method of prayer, said: 'Ask and you shall receive,' and since every man has petitions to make according to his own circumstances, everyone first sends ahead the prescribed and customary prayer which will, so to speak, lay the ground work for his additional desires. He then has the right to heap upon this (substructure) petitions, over and above--ever keeping in mind, however, the prescribed conditions, that we may be no farther from the ears of God than from His teachings.

Chapter 11

The remembrance of these teachings paves the way for our prayers to reach heaven, and the first of these is not to approach the altar of God without settling any controversy or quarrel we may have contracted with our brethren. For, how can one approach the peace of God without peace, or the forgiveness of sin when he nurses a grudge? How will he please his Father if he be angry with his brother, when all anger has been forbidden us from the beginning?

For Joseph, sending his brothers home to bring their father, said: 'Do not quarrel on the way!' He was, in fact,

admonishing us--for elsewhere our manner of life is called our 'way'--that on the way of prayer that has been set up we must not approach the Father if we are angry.

Furthermore, our Lord, clearly enlarging upon the Law, adds anger with one's brother to the sin of murder. He does not permit even an evil word to be expressed; even if one must experience anger, it should not outlast the setting of the sun, as the Apostle reminds us. How foolhardy it is, moreover, either to pass a day without prayer, while you fail to give satisfaction to your brother, or to pray to no avail since your anger persists!

Chapter 12

Since the attention of our prayer is bestowed by and directed to the same Spirit, it should be free not only from anger, but from any and every disturbance of the mind. For the Holy Spirit does not acknowledge an impure spirit, neither is a sad spirit recognized by the Spirit of Joy, nor a spirit that is bound by one that is free. No one extends a welcoming hand to an opponent; no one admits another unless he is a kindred spirit.

Chapter 13

Furthermore, what is the sense of approaching prayer with hands that have been cleansed but with a spirit that is stained? Why, even the hands themselves need a spiritual cleansing that they may be raised to heaven cleansed of falsehood, murder, cruelty, poisoning, idolatry, and all other stains which, conceived in the spirit, are accomplished by the operation of the hands. This is the real cleansing, not the kind which many, in superstitious anxiety, attend to, taking water at every prayer, even when they come after a complete bath!

When I pondered this in detail and sought an explanation, I found it told of Pilate that he washed his hands in the act of surrendering Christ. We adore Christ, we do not surrender Him. Surely, we ought rather to follow a course of conduct different from that of the traitor and for that very reason not wash our hands; except to wash them because of some stain resulting from our dealings with men, for our conscience's sake; but the hands are sufficiently clean which we have washed once and for all, together with the whole body, in Christ.

Chapter 14

Though Israel may wash all its members every day, it is never clean. Its hands, at least, are always stained, forever red with the blood of the Prophets and of our Lord Himself. Conscious, therefore, of this hereditary stain of their fathers, they do not dare to raise their hands to the Lord, lest some Isaias cry out, lest Christ abominate them. In our case, not only do we raise them, we even spread them out, and, imitating the Passion of our Lord, we confess Christ as we pray.

Chapter 15

Now, since we have mentioned one detail of religious observance that is foolish, we shall not be loathe to censure the others, too, in which vanity deserves to be reprov'd, inasmuch as they are without the authority of any precept, either on the part of our Lord or any of the Apostles. Practices such as this are to be considered superstition rather than devout homage; affected and forced and indicative of scrupulosity rather than of a rational service; at any rate, constrained to match those of the pagans.

Take, for example, the practice some have of laying aside their cloaks when they pray. This is the way

pagans approach their idols. Now certainly, if this were necessary, the Apostles would have included it in their instructions about the dress for prayer; unless there are some who think that it was during his prayer that Paul left his cloak with Carpus! I suppose that the God who heeded the prayer of the three holy youths in the furnace of the Babylonian king when they prayed in their wide oriental trousers and turbans would not listen to those who wear their cloaks during prayer!

Chapter 16

Similarly, regarding the custom some have of sitting down when their prayer is ended: I see no reason for it except that they are acting like children. What do I mean? If that Hermas, whose writings generally bear the title 'The Shepherd,' had not sat upon his bed when his prayer was finished, but had done something else, would we adopt this practice, too? Certainly not!

For the phrase, 'When I had offered my prayer and had seated myself on the bed,' was set down simply and solely in the course of the narrative, not as a point of discipline.

Otherwise, we would not be obliged to offer prayers anywhere except where there was a bed!

On the other hand, it would be violating his directions to sit upon a chair or bench!

Furthermore, since this is what the pagans do--sit down before the images of the gods which they adore--it is on this score that what is done before idols deserves to be reproved in us.

For this reason it is set down as a charge of irreverence, and would be so understood, even by those pagans, if they had any understanding. For, if it is disrespectful to sit down in the presence and sight of one whom you hold in very high esteem and honor, how much more is it the height of disrespect to do so in the presence of the living God with the angel of prayer standing beside Him? Unless we are offering a reproach to God because our prayer has wearied us!

Chapter 17

On the other hand, when we offer our prayer with modesty and humility, we commend our petitions to God all the more, even though our hands have not been raised very high in the air, but only slightly and to a proper position, and even though our gaze has not been lifted up in presumption.

For, even the publican who, not only in his words but in his countenance as well, was humble and prayed with downcast eyes went away justified rather than the haughty Pharisee.

The tone of voice, too, should be lowered; otherwise, what lungs we will need, if being heard depended upon the noise we make! But God is not one who heeds the voice; rather, it is the heart which He hears and beholds.

'Even the speechless I hear, and the silent petition I answer.' So runs an oracle of the Pythian demon. Do the ears of God await a sound? If they did, how could Jonas' prayer from the depths of the whale's belly have made its way to heaven, up through the organs of such a great beast from the very bottom of the sea, up through such a vast amount of water?

As for those who pray in such a loud voice, what else will they attain but the annoyance of their neighbors?

Let us say, rather, when they thus publicize their petitions, what else are they doing but praying in public?

Chapter 18

There is another custom which has now become established: when those who are fasting have finished their prayer with their brethren, they withhold the kiss of peace; yet this is the seal of prayer.

But, when is the kiss of peace to be given to our brethren if not when our prayer ascends to heaven, made more worthy of praise because of our charity? So that they themselves may share in our charity, who have contributed to it by passing on their peace to their brother.

What prayer is complete without the bond of a holy kiss?

With whom does the kiss of peace interfere in his service of the Lord?

What kind of sacrifice is it from which one departs without giving the kiss of peace?

Whatever the reason may be, it will not outweigh the observance of the precept whereby we are bidden to conceal our fasting. For, when we refrain from the kiss, it is recognized that we are fasting. But, even if there is some reason for it, still, that you may not be guilty of transgressing this precept, you may, if you wish, dispense with the kiss of peace at home, since there you are among those from whom it is not entirely possible to conceal your fasting. But, wherever else you can conceal your acts of mortification, you ought to remember this precept; in this way you will satisfactorily comply with religious discipline in public, and with ordinary usage at home.

Thus, too, on Good Friday, when the fasting is a general and, as it were, a public religious obligation, we rightly omit the kiss of peace, having no anxiety about concealing that which we are doing along with everyone else.

Chapter 19

Similarly, with regard to the station days, many do not think that there should be any attendance at the prayers of sacrifice, because the station should be ended when the Lord's Body is received.

Has the Eucharist, then, dispensed with a duty vowed to God, or does it place upon us a greater obligation to God?

Will not your station be more solemn if you stand at the altar of God?

When the Body of our Lord is received and reserved, both are preserved: the participation in the sacrifice and the fulfillment of a duty.

Since 'station' has taken its name from military procedure (for we are God's militia), certainly no joy nor sadness which befalls the camp releases the soldiers on guard duty. For, in joy one will perform his duty more readily, and, in sadness, more conscientiously.

Chapter 20

As regards dress--I refer only to that of women--the difference of custom since the time of the holy Apostle has caused me, though a man of no rank (in the Church), to deal with this matter, which is a daring thing to do; except that it is not so daring if we deal with it as did the Apostle.

As for the modesty of their attire and adornment, the admonition of Peter, too, is clearly expressed. Using the same words as Paul, because inspired by the same Spirit, he imposes restraint regarding ostentation in their dress, the proud display of gold, and the overcareful, meretricious arrangement of their hair.

Chapter 21

A point which must be treated, since in general, throughout the Church, it is regarded as a matter of dispute, is the question of whether or not virgins should be veiled.

Those who grant to virgins the right of having their heads uncovered seem to support their position by the fact that the Apostle designated specifically, not that virgins, but that women, are to be veiled; that is, he referred not to the sex, using the generic term 'females,' but to one group within the sex, saying 'women.'

For, if he had specified the (entire) sex by the term 'females' he would have laid down an absolute law relating to every woman; but since he designates one group within the sex, he sets it apart by his silence regarding another group.

For, they say, he could have included them in the general term 'females.'

Chapter 22

Those who take this stand ought to give some thought to the basic meaning of this word. What does 'woman' mean right from the first pages of holy Scripture? They will discover that it is the term used to designate the sex, not a group within the sex; for God called Eve, although she had not yet known man, both woman and female: female, as an over-all term for the sex; woman, with special reference to a stage of life within the sex. Thus, since Eve, who up to that time was still unmarried, was designated by the term 'woman,' this term came to be commonly applied to a virgin, also. No wonder, then, if the Apostle, actuated by the same Spirit which has inspired all the sacred Scriptures as well as that Book of Genesis, used this same word, 'woman,' which, because of its application to the unmarried Eve, means also a virgin.

Everything else, then, is in agreement. For, by the very fact that he has not named virgins, just as is the case in another passage, where he is teaching about marriage, he makes it clear that he is speaking about all women and the entire sex and that there is no distinction between a woman and a virgin since he does not mention the latter at all. For, since he did not forget to make a distinction in another passage where the difference demands it (he distinguishes both classes by designating each with its proper term), in a passage where he does not distinguish, since he does not name each, he does not intend any distinction.

But what of the fact that in the Greek, in which the Apostle wrote his epistles, the ordinary usage is to speak of 'women' rather than 'females,' that is, *gynaika* rather than *thēn*? Well, if this word is the one commonly used to designate the sex, then the Apostle, in saying *gynaika*, referred to the (entire) sex (by using) a word which, in translation, means 'females.' But in the (entire) sex the virgin, too, is included.

The form of expression is unmistakable: 'Every woman,' he says, 'praying or prophesying with her head

uncovered disgraces her head.' What is the meaning of the expression 'every woman' except women of every age, every rank, and every circumstance? In saying 'every,' he excepts no member of the female sex, even as he does not command that men should have their heads covered. For then he would say 'every man.' Therefore, as in the reference to the male sex, under the term 'man' he forbids that even unmarried men should have their heads covered, similarly, in reference to the female sex, under the term 'woman' he commands that even a virgin should have her head covered. Without discrimination, in the case of both sexes, the younger should follow the rule for the elder; or else unmarried men should have their heads covered, too, if unmarried women should not have their heads covered; for the former are not specifically named in the regulation; let the (married) man be different from the unmarried if the woman is different from the virgin.

Of course, it is on account of the angels, he says, that the woman's head is to be covered, because the angels revolted from God on account of the daughters of men. Who, then, would contend that it is only women, that is, married women no longer virgins, that are a source of temptation?

Unless, of course, unmarried women may not present an attractive appearance and find their lovers? Rather, let us see whether it was virgins alone whom they desired when Scripture speaks of the 'daughters of men'; for it could have used the terms 'men's wives' or 'women' indifferently.

But, since it says: 'And they took to themselves wives,' it does so because they took as their wives those without husbands. Scripture would have used a different expression for those who had husbands. Now, they could be without husbands either because they were widows or virgins. So, in naming the sex in general by the term 'daughters,' he embraced species in genus.

Likewise, when he says that nature itself teaches that women should cover their heads because it has bestowed hair on woman both as a covering and an adornment, has not this same covering and this same adornment for the head been bestowed upon virgins as well? If it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair shorn, it is for a virgin then, also.

Since, then, one and the same condition is attributed to each in regard to the head, then one and the same regulation regarding the head is imposed upon them--even upon those virgins whom their tender age protects. For, right from the start she is included in the term 'woman.' Finally, Israel has the same regulation. But even if it did not, our law, amplified and supplemented, would demand an addition, imposing a veil upon virgins, also. Granted that at the moment that period of life which is unaware of its own sex should be excused. (Granted that it should retain the privilege of its innocence; for both Eve and Adam, when realization came to them, immediately covered what they had come to know.) At any rate, in the case of those who have left childhood, their age ought to confer much both by way of nature and of discipline. For women are revealed by their members and their duties. No one is a virgin from the time she is of marriageable age, since the age now in her has become the bride of its own partner, that is, time.

'But (suppose that) someone has consecrated herself to God.' Nevertheless, from this time on, she rearranges her hair and changes her whole appearance to that of a woman. Therefore, let her be earnest about the whole business and present the complete appearance of a virgin; what she conceals for God's sake let her keep completely out of sight. It is to our interest to entrust to the knowledge of God alone what is done for the sake of God, lest we bargain with men for what we hope to receive from God. Why do you expose before the eyes of God what you cover in the presence of men? Will you be more modest in the public street than in church? If it is a gift from God and 'thou hast received it, why dost thou boast,' says the Apostle, 'as if thou

hadst not received it?' Why do you condemn other women by this exhibition of yourself? Or are you inviting others to good by your vanity? Yet you are in danger of losing it yourself if you boast of it, and you force others to the same dangers. That is easily destroyed which is assumed with an inclination to vanity. Virgin, cover your head if you are a virgin, for you ought to blush for shame! If you are a virgin, avoid the gaze of many eyes. Let no one look in admiration upon your face. Let no one realize your deceit. It is praiseworthy for you to create the false impression that you are married by covering your head. Rather, it will not be a false impression you are creating; for you are the bride of Christ. To Him you have surrendered your body; act according to the instructions of your Spouse. If He bids other men's brides to cover their heads, how much more His own!

'But (suppose that) someone thinks the arrangement of his predecessor should not be changed.' Many apply their own ideas and persistence in the same to the custom established by another. Granted that virgins should not be forced to cover their heads; at any rate, those who are willing to do so should not be prevented. If some cannot deny that they are virgins, they should be content, for the sake of preserving their conscience before God, to risk their reputation. However, in regard to those who are betrothed, I can declare and avow this with more than my usual firmness: their heads should be covered from the day when they first trembled at the kiss and handclasp of their future husband. For, in these symbols they have pledged every bit of themselves--their life throughout its full development, their flesh throughout their lifetime, their spirit through their understanding (of the contract), their modesty through the exchange of a kiss, their hope through their expectation, and their mind through their willingness. For us, Rebecca stands as sufficient example; when her future husband had been pointed out to her, she covered her head with her veil merely because she knew she was to marry him.

Chapter 23

With regard to kneeling, too, prayer allows a difference in custom because of certain ones--a very few--who stay off their knees on the Sabbath, an opposing point of view which is just now strongly defending itself in the churches.

The Lord will give His grace so that either they will yield, or else maintain their own opinion without giving scandal to others. As for ourselves, according to our tradition, only on the day (which commemorates) our Lord's Resurrection should we refrain from this custom; and not only from this, but from every sign that bespeaks solicitude and every ceremony arising therefrom. This includes deferring business, lest we give any opportunity to the Devil. The same holds for the season of Pentecost, which is marked by the same joyous celebration.

But who would hesitate every day to prostrate himself before God for at least the first prayer with which we approach the light of day?

Moreover, during the periods of fasting and on the station days no prayer should be said except on the knees and with every other sign of a humble spirit. For we are not merely praying, but beseeching and offering satisfaction to God our Lord.

Chapter 24

Regarding the time for prayer there has been no regulation at all, except that we are to pray at all times and everywhere. But how can we pray everywhere when we are forbidden to pray in public? 'In every place,' He

said, which circumstance or even necessity provides. For it is not considered that when the Apostles, within the hearing of their guards, prayed in prison and sang to God they were acting contrary to the precept any more was Paul when, aboard ship, in the sight of all, he gave thanks to God.

Chapter 25

With regard to the time, the outward observance of certain hours will not be without profit. I refer to those hours of community prayer which mark the main divisions of the day, namely, Terce, Sext, and None. These, it can be found, are mentioned in holy Scripture as being more deserving of note.

It was at the third hour--Terce--when the disciples were assembled, that the Holy Spirit was infused into them for the first time.

It was at the sixth hour--Sext-- on the day when he had the vision of all creatures in the sheet that Peter had climbed to a higher spot in order to pray.

Similarly, it was at the ninth hour--None--that he went into the Temple with John where he restored the paralytic to health.

Although these incidents simply happen without any precept of observing (these hours), it would be good to establish some precedent which would make the admonition to pray a binding force to wrest us violently at times, as by a law, from our business to such an obligation so that we may offer adoration no less than three times a day at least, being debtors to the three divine Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And this, too, we read was observed by Daniel according to the rites of Israel. Of course, we are excepting the appropriate prayers which are due without any admonition at the approach of dawn and evening.

It is befitting for the faithful not to take food and not to bathe before saying a prayer. For the refreshment and food of the spirit are to be put before (the needs) of the flesh, because the things of heaven are to be put before those of the earth.

Chapter 26

When a brother has entered your home, do not let him go away without a prayer. ('You have seen,' He said, 'a brother; you have seen your Lord'). Particularly should this be observed in the case of a stranger, lest he should happen to be an angel.

But, even after one has been welcomed by his brethren, you should not attend to earthly refreshment before the heavenly. For immediately will your faith be revealed. Or how can you say, according to the precept, 'Peace to this house,' unless you exchange the kiss of peace with those who are in the house?

Chapter 27

Those who are more exact about prayer are in the habit of adding to their prayers an 'Alleluia' and psalms of such a character that those who are present may respond with the final phrases. Assuredly, the practice is excellent in every respect which by its high praise and reverence of God is competent to offer Him, as a rich victim, a prayer that has been filled out in every detail.

Chapter 28

Now, this is the spiritual victim which has set aside the earlier sacrifice. 'To what purpose do you offer me the multitude of your victims,' saith the Lord? 'I am full, I desire not holocausts of rams, and fat of fatlings, and blood of calves and goats. For who required these things at your hands?'

The Gospel teaches what God demands. 'The hour is coming,' He says, 'when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. For God is spirit,' and therefore He requires that His worshipers be of the same nature.

We are the true worshipers and true priests who, offering our prayer in the spirit, offer sacrifice in the spirit--that is, prayer--as a victim that is appropriate and acceptable to God; this is what He has demanded and what He has foreordained for Himself.

This prayer, consecrated to Him with our whole heart, nurtured by faith, prepared with truth--a prayer that is without blemish because of our innocence, clean because of our chastity--a prayer that has received the victor's crown because of our love for one another--this prayer we should bring to the altar of God with a display of good works amid the singing of psalms and hymns and it will obtain for us from God all that we ask.

Chapter 29

For what will God refuse to the prayer that comes to Him from the spirit and in truth, since this is the prayer He has exacted? What proofs of its efficacy do we read of or hear of and believe! To be sure, the prayer of old would save one from fires and wild beasts and starvation; yet, had not received its form from Christ. But how much more wrought by Christian prayer! It does not cause an angel (dew) to appear in the midst of fire, nor does it stop the mouth of lions nor take the breakfast of country folk to the hungry; it does not destroy all sense of pain by the grace that is conferred; but by patient endurance it teaches those who suffer, those who are sensitive, and those who have sorrow; by virtue it increases grace that our faith may know what comes from the Lord and understand what it suffers for the name of God.

Then, too, in the past, prayer would impose stripes, set loose the armies of the enemy, and prevent the beneficent effects of rain. But now, the prayer of justice averts the wrath of God, is on the alert for enemies, and intercedes for persecutors. What wonder if it could wrest water from the heavens, when it could even ask for fire and obtain it! Prayer alone overcomes God; but Christ has willed that it work no evil, upon it He has conferred all power for good. Therefore, it has no power except to recall the souls of the dead from the very path of death, to make the weak recover, to heal the sick, to exorcise demons, to open prison doors, to loosen the chains of the innocent. It likewise remits sins, repels temptations, stamps out persecution, consoles the fainthearted, delights the courageous, brings travelers safely home, calms the waves, stuns robbers, feeds the poor, directs the rich, raises up the fallen, sustains the falling, and supports those who are on their feet.

Prayer is the wall of faith, our shield and weapons against the foe who studies us from all sides. Hence, let us never set forth unarmed. Let us be mindful of our guard-duty by day and our vigil by night. Beneath the arms of prayer let us guard the standard of our general, and let us pray as we await the bugle call of the angel.

All the angels pray, too; every creature prays; the beasts, domestic and wild, bend their knees, and as they go forth from their stables and caves they look up to heaven with no idle gaze. Even the birds, upon rising in the morning, mount into the sky and stretch out their wings as a cross in place of hands and say something which might seem to be a prayer. What need, then, is there of further discussion of the duty of prayer? Even

our Lord Himself prayed, to whom be honor and power forever and ever.