

On Cleaving to God

St. Albert the Great, Doctor of the Church

1 Chapter 1

2 On the highest and supreme perfection of man, in so far as it is possible in this life

3 I have had the idea of writing something for myself on and about the state of complete and full
4 abstraction from everything and of cleaving freely, confidently, nakedly and firmly to God
5 alone, so as to describe it fully (in so far as it is possible in this abode of exile and pilgrimage),
6 especially since the goal of Christian perfection is the love by which we cleave to God. In fact
7 everyone is obligated, to this loving cleaving to God as necessary for salvation, in the form of
8 observing the commandments and conforming to the divine will, and the observation of the
9 commandments excludes everything that is contrary to the nature and habit of love, including
10 mortal sin. Members of religious orders have committed themselves in addition to evangelical
11 perfection, and to the things that constitute a voluntary and counselled perfection by means of
12 which one may arrive more quickly to the supreme goal which is God. The observation of these
13 additional commitments excludes as well the things that hinder the working and fervour of
14 love, and without which one can come to God, and these include the renunciation of all things,
15 of both body and mind, exactly as one's vow of profession entails. Since indeed the Lord God is
16 Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth, in other words, by
17 knowledge and love, that is, understanding and desire, stripped of all images. This is what is
18 referred to in [Matthew 6.6](#), 'When you pray, enter into your inner chamber,' that is, your inner
19 heart, 'and having closed the door,' that is of your senses, and there with a pure heart and a
20 clear conscience, and with faith unfeigned, 'pray to your Father,' in spirit and in truth, 'in
21 secret.' This can be done best when a man is disengaged and removed from everything else,

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22 and completely recollected within himself. There, in the presence of Jesus Christ, with
23 everything, in general and individually, excluded and wiped out, the mind alone turns in
24 security confidently to the Lord its God with its desire. In this way it pours itself forth into him in
25 full sincerity with its whole heart and the yearning of its love, in the most inward part of all its
26 faculties, and is plunged, enlarged, set on fire and dissolved into him.

Chapter 2

How one can cling to and seek Christ alone, disdaining everything else

29 Certainly, anyone who desires and aims to arrive at and remain in such a state must needs
30 above all have eyes and senses closed and not be inwardly involved or worried about anything,
31 nor concerned or occupied with anything, but should completely reject all such things as
32 irrelevant, harmful and dangerous. Then he should withdraw himself totally within himself and
33 not pay any attention to any object entering the mind except Jesus Christ, the wounded one,
34 alone, and so he should turn his attention with care and determination *through him into him* -
35 that is, through the man into God, through the wounds of his humanity into the inmost reality
36 of his divinity---

37 This, after all, is the hidden heavenly treasure, none other than the pearl of great price, which
38 must be sought with resolution, esteeming it in humble faithfulness, eager diligence, and calm
39 silence before all things, and preferring it even above physical comfort, or honour and renown...

Chapter 3

What the perfection of man consist of in this life

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42 Now the more the mind is concerned about thinking and dealing with what is merely lower and
43 human, the more it is separated from the experience in the intimacy of devotion of what is
44 higher and heavenly, while the more fervently the memory, desire and intellect is withdrawn
45 from what is below to what is above, the more perfect will be our prayer, and the purer our
46 contemplation, since the two directions of our interest cannot both be perfect at the same
47 time, being as different as light and darkness. He who cleaves to God is indeed translated into
48 the light, while he who clings to the world is in the dark. So the supreme perfection of man in
49 this life is to be so united to God that all his soul with all its faculties and powers are so
50 gathered into the Lord God that he becomes one spirit with him, and remembers nothing
51 except God, is aware of and recognises nothing but God, but with all his desires unified by the
52 joy of love, he rests contentedly in the enjoyment of his Maker alone. Now the image of God as
53 found in the soul consists of these three faculties, namely reason, memory and will, and so long
54 as they are not completely stamped with God, the soul is not yet deiform in accordance with
55 the initial creation of the soul. For the true pattern of the soul is God, with whom it must be
56 imprinted, like wax with a seal, and carry the mark of his impress. But this can never be
57 complete until the intellect is perfectly illuminated, according to its capacity, with the
58 knowledge of God, who is perfect truth, until the will is perfectly focused on the love of the
59 perfect good, and until the memory is fully absorbed in turning to and enjoying eternal
60 happiness, and in gladly and contentedly resting in it. And since the glory of the beatitude
61 which is achieved in our heavenly homeland consists in the complete fulfilment of these three
62 faculties, it follows that perfect initiation of them is perfection in this life.

Chapter 4

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64 How man's activity should be purely in the intellect and not in the senses

65 Happy therefore is the person who by continual removal of fantasies and images, by turning
66 within, and raising the mind to God, finally manages to dispense with the products of the
67 imagination, and by so doing works within, nakedly and simply, and with a pure understanding
68 and will, on the simplest of all objects, God. So eliminate from your mind all fantasies, objects,
69 images and shapes of all things other than God, so that, with just naked understanding, intent
70 and will, your practice will be concerned with God himself within you. For this is the end of all
71 spiritual exercises - to turn the mind to the Lord God and rest in him with a completely pure
72 understanding and a completely devoted will, without the entanglements and fantasies of the
73 imagination. This sort of exercise is not practised by fleshly organs nor by the exterior senses,
74 but by that by which one is indeed a man. For a man is precisely understanding and will. For
75 that reason, in so far as a man is still playing with the products of the imagination and the
76 senses, and holds to them, it is obvious that he has not yet emerged from the motivation and
77 limitations of his animal nature, that is of that which he shares in common with the animals. For
78 these know and feel objects by means of recognised shapes and sense impressions and no
79 more, since they do not possess the higher powers of the soul. But it is different with man, who
80 is created in the image and likeness of God with understanding, will, and free choice, through
81 which he should be directly, purely and nakedly impressed and united with God, and firmly
82 adhere to him. For this reason the Devil tries eagerly and with all his power to hinder this
83 practice so far as he can, being envious of this in man, since it is a sort of prelude and initiation
84 of eternal life. So he is always trying to draw man's mind away from the Lord God, now by
85 temptations or passions, now by superfluous worries and pointless cares, now by restlessness

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86 and distracting conversation and senseless curiosity, now by the study of subtle books,
87 irrelevant discussion, gossip and news, now by hardships, now by opposition, etc. Such matters
88 may seem trivial enough and hardly sinful, but they are a great hindrance to this holy exercise
89 and practice. Therefore, even if they may appear useful and necessary, they should be rejected,
90 whether great or small, as harmful and dangerous, and put out of our minds. Above all
91 therefore it is necessary that things heard, seen, done and said, and other such things, must be
92 received without adding things from the imagination, without mental associations and without
93 emotional involvement, and one should not let past or future associations, implications or
94 constructs of the imagination form and grow. For when constructs of the imagination are not
95 allowed to enter the memory and mind, a man is not hindered, whether he be engaged in
96 prayer, meditation, or reciting psalms, or in any other practice or spiritual exercise, nor will they
97 recur again. So commit yourself confidently and without hesitation, all that you are, and
98 everything else, individually and in general, to the unfailing and totally reliable providence of
99 God, in silence and in peace, and he will fight for you...

100 **Chapter 5**

101 **On purity of heart which is to be sought above all things**

102 If your desire and aim is to reach the destination of the path and home of true happiness, of
103 grace and glory, by a straight and safe way then earnestly apply your mind to seek constant
104 purity of heart, clarity of mind and calm of the senses. Gather up your heart's desire and fix it
105 continually on the Lord God above. To do so you must withdraw yourself so far as you can from
106 friends and from everyone else, and from the activities that hinder you from such a purpose.

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107 Grasp every opportunity when you can find the place, time and means to devote yourself to
108 silence and contemplation, and gathering the secret fruits of silence, so that you can escape the
109 shipwreck of this present age and avoid the restless agitation of the noisy world. For this reason
110 apply yourself at all times to purity, clarity and peace of heart above all things, so that, so far as
111 possible, you can keep the doors of your heart resolutely barred to the forms and images of the
112 physical senses and worldly imaginations by shutting off the doors of the physical senses and
113 turning within yourself. After all, purity of heart is recognised as the most important thing
114 among all spiritual practices, as its final aim, and the reward for all the labours that a spiritual-
115 minded person and true religious may undertake in this life. For this reason you should with all
116 care, intelligence and effort free your heart, senses and desires from everything that can hinder
117 their liberty, and above all from everything in the world that could possibly bind and overcome
118 you. So struggle in this way to draw together all the distractions of your heart and desires of
119 your mind into one true, simple and supreme good, to keep them gathered within yourself in
120 one place, and by this means to remain always joined to things divine and to God in your mind,
121 to abandon the unreliable things of earth, and be able to translate your mind continually to the
122 things above within yourself in Jesus Christ. To which end, if you have begun to strip and purify
123 yourself of images and imaginations and to simplify and still your heart and mind in the Lord
124 God so that you can draw and taste the well of divine grace in everything within yourself, and
125 so that you are united to God in your mind by a good will, then this itself is enough for you in
126 place of all study and reading of holy scripture, and as demonstration of love of God and
127 neighbour, as devotion itself testifies...

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128 You must always keep the eye of your mind clear and still. You must guard your understanding
129 from daydreams and thoughts of earthly things. You must completely free the inclination of
130 your will from worldly cares and cling with all your being to the supreme true good with fervent
131 love. You must keep your memory always lifted up and firmly anchored in that same true
132 supreme good and only uncreated reality. In just this way your whole mind gathered up with all
133 its powers and faculties in God, may become one spirit with him, in whom the supreme
134 perfection of life is known to consist. This is the true union of spirit and love by which a man is
135 made compliant to all the impulses of the supreme and eternal will, so that he becomes by
136 grace what God is by nature. At the same time it should be noted that in the very moment in
137 which one is able, by God's help, to overcome one's own will, that is to cast away from oneself
138 inordinate love or strong feeling, in other words so as to dare simply to trust God completely in
139 all one's needs, by this very fact one becomes so pleasing to God that his grace is imparted to
140 one, and through that very grace one experiences that true love and devotion which drives out
141 all uncertainty and fear and has full confidence in God. What is more, there can be no greater
142 happiness than to place one's all in him who lacks nothing...

Chapter 7

How the heart should be gathered within itself

145 What is more, as is said in the book *On the Spirit and the Soul* (of St. Augustine), to ascend to
146 God means to enter into oneself. He who entering within and penetrating his inmost nature,
147 goes beyond himself, he is truly ascending to God. So let us withdraw our hearts from the
148 distractions of this world, and recall them to the inner joys, so that we can establish them to

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149 some degree in the light of divine contemplation. For this is the life and peace of our hearts - to
150 be established by intent in the love of God, and to be sweetly remade by his comforting...

151 It is therefore right and necessary for the mind to raise itself above itself and everything
152 created by the abandonment of everything, with humble reverence and great trust,...

153 He cannot be experienced by any of the senses, but is completely desirable to my will. He is
154 moreover not discernable, but is perfectly desirable to my inner affections. He cannot be
155 comprehended, but can be loved in his fullness with a pure heart, for he is above all lovable and
156 desirable, and of infinite goodness and perfection. And then a darkness comes over the mind
157 and it is raised up into itself and penetrates even deeper. And the more inward-looking the
158 desire for it, the more powerful this means of ascent to the mysterious contemplation of the
159 holy Trinity in Unity and Unity in Trinity in Jesus Christ is, and the more interior the yearning,
160 the more productive it is. Certainly in matters spiritual the more inward they are the greater
161 they are as spiritual experiences. For this reason, never give up, never stop until you have
162 tasted some pledge, as I might say, or foretaste of the future full experience, ...

163 Take as a pattern of this the example of those climbing an ordinary mountain. If our mind is
164 involved by its desires in the things which are going on below, it is immediately carried away by
165 endless distractions and side tracks, and being to some extent divided against itself, is
166 weakened and as it were scattered amongst the things which it seeks with its desires. The result
167 is ceaseless movement, travel without an arrival, and labour without rest. If on the other hand
168 our heart and mind can withdraw itself by its desire and love from the infinite distraction below
169 of the things beneath it, can learn to be with itself, abandoning these lower things and

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170 gathering itself within itself into the one unchanging and satisfying good, and can hold to it
171 inseparably with its will, it is correspondingly more and more gathered together in one and
172 strengthened, as it is raised up by knowledge and desire. In this way it will become accustomed
173 to the true supreme good within itself until it will be made completely immovable and arrive
174 securely at that true life which is the Lord God himself, so that it can now rest in him within and
175 in peace without any changeability or vicissitude of time, perfectly gathered within itself in the
176 secret divine abode in Christ Jesus who is the way for those who come to him, the truth and
177 life.

178 Chapter 8

179 How a religious man should commit himself to God in all circumstances whatsoever

180 ... Above all it is important for you to keep your mind bare - without imaginations and images
181 and free of any sort of entanglement, so that you are not concerned about either the world,
182 friends, prosperity or adversity, or anything present, past or future, whether in yourself or in
183 others - not even your own sins. But consider yourself with a certain pure simplicity to be alone
184 with God outside the world, and as if your mind were already in eternity and separated from
185 the body so that it will certainly not bother about worldly things or be concerned about the
186 state of the world, about peace or war, about good weather or rain, or about anything at all in
187 this world, but with complete docility will turn to God alone, be empty for him and cleave to
188 him. So now in this way ignore your body and all created things, present or future, and direct
189 the high point of your mind and spirit directly, as best you can, naked and unencumbered on
190 the uncreated light. And let your spirit be cleansed in this way from all imaginations, coverings

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191 and things obscuring its vision, like an angel (not) tied to a body, who is not hindered by the
192 works of the flesh nor tangled in vain and wandering thoughts. Let your spirit therefore arm
193 itself against all temptations, vexations, and injuries so that it can persevere steadily in God
194 when attacked by either face of fortune. So that when some inner disturbance or boredom or
195 mental confusion come you will not be indignant or dejected because of it, nor run back to
196 vocal prayers or other forms of consolation, but only to lift yourself up in your intellect by a
197 good will to hold on to God with your mind whether the natural inclination of the body wills it
198 or not. The religious-minded soul should be so united to God and should have or render its will
199 so conformed to the divine will that it is not occupied with any created thing or cling to it any
200 more than before it was created, and as if nothing existed except God and the soul itself. And in
201 this way it should accept everything confidently and equally, in general and in particular, from
202 the hand of divine providence, agreeing in everything with the Lord in patience, peace and
203 silence. The thing is that the most important thing of all for a spiritual life is to strip the mind of
204 all imaginations so that one can be united in one's intellect to God by a good will, and
205 conformed to him. Besides, nothing will then be intermediary between you and God. This is
206 obvious, since nothing external will stand between you when by the vow of voluntary poverty
207 you will have removed the possession of anything whatsoever, and by the vow of chastity you
208 will have abandoned your body, and by obedience you will have given up your will and your
209 soul itself. And in this way nothing will be left to stand between you and God. That you are a
210 religious person is indicated by your profession, your state, and now your habit and tonsure and
211 such like, but whether you are only a religious in appearance or a real one, you will find out.
212 Bear in mind therefore how greatly you have fallen away and sin against the Lord your God and

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213 all his justice if you behave otherwise and cling with your will and love to what is created rather
214 than to the Creator himself, putting the created before the Creator.

Chapter 10

216 **That one should not be concerned about feeling tangible devotion so much as about cleaving**
217 **to God with one's will**

218 Furthermore you should not be much concerned about tangible devotion, the experience of
219 sweetness or tears, but rather that you should be mentally united with God within yourself by a
220 good will in your intellect. For what pleases God above everything is a mind free from
221 imaginations, that is images, ideas and the representations of created things. It befits a monk to
222 be indifferent to everything created so that he can turn easily and barely to God alone within
223 himself, be empty for him and cleave to him. For this reason deny yourself so that you can
224 follow Christ, the Lord your God, in nakedness, who was himself poor, obedient, chaste, humble
225 and suffering, and in whose life and death many were scandalised, as is clear from the Gospel
226 accounts. After all, a soul which is separated from the body pays no attention to what is done
227 to its abandoned body - whether it is burned, hanged, or reviled, and is in no way saddened by
228 the afflictions imposed on the body, but thinks only of the Now of eternity and the One Thing
229 which the Lord calls necessary in the Gospel. So you too should treat your body as if you were
230 no longer in the body, but think always of the eternity of your soul in God, and direct your
231 thoughts carefully to that One Thing of which Christ said, *For one thing is necessary.* ([Luke](#)
232 [10.42](#)) You will experience because of it great grace, helping you towards the acquisition of
233 nakedness of mind and simplicity of heart. Indeed this One Thing is very much present with you

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234 if you have made yourself bare of imaginations and all other entanglements, and you will soon
235 experience that this is so - namely when you can be empty and cleave to God with a naked and
236 resolute mind. In this way you will remain unconquered in whatever may be inflicted on you,
237 like the holy martyrs, fathers, the elect, and indeed all the saints who despised everything and
238 only thought of their souls' security and eternity in God. Armed in this way within, and united
239 to God through a good will, they spurned everything of the world as if their souls were already
240 separated from their bodies. Consider from this how much a good will united with God is
241 capable of, when by means of its pressing towards God the soul is effectively separated from
242 the body in spirit and looks on its outward man as it were from a distance, and as not belonging
243 to it. In this way it despises everything that is inflicted on itself or on its flesh as if they were
244 happening to someone else, or not to a human being at all. For *He that is united with the Lord is*
245 *one Spirit, ([1 Corinthians 6.17](#))* that is with him. So you should never dare to think or imagine
246 anything before the Lord your God that you would blush to be heard or seen in before men,
247 since your respect for God should be even greater than for them. It is a matter of justice in fact
248 that all your thoughts and thinking should be raised to God alone, and the highest point of your
249 mind should only be directed to him as if nothing existed but him, and holding to him may
250 enjoy the perfect beginning of the life to come.

251 **Chapter 11**

252 **How one should resist temptations and bear trials**

253 Now there is no one who approaches God with a true and upright heart who is not tested by
254 hardships and temptations. So in all these temptations see to it that even if you feel them, you

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255 do not consent to them, but bear them patiently and calmly with humility and long suffering.
256 Even if they are blasphemies and sordid, hold firmly on to this fact in everything, that you can
257 do nothing better or more effective against them than to consider all this sort of fantasy as a
258 nothing. Even if they are the most vile, sordid and horrible blasphemies, simply take no notice
259 of them, count them as nothing and despise them. Don't look on them as yours or allow
260 yourself to make them a matter of conscience. The enemy will certainly take flight if you treat
261 him and his company with contempt in this way. He is very proud and cannot bear to be
262 despised and spurned. So the best remedy is to completely ignore all such temptations, like
263 flies flying around in front of your eyes against your will. The servant of Jesus Christ must see to
264 it that he is not so easily forced to withdraw from the face of the Lord and to be annoyed,
265 murmur and complain over the nuisance of a single fly, that is, a trivial temptation, suspicion,
266 sadness, distraction, need or any such adversity, when they can all be put to flight with no more
267 than the hand of a good will directed up to God. After all, through a good will a man has God as
268 his defender, and the holy angels as his guardians and protectors. What is more, any
269 temptation can be overcome by a good will too, like a fly driven away from a bald head by one's
270 hand. So *peace is for men of good will*. Indeed we can offer God nothing more valuable than a
271 good will, since a good will in the soul is the source of all good things, and the mother of all
272 virtues. If any one is beginning to possess that good will, he undoubtedly has what is necessary
273 for leading a good life. For if you want what is good, but cannot do it, God will make good the
274 deed. For it is in accordance with this eternal law that God has established with irrevocable
275 firmness that deserts should be a matter of the will, whether in bliss or torment, reward or
276 punishment. Love itself is a great will to serve God, a sweet desire to please God, and a fervent

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277 wish to experience God. What is more, to be tempted is not a sin, but the opportunity for
278 exercising virtue, so that temptation can be greatly to a man's benefit, since it is held that *the*
279 *whole of a man's life on earth is a testing.* ([Job 7.1](#))

Chapter 13

The nature and value of prayer, and how the heart should be recollected within itself

281 Besides this, since we are incapable of ourselves for this and for any other good action
282 whatsoever, and since we can of ourselves offer nothing to the Lord God (from whom all good
283 things come) which is not his already, with this one exception, as he has deigned to show us
284 both by his own blessed mouth as well as by his example, that we should turn to him in all
285 circumstances and occasions as guilty, wretched, poor, beggarly, weak, helpless, subject
286 servants and sons. And that we should beseech him and lay before him with complete
287 confidence the dangers that are besetting us on all sides, completely grief-stricken in ourselves,
288 in humble prostration of mind, in fear and love, and with recollected, composed, mature, true
289 and naked, shamefaced affection, with great yearning and determination, and in groaning of
290 heart and sincerity of mind. Thus we commit and offer ourselves up to him freely, securely and
291 nakedly, fully and in everything that is ours, holding nothing back to ourselves, in such a
292 complete and final way, that the same is fulfilled in us as in our blessed father Isaac, who
293 speaks of this very type of prayer, saying, *Then we shall be one in God, and the Lord God will be*
294 *all in all and alone in us when his own perfect love, with which he first loved us, will have*

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296 *become the disposition of our own hearts too*¹. This will come about when all our love, all our
297 desire, all our concern, all our efforts, in fact everything we think, everything we see, speak and
298 even hope will be God, and that unity which now is of the Father with the Son, and of the Son
299 with the Father, will be poured into our own heart and mind as well, in such a way that just as
300 he loves us with sincere and indissoluble love we too will be joined to him with eternal and
301 inseparable affection. In other words we shall be united with him in such a way that whatever
302 we hope, and whatever we say or pray will be God. This therefore should be the aim, this the
303 concern and goal of a spiritual man - to be worthy to possess the image of future bliss in this
304 corruptible body, and in a certain measure experience in advance how the foretaste of that
305 heavenly bliss, eternal life and glory begins in this world. This, as I say, is the goal of all
306 perfection, that his purified mind should be daily raised up from all bodily objects to spiritual
307 things until all his mental activity and all his heart's desire become one unbroken prayer. So the
308 mind must abandon the dregs of earth and press on towards to God, on whom alone should be
309 fixed the desire of a spiritual man, for whom the least separation from that summum bonum² is
310 to be considered a living death and dreadful loss. Then, when the requisite peace has been
311 established in his mind, when it is free from attachment to any carnal passion, and clings firmly
312 in intention to that one supreme good, the Apostle's sayings are fulfilled, *Pray without*
313 *ceasing*, ([1 Thessalonians 5.17](#)) and, *Pray in every place lifting up pure hands without anger or*
314 *dispute*. ([1 Timothy 2.8](#)) For when the power of the mind is absorbed in this purity, so to speak,
315 and is transformed from an earthly nature into the spiritual or angelic likeness, whatever it

¹ I was not able to find any Biblical (Old Testament) Scripture that was close to this. Isaac is not in the New Testament.

² Greatest or Supreme Good

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316 receives into itself, whatever it is occupied with, whatever it is doing, it will be pure and sincere
317 prayer. In this way, if you continue all the time in the way we have described from the
318 beginning, it will become as easy and clear for you to remain in contemplation in your inward
319 and recollected state, as to live in the natural state.

Chapter 14

That we should seek the verdict of our conscience in every decision

322 While we should strive for spiritual perfection of mind, purity and peace in God, it will be found
323 to be not a little beneficial to this that we should return quietly into the inner secret place of
324 the mind in the face of everything said, thought or done to us. There, withdrawn from
325 everything else and completely recollected within ourselves, we can place ourselves in the
326 knowledge of the truth before us and undoubtedly discover and understand that it does us
327 absolutely no good, and rather the contrary, when we are praised or honoured by others while
328 we recognise by the knowledge of the truth about ourselves within that we are blameworthy
329 and guilty. And just as nothing is any help if externally people praise someone if his conscience
330 internally accuses him, in the same way on the contrary it does a man no harm to be despised,
331 maligned and persecuted when he remains internally just as innocent, blameless and without
332 fault. On the contrary he has all the more good reason to rejoice in the Lord with patience, in
333 peace and silence. After all no adversity can do any harm where evil is not in control, and just as
334 no evil goes unpunished, so no good goes unrewarded. Nor should we wish a reward with
335 hypocrites or expect and receive profit from men, but from the Lord God alone, not in the
336 present, but in the future, and not in fleeting time, but in eternity. It is clear therefore that

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337 nothing is greater, and nothing better than to enter into the inner secret place of the mind
338 always and in every tribulation and occurrence, and there to call upon the Lord Jesus Christ
339 himself, our helper in temptations and tribulations, and to humble ourselves there by
340 confession of sin, and praise God and Father himself, the giver of correction and the giver of
341 consolation. Above all one should accept everything, in general and individually, in oneself or in
342 others, agreeable or disagreeable, with a prompt and confident spirit, as coming from the hand
343 of his infallible Providence or the order he has arranged. This attitude will lead to the
344 forgiveness of our sins, the deliverance from bitterness, the enjoyment of joy and security, the
345 outpouring of grace and mercy, introduction and establishment into a close relationship with
346 God, abundant enjoyment of his presence, and firm cleaving and union with him. But let us not
347 copy those who from hypocrisy and Pharisaism want to appear better and different from what
348 they are, and to make a better impression and appearance before men of being something
349 special, than they know in truth inside to be so. For it is absolute madness to seek, hunger for
350 and aspire to human praise or renown, from oneself or others, when one is in spite of it all
351 inwardly full of cravings and serious faults. And certainly the good things we have talked about
352 above will flee him who chases such vanities, and he will merely bring disgrace on himself. So
353 always keep your faults and your own incapacity before your eyes, and know yourself, so that
354 you can be humbled and not try to avoid being held as the lowest, vilest and most abject scum
355 by everyone when you are aware of the grave sins and serious faults in yourself. For which
356 reason consider yourself compared to others as dross to gold, weeds to the wheat, chaff to the
357 grain, a wolf to the sheep, Satan to the children of God. And do not seek to be respected by
358 others and given precedence before others, but rather flee with all your heart and soul the

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359 poison of this disease, the venom of praise, the concern for boasting and vanity, lest, as the
360 prophet says, *The wicked is praised in his own heart's desires*, ([Psalm 10.4](#)) and Isaiah, *They who*
361 *speak good of you, deceive you and destroy the way of your feet*, ([Isaiah 3.12](#)) and the Lord in
362 Luke, *Woe to you when men speak well of you!* ([Luke 6.26](#)).

363 **Chapter 15**

364 **How contempt of himself can be produced in a man, and how useful it is**

365 Furthermore the more a man recognises his own insignificance, the more he fully and the more
366 clearly he becomes aware to the divine majesty, and the more a man is low in his own eyes for
367 the sake of God, the truth and justice, the more precious he is in the eyes of God. For this
368 reason let us strive with the whole strength of our desire to consider ourselves the lowest of all
369 and to consider ourselves unworthy of any favour. We should strive to be displeasing to
370 ourselves and pleasing only to God, while regarded as low and unworthy of consideration by
371 others. Above all not to be moved by difficulties, afflictions and insults, and not to be upset by
372 those who inflict such things on us, or entertain evil thoughts against them or be indignant, but
373 to believe steadfastly and with equanimity³ in all insults, slights, blows and dereliction that it is
374 only appropriate. For in truth he who is really penitent and grieving before God hates to be
375 honoured and loved by all, and does not try to manipulate things so as to avoid being to some
376 degree hated, neglected and despised right to the end, so that he can be truly humbled and
377 sincerely cleave to God alone with a pure heart. Indeed, for loving God alone and hating oneself
378 more than anything, and desiring to be despised by others we do not require external work or

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379 physical strength, but rather physical solitude, the labour of the heart, and peace of mind so
380 that, as it were, by labour of the heart and the disposition of the inmost mind, one may rise up,
381 casting off from oneself lower and physical things, and so soar up, ascending to things heavenly
382 and divine. For indeed in so doing we are changed into God, and this will especially take place
383 when without judgement, condemnation or contempt of our neighbour, we choose rather to
384 be considered as scum and a disgrace by everyone and to be despised as unclean filth by
385 everyone than to experience all sorts of different delicacies or to be honoured and exalted by
386 men, or enjoy all sorts of transitory physical forms of well-being and comfort...
387 so that we can be pleasing to God alone, love him alone, and cleave to him alone... So from now
388 on it should not be your aim to seek enjoyment but to truly mourn with all your heart. For that
389 reason, if you do not mourn, mourn for that, while if you do mourn, mourn especially that you
390 have brought the cause of your pain on yourself by your own great offences and infinite sins.
391 For just as a condemned man on receiving his sentence does not concern himself about the
392 seating of the spectators, so he who laments and is genuinely mourning is not interested in
393 pleasures, resentment, fame or wrongs or things of that sort. And just as townsfolk and
394 contemned criminals have different accommodation, the state and position of those who are
395 mourning and have committed offences deserving punishment ought to be completely
396 different from those who are innocent and under no obligation. Otherwise there would be no
397 difference between the guilty and the innocent in matters of punishment and reward. The
398 result would be great dereliction of duty, and evil behaviour would have more freedom than
399 goodness. So everything must be renounced, everything despised, everything rejected and
400 avoided, so that we can lay a firm foundation of penitent grieving. Then, loving Jesus Christ in

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401 reality, yearning for him, and holding him in one's heart, in reality experiencing pain for one's
402 sins and faults, in reality seeking to know the coming Kingdom, while with true faith bearing in
403 mind the reality of the torments and eternal judgement, and firmly and fully taking up the
404 recollection and fear of one's own death, we should be aware of nothing else, and not care or
405 be worried about anything else. For that reason, he who hurries towards the blessed state of
406 impassibility and towards God should reckon himself to have experienced great loss every day
407 that he is not insulted and despised. Impassibility after all is freedom from vices and passions
408 and purity of heart and the adornment of all virtues. So consider yourself as already dead since
409 there is no doubt that you have got to die. And as a final thought let this be the test for you of
410 whether any thought, word or action of yours is of God, whether you are made more humble
411 because of it, more inward and more recollected and established in God. If you find it is
412 otherwise in yourself, you should be suspicious about it, whether it be not according to God,
413 unacceptable to you and not to your benefit.

414 **Chapter 16**

415 **How God's Providence includes everything**

416 ... Indeed if in doing this our faith in God is weak and slow to rise to God on account of the
417 multitude and magnitude of our sins, we should remember this, that everything is possible with
418 God, and that what he wishes is bound to take place, while what he does not wish cannot
419 possibly happen, and that it is as easy for him to forgive and cancel countless sins, however
420 enormous, as to do it with a single sin. While a sinner cannot, of himself, rise from innumerable
421 sins, and free and absolve himself from them, and not even from just one sin. For we are unable

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422 not only to do, but even to think anything good, of ourselves, but this is from God. Nonetheless
423 it is much more dangerous, other things being equal, to be ensnared in many sins than in a
424 single one, since no sin is left unpunished, and every mortal sin deserves infinite punishment,
425 and this by the rigour of justice since any such sin is against God who is indeed worthy of
426 infinite reverence, dignity and honour. What is more, according to the Apostle Paul, *God knows*
427 *his own* ([2 Timothy 2.19](#)), and it is impossible for any of them to perish by the whirlwinds and
428 floods of any error, scandal, schism, persecution, heresy, tribulation, adversity or temptation,
429 for he has foreseen from eternity and unchangeably the number of his elect and the extent of
430 their merits in such a way that everything good and bad, what is theirs and not theirs,
431 prosperity and adversity, all work together for them for good, except indeed that they appear
432 even more glorious and commendable in adversity. So let us commit everything with full
433 assurance, in general and in particular, confidently and unhesitatingly to divine providence, by
434 which God permits however much and whatever sort of evil to happen to us. For it is good and
435 will lead to good, since he permits it to exist, and it would not exist unless he permitted it to
436 exist. Nor could it exist otherwise or more than he permits it to, because he knows how to, has
437 the power to, and wills to change and convert it into something better. For just as it is by
438 operation of providence that all good things exist, so it is by its permission that all bad things
439 are changed into good. In this way in fact God's power, wisdom and mercy are shown forth
440 through Christ our redeemer - his mercy and his justice, the power of grace and the weakness
441 of nature, the beauty of everything in the association of opposites, the approval of the good,
442 and the malice and punishment of the wicked. Similarly the contrition of the converted sinner,
443 his confession, and penitence, the kindness of God, piety, charity and his praise and goodness

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444 (all show forth God's power and wisdom). Yet it does not always lead to good in those who do
445 ill, but, as is usually the case, to great danger and extreme evil, in the loss, that is, of grace and
446 their place in glory, and in the incurring of guilt and punishment, sometimes even eternal
447 punishment, from which may Jesus Christ defend us. Amen.