DIRECTORIUM ASCETICUM;

OR,

GUIDE TO THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.
THE
DIRECTORIUM ASCETICUM;
OR,
GUIDE TO THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

BY
JOHN BAPTIST SCARAMELLI, S.J.

Originally Published in Italian. Translated and Edited at St. Beuno's College, North Wales.

WITH PREFACE
BY
HIS EMINENCE THE MOST REV.
CARDINAL ARCHBISHOP MANNING.
COLL. CHRISTI REGIS S.J.
BIB. MAJOR
TORONTO
Fifth Edition.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.
VOL. I.

R. & T. WASHBOURNE,
4 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON.
BENZIGER BROS.: NEW YORK, CINCINNATI AND CHICAGO.
1902.
NOTICE BY THE EDITOR.

John Baptist Scaramelli was born at Rome in the year 1688. Having entered the Society of Jesus, he was employed for more than thirty years in the apostolic ministry, and was everywhere distinguished for his great zeal, and for the profound knowledge he displayed of the ways of the interior life. He died at Macerata in 1752.

The works of Father Scaramelli on spiritual subjects are widely known, and maintain the reputation which their author enjoyed during his life. In particular, his "Direttorio Ascetico" has been more than once reprinted in Italian within the last few years, and has been translated into French, German, and Spanish. The present is the first English version that has been published of this celebrated work.

The "Guide to the Spiritual Life," as it is called in this edition, although more immediately addressed to Directors of souls, may be used with advantage by all Christians who aspire to perfection. The author himself makes this remark in his Preface or Introduction. It is essentially a practical work, being intended to supply a defect which the author observed in the treatises of previous writers.
vi

NOTICE BY THE EDITOR.

These had indeed delivered excellent maxims of perfection, but not in such a form as to be immediately applicable to the wants of individual souls. Father Scaramelli has not failed to set forth the scientific or theological basis of each branch of his subject, following in the main the doctrine of St. Thomas; but he has always kept before his eyes the needs of those priests who desire to have some assistance in directing souls called to something higher than the ordinary Christian life.

One of the objects carefully kept in view in the preparation of this edition, has been to preserve the theological exactness of the author. But fidelity to the original, even in the minutest details, has been studied throughout. Many reasons, it is true, suggested themselves, why numerous, if not important, alterations should be made. Scaramelli's writings partake of the peculiarities—it may not be too bold to say the defects—of the age in which he lived. Some of the stories, told according to the custom of the spiritual writers of his time, in illustration of the principles laid down, are taken from authors whose want of criticism is as undeniable as their piety is beyond dispute. Anecdotes, too, are related with a diffuseness of style popular when Scaramelli lived, and useful enough to fix his teaching in the minds of general readers, but which, owing to the hurry and high pressure of modern life, sometimes severely tries the patience of those who have little leisure. Again, the references given to Fathers of the Church and other writers are often inexact, and works are attributed to persons who are now universally considered not to be their authors. The editions, also, of St. Thomas which the Jesuit Father had at his command, were such only as the poverty
NOTICE BY THE EDITOR.

of the house or College of the Society in which he happened to reside could place at his disposal. Hence his quotations from the Angelic Doctor—as he intimates in his Preface—are clumsily given: double references being occasionally made when one would have sufficed.

For these reasons it was at first intended to omit or abbreviate some of the stories, to give some critical remarks in foot-notes concerning spurious quotations, and to cite St. Thomas from the most approved editions. It has, however, on maturer consideration, been thought better and more honest to present Scaramelli's work in the form in which it issued from his hands, so that all who cannot read the Italian original may know it in the English translation, as it is, with all its excellences and all its faults.
PREFACE.

BY THE ARCHBISHOP OF WESTMINSTER
(NOW CARDINAL MANNING).

Of all the names which the Son of God assumed with our Manhood, none is more full of love, patience, and tenderness than the name of the "Good Shepherd." It implies more than Kinsman, Brother, or Friend. These express His relations of consanguinity and love to us. But the name of "Shepherd" implies care, oversight, guidance, and protection. And the "Good Shepherd" implies a special and singular generosity and fidelity in this office of divine charity. The Shepherd is the Physician also of His Flock. He provides it not only with pasture, but with healing. Such He intends His Pastors to be to His universal Flock. Our Divine Lord, by the great commission given to St. Peter in the words, Feed My Sheep—feed My Lambs, invested him also with the office of the "Good Shepherd." He made St. Peter the Pastor of the World; and intrusted all redeemed souls to his care. This charge gave to the Apostle two divine gifts,—the power of jurisdiction and the grace of the pastoral office; that is to say, the cure of souls and the science for its discharge. From this one
Preface.

Supreme Fountain the pastoral office and the cure of souls spreads throughout the Church. It is the highest trust ever committed to man. The supreme power of civil government—including the power of life and death—is of an order inferior to the spiritual government of souls and to the power of the Keys. To bear authority over souls; to be guides of the intelligence, directors of the conscience, supporters of the will of men; to have the power of binding and of loosing, and, to that end, of discerning and of judging the state of souls before God; to sit in the tribunal of Penance, and, as in God’s stead, to know the inmost heart; all this constitutes a charge which transcends all authority on earth, as the soul in worth transcends the body, as eternity transcends time. Such, then, is the pastoral office. It is laid first and in chief upon the Successor of Peter, and through him upon the Bishops of the Church: by these it is distributed to such as, under them, have the cure of souls; that is, the responsibility to give account of them by number and by name to the Great Shepherd of the Christian Fold. It is of faith that, for the discharge of such an office, a proportionate grace is given, of light, and of charity. Our Lord has provided for the Pastors of the Church a special discernment and direction. Besides the sacramental grace of the Priesthood, which is ever fresh and present in all the duties and trials of the sacerdotal life, there is a gratia statús for those who, together with the Priesthood, are invested with pastoral care. This grace contains a special exercise of the Seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost, by which the intellect and the will are made perfect: for a Pastor has need above all men of holy fear, piety, and fortitude in the will; and for the intelligence, of
the speculative gifts of intellect and wisdom, and of the practical gifts of knowledge and of counsel. It is certain that all grace proportionate to the difficulty and the danger of the office of watching over the souls of men, is given to us by our Divine Master. But this grace demands of us a diligent and conscientious cultivation. We must know the Science of God, His laws and operations in the spiritual life of souls. St. Gregory begins his book on the Pastoral Care by these words:—“No one presumes to teach an art unless he have first learned it by intent application. It is a great temerity, for Pastors who are unskilled, to assume the pastoral office, for the government of souls is the Art of Arts.”*

The Physician and the Priest who venture to deal with the diseases of body or soul without adequate knowledge, sin mortally. The words “Medice, cura te ipsum” ought to be always in our ears. This may well inspire those who have the care of souls with fear and self-mistrust. How shall they heal the maladies of others, if they do not know how to discern the symptoms of disease, nor what remedies to apply? In the endless variety of spiritual ailments, it needs a practical discernment to distinguish between leprosy and leprosy. But a Pastor has a harder task than this. He must be the guide and counsellor of those whom the Spirit of God is calling to perfection. How shall he fulfil this duty if he be not, both by science and by experience, able to discern the workings and the will of the Spirit of God? For all this, not only study and science but an interior spirit and a practised touch are needed. It is a fearful thought, that we are to some an odour of life

unto life, and to others an odour of death unto death,* and for these things who is sufficient? But sufficiency, as the Apostle says, is of God. He that had compassion on the multitude because they had nothing to eat, still stands in the wilderness, breaking, blessing, and multiplying the few loaves which we in our scantiness bring to Him. But He makes them enough and to spare. The bread of life never fails, and in the hands of the simplest Pastor, who seeks it from his Master's hand, all that is needed for the life, health, perfection of His flock, is given abundantly. The "Good Shepherd" gives to His Pastors all that His sheep require. The humblest Pastor, if he keep close to the Great Shepherd of the sheep, shall never fail to give all that his flock can need.

The science by which we are directed in this Art of Arts, has three chief divisions,—Moral, Ascetical, and Mystical. Moral Theology is the exposition of the Divine Law, in its relation to conscience. Ascetical Theology treats of the earlier stages of spiritual life, namely, penance and mortification; and Mystical Theology, of the higher and more perfect, that is, union with God by prayer and contemplation. This threefold division is rough, and not precise; for in some degree all these three parts of Theology apply to all the stages, and are mingled together in direction at every period of the spiritual life. Nevertheless, they have each a special application, and a peculiar ascendancy in the three successive states of the soul, which may be described as its purification, illumination, and union with God. Scaramelli's Ascetical and Mystical Directories treat, with great clearness and detail, of the

* 2 Cor. ii. 16.
higher stages of the spiritual life; yet they are of a kind so practical, as to be a benefit to all persons who will diligently study them. They are admirably fitted for Seminaries, and once well mastered, they will supply our pastoral clergy with a copious store of rules, maxims, and counsels, for the instruction and guidance of their flocks.

It only remains to give thanks to those members of St. Beuno's College who have helped to translate the Ascetical Directory, especially to the Rev. Father Eyre, to whose careful editing the present volume owes its completeness and accuracy; and heartily to commend this book to our Seminaries, and to our Clergy at large.

Henry Edward,
Archbishop of Westminster.

October 3, 1869.
CONTENTS OF VOL. I.

INTRODUCTION ........................................... PAGE 1

SECTION I.
MEANS TO ARRIVE AT CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

ARTICLE I.
ESSENTIAL PERFECTION, AND INSTRUMENTAL PERFECTION—
IN WHAT THEY CONSIST—VARIOUS DEGREES OF CHRISTIAN
PERFECTION—DIVISION OF THE WORK.

CHAPTER I.
THE ESSENCE OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION CONSISTS IN CHARITY
TOWARDS GOD AND OUR NEIGHBOUR .................... 7

CHAPTER II.
CHRISTIAN PERFECTION IS CONSTITUTED BY THE MORAL VIRTUES
AND THE COUNSELS; WHENCE IS DEDUCED THE ORDER AND
ARRANGEMENT OF THE WORK ............................ 16

CHAPTER III.
THE PERFECTION OF CHRISTIAN LIFE WHICH HAS BEEN DESCRIBED
IS DIVIDED INTO THREE GRADES—THESE FORM THREE STATES
OF PERFECTION—FULLER LIGHT IS THROWN UPON THE DOCTRINE
AND DIVISION GIVEN IN THE PRECEDING CHAPTERS 29
CONTENTS.

CHAPTER IV.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS TO DIRECTORS ON THE SUBJECT OF THE PRECEDING CHAPTERS 35

ARTICLE II.

THE DESIRE OF PERFECTION IS THE FIRST MEANS FOR ITS ATTAINMENT; AND THIS DESIRE MUST NEVER RELAX, BUT TEND ALWAYS TO HIGHER PERFECTION—THE MOTIVES WHICH EXCITE AND INCREASE SUCH DESIRE.

CHAPTER I.

THAT THE DESIRE OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION IS THE MOST NECESSARY MEANS FOR ITS ATTAINMENT 40

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST MOTIVE TO EXCITE A DESIRE OF PERFECTION—THE OBLIGATION ALL ARE UNDER TO BECOME PERFECT 45

CHAPTER III.

SECOND MOTIVE TO INCITE DESIRES OF PERFECTION—THE NECESSITY OF STRIVING AFTER IT, AS A MEANS NOT ONLY OF PERFECTION, BUT ALSO OF SALVATION 54

CHAPTER IV.

DESIRE OF PERFECTION NECESSARY FOR ITS ATTAINMENT—WE MUST NEVER RELAX, BUT STRIVE CONSTANTLY AFTER HIGHER PERFECTION 60

CHAPTER V.

THE MEANS OF MAINTAINING AND INCREASING OUR DESIRES OF PERFECTION 70

CHAPTER VI.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS TO DIRECTORS TOUCHING THE FIRST, SECOND, AND THIRD CHAPTERS OF THIS ARTICLE 77
CONTENTS.

CHAPTER VII.
PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS TOUCHING THE FOURTH AND FIFTH CHAPTERS OF THIS ARTICLE ...................................................... 85

ARTICLE III.
THE SECOND MEANS TO ACQUIRE CHRISTIAN PERFECTION IS THE CHOICE OF A GOOD DIRECTOR.

CHAPTER I.
THE NECESSITY OF A GUIDE IN ORDER TO WALK WITH SECURITY ON THE ROAD TO PERFECTION, SHOWN FROM SCRIPTURE AND THE HOLY FATHERS ................................................. 93

CHAPTER II.
REASONS SHOWING THE NECESSITY OF A GUIDE, THAT WE MAY WALK SAFELY IN THE ROAD TO PERFECTION .................................................. 102

CHAPTER III.
FOR WHAT GIFTS THE PERSON AIMING AT PERFECTION MUST LOOK IN A DIRECTOR, IF HE WISH TO MAKE A GOOD CHOICE .................................................. 109

CHAPTER IV.
WITH WHAT CANDOUR AND OPENNESS OF SOUL WE MUST CONFER WITH OUR DIRECTOR .................................................. 114

CHAPTER V.
PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR THE DIRECTOR AS TO HIS DEALINGS WITH SUCH AS PLACE THEMSELVES UNDER HIS DIRECTION .................................................. 123

ARTICLE IV.
THIRD MEANS OF ACQUIRING PERFECTION—THE READING OF SPIRITUAL BOOKS.

CHAPTER I.
The advantage of reading spiritual books proved from the authority of the holy fathers .................................................. 133
# CONTENTS

## CHAPTER II

**The Advantage of Spiritual Reading, Shown More in Particular, Both at the Entrance on the Path of Perfection and After Some Progress Has Been Made** 139

## CHAPTER III

**Practical Suggestions on the Method to Be Pursued in Spiritual Reading, in Order That We May Draw from It the Greatest Spiritual Profit** 146

## ARTICLE V

**Fourth Means of Acquiring Perfection—Meditation on the Maxims of Our Faith**

### CHAPTER I

**That Meditation Is a Means of Great Importance for the Keeping of God's Commandments in Their Substance, and Absolutely Necessary for Their Perfect Observance** 151

### CHAPTER II

**Preparation for Meditation** 163

### CHAPTER III

**The Portion of Meditation Which Immediately Follows the Preparation** 170

### CHAPTER IV

**Some Difficulties Removed Which Prevent Many from Taking Up, and Others from Continuing, the Practice of Meditation** 177

### CHAPTER V

**Two Other Difficulties Which Lead Many to Give Up the Practice of Meditation** 183

### CHAPTER VI

**Practical Suggestions to the Director on the First Three Chapters of the Present Article** 192

### CHAPTER VII

**Practical Hints to the Director on the Fourth and Fifth Chapters, inasmuch as They Relate to Dryness and Consolation in Prayer** 203
CONTENTS.

ARTICLE VI.

FIFTH MEANS OF ACQUIRING CHRISTIAN PERFECTION—MENTAL AND VOCAL PRAYER.

CHAPTER I.

THAT WITHOUT PRAYER IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO ATTAIN TO ETERNAL SALVATION, AND MUCH LESS TO PERFECTION ... 207

CHAPTER II.

WHAT THINGS SHOULD FORM THE OBJECTS OF OUR PRAYER ... 217

CHAPTER III.

HOW MUCH THE PRAYER OF PETITION AVAILS TO OBTAIN FROM GOD WHAT WE DESIRE ... 225

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONDITIONS THAT MUST ACCOMPANY PRAYER IN ORDER THAT IT MAY HAVE THE EFFICACY EXPLAINED ABOVE ... 231

CHAPTER V.

ON VOCAL PRAYER—HOW FAR IT IS OF OBLIGATION—IN WHAT MANNER IT SHOULD BE MADE IN ORDER THAT IT MAY BEAR FRUIT ... 241

CHAPTER VI.

THREE SortS OF ATTENTION SUITABLE IN PRAYER ... 245

CHAPTER VII.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS TO DIRECTORS ON THE SUBJECT OF VOCAL PRAYER ... 250

ARTICLE VII.

ON THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

CHAPTER I.

SCRIPTURE PROOFS OF THE SOVEREIGN EFFICACY OF THE SENSE OF GOD'S PRESENCE AS A MEANS OF SPEEDILY ATTAINING TO PERFECTION—GENERAL REASONS FOR THIS ... 256

CHAPTER II.

PARTICULAR ARGUMENTS TO PROVE THE GREAT EFFICACY OF GOD'S PRESENCE AS A MEANS OF ATTAINING PERFECTION ... 261.
CONTENTS.

CHAPTER III.

OTHER REASONS TO PROVE THE EFFICACY OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE AS A MEANS OF ATTAINING PERFECTION . . . . . 267

CHAPTER IV.

VARIOUS METHODS OF DEVOUTLY AND PROFITABLY CULTIVATING THE PRESENCE OF GOD . . . . . . . . 272

CHAPTER V.

CERTAIN METHODS FOR RENDERING MORE EASY THE EXERCISE OF GOD’S PRESENCE IN THE MIDST OF OUR EXTERIOR EMPLOYMENTS . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 278

CHAPTER VI.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS TO DIRECTORS ON THE SUBJECT OF THE EXERCISE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD . . . . . . . 284

ARTICLE VIII.

SEVENTH MEANS FOR ATTAINING TO CHRISTIAN PERFECTION—SACRAMENTAL CONFESSION MADE FREQUENTLY AND WITH DUE DISPOSITIONS.

CHAPTER I.

THAT SACRAMENTAL CONFESSION MADE FREQUENTLY IS A MOST EFFECTUAL MEANS OF SPEEDILY ATTAINING TO PERFECTION . 290

CHAPTER II.

CONDITIONS REQUIRED FOR SACRAMENTAL CONFESSION IN ORDER THAT IT MAY PRODUCE THAT CLEANSINESS OF HEART WHICH IS THE PROXIMATE DISPOSITION TO PERFECTION—EXPLANATION OF THE FIRST CONDITION . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 296

CHAPTER III.

SECOND AND THIRD CONDITIONS REQUIRED FOR CONFESSION, THAT IT MAY BRING TO THE SOUL THE DESIRED DEGREE OF PURITY . 302

CHAPTER IV.

THE FOURTH AND FIFTH CONDITIONS REQUIRED IN ORDER THAT CONFESSION MAY LEAD TO PERFECTION THROUGH EXQUISITE PURITY OF SOUL . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 306
CONTENTS.

CHAPTER V.
WHETHER GENERAL CONFESSIONS HELP US TO ACQUIRE CLEANSNESS
OF HEART, AND CONSEQUENTLY TO ATTAIN TO PERFECTION . 312

CHAPTER VI.
PRACTICAL HINTS TO DIRECTORS ON THE SUBJECT OF THE FORE-
GOING CHAPTERS . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 318

CHAPTER VII.
CERTAIN DIFFICULTIES WHICH DETER PRIESTS FROM UNDERTAKING
THE MINISTRY OF HEARING CONFESSIONS, OR WHICH MAKE
THEM WITHDRAW FROM IT . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 324

ARTICLE IX.
EIGHTH MEANS OF ATTAINING TO CHRISTIAN PERFECTION—
DAILY EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE.

CHAPTER I.
THAT DAILY EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE IS A MOST IMPORTANT
MEANS OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION, IS SHOWN FROM THE
AUTHORITY OF THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH . . . 334

CHAPTER II.
REASONS WHICH MADE THE SAINTS LOOK UPON DAILY EXAMINA-
TION OF CONSCIENCE AS MOST NECESSARY . . . . . 339

CHAPTER III.
The manner of making the daily examination of conscience
explained . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 348

CHAPTER IV.
ON THE PARTICULAR EXAMINATION—ITS ADVANTAGES FOR THE
ATTAINING OF PERFECTION—THE METHOD OF MAKING IT . 355

CHAPTER V.
PRACTICAL HINTS TO DIRECTORS ON THE SUBJECT OF THE PRESENT
ARTICLE . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 360
CONTENTS.

ARTICLE X.

NINTH MEANS FOR ATTAINING PERFECTION—FREQUENT COMMUNION.

CHAPTER I.

HOLY COMMUNION THE CHIEF MEANS FOR ATTAINING CHRISTIAN PERFECTION ........................................... 365

CHAPTER II.

THE SALUTARY EFFECTS PRODUCED BY HOLY COMMUNION FURTHER DEMONSTRATE THAT IT IS THE CHIEF MEANS OF ATTAINING PERFECTION ................................................................. 371

CHAPTER III.

THE PROXIMATE DISPOSITIONS WITH WHICH THE DEVOUT SOUL SHOULD PREPARE FOR HOLY COMMUNION .................................................. 380

CHAPTER IV.

HOW FREQUENTLY THE FAITHFUL SHOULD GO TO HOLY COMMUNION, AND WHETHER, IN THE CASE OF SECULARS, THIS FREQUENCY MAY BE EXTENDED TO DAILY COMMUNION ........................................ 387

CHAPTER V.

THE PRACTICAL RESULTS OF THE DOCTRINE DEVELOPED IN THE FOREGOING CHAPTER CONCERNING DAILY COMMUNION ........................................ 393

CHAPTER VI.

PARTICULAR RULES AND PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR DIRECTORS IN FIXING THE FREQUENCY OF COMMUNION TO BE ALLOWED TO THEIR PENITENTS ......................................................... 397

CHAPTER VII.

A BRIEF TREATISE ON SPIRITUAL COMMUNION, BY WHICH DEVOUT PERSONS MAY SUPPLY THE WANT OF SACRAMENTAL COMMUNION .................. 404
CONTENTS.

ARTICLE XI.

TENTH MEANS OF ATTAINING CHRISTIAN PERFECTION—DEVOTION TO THE SAINTS, AND ESPECIALLY TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

CHAPTER I.

DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN A MOST EFFICACIOUS MEANS, AND, MORALLY SPEAKING, NECESSARY FOR THE ATTAINMENT OF ETERNAL SALVATION EVEN IN ITS LOWEST DEGREE

CHAPTER II.

REASONS ACCOUNTING FOR THE EFFICACY ASCRIBED BY THE SAINTS TO DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN

CHAPTER III.

DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN A MOST EFFECTUAL MEANS, AND, MORALLY SPEAKING, NECESSARY TO ATTAIN SALVATION IN ITS PERFECTION

CHAPTER IV.

A FURTHER REASON TO SHOW THE NECESSITY OF DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN IN ORDER TO ATTAIN PERFECTION

CHAPTER V.

NATURE OF THAT TRUE DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN WHICH PRODUCES THE FRUITS OF SALVATION DESCRIBED IN THE FOREGOING CHAPTERS

CHAPTER VI.

THE MEANS SUITABLE FOR ACQUIRING THIS DEVOTION

CHAPTER VII.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS TO DIRECTORS ON THE FOREGOING CHAPTERS
INTRODUCTION.

Every one surely would consider that master of a vessel to be out of his mind, who, without oars, without mast, without sails, without anchors, and without provisions, should believe himself able safely to carry passengers and crew across the open sea to the place of their destination; as all are aware that such appointments and supplies are the necessary condition of gaining the harbour of rest, in defiance of contrary winds, and in despite of furious storms. In the same way every one would look upon that general as bereft of reason, who, without arms, without artillery, without the engines and the implements of war, should think to conquer provinces and empires, and to subject them to the rule of his sovereign; as it is obvious to each of us that to be provided with military stores is perfectly essential to the success of such undertakings. Just so it seems to me, we ought to judge that Director to be utterly wanting in sense, who, without knowing or without employing the proper means, should hope to bring to a successful issue the great enterprise of leading to perfection the souls confided to his care, and should, without such means, presume to guide them through the stormy sea of this life, amidst the tempests of so many passions, the troubled waters of so many temptations, the rocks of so many dangerous occasions, and expect to lead them to the port of Christian perfection, from which a safe passage may be made to the most blessed harbour of eternal happiness. And therefore having, in the work which I now undertake, proposed to myself to give Directors a true idea of Christian perfection, and, at the same time, to suggest to them practical
methods by which they may gradually instil this perfection into
the souls intrusted to their keeping, it seems necessary, in the
first place (and to this, accordingly, I shall devote the whole of
the present treatise), to lay down the means to be employed for
the successful attainment of that object. Indeed, to arrive at the
desired perfection, without such means, is no less impossible than
it would be impracticable for a traveller to reach the end of his
journey without first passing along the roads that lead him to it.

2. But as in the first Article of the first Section of this work I
am going to treat more diffusely and thoroughly of the entire
scope of the work, I trust that the devout reader will allow me
just now to detain him for a little space, while I set forth the
motives which have induced me to undertake a task so laborious,
and so far surpassing my feeble powers. In the course, then, of
my holy duties, when engaged in giving missions, in which I have
spent a great portion of my life, it has often happened to me to come
in contact with pious and docile persons, disposed alike by natural
inclination, and by the impulse of grace, to make rapid progress
in Christian perfection, had they only been so fortunate as to meet
with an experienced Director to be their guide in a journey of so
much difficulty and of so much danger. Hence the thought
struck me that it would contribute greatly to the glory of God and
the good of souls, if a Guide to the Spiritual Life were published,
which, leaving unnoticed the extraordinary paths of sublime con-
templation along which God occasionally leads some favoured
persons, should point out to Directors the method of guiding their
penitents along the easy and beaten paths of ordinary grace—by
which the greater number of devout souls are wont to travel—
ever, however, combining with theory some practical instructions
for the safe and profitable rule of conduct of such souls. Because
it seemed to me that, if Confessors were provided with full and
clear information concerning all the roads by which perfection is
reached, they would be able, with great ease, to help forward on
their journey persons of whatever character who might present
themselves in the sacred tribunal; always supposing such persons
to be already set free from the slavery of mortal sin.

3. I was occupied with these reflections, and was already turning
INTRODUCTION.

Over in my mind the plan of this new edifice—I was already, indeed, collecting materials, and was on the very point of beginning the work of building—when an unforeseen occurrence strongly confirmed me in the resolution I had formed. A Priest charged with the care of souls came to me for advice. He set before me the state of soul of a young girl, a penitent of his, poor in the gifts of fortune as she was rich in innocence and virginal purity, and he begged me to suggest to him the measures to be adopted, in order to bring to perfect fertility a soil which seemed to him so worthy of cultivation. In the course of conversation, he made a remark to me which left a deep impression on my mind. He had, he said, perused various works, all treating of spiritual perfection (and he mentioned one of very high authority); he admired the sublimity and usefulness of their teaching, but he had been quite unable to reduce it to practice: he was at a loss where to begin, how to go on, or how judiciously to apply the rules given to the particular case before him. It seemed to him, in short, that these authors had offered to him the richest materials of embroidery—thread of gold, jewels and gems of great price—but had never taught him the way to work out the beauteous pattern of perfection which he longed to trace in the soul of his youthful penitent. On hearing this, I told him that he was putting to me a question which I could not satisfactorily answer in any other way than by referring him to two works which I was myself preparing to write;* because to ask the method of guiding a soul to perfection was the same thing as to make inquiry how to form an accomplished architect or a first-rate artist: things that require a long course of study and experimental teaching. In conclusion, after I had given him a short instruction as to the best way of beginning his work of grace, I bade him farewell.

4. In this interview I saw in practice, as I had before recognised in theory, how very useful it would have been if I had prepared for use a clear and methodical exposition of the ways of Christian perfection; explaining, in the first place, one after another, its commencement, progress, advanced stages, and final state; continually and systematically joining with speculative teaching.

* The author alludes to his *Directorium Asceticum* and *Directorium Mysticum*.
rules drawn from experience, which, more than anything else, contribute to the safe accomplishment of the soul's journey; so that a Director might see at a glance the path which his penitent has to traverse, and be able to give him opportune warning of the dangers which he may have to encounter. Of all this, as I have said, I was abundantly convinced, and had already made up my mind to frame the whole work upon this idea. But the incident I have just related strengthened me more than ever in my resolution. And with the grace of our Blessed Lord (for from a fountain of evil, such as I know myself full well to be, no real good can spring), I hope that this my undertaking may prove very serviceable to Directors in their sacred ministry, and most profitable to the souls which are guided by their direction.

5. I shall divide the entire work into four Sections, in which I shall comprise the whole extent of Christian perfection, and each Section shall be subdivided into several Articles. In the first chapter of each Article I shall discuss the points of doctrine which are indicated in the title of the Article; and since I address myself to guides in the spiritual life, who should be thoroughly grounded in the science of their profession, I shall establish the truths enunciated, not alone by arguments taken from reason, but likewise by the authority of the Holy Fathers of the Church, and very often by that of the Angelic Doctor, who subjected their teaching to the rigorous analysis of the Schools, especially in his Summa, of which I have availed myself a good deal, using such editions as were at hand when I was composing my book.

6. As I wish my work to be useful to such of the laity also as may not understand Latin, I shall always translate the passages quoted from Scripture and the Fathers. The last chapter of each Article I shall reserve for practical advice on the subjects of the preceding chapters, and I hope thus to preserve Directors from all risk of misunderstanding the teaching previously conveyed. In the chapters of instruction I shall direct my discourse to all readers without exception, though such chapters are intended more particularly for the use of Directors. In the chapters of practical advice I shall address myself to Directors exclusively, though all Christians may be able to reap benefit from them.
INTRODUCTION.

7. I shall endeavour to vary the instruction with moral stories and examples taken from ecclesiastical history, or from accredited and trustworthy authors; and this for two reasons: in the first place, to make the matter more interesting, or, at all events, less uninviting; in the second place, to render it more profitable to the reader. The saying of St. Gregory has ever been impressed on my mind: that no small portion of mankind are more moved to the desire of heavenly things by example than by argument.* The reason is a simple one: by the way of authority and argument we come to know the truth confusedly, and in the abstract only; but by the light of example we see it clearly and in action: reason and authority prove that virtue ought to be practised; but facts show that it is really practised: and this is why examples have more power than reasons to move our souls. One thing, at least, is certain, that the one and the other combined, are more efficacious than either singly, to excite our will to the performance of good works.

8. And here I foresee that a serious objection relating to myself personally will arise in the mind of the pious reader, which he will probably, out of delicacy, be unwilling to express, but which I ought not to refuse to make public to my own confusion. The difficulty which so much redounds to my shame is this: that no one ought to assume the office of a teacher of the spiritual life, who has not yet taken his place as a learner in the school of the spirit, nor should any one give lessons to others in that perfection which he has himself never carried into practice. This objection, I own, not only comes home to me, but pierces my heart through and through; nor can I give any other answer than that which many times I have given to my guilty conscience, which itself suggested the objection to me, namely, that my trust is in God. I have clear and repeated proof that the Almighty wishes me to compile this work, disproportioned as it is to my poor ability. I must consequently trust in Him, and make an act of faith, that this is one of those occasions in which Almighty God makes use of feeble instruments for the performance of great works, that so His glory may shine forth the more. And hence

* Sunt nonnulli, quos ad amorem patris celestis plus exempla quam prædicamenta succendunt. Dial. lib. i. cap. 1.
it behoves me now to say of myself in simple truth, what St. Gregory said in his humility, when, as he was about to undertake his explanation of the Book of Job, he felt discouraged at the arduousness of the task: "I am out of heart, seeing my own inability, but am made stronger by my very weakness. I am buoyed up with confidence in that God, Who gives speech to the dumb, Who makes eloquent the tongues of little ones, and has even moved to utterance the tongue of a brute. And why have not I sufficient grounds for hope that God will infuse into my dull mind the gift of understanding, if, when His glory require it, He knows how to put words of truth into the mouth of even irrational creatures? Encouraged by this consideration, I am no longer in alarm concerning the success of my work, much as I stand in dread of myself; and now I boldly put my hand to the work." *

9. No other recompense do I desire to reap from this my labour, save the glory of God and the spiritual advantage of my fellow-men, who may be helped along the path of Christian perfection to their heavenly country; the which if peradventure I am fortunate enough to compass in the case of any one person, I shall be able to say what Lactantius said, when consoling himself during the mental toil of his works. His words are as follows: "I shall believe myself to have spent my life well, since we can have no motive more pure and holy for desiring life than the wish to spend it in the service of our neighbour." †

* Fore quippe idoneum me ad ista desperavi; sed ipsa mea desperatione robustior, ad illum spem protinus crexi, per quem aperta est lingua nutorum; qui linguas infantium fecit disertas; qui immensos, brutesque asine rudibus per sensatos humani eloqui distinxit modos. Quid igitur mirum, si intellectum stulto homini praebeat, qui veritatem suam, cum velicerit, etiam per ora jumentorum narrat? Hujus ergo robore cogitationisacciunctus, ariditatem meam ad indagandum fontem tante profunditatis excitavi. In Epist. ad Leand, Episc. In expos. lib. Job.

† Quod si vita est optanda sapienti, profecto nullam aliam ob causam vivere optaverim, quam ut aliquod officium, quod vià dignum sit, et quod utilitatem legentibus, etsi non ad eloquentiam, quia tenuis in nobis facundie rivus est, ad vivendum tamen conferat, quod est maxime necessarium. Quo perfecto, satis me vixisse arbitrabor, et officium hominis impellette, si labor meus aliquot homines ab erroribus liberans, ad iter direxit. Opif. Dei. cap. 20.
GUIDE TO THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

SECTION I.
MEANS TO ARRIVE AT CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

ARTICLE I.

CHAPTER I.
The essence of Christian perfection consists in charity towards God and our neighbour.

10. There can be no doubt that in our present life we can never reach absolute perfection; because no sojourner in this vale of tears can possess that perfect stainlessness, which is exempt from every, even the slightest fault. It was an error of the Beguards and Beguines, condemned by the Council of Vienne, to maintain that mortal man can arrive at so great perfection as to become impecable, and that he can attain to so great an elevation as not to be able to wing his flight to a yet higher region of perfection.* It was a dream of the Illuminati, dispelled by the holy tribunal of the

GUIDE TO THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

Inquisition in Spain, that in this life a perfection so sublime may be reached that its limits once attained, it is impossible to retrace the path. These are the idle conceits of blinded souls. The truth is, that so long as we live in this vale of misery and weeping, the sting of concupiscence cannot be removed, nor are all the restraints of divine grace, how strong and sweet soever they be, sufficient to bind it so that its lusts shall never more wanton, and its wild desires never again rage. Hence it follows, that although with the aid of grace and the use of our own industry we may make opposition in each individual instance, we cannot, nevertheless, in the whole course of life, avoid showing some occasional little condescension to our disordered inclinations, nor help incurring the stain of some slight transgression. This is a truth defined by the Council of Trent, which pronounced anathema against such as should dare to affirm that the just man can avoid all sin, even venial, except by a special privilege from God, which the holy Council recognises in none other save in the Queen of Heaven.† In short, it is not given to any one who lives amid the corruptions of this earth never to contract any stain of sin: this is the boast of Him alone Who has His dwelling above the stars in the heavens. If, then, we cannot say that linen is perfectly white when it is ever so slightly stained, nor crystal perfectly clear if it have within it any speck or flaw to dim its brightness; how can we call any one living on this earth absolutely perfect, even though he may outshine all others with the lustre of his sanctity, so long as he is defiled with those venial faults and imperfections of the soul, which mar its beauty?

11. We may add to this that charity—in which, as we shall presently see, the perfection of every rational creature consists—can indeed attain its highest excellence and power in heaven, but not upon this earth; both because the Orient from on High, seen by us through the veil of certain images, which are incapable of fittingly representing it, has not strength enough to light up in our

† Possit in totâ vitâ peccata omnia etiam venialia vitare, nisi ex special. Dei privilegio. Sess. vj. can. 23.
souls that fire of Divine life with which it inflames the blessed in heaven, who behold it unclouded and unveiled; and because our materialising occupations hinder us from perpetually contemplating and loving that Sun of heavenly beauty, as the blessed do in heaven: whence it happens that our charity cannot be fully perfect as is theirs. This is the teaching of St. Thomas.* And hence the Apostle of the Gentiles hit, so to say, the exact mark, when, in speaking of perfection in this life, he called it the perfection of a child; and speaking of perfection in the next life, he called it full-grown, manly perfection.† And these words are very properly interpreted by St. Thomas in harmony with the idea I have above expressed. The Apostle, says the Angelic Doctor, compares the perfection of our present life to the age of youth, which is feeble and imperfect; and he likens the perfection of the life of blessedness to the state of manhood, which has already reached its perfection of strength and vigour:—to give us to understand how imperfect is our perfection, which, like a child, is always in a state of growth and advancement; and how complete is the perfection of the blessed, which, like a full-grown man, has already attained its perfect stature.‡ Let us then sum up by understanding clearly what we are to hold. The perfection of us mortal men, compared with the perfection of the immortal spirits now reigning in their heavenly country, is, on many accounts, ever wanting, and must be spoken of as a defective and imperfect perfection. But if we compare it with the state of this our present life, and with the capabilities of our feeble forces, we may and must speak of it as true perfection. Nay, when it increases much and attains, if we may so speak, a greater finish, it may

* Alia est perfectio, quae attenditur secundum totalitatem absolutam ex parte diligentis, prout scilicet affectus, secundum totum suum posse, semper actualiter tendit in Deum; et talis perfectio non est possibilis in via, sed erit in patria. 2. 2. qu. 84, art. 2.

† Cum venerit quod perfectum est, evacuabitur quod ex parte est. Cum esset parvulus, loquebar ut parvulus, sapiebam ut parvulus: quando autem factus sum vir, evacuavi quae erant parvuli. 1 Cor. xiii. 10.

‡ Et est attendendum, quod hic Apostolus comparat statum presentem, puere, propter imperfectionem; statum autem futurum glorie, propter perfectionem, virili aetati. Lect. 3, in verba Apostoli.
be termed great perfection, heroic perfection, sublime perfection. Now, it is of this perfection that we are to treat throughout the present work, and we will begin at once by an inquiry into what constitutes its essence.

12. The Fathers of the Church, speaking of Christian perfection, do not agree in the definition they give of its substance; at least, as far as we can judge, some of them appear to make it consist in one particular virtue, while others, it may be thought, assign an entirely different virtue. St. Thomas, applying his angelic mind to the examination of this point, unhesitatingly decides that the whole essence of Christian perfection consists in the love of God and our neighbour; with this distinction, however, that the love of God must hold the first place, the love of our neighbour the second. * This most authoritative opinion is founded on the words of the Apostle, who encourages us to aim at the acquisition of this divine love, putting before us the grand motive that this is the very pith and quintessence, as it were, of our perfection. † It is based, likewise, upon those other words of St. Paul, that the complete and perfect fulfilment of the Christian law is holy love, which, consequently, is the essential perfection of all who make profession of that law. ‡ It is admitted by all, that the end of every law is to promote some special perfection in that community for which it has been enacted. Thus the civil laws have in view the formation of a perfect state; rules of military discipline have for their scope the organisation of a perfect army; the laws or rules of monastic life are framed to establish a religious order which shall be pre-eminently perfect in some particular virtue. So, too, God Almighty, in giving us His law, had for His sole aim to form us into perfect Christians. Thus all our perfection should consist in the perfect fulfilment of God's laws, and, consequently, in charity, which, according to the Apostle, is the fulfilment of all God's laws. Plenitudo legis est

* Per se quidem, et essentialiter consistit perfectionis christiana vitæ in caritate; principaliter quidem secundum dilectionem Dei, secundario autem secundum dilectionem proximi. 2. 2. qu. 184, art. 3, in corp.
† Super omnia caritatem habete, quod est vinculum perfectionis. Coloss, iii. 14.
‡ Plenitudo legis est dilectio. Ad Rom. xiii. 10.
ESSENCE OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

dilectio. Whence St. Gregory was moved to say, with reference to this subject, that all observance of the precepts of God attains solidity and perfection in love alone.* This sound and solid teaching has also the support of the authority of St. Augustine, who, long before the Angel of the Schools, had published it for the instruction of the faithful. "Love that is newly born," he says, "is perfection in its infancy; love that is on the increase is mature perfection; great love is great perfection; perfect love is entire and complete perfection."† Consequently, I infer, if the perfection of a Christian increases in proportion as his charity is greater or less, more or less sublime, we have a proof that no distinction can be made between perfection and charity, but that they are, in their essence, one and the same thing.

13. Reason joins itself with authority, and concurs in urging the belief of this important truth. The perfection of everything created most certainly consists in the attainment of the end peculiar to itself; thus we say that an eye is perfect when it sees objects distinctly, because the end for which the eye was made is to see; we call an ear perfect when it distinguishes voices and words with accuracy, for the ear was made to hear with; we call a light perfect when it shows us everything clearly and well-defined, since the object of the light is to enlighten; we call a fire perfect when it burns most actively, for the end of a fire is to inflame and consume. Thus, too, speaking of the fine arts, we consider a brush perfect, if it is well adapted for painting, and a pen, if well suited for writing; because the end of the former is to paint, of the latter to write. To determine, therefore, in what man's perfection consists, it suffices to know what that thing is which unites us to our last end,—I mean to God, Who alone created us, and Who alone now rules us, and preserves us in life. But there can be no doubt that this thing is charity, since the Beloved Disciple lays it down in such plain terms, "He that abideth in charity abideth in God, and God in him."‡ And again, in his

* Quidquid precipitur, in solâ caritate solidatur. Hom. 27, in Evang.
† Inchoata caritas, inchoata justitia est; proiecta caritas, proiecta justitia est; magna caritas, magna justitia est; perfecta caritas, perfecta justitia est. Lib. de Nat. et Grat.
‡ Qui manet in caritate, in Deo manet et Deus in eo. I. Epist. iv. 16
GUIDE TO THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

Gospel, the same Apostle repeats the words of Jesus Christ, "If any man love Me, My Father will love him, and We will both come down to him and will dwell in his soul, and make Our fixed and permanent abode with him."* Hence St. Paul infers that charity unites the Spirit of God to the spirit of man with the bond of divine love, and of the two forms one spirit.† No wonder, then, that he calls charity the bond of perfection,‡ since charity, which unites us with our last end, alone can make us perfect, and alone can constitute the whole essence of our perfection.

14. Throughout this well-grounded train of reasoning, we have always been following the path traced for us by St. Augustine, in his Commentary upon the Psalms. "Jesus Christ is our end; by Him, then, we are made perfect: for all our perfection is to tend towards Him, not, of course, by a bodily movement, but by affections of the heart, and, therefore, by a close union with Him in the sweet bond of charity."§ In following St. Augustine, we have kept close to our guide, St. Thomas, though he explains in a few words what we have expressed in a great many.||

15. The thought of this great truth pierced to the quick the soul of that blessed youth, who, coming from a distant country to the city of Paris, there to study the sacred sciences, entered a school of theology over which an eminent professor presided as teacher. Seated on a bench with the other students, he listened attentively to the first lecture, which, happily for him, chanced on that day to be upon the words of St. Matthew, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul.¶ The lecture ended,

† Qui adhaeret Deo, unus spiritus est. 1. ad Cor. vi. 17.
‡ Caritatem habete, quod est vinculum perfectionis.
§ Finis est Christus. Quare dictus est finis: non quia consumit; sed quia consummat: consumere enim perdere est; consummare perficiere. . . Finis ergo propositi nostri, Christus est: quia quantulumque conemus, in illo perficium et ab illo perficium: et hae est perfectio nostra ad illum pervenire. Sed cum ad illum pervenitis, ultra non queris; tuus finis est. In Ps. lvi.
|| Dicendum, quod unumquodque dicitur esse perfectum, in quantum attingit proprium finem, qui est ultima rei perfectio: caritas autem est, que unit nos Deo, qui est ultimus finis humanae mentis. 2. 2. qu. 184, art. 2, in corp.
¶ Diliges Dominum Deum tuum, ex toto corde tuo.
the youth rose from his seat, turned his back on the teacher, and hastened towards the door with the determination of leaving the school. The students were astounded at this behaviour, and the master, imagining himself to be insulted by the newly-arrived scholar, was bitterly offended. "How have I displeased you," he asked, "that having but just entered my school, you are about to leave it? Are you tired already of my teaching; do my lessons appear so mean and contemptible in your eyes?" "Far from it, indeed," replied the youth; "it is the sublimity of your doctrine which forces me to leave your school. I have already heard quite enough of what has to be done in order that I may become perfect and a saint. What need have I to listen to more? The time has now come for action and practice." Saying this he went away into the retirement of a religious house, there to acquire that perfection of which he had already learned that it was contained whole and entire in the love of God.*

16. Having established the first point, it will not be difficult to prove the second, that after charity towards God, charity towards our neighbour enters into the essence of Christian perfection. We will again take our argument from St. Thomas, quoted just now. He says "that the habit of charity, by which we love God, is not different in kind from the habit of charity by which we love our neighbour." Nay more, he teaches that even the act of charity by which we love God is not specifically different from the act of charity by which we love our neighbour for the love of God.† Indeed, in the act of charity by which we love our neighbour for the love of God, is included a formal act of love towards God. Nor should this appear strange to us, since we are witnesses daily of this very thing, in the merely natural order, and in social life. The mother loves the nurse at whose breast her infant is suckled, and on that account is fond of her, and rewards and shows her respect; but as she loves the nurse for the love of the babe, she loves the babe with the same love, only more intensely than she

† Habitus caritatis non solum se extendit ad dilectionem Dei, sed etiam ad dilectionem proximi. 2. 2. qu. 25, art. 1. in corp.
‡ Manifestum est, quod idem specie actus est, quo diligetur Deus, et quo diligetur proximus. Eod. loc.
loves the nurse who has care of the child. The man of learning loves study, and on that account shuts himself up all alone in his room; his brain grows dizzy over his books; his cheeks become pale as he bends over the pages, and by incessant application he destroys sight and life; but as he loves study for the love of knowledge to which he is devoted, his affections must be said to be fixed upon knowledge rather than upon study. The sportsman loves the fatigues, the hardships, the exhaustion of the chase; and hence fearlessly exposes himself to the rays of a scorching sun, to wind, rain, and frost; with fearless step he ranges over mountains and hills, through woods and glens, and precipitous paths; sleep is a stranger to his eyes; no food appeases his hunger, no draught allays his thirst; but because he loves these hardships and fatigues for love of the sport after which he so eagerly pursues, it is a clear proof that he loves the sport more than he loves the sufferings and fatigues to which he exposes himself. Thus in the act by which we love our neighbour for the love of God, we love God Himself more than we love our neighbour. If, then, to love our neighbour for God's sake is to love God Himself, it is clear that perfection, which consists essentially (as we have above shown) in charity towards God, must likewise essentially consist in charity towards our neighbour.

17. St. Ambrose relates the history of a contest of charity between a soldier and a young lady of rank at Antioch, named Theodora. She was discovered to be a Christian, and straightway was hurried by the idolaters, not to a prison or the scaffold to be deprived of life, but to a place of infamy to be despoiled first of her virginity, and afterwards of her faith. A soldier, seeing the dreadful danger to which this innocent dove was being exposed, of falling into the claws of obscene vultures, which would soon be coming to attack her, made haste to visit her before any one else had gained admission to where she had been taken; and the charity which glowed in his heart having made him ingenious in devising his plan, he persuaded her to change clothing with him. "In my dress," he said, "in this uniform, you may pass the guards in safety, without being recognised, and I, in your woman's garb, shall be secure from insult in this den of iniquity." The stratagem
succeeded. Scarcely, however, had the innocent girl escaped, when sentence of death was passed upon her at the tribunal of the tyrant; in punishment of the crime of being a Christian, she was to be conveyed to the place of execution and there beheaded. The officers of justice having arrived, and finding the soldier attired as a woman, supposing him to be the young girl on whom sentence of death had been pronounced, they seized and bound him, and led him through the public streets to the place of execution. He had already mounted the scaffold, already was the executioner with drawn sword standing near, ready to strike the blow which would sever the head from the body, and set free the happy soul from its earthly tabernacle; when suddenly the maiden, impelled by lively feelings of gratitude towards her deliverer, magnanimously sprang upon the scaffold, and cried out with a loud voice, "Stay your hand, executioner, I am Theodora; it is I who ought to suffer death." "No!" exclaimed the soldier, "I am the person doomed to die: the sentence of death has fallen to me." "Not so, executioner," Theodora rejoined; "be not deceived by the borrowed clothes which he is now wearing. I am Theodora, whom the judge has condemned: aim your blows at me. See, my neck is bared, strike at once." They continued a long time this contest of love. "Eventually," writes St. Ambrose, "as both had engaged in the strife, so both came off victorious, and the two combats only multiplied the crowns and palms of triumph, for martyrdom originated with the one and was gloriously consummated by the other."* A modern author, in his comments on this narrative of St. Ambrose, observes, "The two were beheaded in glorious martyrdom, in order that the sword of the tyrant might not separate those whom the love of Christ had united together."† It may seem, perhaps, that he ought rather to have said that the sword divided not those whom brotherly-love and the affection of a sincere charity towards their neighbours had joined in one. But no, he was right in saying that the love

* Duo contendunt, et ambo vicerunt: nec divisa est corona, sed addita. Ita sancti martyres invicem sibi beneficia conferentes, altera principium martyrio dedit, alter dedit effectum. Lib. ii. de Virg.
† Ambo simul capitis obturacione gloriosum martyrium peregerunt, nec tyranni gladius separaret quos junxerat amor Christi.
of Christ was the bond of this admirable union; because the love by which we love our neighbour for the sake of God, is, in reality, the love of God Himself; and these two, loving each other with the love of fraternal charity, really loved each other with one and the same love—the love of God. Consequently we must acknowledge that the love of Jesus Christ was the real bond of that so holy a union.

CHAPTER II.

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION IS CONSTITUTED BY THE MORAL VIRTUES AND THE COUNSELS; WHENCE IS DEDUCED THE ORDER AND ARRANGEMENT OF THE WORK.

18. If, then, the essence of Christian perfection consists wholly in the love of God and of our neighbour, what is to be said of the moral virtues, and, in the first place, of the cardinal virtues, the origin and source whence all the other moral virtues spring, and which make the soul of him that possesses them so bright and beautiful? What is to be said of the Evangelical Counsels, which our dear Redeemer recommends so strongly in the Gospel? As for example: to renounce all worldly possessions; to lead a life of celibacy; to subject ourselves voluntarily to the will of another; to confer a kindness on a friend when the rules of charity do not make it of obligation; to pray frequently, even when present necessities do not force us to pray; to bestow alms, not only out of our abundance, but also out of that which is suitable for our maintenance; to fast often, even when no precept of the Church enjoins us the practice; to mortify our senses, even in regard to lawful objects; to chastise our body in various ways; and a thousand other things, which, though not under rigorous precept, are nevertheless demanded from us by God, being by their own nature better than their opposites, and very pleasing to Him.
MORAL VIRTUES AND COUNSELS.

Must not all these holy counsels and exalted virtues have their share in carrying out the noble work of our perfection?

19. Beyond all doubt these virtues concur powerfully in the formation of perfection, not because they constitute its substance, but, as the Angelic Doctor teaches, because they are the instruments by which perfection is elaborated.* St. Thomas, moreover, will have it† that in the words of Christ, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell all that thou hast, and give it to the poor, and follow Me," the essence of Christian perfection is declared to be found in the mere following of Christ, whereby we become united to Him through charity;‡ and he supports his opinion by the authority of St. Jerome and St. Ambrose, both of whom give this very interpretation of the words, Follow Me. The renunciation of riches is mentioned only as an instrument of perfection; as a means, that is, for the acquirement of essential perfection, which consists in following Christ, and in holy love for Him. Cassian teaches the same, in clear and unmistakable terms, in the Conference of the Abbot Moses. To deprive one's self of property and divest one's self of all worldly goods, is not the pith and marrow of Christian perfection, but only a means for its attainment.§ If a painter were to prepare brushes suitable for painting, and procure brilliant colours, combining them skilfully and mixing them with a master-hand, still no one could call him an accomplished artist, because these things are not that at which his profession aims, but only means thereto. The end proposed in the art of painting is to produce representations true to life: other things are but the means which the artist makes use of for this purpose. So in the case before us. The end of the Christian life and therefore its formal perfection, is charity, as we have already shown. To

* Secundario autem, et instrumentaliter perfectio consistit in consilii. 2. 2.
qu. 184, art. 3, in corp.
† Eod. art. in resp. ad 1.
‡ Et ideo ex ipso modo loquendi apparat, quod consilia sunt quaedam instrumenta pervenienti ad perfectionem, dum dicitur: Si vis perfectus esse, vade, et vende omnia quae habes, et da pauperibus: et veni, sequere me. Matth. xix. 21.
§ Nuditas, privatio omnium facultatum, non perfectio, sed perfectionis instrumenta sunt: quia non in illis consistit disciplinae illius finis, sed per illas pervenitur ad finem. Collat. 1, cap. 7.
renounce all worldly possessions, to lead a life of virginity, to subject one's self to the will of another, constitute Christian perfection, and this too in an exalted degree; but only as instruments, which help to acquire divine charity, as any one may clearly see, if he take the trouble to consider these things one by one. For voluntary poverty leads us to perfection, not precisely because it deprives us of the fleeting and perishable goods of this world, otherwise, as St. Jerome observes, the philosopher Crates would have been perfect, and many others who have despised these things;* but because poverty, in depriving us of riches, at the same time plucks from our heart all that attachment to them which is so great a hindrance to the acquisition of holy love. Chastity, too, is perfection, but not precisely because it cuts off even such pleasures of sense as are lawful: else should we have to admit that those idolaters were perfect, of whom history tells us that they lived in entire estrangement to such enjoyments; but because, in depriving us of vile bodily pleasures, it disposes us to the pure affection of superhuman charity. Obedience also is a great perfection in the faithful, yet not precisely because it divests us of our self-will (for in that case soldiers and slaves would be perfect, since they submit their will to their officers and masters, and sometimes do so in matters that are hard and painful), but because, by crushing the natural propensity of each of us to follow the lead of his own will, we are made prompt to submit ourselves to the Will of God alone, and this submission is the quintessence of the love of God.

20. And the Holy Fathers speak of these moral virtues in the same strain. St. Thomas, treating of these virtues, remarks, "A thing may be called perfect in two different senses: first, as regards what is of the very essence of its being; which is the case when the thing wants none of those parts without which it could not exist; in this sense a man is perfect when he has a body, a soul, and that union of the two by which both are made one. Secondly, we may call a thing perfect as to what belongs to the qualities only of its being, which consist in certain things foreign to its essence, but which serve either to prepare or to embellish it; in this sense

MORAL VIRTUES AND COUNSELS.

A man is perfect whose limbs are cast in such or such a mould, who has a certain complexion, and particular constitution." From which St. Thomas wisely infers, that the substantial perfection of Christian life consists in that charity which unites us to God, our last and most blessed end; while, without this, all perfection languishes and dies. The moral virtues, on the other hand, contain nothing beyond the accidental perfection of the Christian life, inasmuch as they dispose a man to the attainment and increase of charity, and are, so to say, its jewels.* St. Jerome teaches the same doctrine in many places, when speaking of the mortification of the body by fasting, which is a real, though not more than a moral, virtue. For, writing to Celantia, he tells her, "Be on your guard when you begin to mortify your body by abstinence and fasting, lest you imagine yourself to be perfect and a saint, for perfection does not consist in this virtue; it is only a help, a disposition, a means—suitable, certainly—for the attainment of true perfection."† And the same may be said of all the other moral virtues, for the same reason holds good in all. St. Jerome gives the like instruction to Demetrias: "Fasting is not perfect virtue; that is, it is not a virtue which renders us perfect, but it constitutes the foundation of virtue; it is a ladder by which we ascend to the summit of that Christian perfection which dwells in charity alone. Fasting by itself can never win for a virgin her crown of perfection and of sanctity."‡ St. Jerome, then, agrees in

* Dicendum, quod dupliciter potest dici aliquis perfectus. Uno modo simpliciter, quae quidem perfectio attenditur secundum id quod pertinet ad ipsum rei naturam: puta si dicatur animal perfectum, cum nihil ei deficit de dispositione membrorum, et alis hujusmodi quae requiruntur ad vitam animalis. Alio modo dicitur aliquid perfectum secundum quid; quae quidem perfectio attenditur secundum aliquid exterius adjacens, puta in albedine, vel in aliquo hujusmodi. Vita autem christianae specialiter in charitate consistit, per quam anima Deo conjungitur. Unde dicitur, (Joan. cap. 1:) Quia non diligis, manet in morte: et ideo secundum caritatem attenditur simpliciter perfectio christianae vitae, sed secundum alias virtutes secundum quid. 2. 2. qu. 184, art. 1 ad 2.

† Cave, ne si jejunare coeperis, putes te esse sanctam. Haec enim virtus adjumentum est, non perfectio sanctitiatis. Epist. ad Celant.

‡ Jejunium non perfecta virtus, sed ceterarum virtutum fundamentum est. Gradus praebet ad summam sanctitatis; non tamen si soluere fuerit, virginem poterit coronare. Idem, Epist. ad Demetr.
recognising no other perfection in the moral virtues, except that accidental perfection which they contribute, as being helps and instruments to the attainment of the essential perfection of charity.

21. I am going to confirm this truth by a well-known incident related in ecclesiastical history.* In the city of Antioch there lived an exemplary priest named Sapricius, who from his earliest years had contracted so close a friendship with a certain layman, by name Nicephorus, that it seemed as though it never could change. However, Sapricius, taking offence at something or other, I know not what, not only broke the bond of a friendship of so long standing, but changed his affection into a hatred so implacable that he would never see him, and studiously avoided every occasion of meeting. Again and again Nicephorus humbled himself before him, and both by the mediation of others and in his own person implored forgiveness for his fault; but all had no effect whatever in softening the heart of Sapricius, or in moving him to show the least sign of peace and reconciliation. Yet the conscience of the priest was no way troubled at all this serious breach of charity, and as usual he ceased not by word and example to animate the people to constancy in their holy faith, amidst the storms of persecution which then were raging against the Christians in the city of Antioch. So much so indeed, that, summoned before the tribunal of the judge to render an account of his religion, and being questioned as to his name and profession, he replied with a holy daring: “I am a follower and priest of Jesus Christ. I observe His law, and try to secure its observance by the people. I honour Him, and seek to forward His worship in every way.” The tyrant, on hearing words which sounded to him as bold beyond enduring, burned with fury, and instantly commanded that the resolution of the priest should be tested by frightful tortures. Sapricius remained, however, unshaken, though cruelly scourged and bathed in his blood. Nay, in the midst of his sufferings he even mocked at the tyrant, who was exercising with such cruelty his barbarous power over the body, but had no power to touch the soul, which more than ever, under torture,