

The Letters of Saint Antony the Great

Wednesday, March 23, 2005

Written by The Great Saint Antony

The Seven Great Letters of Saint Antony the Great.

Letter I : A Letter of Antony the Solitary and Chief of Solitaries to the brethren dwelling in every place

First of all – peace to your love in the Lord!

I think, brethren, that the souls which draw near to the love of God are of three sorts, be they male or female.

There are those who are called by the law of love which is in their nature, and which original good implanted in them at their first creation. The word of God came to them, and they doubted not at all but followed it readily, like Abraham the Patriarch: for when God saw that it was not from the teaching of men that he had learnt to love God, but from the law implanted in the nature of his first compacting, God appeared to him and said, ‘Get thee out from thy country and from thy kindred and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee.’ (Gen. 12:1) And he went nothing doubting, but was ready for his calling. He is the pattern of this approach, which still persists in those who follow in his footsteps. Toiling and seeking the fear of God in patience and quiet, they achieve the true manner of life, because their souls are ready to follow the love of God. This is the first kind of calling.

The second calling is this. There are men who hear the written Law testifying of pains and torments prepared for the wicked, and of the promises prepared for those who walk worthily in the fear of God; and by the testimony of the written Law their thoughts are roused up to seek to enter into the calling, as David testifies when he says: ‘The law of the Lord is undefiled, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, and giveth wisdom unto the simple.’ (Ps. 19:7) And in another place he says, ‘The opening of thy words giveth light and understanding unto the simple’ (Ps. 119:130); and much else, all of which we cannot mention now.

The third calling is this. There are souls which at first were hard of heart and persisted in the works of sin; and somehow the good God in his mercy sends upon such souls the chastisement of affliction, till they grow weary, and come to their senses, and are converted, and draw near, and enter into knowledge, and repent with all their heart, and they also attain the true manner of life, like those others of whom we have already spoken.

These are the three approaches by which souls come to repentance, till they attain to the grace and calling of the Son of God.

Now, as regards those who have entered with all their heart, and have made themselves despise all afflictions of the flesh, valiantly resisting all the warfare that rises against them, until they conquer – I think that first of all, the Spirit calls them, and makes the warfare light for them, and sweetens for them the works of repentance, showing them how they ought to repent in body and soul, until He has taught them how to be converted to God who created them. And he delivers to them works whereby they may constrain their soul and their body, that both may be purified and enter together into their inheritance.

First the body is purified by much fasting, by many vigils and prayers, and by the service which makes a man to be straitened in body, cutting off from himself all the lusts of the flesh. And the Spirit of Repentance is made his guide in these things, and tests him by means of them, lest the enemy should turn him back again.

Then the Spirit that is his guide begins to open the eyes of his soul, to give to it also repentance, that it may be purified. The mind also starts to discriminate between the body and the soul, as it begins to learn from the Spirit how to purify both by repentance. And, taught by the Spirit, the mind becomes our guide to the labours of body and soul, as it begins to learn from the Spirit how to purify both by repentance. And, taught by the Spirit, the mind becomes our guide to the labours of body and soul, showing us how to purify them. And it separates us from all the fruits of the flesh which have been mingled with all the members of the body since the first transgression, and brings back each of the members of the body to its original condition, having nothing in it from the spirit of satan. And the body is brought under the authority of the mind, being taught by the Spirit, as St. Paul says: 'I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection'. (1 Cor. 9:17) For the mind purifies it from food and from drink and from sleep, and in a word from all its motions, until through its own purity it frees the body even from the natural emission of seed.

And, as I think, there are three types of motion of the body. There is that which is implanted in the body by nature, compacted with it in its first creation; but this is not operative if the soul does not will it, save only that it signifies its presence through a passionless movement in the body. And there is another motion, when a man stuffs his body with food and drink, and the heat of the blood from the abundance of nourishment rouses up warfare in the body, because of our greed. For this cause the Apostle said, 'Be not drunk with wine, where is excess.' (Eph. 5:18) And again the Lord enjoined His disciples, 'Take heed lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness' (Luke 21:34) or pleasure. Especially those who seek the measure of purity ought to be saying, 'I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection.' (1 Cor. 9:27) And there is a third motion, from the evil spirits which tempt us out of envy, and seek to defile those who are setting out on the way of purity.

And now, my beloved children, in these three types of motion, if the soul exerts itself and perseveres in the testimony which the Spirit bears within the mind, both soul and body are purified from this kind of sickness. But if in regard to these three motions the mind spurns the testimony which the Spirit bears within it, evil spirits take authority over it, and sow in the body all the passions, and stir up and quicken strong war against it; till the soul grows weary and sick, and cries out and seeks from whence help may come to it, and repents, and obeys the commandments of the Spirit, and is healed. Then it is persuaded to make its rest in God, and that He is its peace.

These things I have said to you, beloved, that you may know how it is required of a man to repent in body and soul, and to purify them both. And if the mind conquers in this contest, then it prays in the Spirit, and beings to expel from the body the passions of the soul which come to it from its own will. Then the Spirit has a loving partnership with the mind, because the mind keeps the commandments which the Spirit has delivered to it. And the Spirit teaches the mind how to heal all the wounds of the soul, and to rid itself of every one, those which are mingled in the members of the body, and other passions which are altogether outside the body, being mingled in the will. And for the eyes it sets a rule, that they may see rightly and purely, and that in them there may be no guile. After that it sets a rule also for the ears, how they may hear in peace, and no more thirst or desire to hear ill speaking, nor about the falls and humiliations of men; but how they may rejoice to hear about good things, and about the way every man stands firm and about the mercy shown to the whole creation, which in these members once was sick.

Then again the Spirit teaches the tongue its own purity, since the tongue was sick with a great sickness; for the sickness which afflicted the souls was expressed in speech through the tongue, which the soul used as its organ, and in this way a great sickness and wound was inflicted upon it, and especially through this member – the tongue – was the soul stricken. The Apostle James testifies to us and says, ‘If any man thinketh himself to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain.’ (Jas. 1:26) And in another place he says, ‘The tongue is a little member, and defileth the whole body’ (Jas. 3:5) – and much besides, which I cannot all quote now. But if the mind is strengthened with the strength that it receives from the Spirit, first it is purified and sanctified, and learns discrimination in the words that it delivers to the tongue, that they may be without partiality and without self-will, and so the saying of Solomon is fulfilled, ‘My words are spoken from God, there is nothing forward nor perverse in them.’ (Cf. Prov. 8:8) And in another place he says, ‘The tongue of the wise is healing’ (Prov. 12:18); and much besides.

After this again the Spirit heals the motions of the hands, which once were moved in a disorderly way, following the will of the mind. But now the Spirit instructs the mind in their purification, that it may labour with them in almsgiving and in prayer; and the word is fulfilled concerning them which says, ‘Let the lifting up of my hands be an evening sacrifice’ (Ps. 141:2); and in another place, ‘The hands of the diligent make rich.’ (Prov. 10:4)

After this again the Spirit purifies the belly in its eating and drinking; for, so long as the desires of the soul were active within it, it was never satisfied in its greedy longing for food and drink, and in this way demons made their onslaught on the soul. About this the Spirit speaks by David, ‘With him that hath a high look and a proud heart I would not eat.’ (Cf. Ps. 101:5) And to those who seek purity in this, the Spirit assigns rules of purification, to eat in moderation sufficient for the strength of the body, but in so doing not to have the taste of concupiscence; and in this way the saying of Paul is fulfilled, ‘Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.’ (1 Cor. 10:31)

Then in regard to the sexual thoughts which are moved from below the belly, again the mind is taught by the Spirit, and makes discrimination between the three types of motion of which we spoke above, and perseveres in their purification, as the Spirit helps and strengthens it; and all the motions are quenched by the power of the Spirit, which makes peace in the whole body, and cuts off from it all passions. This is what St. Paul says: ‘Mortify your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil concupiscence’, and so on. (Col. 3:5)

After all this, it gives to the feet also their purification. At one time they were not making their steps aright according to God; but now the mind, being unified under the authority of the Spirit, effects their purification, that they should walk according to its will, going and ministering in good works, so that the whole body may be changed and renewed and be under the authority of the Spirit. And I think that when the whole body is purified, and has received the fullness of the Spirit, it has received some portion of that spiritual body which it is to assume in the resurrection of the just.

This I have said concerning the sicknesses of the soul which are mingled with the members of the bodily nature in which the soul moves and works; and so the soul becomes guide to the evil spirits which by it have been working in the limbs of the body. But I have said that the soul has also other passions apart from the body; and this we will now demonstrate. Pride is a sickness of the soul apart from the body; so also are boastfulness, envy, hatred, impatience, sloth and the rest. But if the soul gives itself to God wholeheartedly, God has mercy upon it and gives it the Spirit of Repentance, which testifies to it about each sin, that it may not again draw near to them; and show it those who rise up against it and seek to prevent it separating itself from them, contending with it greatly that it may not abide in repentance. But if it endures and obeys the Spirit which counsels it to repentance, suddenly the Creator has mercy on the weariness of its repentance, and seeing its bodily toils, in much prayer and fasting and supplication and learning of the words of God, in renunciation of the world, in humility and tears and perseverance in contrition, then the merciful God, seeing its toil and submission, has pity upon it and delivers it

The end of the letter which the holy Antony sent to the brethren.

Letter II

My dear and honourable brethren, I Antony greet you in the Lord.

Truly, my beloved in the Lord, not at one time only did God visit His creatures; but from the foundation of the world, whenever any have come to the Creator of all by the law of His covenant implanted in them, God is present with each one of these in His bounty and grace by His Spirit. But in the case of those rational natures in which that covenant grew cold, and their intellectual perception died, so that they were no longer able to know themselves according to their first condition, concerning them I say that they became altogether irrational, and worshipped the creation rather than the Creator. But the Creator of all in His great bounty visited us by the implanted law of the covenant. For He is immortal substance. And as many as became worthy of God and grew by His implanted law, and were taught by His Holy Spirit and received the Spirit of Adoption, these were able to worship their Creator as they ought: of whom Paul says that 'they received not the promise' on account of us. (Heb. 11:39)

And the Creator of All, who repents not of His love, desiring to visit our sickness and confusion, raised up Moses the Lawgiver, who gave us the law in writing, and founded for us the House of Truth, which is the Catholic Church, that makes us one in God; for He desires that we should be brought back to our first beginning. Moses built the house, yet did not complete it, but left it and went away. Then again God raised up the choir of the Prophets by His Spirit. And they also built on the foundation of Moses, but could not complete the house, and likewise left it and went away. And all of them, being clothed with the Spirit, saw that the wound was incurable, and none of the creatures was able to heal it, but only the Only-begotten, who is the very Mind of the Father and His Image, who after the pattern of His Image made every rational creature. For these knew that the Saviour is the great physician; and they assembled all together, and offered prayer for their members, that is, for us, crying out and saying, 'Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?' (Jer. 8:22) 'We would have healed her, but she is not healed: now therefore let us forsake her and go away.' (Jer. 51:9)

But God in His abundant and unfeigned love came to us, saying by His Saints, 'Son of man, make to thyself vessels of captivity.' (Ezek. 12:3) And He, 'being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross: wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' (Phil. 2:6-11) Now therefore, beloved, let this word be manifest among you, that the bounty of the Father spared not His Only-begotten for our sakes, but delivered Him up for the salvation of us all (cf. Rom. 8:32): 'He gave Himself for our sins' (Gal 1:4), and our iniquities humbled Him, and 'by His stripes we were healed' (Isa. 53:5), and by the word of His power He gathered us out of all lands, from one end of the earth to the other end of the world, and made resurrection of our minds, and remission of our sins, and taught us that we are members one of another.

I pray you, brethren, understand this great dispensation, that He was made like unto us, apart from sin. (Heb. 4:15) And each of the rational natures, for which principally the Saviour came, ought to examine his pattern, and know his mind, and discern between bad and good, so that he may be set free by His advent. For as many as are set free by His dispensation, are called the servants of God. And this is not yet perfection, but in its own time it is righteousness, and it leads to the adoption of sons. And Jesus our Saviour understood that these were near to receiving the Spirit of Adoption, and that they knew Him, having been taught by the Holy Spirit; and He said to them, 'Henceforth I will not call you servants, but brothers and friends: for all things that the Father hath taught me, I have made known unto you and taught you.' (Cf. John 15:15) Therefore, being made bold in mind, since they knew themselves and their intellectual substance, they gave voice and said, 'Even though we have known Thee after the flesh, yet now we know Thee so no more.' (Cf. 2 Cor. 5:16) And they received the Spirit of Adoption, and cried out saying, 'We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but we have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.' (Rom. 8:17)

But let this word be manifest unto you, beloved: Whosoever has not prepared his own amendment, nor toiled with all his strength, let such an one know that for him the advent of the Saviour will be unto judgement. For to some it is 'a savour of death unto death' and to some 'a savour of life unto life'. (2 Cor. 2:15) For He 'is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against.' (Luke 2:34) I beseech you, beloved, by the name of Jesus Christ, do not neglect your own salvation, but let each one of you rend his heart and not his garment (Joel 2:13), for fear lest we should be wearing this monastic habit in vain, and preparing for ourselves judgment. For behold, even now the time is near in which the works of every one of us shall be proved. And about the details of what I am saying, there are many other things to be written unto you. But it is written, 'Give occasion to the wise man, and he will be yet wiser.' (Prov. 9:9) I salute you all, from the least to the greatest. And may the God of peace keep you all, beloved. Amen.

Letter III

The rational man who has prepared himself to be set free through the advent of Jesus, knows himself in his intellectual substance. For he who knows himself knows the dispensations of the Creator and all that He does among His creatures. Dearly beloved in the Lord, our members and join theirs with the saints, I beseech you in the name of Jesus Christ, that God may give you the spirit of discernment, to perceive and know how great love I have towards you, that it is not a bodily love, but a spiritual, religious love. For concerning your bodily names there is no need to write to you at all, since they are transitory. If a man knows his true name, he will see also the name of truth. For this cause also while Jacob was wrestling all night long with the angel, his name was still Jacob; but when morning came, his name was called Israel, which means "Mind that sees God". (Gen. 32:24-30)

I think you are not ignorant that the enemies of virtue are always plotting against the truth. For this cause not at one time only did God visit His creatures, but from the beginning there were some who were prepared to come to their own Creator by the Law of His covenant implanted in them, being taught by it to worship their Creator as is right. But by reason of the spread of infirmity, and the heaviness of the body, and evil cares, the implanted law dried up and the senses of the soul grew weak, so that men could not find themselves as they truly are according to their creation, that is to say, an immortal substance, which is not to be dissolved with the body; therefore this substance could not be set free by its own righteousness. For this cause God dealt with them according to His bounty by the writing of the Law, to teach them to worship the Father as they ought. God is One, that is to say, Unity of intellectual substance. You should understand this, beloved, that in all places where there is not harmony, men draw wars upon themselves, and raise up lawsuits among themselves.

And the Creator saw that their wound was grown great, and needed the care of a physician – and Jesus Himself is their Creator, and Himself heals them – and He sent forerunners before His face. And we are not afraid to say of Moses the Lawgiver that he is one of His forerunners, and that the same Spirit which was with Moses worked also in the choir of the saints; and they all prayed for the Only-begotten Son of God. John again is one of His fore-runners: and for this cause the Law and the Prophets were until John, and ‘the kingdom of God suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.’ (Matt. 11:12-13) And being clothed with the Spirit, they saw that none among the creatures was able to heal that great wound, but only the bounty of God, that is to say His Only-begotten, whom He sent to be the Saviour of all the world; for He is the great physician, who is able to heal the great wound. And they asked God, and of His bounty the Father of creatures spared not His Only-begotten for our salvation, but delivered Him up for us all and for our iniquities. (Rom. 8:32) And He humbled himself, and by his stripes we all were healed. (Phil. 2:8, Isa. 53:5) And by the word of His power He gathered us out of all lands, from one end of the world to the other end of the world, and raised up our hearts from the earth, and taught us that we are members one of another.

I beseech you, dearly beloved in the Lord: understand that this Scripture is the command of God. For it is a great thing for us to understand the form that Jesus accepted for us: for He became in all things like unto us, apart from sin. (Heb. 4:15) Now therefore it is right that we also should set ourselves free by His advent, that by His foolishness He may make us wise, and by His poverty may enrich us, and by His weakness strengthen us, and confer resurrection upon us all, destroying him that had the power of death. (Heb. 2:14) Now therefore it is right that we also should set ourselves free by His advent, that by His foolishness He may make us wise, and by His poverty may enrich us, and by His weakness strengthen us, and confer resurrection upon us all, destroying him that had the power of death. (Heb. 2:14) Then we shall also cease to call upon Jesus for bodily needs. The advent of Jesus helps us to do what is good, until we have destroyed all our vices. Then Jesus will say to us, ‘Henceforth I call you not servants, but brethren.’ (Cf. John 15:15) When therefore the Apostles attained to receiving the Spirit of Adoption, then the Holy Spirit taught them to worship the Father as they ought.

And to me, this poor prisoner of Jesus, this time to which we have come has brought joy and lamentation and weeping. For many of our generation have put on the robe of religion, and are become beasts – for them I weep. Know therefore that for such men the advent of Jesus becomes a great judgment. But do you, my beloved in the Lord, know yourselves, that you may also know this time, and prepare to offer yourselves as a sacrifice acceptable to God.

Truly my beloved in the Lord – for I write to you as men of understanding, who are able to know yourselves – you know that he who knows himself knows God: and he who knows God, knows also the dispensations which He makes for His creatures. Let this word be manifest to you, that it is no bodily love that I have towards you, but a spiritual, religious love: for God is glorified in the council of His saints. (Ps. 88 [89]:8 – Septuagint) Prepare yourselves while you have intercessors to pray to God for your salvation, that He may pour into your hearts that fire which Jesus came to send upon the earth (Luke 12:49), that you may be able to exercise your hearts and senses, to know how to discern the good from the bad, the right from the left, reality from unreality. Jesus knew that the devil derives his power from the material things of this world, and He called His disciples and said to them, ‘Lay not up for yourselves treasure upon earth’, and ‘Take no thought for the morrow; for the morrow will take thought for itself.’ (Matt. 6:19, 34) Truly, my beloved, you know that when there is a fair wind, the captain of the ship boasts; but it is in the time of violent adverse winds that every skilled captain is revealed. Know now of what kind is this time to which we have come.

Of the details for the word of freedom there were many things to say to you, But ‘give occasion to the wise man, and he will be yet wiser.’ (Prov. 9:9) I salute you, from the least to the greatest, in the Lord, Amen.

Letter IV

Antony wishes all his dear brethren joy in the Lord. Members of the Church, I will never grow weary of remembering you. I want you to know that the love that is between me and you is no bodily love, but a spiritual, religious love. For bodily friendship has no firmness or stability, being moved by strange winds. Whosoever fears God and keeps His commandments, is the servant of God. And in this service is not perfection, but the righteousness which leads to adoption. For this cause the Prophets also and the Apostles, the holy band whom God chose, entrusting to them the apostolic preaching, by the goodness of God the Father became prisoners in Christ Jesus. For Paul says, ‘Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle’ (Eph. 3:1; Rom. 1:1): so that the written law works with us in a good servitude, until we are able to master every passion, and to become perfect in the good ministry of virtue through this apostolic state.

For if a man draws near to grace, then Jesus will say to him, ‘I will no longer call you servants, but I will call you my friends and my brothers: for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.’ (John 15:15) For those who have drawn near, and have been taught by the Holy Spirit, have known themselves according to their intellectual substance. And in their knowledge of themselves they have cried out and said, ‘For we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father’ (Rom. 8:15): that we may know what God has given us – ‘If we are sons, then are we heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with the saints.’ (Rom. 8:17)

My dear brethren and joint heirs with the saints, not foreign to you are all the virtues, but they are yours, if you are not under guilt from this fleshly life, but are manifest before God. For the Spirit enters not the soul of one whose heart is defiled, nor the body that sins; a holy power it is, removed from all deceit.

Truly, my beloved, I write to you as to reasonable men, who have been able to know yourselves. For he who knows himself, knows God: and he who knows God, is worthy to worship Him as is right. My beloved in the Lord, know yourselves. For they who know themselves from their time: and they who know their time, are able to stand firm, and not be moved about by divers tongues. For in regard to Arius, who has risen up in Alexandria, and spoken strange words about the Only-begotten, giving a beginning to Him who has no beginning, and an end to Him who is ineffable among men, and motion to Him who is without motion – if one man sin against another, they entreat God for him; but if a man sin against God, whom will they entreat for him? (Cf. 1 Sam. 2:25) That man therefore has taken upon himself a great matter, and a wound incurable. For if such a one had known himself, his tongue would not have spoken that of which he had no knowledge. But it is manifest that he did not know himself.

Idren, holy Israelites in their intellectual substance. There is no need to name your bodily names which will pass away, for you are Israelite children. Truly, my children, the love that is between me and you is no bodily love, but a spiritual, religious love. For this cause I grow not weary of praying to my God day and night for you, that you may be able to know the grace He has wrought towards you. For not at one time only did God visit His creatures, but from the beginning of the world He makes disposition for His creatures, and in every generation rouses up each one by opportunities and by grace. Now, my children, neglect not to cry out day and night to God, constraining the bounty of the Father, and in His bounty He will give you help from heaven, teaching you until you know what is good for you.

Truly, my children, we are dwelling in our death, and staying in the house of the robber, and bound with the bonds of death. Now therefore, give not sleep to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids (Ps. 132:4), that you may offer yourselves a sacrifice to God in all holiness, which none can inherit without sanctification. Truly, my beloved in the Lord, let this word be manifest to you, that you may do good, and so refresh all the saints, and give gladness to the ministry of the angels, and joy to the coming of Jesus: for never yet have they had rest on our behalf until this hour. And to me also, this poor wretch, who am dwelling in this house of clay – you will give joy to my soul. Truly, my children, this sickness and low estate of ours is a grief to all the saints, and they weep and moan for us before the Creator of all. And for this cause the God of all is angry at our evil works, because of the groans for the saints. And again, our progress in righteousness gives gladness to the people of the saints, and they make much prayer and joyful exultation before our Creator. And He Himself, the Creator of all, rejoices over our works at the testimony of His saints, and grants us gifts of His grace without measure.

That you may know therefore that God always loves His creatures – their substance being immortal, not to be dissolved with their bodies, - He saw how the intellectual nature had gone down altogether into the abyss, dead altogether, and the implanted law of the covenant was dried up. And of His goodness He visited mankind by Moses. And Moses founded the house of truth, and desired to heal the great wound, and wanted to bring them back to the first union and could not do it, and withdrew from them. Then again the choir of the Prophets built upon Moses' foundation, and could not heal the great wound of their members. And seeing that their power had ceased, again all the peoples of the saints were gathered together in one, and offered prayer before their Creator and said, 'Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered? O Lord, we would have healed Babylon, ad she is not healed. Now let us forsake her and flee from her.' (Jer. 8:22; 51:9)

And as all the saints asked the goodness of the Father concerning His Only-begotten, because unless He Himself should come hither, none of the creatures was able to heal the great wound of men, for the sake of this the Father in His goodness spoke and said, 'Son of man, make to thyself instruments of captivity, and go into captivity willingly.' (Ezek. 12:3 – Septuagint; cf. Jer. 46:19) The Father spared not His Only-begotten, for the salvation of us all, but delivered Him up for our sins. (Cf. Rom. 8:32) For our iniquities humbled Him, and by His stripes we all are healed (Isa. 53:5): and He gathered us from one end of the world to the other, making resurrection of our minds from the earth, and teaching us that we are 'members one of another'. (Eph. 4:25) Take heed, my children, lest that word of Paul be accomplished upon us, that we should 'have the form of godliness, but deny the power thereof.' (2 Tim. 3:5) Now let each one of you rend his heart, and weep before Him and say, 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me?' (Ps. 116:11) Again I fear, my children, lest that word be accomplished upon us, 'What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to corruption?' (Ps. 30:9)

Truly, my children, I speak to you as to wise men, that you may understand what I say to you, and this I testify to you: unless each one of you shall hate all nature of earthly possession, and renounce it and all its works with all his heart, and stretch out the hands of his heart to heaven, to the Father of all, he cannot be saved. If he do what I have said, God will have pity upon him for his labour, and grant him that invisible fire which will burn up all impurity from him, and our principal spirit will be purified; and then the Holy Spirit will dwell in us, and Jesus will abide with us, and so we shall be able to worship God as we ought. But as long as we have peace with the natures of the world, we are enemies of God and of His angels and of all His saints.

Now therefore, my beloved, I beseech you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ not to neglect your salvation, that this transitory life may not deprive you of eternal life, nor the skin of a corruptible body deprive you of the kingdom of light ineffable, nor a guilty seat lose you the angelic thrones of judgment. Truly, my children, my heart is in wonder and my spirit in terror, that we all take our pleasure like drunkard on new wine; for each one of us has sold himself of his own free choice, and we are dominated of our own free choice, and we are not willing to lift up our eyes to heaven, to seek the glory of heaven and the work of all his saints, and to walk in their footsteps.

Now therefore understand that, be it the holy heavens or angels or archangels or thrones or dominions or cherubim or seraphim or sun or moon or stars, or patriarchs or prophets or apostles, or devil or satan or evil spirits or powers of the air, or (to say no more) be it man or woman, in the beginning of their creation they are all derived from one – all save only the perfect and blessed Trinity of Father and Son and Holy Spirit. And from the evil conduct of some, it became needful that God would set names upon them according to their works. And to those who made most progress, He gave more abundant glory.

Letter VI

Antony to all the dear brethren who are at Arsinoe and in its neighbourhood, and to those who are with you, greeting. All you who have prepared yourselves to go to God, I greet you in the Lord, beloved, from the least to the greatest, both men and women, holy Israelite children in your intellectual substance. Truly, my children, great blessedness is come to you, for great is the grace that has been set upon you in this your generation. And it befits you, on account of Him who has visited you, not to grow weary in your striving, till you offer yourselves a sacrifice to God in all holiness, without which none can receive the inheritance.

Truly, my beloved, this is a great thing for you, that you should ask concerning the understanding of the intellectual substance, in which is neither male nor female, but it is an immortal substance, which has a beginning but no end. And you ought to know of it, that it has fallen altogether into humiliation and great disgrace, which has come upon all of us; yet it is an immortal substance, not to be dissolved with the body. For this cause God saw that its wound was incurable; and because it was so grave, He visited mankind in His clemency, and of His goodness after times had passed He delivered to them a Law, helping them through Moses the Lawgiver. And Moses founded for them the House of Truth, and wanted to heal that great wound, and could not complete the building of the house.

Thereafter again all the choirs of the saints gathered together and asked the Father's kindness concerning our Saviour, that He might come to us for the salvation of us all. For He is our great and faithful high priest and true physician, who is able to heal the great wound. So at the Father's will He emptied Himself of His glory. He was God, and took upon Him the form of a slave (Phil. 2:7-8), and gave Himself for our sins, and our sins humbled Him, and with His wound we all are healed. (Isa. 53:5) Therefore, my dear children in the Lord, I want you to know that because of our foolishness, and because of our weakness the form of weakness, and because of our poverty the form of poverty, and because of our death put on the form of a mortal, and endured in all this for our sake. Truly, my beloved in the Lord, we ought not to give sleep to our eyes or slumber to our eyelids (Ps. 132:4), but we should pray and constrain the goodness of the Father, until He has mercy on us; and in this way we shall give refreshment to the coming of Jesus, and power to the ministry of the saints, who work for us on the earth in the time of our negligence, and we shall rouse them to eagerness that they may help us in the time of our tribulation. Then 'he that soweth and he that reapeth will rejoice together.' (John 4:36.)

I want you to know, my children, my great grief which I have for you, when I see the great confusion which is coming upon us all, and consider the great labour of the saints, and their groanings which they are always uttering before God on our behalf, as they see all the labour of their Creator, and all the evil counsels of the devil and his ministers, the evil they meditate always for our perdition, since their portion is to be in hell, and for this cause they want us to be lost with them, and to be with the multitude. Truly, my beloved in the Lord, I speak to you as to wise men, that you may know all the dispensations of our Creator which are made for us, being given to us by manifest and hidden preachings. For we are called rational, yet have put on the mind of irrational beings. Or do you not know what the many machinations and arts of the devil are like: for the evil spirits envy us, ever since they knew that we have tried to see our disgrace, and have sought a way of fleeing from their works which they sow among us, but even many of us laugh at their machinations. And they know of the indulgence of our Creator that in this world He has condemned them to death, and has prepared for them to inherit gehenna because of their negligence.

I want you to know, my children, that I cease not to pray God for you night and day, that He may open for you they eyes of your hearts, to see the many hidden malignities which the evil spirits pour upon us daily in this present time. I want God to give you a heart of knowledge and a spirit of discernment, that you may be able to offer your hearts as a pure sacrifice before the Father, in great holiness, without blemish. Truly, my children, they envy us at all times, with their evil counsel, and hidden persecution, and subtle malice, and spirit of seduction, and their blasphemous thoughts, and their infidelities which they sow in our heart every day, and their hardenings of heart, and their many griefs which they bring upon us at every hour, and the faintings with which they make our heart to faint daily, and all the anger and mutual slander which they teach us, and the self-justifications in what we do, and the judgments which they set in our hearts, causing us, when we are sitting alone, to judge our fellows though they dwell not with us; and the contempt which they set in our hearts by pride, when we are hard-hearted and despise each other, when we are bitter against each other with our heard words, grieving at every hour, accusing each other and not ourselves, thinking that our toil is from our fellows, sitting in judgment on what appears outwardly, while the robber is all within our house; and the disputes and divisions wherein we dispute against each other until we establish our own word, to appear justified in the face of each other.

The evil spirits make us zealous for works which we are not able to perform, and cause us to faint in tasks on which we are engaged, and which are profitable for us. Therefore they make us laugh when it is time for weeping, and weep when it is time for laughter, and simply turn us aside at every time from the right way. And there are many other deceits whereby they make us their slaves, but there is no time now to describe all this. But when they fill our heart with these deceits, and we feed on them and they become our food, then God is patient with us and He visits us, to bring us back again from this heavy body, that we may leave it. And then our evil works which we wrongly committed will be manifested to us in the body subjected to punishment; and we shall clothe ourselves in this body once more – for God in His patience permits this – and our last state will be worse than the first. (Matt. 12:45.) Therefore weary not of praying the goodness of the Father, if perchance His help may come upon you, that you may teach yourselves to know what is right.

Truly I tell you, my children, that this vessel in which we dwell is perdition for us, and a house full of war. In truth, my children, I tell you that every man who delights in his own will, and is subdued to his own thoughts, and takes up the things sown in his heart, and rejoices in them, and supposes in his heart that these are some great chosen mystery, and justifies himself in what he does – the soul of such a man is a lair of evil spirits, counseling him to evil, and his body a store of evil mysteries which it hides in itself: and over such a one the demons have great power, because he has not dishonoured them before all men.

Do you not know that they have not one uniform method of hunting, that we should know it and flee from it? Seek, and you will not find their sin and iniquity revealed bodily, for they are not visible bodily; but you must know that we serve as bodies for them, for our soul receives their wickedness, and when it receives them, then it brings them to manifestation by the body in which we dwell. Now, then, my children, let us give them no place; otherwise we shall stir up the wrath of God against us, and they will go away home and laugh at us. For they know that our perdition is from our neighbour, and our life also is from our neighbour. Who ever saw God, to rejoice with Him and retain Him within himself, so that God should not leave him, but help him while he dwells in this heavy body? Or who ever saw a demon in his fight against us, while he prevents us from doing good and attacks us, standing in a bodily place, so that we fear him and flee from him? For they are in secret, and we make them manifest by our works. For they are all from one source in their intellectual substance; but in their flight from God, great diversity arises between them through the variety of their working.

That is why different names have been given to them by reason of the operation of each one of them. So some of them are called archangels, and some of them thrones and dominions, principalities and powers and cherubim; and these names are given to them when they have kept the will of their Creator. Again, the evil way of others made it necessary to name them devil and satan, because of their evils state; and others were named demons, and evil and impure spirits, and seducing spirits, and princes of this world. And many other varieties are there among them. Again, there are those who have opposed them in this heavy body in which we dwell; and some of these were named patriarchs, and some prophets and kings and priest and judges and apostles, and many others were made elect for their good conduct. And all these names are given them, be they man or woman, according to the different principle of their works; for all are from one.

For this cause, therefore, he who sins against his neighbour sins against himself, and he who does evil to his neighbour does evil to himself; and he who does good to his neighbour, does good to himself. Otherwise, who is able to do ill to God, or who is there who could hurt Him, or who could refresh Him, or who could ever serve Him, or who could ever bless Him, that He should need his blessing, or who is able to honour Him with the honour that is His due, or to exalt Him as He serves? Therefore, while we are still clothed in this heavy body, let us rouse up God in ourselves by incitement of each other, and deliver ourselves to death for our souls and for each other; and if we do this, we shall be manifesting the substance of His compassion for us. Let us not be lovers of ourselves, so as not to become subject to their inconstant power. For he who knows himself, knows all men. Therefore it is written, 'He called all things out of nothingness into being.' (Cf. Wisd. 1:14.) Such statements refer to our intellectual nature, which is hidden in this body of corruption, but which did not belong to it from the beginning, and is to be freed from it. But he who can love himself, loves all men.

My dear children, I pray that this may not be a toil to you, and that you may not grow weary of loving one another. Lift up your body in which you are clothed, and make it an altar, and set thereon all your thoughts, and leave there very evil counsel before the Lord, and lift up tht hands of your heart to Him, that is, to the creator Mind, and pray to God that He may grant you His great invisible fire, that it may descend from heaven and consume the altar and all that is on it, and that all the priests of Baal, who are the contrary works of the enemy, may fear and flee from your face as from the face of Elijah the prophet. And then you will see a cloud 'like a man's head' over the sea, which will bring you the spiritual rain, which is the comfort of the Comforter Spirit. (Cf. 1 Kings 18:38-44.)

My dear children in the Lord, holy Israelite children, there is no need to bless or to name your bodily names, which will pass away. For you are not ignorant of the love between me and you, that it is no bodily love, but a spiritual, religious love. And herein I am confident that it is a great blessedness for you are not ignorant of the love between me and you, that it is no bodily love, but a spiritual, religious love. And herein I am confident that it is a great blessedness for you that you have tried to know your own ignominy, and to strengthen the invisible substance which does not pass away with the body. And in this way I think that your blessedness is brought about in this time. Therefore let this word be always manifest to you, that you may not think that your progress and entry into religion has been your own work, but may understand that you are always helped by some divine power. Strive to offer yourselves as a sacrifice to God always, and give gladness to the power that helps you, and refreshment to God at His coming, and to all the band of the saints, and to me also, this poor wretch, who am dwelling in this house of clay and darkness. For this reason I tell you these things, refreshing you, and praying that, since we are all created of the same invisible substance, which has a beginning but no end, we may love one another with a single love. For all who know themselves, know that they are of one immortal substance.

I want you to know this, that Jesus Christ our Lord is Himself the true Mind of the Father. By Him all the fullness of every rational nature is made in the image of His image, and He Himself is the head of all creation, and of His body the Church. (Col. 1:15-18.) Therefore we are al members one of another, and the body of Christ, and the head cannot say to the feet, 'I have no need of you'; and if one member suffers, the whole body is moved and suffers with it. (Eph. 4:25; 1 Cor. 12:21, 26, 27.) But if a member is estranged from the body, and has no communication with the head, but is delighted by the passions of its own body, this means that its wound is incurable, and it has forgotten its beginning and it s end. And therefore the Father of creatures, moved with compassion towards this our wound, which could not be healed by any of the creatures, but only by the goodness of the Father, sent forth to us His Only-begotten, who because of our bondage took upon Himself the form of a bondservant (Phil. 2:7), and gave Himself up for our sins; for our iniquities humbled Him, and by His wound we all are healed (Isa. 53:5); and He gathered us out of all regions, till He should make resurrection of our hearts from the earth, and teach us that we are all of one substance, and members one of another. Therefore we ought greatly to love one another. For he who loves his neighbour, loves God: and he who loves God, loves his own soul.

Let this word be manifest to you, my dear children in the Lord, holy Israelite children, and make yourselves ready to go to the Lord, and to offer yourselves as sacrifices to God in all purity, which none can acquire without purification. Or do you not know, beloved, that the enemies of virtue are always plotting evil against the truth? For this cause also, beloved, give heed, and give not sleep to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids. (Ps. 132:4.) Cry out to your Creator day and night, that help may come forth to you from on high, and may encompass your hearts and thoughts in Christ. Truly, my children, we are set in the house of the robber, and bound with the bonds of death. I tell you truly, my beloved, that our carelessness and our humiliation and our turning side from the way, are not a loss to us only, but they are weariness for the angels and for all the saints in Christ Jesus. Truly, my children, our humiliation gives grief to them all: and again our salvation and glory gives joy and refreshment to them all. And know that the kindness of the Father ceases not, always from its first motion until today, to do good to us, that we may not bring about our own death by misusing the fee will with which we were created. For this cause they encompass us at all times; as it is written, 'The angel of the Lord tarrieth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them.' (Ps. 34:7.)

Now, my children, I want you to know, ever since this motion of God's love came about until now, all who have become estranged from virtue and acted wickedly, are reckoned as children of the devil; and those who are of the devil know it, and that is why they try to change each of us according to their own will. For knowing this, that the devil fell from heaven through pride, for this cause also they attack first those who have attained to a very great measure, seeking by means of pride and vainglory to turn them against one another. They know that in this way they can cut us off from God, for they know that he who loves his neighbour loves God; and for this cause the enemies of virtue sow division in our hearts, that we may be filled with great enmity against each other, and not hold any converse with our neighbour even from a distance.

Truly, my children, I want you to know that there are many who have pursue asceticism throughout their life, but lack of discernment killed them. Truly, my children, I think it is no great wonder, if you neglect yourselves and do not discern your works, that you should fall into the hands of the devil, when you think you are near to God, and that in your expectation of the light, darkness should overtake you. For what need was there at all for Jesus to gird Himself with a towel and wash the feet of His inferiors, but that He should make this an example, to teach those who should turn to Him their own first beginning? (Cf. John 13:4-17.) For the beginning of their motion is the pride which came at the first. That is why, except through great humility in your whole heart and mind and spirit and soul and body, you will not be able to inherit the Kingdom of God.

Truly, my children in the Lord, I ask my Creator day and night, from whom I have the pledge of His Spirit (2 Cor. 1:22), to open for you the eyes of your heart to know this my love which I have towards you, and the ears of your soul to perceive your own confusion. For he who knows his own disgrace, seeks again his elect grace: and whoso knows his own death, also knows is life eternal. I speak to you as to wise men, my children: truly I am afraid lest hunger overtake you on the way, in the place where we have need to be made rich. I had hoped to see you face to face in the body. But I look forward to the time which is near, when we shall be able to see face to face watch other's very selves, when pain and sorrow and sighing shall fee away, and joy shall be upon the heads of all. (Cf. Isa. 35:10.) There are many other things I wanted to tell you. But give occasion of wisdom to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser. (Prov. 9:9.) I salute you all, my dear children, by name.

Letter VII

My children, 'Ye know the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might become rich.' (2 Cor. 8:9.) Behold, His bondage had made us free, and His weakness has strengthened us, and His foolishness has made us wise. Again, by His death He brings to pass our resurrection, that we may be able to lift up our voice on high and say, 'Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him so no more, but in Christ each is a new creature.' (2 Cor. 5:16-17.) Truly, my beloved in the Lord, I tell you that as to the details of the word of liberty whereby we have been set free, I have still many other things to say to you, but there is not time now to tell you them. Now I greet you all, my dear children in the Lord, holy Israelite children in your intellectual substance. Truly it befitted you, who have drawn near to your Creator, to seek the salvation of your souls by the implanted law of the covenant. But by the abundance of wickedness and stirring up of evil and the cupidity of the passions, the implanted law of the covenant dried up, and the senses of our soul perished, and therefore we could not perceive the glorious intellectual substance, because of the death into which we had fallen. Therefore it is written in the divine Scriptures, 'As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.' (1 Cor. 15:22.) Now therefore He is the life of every rational nature created by Him after the likeness of His own image; who Himself is the true Mind of the Father, and unaltered Image of the Father. (Heb. 1:3.) But the creatures made in His image are of changeable substance; for evil is come about in us, wherein we have all died, since it is alien to the nature of our intellectual substance. Therefore through all that is foreign to nature, we have made for ourselves a home dark and full of war. An this I testify to you, that we had lost all knowledge of virtue. Therefore our Father God saw our infirmity, that we were become incapable of clothing ourselves aright in the truth; therefore in His goodness He came to visit His creatures by the ministry of the saints.

I pray you all in the Lord, beloved, to understand what I write to you; for it is no bodily love that I have towards you, but a spiritual, religious love. Prepare yourselves therefore to go to your Creator, and 'rend your hearts and not your garments' (Joel 2:13); and ask yourselves what we can 'render unto the Lord for all the benefits that He has done unto us' (Ps. 116:11), who even in our dwelling here and our humiliation, remembered us in His great goodness and His infinite love, and 'hath not dealt with us after our sins' (Ps. 103:10); who even made the sun to minister to us in this our dark home, and appointed the moon and all the stars for our ministers, commanding them to be subject unto vanity that will pass away (cf. Rom. 8:30), for the strengthening of our bodies. And there are other powers also, hidden powers, which He made ministers unto us, powers which we see not with the bodily eye.

Now, therefore, what shall we answer Him in the day of judgment, or what good is lacking from Him to us, that He has not done for us? Did the patriarchs not suffer for us, or the priest not teach us, or judges and kings not fight for us? Did not the prophets die for us? Or were not the apostles persecuted for us? Or did not His beloved Son die for us all? And now we ought to prepare ourselves to go to our Creator in holiness. For the Creator saw that His creatures, even the saints, were not able to heal the great wound of their own members. Therefore, being the Father of the creatures, He knew the infirmity of all their minds, and showed mercy towards them according to His great love, and spared not His only-begotten Son for the salvation of us all, but delivered Him up for our sins. (Rom 8:32). And our iniquities humbled Him, and with His stripes we all are healed. (Isa. 53:5.) And He gathered us from all regions by the word of His power, till He should make the resurrection of our minds from the earth, teaching us that we are members one of another. (Eph. 4:25.)

Therefore it behoves us all, approaching our Creator, to exercise our minds and senses to understand the distinction between good and evil, and to know the whole dispensation of Jesus which He made in His advent; how He was made in all things like unto us, apart from sin only. (Heb. 4:15.) But by reason of our great wickedness and stirring up of evil, and the grievousness of our inconstancy, the advent of Jesus was to some foolishness, and to some a stumbling-block; but for others, gain; and for some, wisdom and power; and for some, resurrection and life. (1 Cor. 1:23-24.) And let this be clear to you, that His advent is made a judgment for all the world. For it says, 'Behold the days come, saith the Lord, and they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them; and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; and I will make my name heard unto the ends of the earth: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may be brought under the judgment of God; because that when they knew God they glorified Him not as their Creator' (Jer. 31:34; Rom. 3:19, 1:21), through their unintelligence, whereby they were unable to apprehend His wisdom, but each one of us sold himself to his own will for evil, and became slave to it.

Therefore, also, Jesus emptied himself of His glory, and took upon himself the form of a slave (Phil. 2:8), that His bondage might make us free. And we were become foolish, and in our foolishness committed every kind of evil; and again He took the form of foolishness, that by His foolishness we might be made wise. And we were become poor, and in our poverty lacked all virtue; therefore again He took the form of poverty, that by His poverty He might make us rich in all wisdom and understanding. (2 Cor. 8:9.) Not only this, but He even took upon himself the form of our weakness, that by His weakness He might make us strong. And He became obedient to the Father in everything unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2:8), that by His death He might work the resurrection of us all, that He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. (Heb. 2:14.) And if indeed we set ourselves free through His advent, we shall be found disciple of Jesus, and receive in Him the divine inheritance.

Truly, my beloved in the Lord, I am greatly troubled and vexed in my spirit: for we wear the habit and have the name of saints, and boast of this before unbelievers. And I fear lest the word Paul be fulfilled in us, which says, 'having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof'. (2 Tim. 3:5.) And out of the love which I have towards you, I pray to God for you, that you may consider your own life, and inherit things unseen. Truly, my children, though we should give ourselves with all our power to seek the Lord, what thanks do we deserve? For we are only seeking our own reward; we are only seeking what is natural to our substance. For every man who seeks God or services Him, does what is natural to our substance. For every man who seeks God or serves Him, does what is natural to his substance. But every sin of which we are guilty, is foreign and unnatural to our substance.

Truly, my dear children in the Lord, who have prepared to offer yourselves a sacrifice to God in holiness, we have hid from you nothing needful, but testify unto you that we have seen, that the enemies of virtue are always meditating evil against the truth. Of this also be advised, that he who is after the flesh always persecutes him who is after the spirit (Gal. 4:29), and all who will live godly in Christ shall suffer persecution. (2 Tim. 3:12.) Therefore Jesus, knowing all the tribulations and temptations were coming in the world upon the apostles, and that by their patience they would destroy all the power of the enemy, that is, idolatry, comforted them and said, 'In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world.' (John 16:33.) And He taught them saying, 'Fear not the world: for all the evils of the world are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed. If they persecuted the prophets which were before you, they will also persecute you: if they hate me, they will hate you also. But fear not: for by your patience you will destroy all the power of the enemy.' (Rom. 8:18; Matt. 5:12; John 15:20; Luke 21:19.)

Of the details of the word of liberty wherewith we are west free, I have much to tell you. But vie occasion of wisdom to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser. (Prov. 9:9.) Yet we have need of mutual consolation in our paltry words. But if the mind has attained true perception, it needs no more the falsehood of bodily speech. But I rejoice in you all, beloved in the Lord, holy Israelite children in your intellectual substance. For first the rational man needs to know himself, and then to know the things of God, and all the bounties which His grace is ever showing towards him; and then to know that all sin and guilt is foreign to the nature of his intellectual substance. For at last our Creator seeing that by our own free choice we possess these unnatural things in which here we were dying, and being for this reason moved with compassion towards us, of His goodness wanted to bring us back to that beginning without end, and visited His creatures, not sparing Himself for the salvation of us all. He gave Himself up for our sins (Gal. 1:4); and our iniquities humbled Him, but with His stripes we were healed. (Isa. 53:5.) And by the word of His power He gathered us out of all lands, from one end of the earth to the other end of the world, and taught us that we are members one of another. (Eph. 4:25.) Therefore, if indeed we have prepared to set ourselves free through His advent, let us examine ourselves to see what as rational men we can 'render unto the Lord for all the benefits that He hath done unto us.' (Ps. 116:11.) And so I also, the poor wretch who writes this letter, being roused from the sleep of death, have spent most of the time that I have been upon earth mourning and weeping, saying 'What can I render unto the Lord for all the benefits that He hath done unto me?' For nothing is lacking to us, which He has not done for us in our humiliation. He made His angels minister to us. He bade His prophets to prophesy, and His apostles to preach the Gospel to us. And as the greatest of all His ordinances, He made His Only-begotten Son to take upon Himself the form of a slave for us.

I beseech you therefore, my beloved in the Lord, you who are joint heirs with the saints, to rouse up your minds in the fear of God. For let this word be clear to you, that John the Forerunner of Jesus baptized unto remissions of sins for our sakes, but by the Spirit we were sanctified in Christ. Let us now prepare in all holiness to cleanse the senses of our mind, that we may be clean by the baptism of Jesus, so as to offer ourselves a sacrifice to God. And this Paraclete Spirit comforts us and brings us back to our beginning, to recover our inheritance and the dominion of that same comforting Spirit. Therefore, 'as many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ; there is neither male nor female, there is neither bond nor free.' (Gal. 3:27-28.) And every bodily tongue fails them, when they receive the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, at the time when they take up the holy inheritance, and worship the Father as is right, in spirit and in truth. (John 4:24.) And let this word be clear to you; and do not wait for a future judgment in that coming of Jesus. For already His advent is judgment to all of us.

Now therefore know that the saints and the righteous, clothed in the Spirit, pray for us always that we may be humbled before God, and put on again the garment that we had put off, in our intellectual substance. For often also has that voice come from God the Father to all who are clothed in the Spirit, saying to them, 'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith the Lord: priests, speak to the heart of Jerusalem.' (Isa. 40:1-2.) For God always visits His creatures, and bestows His goodness upon them.

Truly, my beloved, of the details of the word of liberty with which we are set free, there are very many other things to tell you. But it says, 'Give occasion of wisdom to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser.' (Prov. 9:9.) But may the God of peace give you grace and the spirit of discernment, to know that what I write to you is the commandment of the Lord. May the God of all grace keep you holy in the Lord to your last breath. I pray God always for the salvation of you all, my beloved in the Lord. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

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