Treatise 2. On the Dress of Virgins

Cyprian of Carthage (c. AD 200–258)

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Argument.-Cyprian Celebrates the Praises of Discipline, and Proves Its Usefulness from Scripture. Then, Describing the Glory, Honour, and Merits of Virginity, and of Those Who Had Vowed and Dedicated Their Virginity to Christ, He Teaches that Continence Not Only Consists in Fleshly Purity, But Also in Seemliness of Dress and Ornament, and that Even Wealth Did Not Excuse Superfluous Care for Dress on the Part of Those Who Had Already Renounced the World. Rather, Since the Apostle Prescribes Even to Married Women a Dress to Be Regulated by Fitting Limits, Moderation Ought Even More to Be Observed by a Virgin. Therefore, Even If She Be Wealthy, She Should Consider Certainly How to Use Wealth, But for Good Purposes, for Those Things Which God Has Commanded, to Wit, for Being Spent on the Poor. Moreover, Also, He Forbids to Virgins Those Things Which Had Negligently Come into Use, as Being Present at Weddings, as Well as Going to Promiscuous Bathing-Places. Finally, in a Brief Epilogue, Declaring What Benefit the Virtue of Continency Affords, and What Evil It is Without, He Concludes the Book.

1. Discipline, the safeguard of hope, the bond of faith, the guide of the way of salvation, the stimulus and nourishment of good dispositions, the teacher of virtue, causes us to abide always in Christ, and to live continually for God, and to attain to the heavenly promises and to the divine rewards. To follow her is wholesome, and to turn away from her and neglect her is deadly. The Holy Spirit says in the Psalms, ”Keep discipline, lest perchance the Lord be angry, and ye perish from the right way, when His wrath is quickly kindled against you.” And again: ”But unto the ungodly saith God, ”Why dost thou preach my laws, and takest my covenant into thy mouth? Whereas thou hatest discipline, and hast cast my words behind thee.” And again we read: ”He that casteth away discipline is miserable.” And from Solomon we have received the mandates of wisdom, warning us: ”My son, despise not thou the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him: for whom the Lord loveth He correcteth.” But if God rebukes whom He loves, and rebukes him for the very purpose of amending him, brethren also, and especially priests, do not hate, but love those whom they rebuke, that they may mend them; since God also before predicted by Jeremiah, and pointed to our times, when he said, ”And I will give you shepherds according to my heart: and they shall feed you with the food of discipline.? ”

2. But if in Holy Scripture discipline is frequently and everywhere prescribed, and the whole foundation of religion and of faith proceeds from obedience and fear; what is more fitting for us urgently to desire, what more to wish for and to hold fast, than to stand with roots strongly fixed, and with our houses based with solid mass upon the rock unshaken by the storms and whirlwinds of the world, so that we may come by the divine precepts to the rewards of God? considering as well as knowing that our members, when purged from all the filth of the old contagion by the sanctification of the layer of life, are God's temples, and must not be violated nor polluted, since he who does violence to them is himself injured. We are the worshippers and priests of those temples; let us obey Him whose we have already begun to be. Paul tells us in his epistles, in which he has formed us to a course of living by divine teaching, "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a great price; glorify and bear God in your body. Let us glorify and bear God in a pure and chaste body, and with a more complete obedience;

and since we have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, let us obey and give furtherance to the empire of our Redeemer by all the obedience of service, that nothing impure or profane may be brought into the temple of God, lost He should be offended, and forsake the temple which He inhabits. The words of the Lord giving health and teaching, as well curing as warning, are: "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee. He gives the course of life, He gives the law of innocency after He has conferred health, nor suffers the man afterwards to wander with free and unchecked reins, but more severely threatens him who is again enslaved by those same things of which he had been healed, because it is doubtless a smaller fault to have sinned before, while as yet you had not known God's discipline; but there is no further pardon for sinning after you have begun to know God. And, indeed, let as well men as women, as well boys as girls; let each sex and every age observe this, and take care in this respect, according to the religion and faith which they owe to God, that what is received holy and pure from the condescension of the Lord be preserved with a no less anxious fear.

3. My address is now to virgins, whose glory, as it is more eminent, excites the greater interest. This is the flower of the ecclesiastical seed, the grace and ornament of spiritual endowment, a joyous disposition, the wholesome and uncorrupted work of praise and honour, God's image answering to the holiness of the Lord, the more illustrious portion of Christ's flock. The glorious fruitfulness of Mother Church rejoices by their means, and in them abundantly flourishes; and in proportion as a copious virginity is added to her number, so much the more it increases the joy of the Mother. To these I speak, these I exhort with affection rather than with power; not that I would claim-last and least, and very conscious of my lowliness as I am-any right to censure, but because, being unceasingly careful even to solicitude, I fear more from the onset of Satan.

4. For that is not an empty carefulness nor a vain fear, which takes counsel for the way of salvation, which guards the commandments of the Lord and of life; so that they who have dedicated themselves to Christ, and who depart from carnal concupiscence, and have vowed

themselves to God as well in the flesh as in the spirit, may consummate their work, destined as it is to a great reward, and may not study any longer to be adorned or to please anybody but their Lord, from whom also they expect the reward of virginity; as He Himself says: "All men cannot receive this word, but they to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb; and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men; and there are eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake." Again, also by this word of the angel the gift of continency is set forth, and virginity is preached: "These are they which have not defiled themselves with women, for they have remained virgins; these are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." For not only thus does the Lord promise the grace of continency to men, and pass over women; but since the woman is a portion of the man, and is taken and formed from him, God in Scripture almost always speaks to the Protoplast, the first formed, because they are two in one flesh, and in the male is at the same time signified the woman also.

5. But if continency follows Christ, and virginity is destined for the kingdom of God, what have they to do with earthly dress, and with ornaments, wherewith while they are striving to please men they offend God? Not considering that it is declared, "They who please men are put to confusion, because God hath despised them; " and that Paul also has gloriously and sublimely uttered, "If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But continence and modesty consist not alone in purity of the flesh, but also in seemliness, as well as in modesty of dress and adornment; so that, according to the apostle, she who is unmarried may be holy both in body and in spirit. Paul instructs and teaches us, saying, "He that is unmarried careth for the things of the Lord, how he may please God: but he who has contracted marriage careth for the things which are of this world, how he may please his wife. So both the virgin and the unmarried woman consider those things which are the Lord's, that they may be holy both in body and spirit. A virgin ought not only to be so, but also to be perceived and believed to be so: no one on seeing a virgin should be in any doubt as to whether she is one. Perfectness should show itself equal in all things; nor should the dress of the body discredit the good of the mind. Why should she walk out adorned?

Why with dressed hair, as if she either had or sought for a husband? Rather let her dread to please if she is a virgin; and let her not invite her own risk, if she is keeping herself for better and divine things. They who have not a husband whom they profess that they please, should persevere, sound and pure not only in body, but also in spirit. For it is not right that a virgin should have her hair braided for the appearance of her beauty, or boast of her flesh and of its beauty, when she has no struggle greater than that against her flesh, and no contest more obstinate than that of conquering and subduing the body.

6. Paul proclaims in a loud and lofty voice, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." And yet a virgin in the Church glories concerning her fleshly appearance and the beauty of her body! Paul adds, and says, "For they that are Christ's have crucified their flesh, with its faults and lusts." And she who professes to have renounced the lusts and vices of

the flesh, is found in the midst of those very things which she has renounced! Virgin, thou art taken, thou art exposed, thou boastest one thing and affectest another. You sprinkle yourself with the stains of carnal concupiscence, although you are a candidate of purity and modesty. "Cry," says the Lord to Isaiah, "All flesh is grass, and all the glory of it as the flower of the grass: the grass withereth, and the flower fadeth; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever." It is becoming for no Christian, and especially it is not becoming for a virgin, to regard any glory and honour of the flesh, but only to desire the word of God, to embrace benefits which shall endure for ever. Or, if she must glory in the flesh, then assuredly let her glory when she is tortured in confession of the name; when a woman is found to be stronger than the tortures; when she suffers fire, or the cross, or the sword, or the wild beasts, that she may be crowned. These are the precious jewels of the flesh, these are the better ornaments of the body.

7. But there are some rich women, and wealthy in the fertility of means, who prefer their own wealth, and contend that they ought to use these blessings. Let them know first of all that she is rich who is rich in God; that she is wealthy who is wealthy in Christ; that those are blessings which are spiritual, divine, heavenly, which lead us to God, which abide with us in perpetual possession with God. But whatever things are earthly, and have been received in this world, and will remain here with the world, ought so to be contemned even as the world itself is contemned, whose pomps and delights we have already renounced when by a blessed passage we came to God, John stimulates and exhorts us, witnessing with a spiritual and heavenly voice. "Love not the world," says he, "neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, is lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, which is not from the Father, but is of the lust of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever, even as God also abideth for ever.

Therefore eternal and divine things are to be followed, and all things must be done after the will of God, that we may follow the divine footsteps and teachings of our Lord, who warned us, and said, "I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me. But if the servant is not greater than his lord, and he that is freed owes obedience to his deliverer, we who desire to be Christians ought to imitate what Christ said and did. It is written, and it is read and heard, and is celebrated for our example by the Church's mouth, "He that saith he abideth in Christ. ought himself also so to walk even as He walked. Therefore we must walk with equal steps; we must strive with emulous walk. Then the following of truth answers to the faith of our name, and a reward is given to the believer, if what is believed is also done.

8. You call yourself wealthy and rich; but Paul meets your riches, and with his own voice prescribes for the moderating of your dress and ornament within a just limit. "Let women," said he, "adorn themselves with shamefacedness and sobriety, not with broidered hair, nor gold, nor pearls, nor costly array, but as becometh women professing chastity, with a good conversation." Also Peter consents to these same precepts, and says, "Let there be in the woman

not the outward adorning of array, or gold, or apparel, but the adorning of the heart." But if these also warn us that the women who are accustomed to make an excuse for their dress by reference to their husband, should be restrained and limited by religious observance to the Church's discipline, how much more is it right that the virgin should keep that observance, who has no excuse for adorning herself, nor can the deceitfulness of her fault be laid upon another, but she herself remains in its guilt!

9. You say that you are wealthy and rich. But not everything that can be done ought also to be done; nor ought the broad desires that arise out of the pride of the world to be extended beyond the honour and modesty of virginity; since it is written, "All things are lawful, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful, but all things edify not." For the rest, if you dress your hair sumptuously, and walk so as to draw attention in public, and attract the eyes of youth upon you, and draw the sighs of young men after you, nourish the lust of concupiscence, and inflame the fuel of sighs, so that, although you yourself perish not, yet you cause others to perish, and offer yourself, as it were, a sword or poison to the spectators; you cannot be excused on the pretence that you are chaste and modest in mind. Your shameful dress and immodest ornament accuse you; nor can yon be counted now among Christ's maidens and virgins, since yon live in such a manner as to make yourselves objects of desire.

10. You say that you are wealthy and rich; but it becomes not a virgin to boast of her riches, since Holy Scripture says, "What hath pride profited us? or what benefit hath the vaunting of riches conferred upon us? And all these things have passed away like a shadow." And the apostle again warns us, and says, "And they that buy, as though they bought not; and they that possess, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as though they used it not. For the fashion of this world passeth away." Peter also, to whom the Lord commends His sheep to be fed and guarded, on whom He placed and founded the Church, says indeed that he has no silver and gold, but says that he is rich in the grace of Christ-that he is wealthy in his faith and virtue-wherewith he performed many great works with miracle, wherewith he abounded in spiritual blessings to the grace of glory. These riches, this wealth, she cannot possess, who had rather be rich to this world than to Christ.

11. You say that you are wealthy and rich, and you think that you should use those things which God has willed you to possess. Use them, certainly, but for the things of salvation; use them, but for good purposes; use them, but for those things which God has commanded, and which the Lord has set forth. Let the poor feel that you are wealthy; let the needy feel that you are rich. Lend your estate to God; give food to Christ. Move Him by the prayers of many to grant you to carry out the glory of virginity, and to succeed in coming to the Lord's rewards. There entrust your treasures, where no thief digs through, where no insidious plunderer breaks in. Prepare for yourself possessions; but let them rather be heavenly ones, where neither rust wears out, nor hail bruises, nor sun burns, nor rain spoils your fruits constant and perennial, and free from all contact of worldly injury. For in this very matter you are sinning against God, if you think that riches were given you by Him for this purpose,

to enjoy them thoroughly, without a view to salvation. For God gave man also a voice; and yet love-songs and indecent things are not on that account to be sung. And God willed iron to be for the culture of the earth, but not on that account must murders be committed. Or because God ordained incense, and wine, and fire, are we thence to sacrifice to idols? Or because the flocks of cattle abound in your fields, ought you to immolate victims and offerings to the gods? Otherwise a large estate is a temptation, unless the wealth minister to good uses; so that every man, in proportion to his wealth, ought by his patrimony rather to redeem his transgressions than to increase them.

12. The characteristics of ornaments, and of garments, and the allurements of beauty, are not fitting for any but prostitutes and immodest women; and the dress of none is more precious than of those whose modesty is lowly. Thus in the Holy Scriptures, by which the Lord wished us to be both instructed and admonished, the harlot city is described more beautifully arrayed and adorned, and with her ornaments; and the rather on account of those very ornaments about to perish. "And there came," it is said, "one of the seven angels, which had the seven phials, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the judgment of the great whore, that sitteth upon many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication. And he carried me away in spirit; and I saw a woman sit upon a beast, and that woman was arrayed in a purple and scarlet mantle, and was adorned with gold, and precious stones, and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand, full of curses, and filthiness, and fornication of the whole earth." Let chaste and modest virgins avoid the dress of the unchaste, the manners of the immodest, the ensigns of brothels, the ornaments of harlots.

13. Moreover Isaiah, full of the Holy Spirit, cries out and chides the daughters of Sion, corrupted with gold, and silver, and raiment, and rebukes them, affluent as they were in pernicious wealth, and departing from God for the sake of the world's delights. "The daughters of Sion," says he, "are haughty, and walk with stretched-out neck and beckoning of the eyes, trailing their gowns as they go, and mincing with their feet. And God will humble the princely daughters of Sion, and the Lord will unveil their dress; and the Lord will take away the glory of their apparel, and their ornaments, and their hair, and their curls, and their round tires like the moon, and their crisping-pins, and their bracelets, and their clusters of pearls, and their armlets and rings, and earrings, and silks woven with gold and hyacinth. And instead of a sweet smell there shall be dust; and thou shall be girt with a rope instead of with a girdle; and for a golden ornament of thy head thou shalt have baldness. This God blames, this He marks out: hence He declares that virgins are corrupted; hence, that they have departed from the true and divine worship. Lifted up, they have fallen; with their heads adorned, they merited dishonour and disgrace. Having put on silk and purple, they cannot put on Christ; adorned with gold, and pearls, and necklaces, they have lost the ornaments of the heart and spirit. Who would not execrate and avoid that which has been the destruction of another?

Who would desire and take up that which has served as the sword and weapon for the death of another? If he who had drunk should die by draining the cup, you would know that what he had drunk was poison; if, on taking food, he who had taken it were to perish, you would know that what, when taken could kill, was deadly; nor would you eat or drink of that whence you had before seen that others had perished. Now what ignorance of truth is it, what madness of mind, to wish for that which both has hurt and always will hurt and to think that you yourself will not perish by those means whereby you know that others have perished!

14. For God neither made the sheep scarlet or purple, nor taught the juices of herbs and shell-fish to dye and colour wool, nor arranged necklaces with stones set in gold, and with pearls distributed in a woven series or numerous cluster, wherewith you would hide the neck which He made; that what God formed in man may be covered, and that may be seen upon it which the devil has invented in addition. Has God willed that wounds should be made in the ears, wherewith infancy, as yet innocent, and unconscious of worldly evil, may be put to pain, that subsequently from the scars and holes of the ears precious beads may hang, heavy, if not by their weight, still by the amount of their cost? All which things sinning and apostate angels put forth by their arts, when, lowered to the contagious of earth, they forsook their heavenly vigour. They taught them also to paint the eyes with blackness drawn round them in a circle, and to stain the cheeks with a deceitful red, and to change the hair with false colours, and to drive out all truth, both of face and head, by the assault of their own corruption.

15. And indeed in that very matter, for the sake of the fear which faith suggests to me, for the sake of the love which brotherhood requires, I think that not virgins only and widows, but married women also, and all of the sex alike, should be admonished, that the work of God and His fashioning and formation ought in no manner to be adulterated, either with the application of yellow colour, or with black dust or rouge, or with any kind of medicament which can corrupt the native lineaments. God says, "Let us make man in our image and likeness; " and does any one dare to alter and to change what God has made? They are laying hands on God when they try to re-form that which He formed, and to transfigure it, not knowing that everything which comes into being is God's work, everything that is changed is the devil's If any artist, in painting, were to delineate in envious colouring the countenance and likeness and bodily appearance of any one; and the likeness being now painted and completed, another person were to lay hands on it, as if, when it was already formed and already painted, he, being more skilled, could amend it, a serious wrong and a just cause of indignation would seem natural to the former artist. And do you think yourself likely with impunity to commit a boldness of such wicked temerity, an offence to God the artificer? For although you may not be immodest among men, and are not unchaste with your seducing dyes, yet when those things which belong to God are corrupted and violated, you are engaged in a worse adultery. That you think yourself to be adorned, that you think your hair to be dressed, is an assault upon the divine work, is a prevarication of the truth.

16. The voice of the warning apostle is, "Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened; for even Christ our passover is sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." But are sincerity and truth preserved, when what is sincere is polluted by adulterous colours, and what is true is changed into a lie by the deceitful dyes of medicaments? Your Lord says, "Thou canst not make one hair white or black; " and you, in order to overcome the word of your Lord, will be more mighty than He, and stain your hair with a daring endeavour and with profane contempt. With evil presage of the future, you make a beginning to yourself already of flame-coloured hair; and sin (oh, wickedness!) with your head-that is, with the nobler part of your body! And although it is written of the Lord, "His head and His hair were white like wool or snow," you curse that whiteness and hate that hoariness which is like to the Lord's head.

17. Are you not afraid, I entreat you, being such as you are, that when the day of resurrection comes, your Maker may not recognise you again, and may turn you away when you come to His rewards and promises, and may exclude you, rebuking you with the vigour of a Censor and Judge, and say: "This is not my work, nor is this our image. You have polluted your skin with a false medicament, you have changed your hair with an adulterous colour, your face is violently taken possession of by a lie, your figure is corrupted, your countenance is another's. You cannot see God, since your eyes are not those which God made, but those which the devil has spoiled. You have followed him, you have imitated the red and painted eyes of the serpent. As you are adorned in the fashion of your enemy, with him also you shall burn by and by." Are not these, I beg, matters to be reflected on by God's servants? Are they not always to be dreaded day and night? Let married women see to it, in what respect they are flattering themselves concerning the solace of their husbands with the desire of pleasing them, and while they put them forward indeed as their excuse, they make them partners in the association of guilty, consent. Virgins, assuredly, to whom this address is intended to appeal, who have adorned themselves with arts of this kind, I should think ought not to be counted among virgins, but, like infected sheep and diseased cattle, to be driven from the holy and pure flock of virginity, lest by living together they should pollute the rest with their contagion; lest they ruin others even as they have perished themselves.

18. And since we are seeking the advantage of continency, let us also avoid everything that is pernicious and hostile to it. And I will not pass over those things, which while by negligence they come into use, have made for themselves a usurped licence, contrary to modest and sober manners. Some are not ashamed to be present at marriage parties, and in that freedom of lascivious discourse to mingle in unchaste conversation, to hear what is not becoming, to say what is not lawful, to expose themselves, to be present in the midst of disgraceful words and drunken banquets, by which the ardour of lust is kindled, and the bride is animated to bear, and the bridegroom to dare lewdness. What place is there at weddings for her whose mind is not towards marriage? Or what can there be pleasant or joyous in those engagements for her, where both desires and wishes are different from her own? What is learnt there-what is seen? How greatly a virgin falls short of her resolution,

when she who had come there modest goes away immodest! Although she may remain a virgin in body and mind, yet in eyes, in ears, in tongue, she has diminished the virtues that she possessed.

19. But what of those who frequent promiscuous baths; who prostitute to eyes that are curious to lust, bodies that are dedicated to chastity and modesty? They who disgracefully behold naked men, and are seen naked by men, do they not themselves afford enticement to vice, do they not solicit and invite the desires of those present to their own corruption and wrong? "Let every one," say you, "look to the disposition with which he comes thither: my care is only that of refreshing and washing my poor body." That kind of defence does not clear you, nor does it excuse the crime of lasciviousness and wantonness. Such a washing defiles; it does not purify nor cleanse the limbs, but stains them. You behold no one immodestly, but you yourself are gazed upon immodestly. You do not pollute your eyes with disgraceful delight, but in delighting others you yourself are polluted. You make a show of the bathing-place; the places where you assemble are fouler than a theatre. There all modesty is put; off together with the clothing of garments, the honour and modesty of the body is laid aside; virginity is exposed, to be pointed at and to be handled. And now, then, consider whether when you are clothed you are modest among men, when the boldness of nakedness has conduced to immodesty.

20. For this reason, therefore, the Church frequently mourns over her virgins; hence she groans at their scandalous and detestable stories; hence the flower of her virgins is extinguished, the honour and modesty of continency are injured, and all its glory and dignity are profaned. Thus the hostile besieger insinuates himself by his arts; thus by snares that deceive, by secret ways, the devil creeps in. Thus, while virgins wish to be more carefully adorned, and to wander with more liberty, they cease to be virgins, corrupted by a furtive dishonour; widows before they are married, adulterous, not to their husband, but to Christ. In proportion as they had been as virgins destined to great rewards, so will they experience great punishments for the loss of their virginity.

21. Therefore hear me, O virgins, as a parent; hear, I beseech you, one who fears while he warns; hear one who is faithfully consulting for your advantage and your profit. Be such as God the Creator made you; be such as the hand of your Father ordained you. Let your countenance remain in you incorrupt, your neck unadorned, your figure simple; let not wounds be made in your ears, nor let the precious chain of bracelets and necklaces circle your arms or your neck; let your feet be free from golden bands, your hair stained with no dye, your eyes worthy of beholding God. Let your baths be performed with women, among whom your bathing is modest. Let the shameless feasts and lascivious banquets of marriages be avoided, the contagion of which is perilous. Overcome dress, since you are a virgin; overcome gold, since you overcome the flesh and the world. It is not consistent to be unable to be conquered by the greater, and to be found no match for the less. Strait and narrow is the way which leadeth to life; hard and difficult is the track which tends to glory. By this pathway the martyrs progress, the virgins pass, the just of all kinds advance. Avoid

the broad and roomy ways. There are deadly snares and death-bringing pleasures; there the devil flatters, that he may deceive; smiles, that he may do mischief; entices, that he may slay. The first fruit for the martyrs is a hundred-fold; the second is yours, sixty-fold.

As with the martyrs there is no thought of the flesh and of the world, no small, and trifling, and delicate encounter; so also in you, whose reward is second in grace, let there be the strength in endurance next to theirs. The ascent to great things is not easy. What toil we suffer, what labour, when we endeavour to ascend the hills and the tops of mountains! What, then, that we may ascend to heaven? If you look to the reward of the promise, your labour is less. Immortality is given to the persevering, eternal life is set before them; the Lord promises a kingdom.

22. Hold fast, O virgins! hold fast what you have begun to be; hold fast what you shall be. A great reward awaits you, a great recompense of virtue, the immense advantage of chastity. Do you wish to know what ill the virtue of continence avoids, what good it possesses? "I will multiply," says God to the woman, "thy sorrows and thy groanings; and in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." You are free from this sentence. You do not fear, the sorrows and the groans of women. You have no fear of child-bearing; nor is your husband lord over you; but your Lord and Head is Christ, after the likeness and in the place of the man; with that of men your lot and your condition is equal. It is the word of the Lord which says, "The children of this world beget and are begotten; but they who are counted worthy of that world, and of the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage: neither shall they die any more: for they are equal to the angels of God, being the children of the resurrection." That which we shall be, you have already begun to be. You possess already in this world the glory of the resurrection. You pass through the world without the contagion of the world; in that you continue chaste and virgins, you are equal to the angels of God. Only let your virginity remain and endure substantial and uninjured; and as it began bravely, let it persevere continuously, and not seek the ornaments of necklaces nor garments, but of conduct. Let it look towards God and heaven, and not lower to the lust of the flesh and of the world, the eyes uplifted to things above, or set them upon earthly things.

23. The first decree commanded to increase and to multiply; the second enjoined continency. While the world is still rough and void, we are propagated by the fruitful begetting of numbers, and we increase to the enlargement of the human race. Now, when the world is filled and the earth supplied, they who can receive continency, living after the manner of eunuchs, are made eunuchs unto the kingdom. Nor does the Lord command this, but He exhorts it; nor does He impose the yoke of necessity, since the free choice of the will is left. But when He says that in His Father's house are many mansions, He points out the dwellings of the better habitation. Those better habitations you are seeking; cutting away the desires of the flesh, you obtain the reward of a greater grace in the heavenly home. All indeed who attain to the divine gift and inheritance by the sanctification of baptism, therein put off the old man by the grace of the saving layer, and, renewed by the Holy Spirit from the filth of the

old contagion, are purged by a second nativity. But the greater holiness and truth of that repeated birth belongs to you, who have no longer any desires of the flesh and of the body. Only the things which belong to virtue and the Spirit have remained in you to glory. It is the apostle's word whom the Lord called His chosen vessel, whom God sent to proclaim the heavenly command:

"The first man," says he, "is from the earth, of earth; the second man is from heaven. Such as is the earthy, such are they also who are earthy; and such as is the heavenly, such also are the heavenly. As we have borne the image of him who is earthy, let us also bear the image of Him who is heavenly. Virginity bears this image, integrity bears it, holiness bears it, and truth. Disciplines which are mindful of God bear it, retaining righteousness with religion, stedfast in faith, humble in fear, brave to all suffering, meek to sustain wrong, easy to show mercy, of one mind and one heart in fraternal peace.

24. Every one of which things, O good virgins, you ought to observe, to love, to fulfil, who, giving yourselves to God and Christ, are advancing in both the higher and better part to the Lord, to whom you have dedicated yourselves. You that are advanced in years, suggest a teaching to the younger. You that are younger, give a stimulus to your coevals. Stir one another up with mutual exhortations; provoke to glory by rival proofs of virtue. Endure bravely, go on spiritually, attain happily. Only remember us at that time, when virginity shall begin to be rewarded in you.

Source. English translation: an older public-domain translation as collected in the Writings-Database (HistoricalChristianFaith), mostly from the Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers and similar nineteenth-century editions. SermonIndex has only divided it into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Square brackets, Greek or Latin words and footnote-free text are as the source file prints them, and a transcription error may remain. No Greek or Latin text is shown beside it yet, and no modern English version has been made.