

from material cares and to give themselves to God wholeheartedly. And yet they are never to relax their intense desire to draw men to God that they too may be bathed in his love; this is the secret of the apostolate. It was not a foolish or unusual thing that Br John Lacy should box himself up in this small enclosure, but rather was it an integral part of his Dominican vocation.

The letter to Demetrias, the first section of which we print below, was copied out with care and beauty by Br John, though it is not clear whether he was responsible for the actual translation. Although he was under the impression that it was written by St Jerome and probably would have had nothing to do with it had he known the real author, the letter was written by Pelagius, who followed St Jerome and St Augustine in writing to that fortunate maiden on her dedication to the virginal life. No one should, however, lay the Epistle aside on account of the heresy of its author, for it begins here with the ninth chapter after the controversial discussion, and it contains nothing unorthodox. It was in fact regarded during the middle ages as a spiritual classic which in England became associated with Walter Hilton. It seems to have been translated in order to help anchorites like John himself and other religious and will be found to contain much of value.



FROM THE EPISTLE OF ST JEROME TO DEMETRIADES¹

fol. 127. Here beginneth the pistle of saint Jerome, the which he wrote to a maiden dematriade that had vowed chastity to our Lord Jesus Christ. And ye may understand and find in this pistle comfort and learning to all other, who that will take tent and heed to the understanding thereof, be he religious or secular, wedded man or woman or single or what the gree² he standeth in.³

¹ College of St John Baptist, Oxford, MS. 94, folio 127. Not Jerome, but Pelagius; ch. ix of the original. Migne P.L. 30, col. 24, line 5.

² *gradus*, degree.

³ Translator's prologue.

Cap. I.
(Lat. ch.
ix. 1. 5)

Rom.
12, 1.

Eph.
V, 17.

Now the first business and the first study of a maiden oweth for to be to know the will of God our Lord and for to enquire busily what that may please him, and what that displeaseth him; so that after the bidding of the Apostle, *that she might yield her service to our Lord Jesus Christ, queemfully⁴ and reasonably*, and that all the course of her living mightily be ordained after the rule of his words. It is impossible any man to please him that knoweth not what should please him, for it falleth often that they offend and grieve in their manner of serving that hath not learned how they ought to serve. And though it be more and better thing for to do God's will, than only for to know it, nevertheless it behoveth first to be known, and so after for to fulfill it in deed. Knowing goeth before the deed, as in order, for without knowing the deed is not profitable. *And therefore the prophet says thus: Thou Israel be not unknown. And the Apostle says thus: he that knoweth not shall not be known, and therefore be not unknown but be ye wise and understand what is God's will.* The beginning of wisdom is for to well know what is charged of God for to do, and a great part of his service is for to learn what we should do. In holy writ if thou wilt look it or hear it thou shalt (may) know what is God's will.⁵ For thou shalt understand for God's will in holy writ standeth in these four things, in forbidding of some things, in bidding of some things, in granting or in suffering of some things, or in counselling. All sins and wickedness are forbidden; all virtues and goodness are commanded and bidden. Other deeds that are in the mean way, that are neither good nor evil, are suffered. But the best deeds are counselled. In the first two that are forbidden and bidden is contained all God's commandments, and they are generally bidden to all men and women, for it is the common observance and rightwiseness to all

⁴ acceptably, convenient, pleasing. The passages in italics are underlined in the text and are generally translations of scriptural texts—but not invariably.

⁵ Latin: *scito itaque in scripturis divinis, per quas solas potes plenam Dei intelligere voluntatem.* (English modifies this, albeit obscurely.)

men. Of the which our Lord saith in the Gospels thus:
 Matt. VII, 12. *All things that ye will reasonably that other men do to you the same do ye again to them.* And the meaning of this is nought else but that ye do never evil to other men in word nor in deed, and also that ye do them all the good that ye may reasonably. This sentence and this bidding evenly bindeth all men and women. It is not lawful to none to forfeit in that that is bidden to all, for it is certain a great contempt to God, either for to do that that is forbidden, or else not for to do that that is bidden. The other two, of the which that one is suffered and that other is counselled, they are so left in our free choosing that we may lawful use those things that are suffered with less meed. And if we will refuse the use of other things that are suffered to us, and will do after God's counsel, we shall have passing meed and reward. Things that are suffered, and is granted to us lawfully for to use, be these: wedlock, and eating and drinking, and eating of flesh, and of all manner of meats and drinks. But the vow of maidenhood and of chastity and the abstinence of all manner delights is counselled us as perfection, for the more lawful wedlock is, the more meedful is maidenhood and chastity. And the more sufferable that is to eat of all manner of meats, the more bright is the virtue of abstinence from many meats.⁶ Thou maiden that for love of chastity forsakest wedlock, and for the hope of more meed thou vowedst to God thy maidenhood, not i-bidden but i-counselled, then be glad for thou thinkest more of the meed of victory than of the travail of thy life. I trow thou hast read the praising of chastity, that our Lord speaketh of in the gospel, for I hope his words hath kindled in thine heart to the love of maidenhood and of virginity, where that he praiseth them that will castrate themselves in chastity for the Kingdom of heaven and he saith thus: *Who so may take, take.*

Matt.
XIX, 12.

⁶ Compare the text: *conceduntur quidem nuptiae carnum usus et vinum: sed horum omnium abstinentia, concilio perfectiore suadetur. Ad virginitatis honorem pertinet licentia nuptiarum: et escarum indulgentia virtutem abstinentiae clariorem facit.*

. . . And our Lord said not only to men but also to women, for verily the reward of maidenhood is byhet⁷ to both.

Now then sith thou hast followed the counsel of perfection and hath chosen to thee the purpose of this special virtue that is maidenhood, now then I pray thee that thou keep also with it the general commandments of God, the which is the common rightwiseness and bidden to all men and women, for that is the law of God that bindeth all men and women. For why? Widows, maidens and wives from the highest degree to the lowest degree, all are bound to keep this common law of rightwiseness, the commandments of God. And the mickel more thou art bound to keep them, that purposedst thee for to do above the common law, for certainly there is no man more bounden to fulfill the commandments of God as he, that is, that for the love of perfection and for plesance [pleasing] of Christ, that proposeth and avoweth for to do more and better than is commanded. And therefore he that wilfully bindeth himself for to keep God's counsel wonder busy oweth him to be mickle the more for to keep God's bidding, that be his commandments. For that one of these is a deed of perfection that standeth only in a man's free-will, or that he bindeth him thereto; that other is needful to be done.⁸

Matt.
VII, 19.

Of chastity is written thus 'he that may take, take' but of common rightwiseness, that is the commandments, it is not written so, but thus counselled he,⁹ 'he that may do good, do [he it]'. But thus it is said of our Lord 'Ilk a tree', that is 'ilk a man that maketh no good fruit, that is, that doeth no good deeds, shall be hewn down and cast into the fire'. Now, behold, my good daughter, what difference and parting is atwixt counsel and bidding. The one pertaineth to special persons. That other comprehendeth generally to all persons.

⁷ promised.

⁸ that one, i.e., the counsels; that other, i.e., the commandments.

⁹ The corrected Latin text has: *De justitia non dicitur: Qui potest facere, faciat.* (Cap. X, col. 25. Migne op. cit.)

That one beheteth¹⁰ great reward, that tother beheteth great pain. That one prayeth thee for to do it, that other menaceth thee, if thou do it not. Therefore, take thou heed to both. And take heed what thou offerest to God of his counsel. And then take thou heed what thou owest to God at his bidding. For why? thou art debtor of both, for thou art debtor of chastity and of maidenhood, for thou hast wilfully offered it to Jesus Christ; and thou art also debtor of the common right-wiseness, that is the commandments of God, for that is commanded to thee. And therefore pay them, whole, well, truly: And aye keep the common rightwiseness in all thy works. That servant pleaseth well his lord that doeth a thing of his own free will to his Lord, so that he leave not that thing undone that is bidden and commanded. He that doeth not one deed for another, nor he that leaveth not the needful and taketh the wilful as some do, but fulfilleth them both, and that eketh¹¹ that one to that other, he doeth well. Now then be ware, by ensample of some, that keep that one and break that other; as some do that rejoyce themselves of their maidenhood, and of their chastity, and there to follow all their wills and all their likings in other things of vanities and covetise and lusts against God's will. These offer the gifts of maidenhood not with rightwiseness. But certain, instead of rightwiseness, as they ween to open heaven's gates with their maidenhood, right so they sperre¹² them with wicked living.

Then it is good that they think how that the five unwise maidens that the gospel speaketh of, that had no light in their lamps, for they had no charity with their chastity; such shall be put out of heaven's gates in the last day, when that our Lord shall say to them thus: 'I know ye not'. Therefore daughter, thee behoveth for to go another way, if that thou wilt perfectly tread down and thereto for to despise the love and liking of the world, and if thou wilt shape thee to

¹⁰ Behight: is promised.

¹¹ addeth.

¹² close, bar.

Gal.
VI, 14.

be a virgin after the bidding of the apostle. And that is, that thou be clean in body and spirit and ay thinking how that thou might please thy spouse Jesus Christ, and that thou be aye busy and diligently for to put oil of charity and of God's words into the lamp of thy maidenhood. And so that thou be ready with thy lamp light for to abide the coming of thy lord and thy spouse Jesus Christ and that thou might be one of the wise maidens to the which is ordained and dight a rich crown in the bliss of heaven. Now then if that thou wilt have this reward, and to be such a virgin, flee then and also forsake the broad way of lust and of liking, by the which many go to endless death. But choose to thee the strait way of chastity and also of all manner cleanness, that few men follow, that leadeth to life. For now hast thou well begun onwards, for thou hast put away and overcome by the grace of Jesus Christ, all the great lettings that mightily tarry or let thee from the purpose of ghostly living. For why? thou hast refused and put away wedlock, business and bearing of children and pride of riches, pomp of worldly array and vanity, covetise of delights, so that thou may somewhat say with Apostle, *'The world is crucified to me and slain and I to it'*. Now since thy beginning is so good, look thou then, what oweth to be the end. Thou hast put from thee occasions of sin with great might of heart, but look thou henceforward that thou hold the same fervour forth, and that thou faint not and that the self-same might in will for to destroy in thee all manner of sins unto the last end.

Thou shalt understand that maidenhood by itself is but a naked thing, therefore thou shalt attire it and array it with holiness of good manners and with honesty of good virtues, so that thou mayst worshipfully in the fair company of holy virgins appear before the face of Jesus Christ. For if that thee had liked for to have been wedded and for to have increased in worldly state, then thou wouldest have done all thy business, that no woman in riches nor in fairhead, in worship nor in array that should have overpassed thee. Now therefore since

thy purpose is now changed, set fully for to please Jesus Christ in cleanness of maidenhood, and look that thou be now more busy, so that none overpass thee in good living and that none overpass nor overcome thee in holiness of manners, that none in virtues be set before thee. And that shalt thou better do if that thou think that thou doest naught thyself and that all other be better than thou, such business shalt thou have in getting of virtues and then shalt thou nought dread but that thou shalt get them, for they may lightloker¹³ be purchased than may riches of this world.



THE LITTLE OFFICE MEDITATED

BY

BROTHER HUMBERT, T.O.S.D.



THE Latin word *Officium*, like the Greek word *Liturgia*, means duty or service; hence 'Office'. Both these words describe what we know as Divine Worship—that which is the prime duty of man and the purpose of his creation.

The supreme form of worship is the Sacrifice the Mass. That is the central gem, and it has a setting—the Divine Office. This setting is further elaborated by the Little Office and all the ceremonies which go to make up the official public worship of the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ. This is all known as 'The Liturgy'—the public, official and universal worship of God.

Now the Liturgy is taken almost exclusively from the Bible—the inspired Word of God; God-written in fact. Both our Lord and our Lady used the psalms as a norm of worship. David himself said, 'Seven times a day do I worship thee', and therefore we speak of the seven 'Hours'.

Both the Divine Office and the Little Office were of obligation on religious in the old days, and it was not until the eighteenth or even the nineteenth century that they were dispensed from saying the Little Office. The average Catholic now considers the Morning Offering and Night Prayers—five minutes at the beginning and end of each day—as the normal

¹³ more lightly.