

Humbly -

# True Surrender and Christian Community of Goods

From The Great Article Book by Peter Walpot, 1577

The Plough Publishing House  
Bromdon, Bridgnorth, Shropshire  
England, 1957

A NOTABLE HUTTERITE DOCUMENT

CONCERNING TRUE SURRENDER AND CHRISTIAN  
COMMUNITY OF GOODS

Being Article Three of *The Great Article Book* of the Hutterian Brethren, written by Peter Walpot about 1577 and translated from the original German by Kathleen Hasenberg, with an introduction by Robert Friedmann.



CONCERNING TRUE SURRENDER AND CHRISTIAN  
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*Introduction*

Doctrinal writings among the German and Swiss Anabaptists of the sixteenth century are comparatively rare. For this reason the three major writings of this type produced by the Hutterian Brethren and carefully preserved through the centuries are especially welcome. In fact, they are a major element in the foundations of this brotherhood which have enabled it to survive in almost its original form to the present day.<sup>1</sup> These three writings are: 1. *The Account of Our Religion and Faith (Rechenschaft)* by Peter Rideman, drawn up in 1540-41 and printed in 1565.<sup>2</sup> 2. *The Great Article Book*, in its original edition called *Ein Schön Lustig Büchlein Etliche Hauptartikel Unseres Christlichen Glaubens [betreffend], . . . auch wie es die Welt verkehrt hat und darwider lebt und strebt*. In its elaborate form it dates back to 1577, and in all likelihood was drawn up by the bishop or *Vorsteher* of the brotherhood, Peter Walpot (1519-78), although it may safely be assumed that other brethren gave their assistance in the work. 3. *The Handbüchlein wider den Prozess, . . .*, etc. of (about) 1558, an anonymous tract, answering the accusations of a number of Lutheran theologians (in the *Prozess*, etc., 1557), and also most probably drafted in its main outlines by Peter Walpot, at that time not yet bishop but already a leading minister (*Diener am Wort*) of the Moravian communities.<sup>3</sup>

Concerning the *Article Book* only a few remarks can be presented here.<sup>4</sup> Its origins go back to a religious debate (*Religionsgespräch*) between the Hutterian and the Gabrielite Brethren in 1545,<sup>5</sup> which finally led to a joining of the Gabrielites with the Moravian group. Subsequently the main points of that memorable debate were condensed into five articles, concerning a) Baptism (of adults), b) the Lord's Supper, c) Community of Goods, d) Warfare and Nonresistance, e) Divorce Between Believers and Unbelievers. These articles are in the main compilations of appropriate Scripture texts together

<sup>1</sup> Another element of this foundation is the oral tradition of the brotherhood, the self-perpetuating spirit which has been kept amazingly alive all through the centuries.

<sup>2</sup> *Account of Our Religion, Doctrine and Faith*, given by Peter Rideman, etc., The Plough Publishing House (Bromdon, Bridgnorth, Shropshire, England, 1950), 283.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. "The Anabaptists Answer Melancthon": (I) "The Handbüchlein of 1558," Wilhelm Wiswedel; (II) "Some Further Studies Pertaining to the Handbüchlein of 1558," Robert Friedmann, in *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, XXIX (October, 1955), 212-31.

<sup>4</sup> For more details compare the study by Robert Friedmann, "Eine Dogmatische Hauptschrift der Hutterischen Täufergemeinschaften in Mähren," in *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* XXVIII (1931), 80-111, 207-40, and XXIX (1932), 1-17. Cf. also by the same author the article "Article Book, Hutterite," in *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, Vol. I, (Scottsdale, 1955), 173-74.

<sup>5</sup> *Geschichtsbuch der Hutterischen Brüder*, ed. R. Wolkan (Vienna, 1923), 195-200, or *Die Älteste Chronik der Hutterischen Brüder*, ed. A. J. F. Zieglschmid (Philadelphia, 1943), 251-56.



with quotations from the church fathers and other authorities, tied together by comments of the writer. This oldest form of our document is called *Die Fünf Artikel des Grössten Streites Zwischen Uns und der Welt*, and as such was incorporated into the great Chronicle of the Brethren, the *Geschicht-Buch*, inserted at the year 1547.<sup>6</sup> Thirty years later Peter Walpot, then 58 years of age, took advantage of the peaceful years in Moravia, the so-called "golden period," and elaborated greatly upon these five articles. The result was a work, anonymously distributed, of about 300 leaves quarto in manuscript, entitled *Ein Schön Lustig Büchlein*, etc. In it the arguments of each article are presented *punktweis*, that is, point by point.<sup>7</sup>

In view of the fact that the principle of community of goods was and still is the most salient characteristic of the Hutterite type of Anabaptism, the third article is perhaps of greater interest today than the other articles, and the arguments for this type of Christian living appear particularly relevant, all the more since Peter Rideman in his great *Rechenschaft* failed to put major emphasis upon this point. Likewise, also the *Handbüchlein* of 1558 touches but slightly the same issue. Thus, the classic defense of the principle of community of goods is this third article of the *Schön Lustig Büchlein*.<sup>8</sup>

The Christian demand for the sharing of worldly goods (both in their consumption and in their production) is here argued in a twofold way: 1. By reference to brotherly love in its fullest extent where no one can speak any longer of mine and thine. *Gemeinschaft ist nichts anderes als aus Liebe zum Nächsten alles gemein haben*. 2. By reference to *Gelassenheit*, an old German term of medieval origin, not easy to translate but in general meaning self-surrender, yielding to the divine commandments, resignation, giving up all self-willing, etc. To the Hutterites this term assumes definitely also a material connotation, namely, the surrender of all one's personal goods to the community at large so that they no longer belong to anyone personally. This means the *lassen* or giving away of such goods, the very realization of discipleship on the level of economics, as the Hutterite understood it. The frequent reference to the Scriptural passages Acts 2 and 4 as the New Testamental model of such a life is rather secondary in this connection and should not be overstressed.

In brief, to the Hutterite understanding, the retention of property within one's private possession is a sort of keeping back from full discipleship, and they call this *Geiz*, i.e., avarice or greed. Naturally the Brethren knew only too well that of all the demands upon a disciple of Christ this kind of *Gelassenheit* (including spiritual and material surrender) is perhaps the hardest of all, and they call it walking the "narrow path," requiring much inner self-conquest. "Communal living would not be hard, if there were not such self-regard."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Published *Geschichtsbuch*, ed. Wolkan, 208-40; Zieglschmid, 269-316. Also Lydia Müller published parts of this document in her book, *Glaubenszeugnisse oberdeutscher Täufer* (Leipzig, 1938), 238-56.

<sup>7</sup> A general summary of these articles may be found in Robert Friedmann's study, mentioned in note 4, *Arch. f. Ref. Gesch.* XXVIII (1931), 207-12.

<sup>8</sup> There exist also a number of most remarkable private letters with such a defense or apology, mainly Claus Braidl's very long epistle to Christian Raussenberger, a Swiss Brother, written 1601, and scheduled to be published in the near future.

<sup>9</sup> John Horsch, *The Hutterian Brethren* (Goshen, Ind., 1931), 74.

Among the many references in the *Article Book* to old authorities a particular one should be singled out for a few remarks. It is to be found in Point 148 of this Third Article where the *Pseudo-Clementine Fourth Epistle*<sup>10</sup> is quoted as a proof that such community of goods was practiced among believers in A.D. 92, not only in Jerusalem but at many other places as well. A learned reference of this kind is certainly unusual. Today we know that the source was in all likelihood Sebastian Franck's *Chronica, Zeitbuch und Geschichtsbibel* of 1531, where the Fourth Clementine Epistle is presented in a German translation from the Latin version published previously in 1526.<sup>11</sup> Further references point to Augustine, John Chrysostom, the *German Theology*, and other authorities; in most instances Sebastian Franck may be assumed as the mediator for such scholarly arguments.

The *Article Book* is extant in about twenty-three manuscripts, and is known in five different versions of unequal length. The *Schön Lustig Büchlein* in particular exists at least in the following eight copies: (1) Primavera, Paraguay, a codex of 1640 (248 leaves, 4°); (2) Göttingen, Library of the University (formerly Preussische Staatsbibliothek, Berlin), a codex of 1602 (255 leaves, 4°); (3 and 4) two copies in the library of the Archbishop and Primate of Hungary in Esztergom (Gran), Hungary; (5) one copy in the Library of the Evangelical Church of Bratislava, Czecho-Slovakia, a codex of 1583 (the so-called *Codex Zuckenhammer*, a beautifully written work); (6) one copy in the City Archive of Bratislava, a codex of about 1640-50 (274 leaves); (7 and 8) two eighteenth-century copies among the Hutterite Brethren in Canada, written at the former Bruderhofs of the Ukraine. It is planned to have a complete German edition published of the excellently preserved Göttingen codex together with other Anabaptist material in Volume II of the *Glaubenszeugnisse deutscher Täufer*, edited by the late Lydia Müller and Robert Friedmann (*Täuferakten* series). Two shorter versions in print are known: (1) in the *Geschicht-Buch der Hutterischen Brüder* as the *Fünf Artikel des grössten Streits*, etc. (see above), and (2) in the so-called *Schriftmässiger Bericht*, etc., being a section of the *Geistliches Blumengärtlein* (Amsterdam, 1680), and later reprinted by L. Schwabe in his study "Ueber Hans Denck" in the *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, XII (1891), 466-93.

In the meantime, The Society of Brothers, which previously had done such a splendid work with the publication of the English version of Rideman's *Account*, of 1540, felt the great need to have this Article Three translated into English also, in order to make the main arguments for communal living better known to all English-speaking brothers and sisters. Thus Kathleen E. Hasenberg, M.A., a member of the Primavera Bruderhof of the Society in Paraguay, undertook the difficult task of rendering this article into English, while two other members of the Bruderhof checked and rechecked her work. As

<sup>10</sup> See the article "Clemens, Epistle No. IV," by Robert Friedmann in *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, Vol. I (1955), 621-22.

<sup>11</sup> This passage is also quoted by Pilgram Marpeck in his *Vermahnung*, etc., of 1542. Cf. *Gedenkschrift zum 400 jährigen Jubiläum der Mennoniten* (Karlsruhe, 1925), 265.



their source they used the Paraguay codex mentioned above. In presenting this work the REVIEW continues a line of publication begun with the English translation of the Claus Felbinger *Verantwortung* of 1560.<sup>12</sup>

Robert Friedmann

- (307)<sup>13</sup> Concerning True Surrender and Christian Community of Goods, Presented Point by Point. (*Von der wahren Gelassenheit und der Christlichen Gemeinschaft der Güter*).

1.

He who will have the one, must let the other go.

Matt. 22:37.

THOU shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. LAY up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt. No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other.

Matt. 6.

- (308) THIS commandment have we from the Lord, That he who loveth God love his brother also. I John 4:21.

Ecclesiasticus 2:5.

AS gold is tried in the fire, so are men in the furnace of surrender. Not hard the Word of God would be If from self-interest men were free.

THE Lord commanded Israel, "There shall be no poor among you"—how much more should the people of the new covenant fulfill this in perfect community, for if the old covenant had been perfect and sufficient, one would not have sought another covenant.

2.

- (309) SIX years could Israel gather in their fruits, each man for himself, but the seventh year was a year of release, and it was proclaimed that the land should hold a solemn Sabbath unto the Lord, and they might not gather in, but what it bore in the seventh year was common to them, to the father of the household and his servant and to the cattle and beasts of the land. And he who had been bought was released in this seventh year with all manner of gifts and presents. In the same way whosoever had lent his neighbour and brother ought, might not ask it back in the year of release, but had to let it go. For he saith, it is a glorious proclamation as inviting to a wedding feast—that of the year of release of the Lord. Which year of release should have been a prefiguring of the time of the new covenant in Christ, for the true year of release is the acceptable year of the Lord, as the prophet himself doth interpret it, when those who their whole lives have been subject unto the bondage and power of the devil are redeemed. Therefore we should have all goods which God hath given us in this time in common, through Christian love, and enjoy them with our neighbours,

(310)

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Robert Friedmann, "Claus Felbinger's Confession of 1560," in *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, XXIX (April, 1955), 141-61. This translation was also performed by Miss Hasenberg in Primavera, Paraguay.

<sup>13</sup> The numbers in the margin in parentheses are the page numbers of the manuscript. Thus Article Three includes pages 307 to 466 of *The Great Article Book*.

brothers and household, and not make the same our own. For it is now a much more glorious and festive proclamation of the year of release, yea, of the year of grace, than in the Old Testament.

3.

- (311) MEN will observe a great Sabbath, yea, they will have one Sabbath after another and will lead the most peaceful life on earth where they have laid aside these two words—"Mine" and "Thine" which do *not* belong to the nature of things. These words have been the cause of much warfare, and are still so today; for whence cometh war and bloodshed? Whence cometh much contention and strife? Whence so much disunity and division? Whence but from property and the making one's own. For they who have surrendered to "mine" and "thine," that is, to property, are in the first place friends of covetousness, of which are born the two daughters (of the angels?) of shameful covetousness, called "Fetch here," "Carry here." For even as the earth hath never satiety of water; the fire never saith, "It is enough"; the sufferer from dropsy, the more he drinketh the more doth he thirst; even so the devil, death, and hell can never be satisfied. While there are men upon the earth, the more these have, the more they lack. For he that seeketh much lacketh much, and he that desireth much needeth much. Now that is the greatest poverty and the most unpeaceful life on earth—which thing Christ desireth not in His house, among those who have entered upon the true Sabbath, Pentecost, and Easter Day.

4.

- (312) THE Lord saith to Israel, "The priests shall have no inheritance. Yea, I shall be their inheritance. Apart from this ye shall give them no possession in Israel, for I am their possession." That is a concordantia (agreement) with the whole people in Christ Jesus, who are likewise all a royal priesthood of God and Christ. Jehovah's priesthood supported themselves with the sacrifice, which, when it was offered, was never his who offered it. Even so now the Christian church.

5.

- (313) WHEN God the Lord led the children of Israel out of Egypt, and they were come into the wilderness of Sin, He gave them bread from heaven, which they did gather, one much, another little; and when they did measure it out with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack. But he that kept some until morning, found worms therein, and it stank. Thus, since God hath led the Christian church out of the Egypt of the present age, they should be even so in the wilderness of this world that the rich man hath no more than the poor and the poor no less than the rich, and have all their food in common, for the use of all, and none reserve anything for himself. This is what it pictureth for us and signifieth, as Paul showeth, and Christ Himself teacheth in a new way in that He fed the great multitude in the desert place, and served the bread to them in common and equally.

6.

DAVID, the royal prophet, prophesying of the kingdom of Christ, saith, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty." Here he also teacheth and declareth the true surrender of what is temporal and of property or of worldly household.

7.

THE Lord will give the word with great numbers of evangelists, the kings of the great hosts will be friends one with another, and she that adorneth



(314) the house will serve out the spoil, as was brought to pass and fulfilled in Acts 2 and 4.

8.

I Sam. 30. WHEN the wicked men and men of Belial spake, saying, "We will give naught of the spoil that we have recovered to the two hundred men who remained behind and were too faint to pursue after them that had robbed Ziklag," David said, "Ye shall not do so, my brothers, with that which the Lord hath given us. Who will hearken unto you in this matter? but as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike. And it was so from that day forward, and he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day"—how much more should it be a statute and ordinance to the children of the new covenant, to share all that God giveth them equally among them?

9.

(315) ISAIAH the prophet hath long ago said clearly, when he spake of how God would visit the city of Tyre, that all "her profit and gain shall be sanctified to the Lord: it shall not be treasured nor laid up; for her merchandise shall be for the citizens of the Lord for food and lodging to the hungry and clothing to the aged." Christ will say at the Last Judgment of them who are His, that they who have done such have done the same to Him: the rest, however, He pointeth to the left side, for they have not done so, for which reason they are appointed to eternal pain.

10.

Isa. 4:1. "AND in that day seven women, that is the number of churches and peoples, shall take hold of one man, saying, All our food and clothing we will have in common: only let us be called thy wives (or friends and comrades) to take away our reproach"—namely, that of the word of God and of our conscience.

11.

(316) "STRANGERS shall cleave to him and they shall join the house of Jacob. Isa. 14:1, 2. They shall take the peoples and bring them home with them; and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the Lord for servants and handmaids," that is, for true members of community. In chapter 49 he saith, "All these shall gather themselves together and come to thee, and thou shalt clothe thee with them as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth."

12.

(317) THE islands also (that is, the heathen) shall gather themselves to me, and especially the ships of the sea to bring thee sons from afar and their silver and gold with them, to the name of the Lord thy God, to the Holy One of Israel, who doth make thee glorious. The same is likewise shown when Peter cast his hook into the sea and drew up a fish which had in its mouth a piece of money, which the Lord commanded him to take to pay for himself and Him.

13.

Isa. 61:5-7. "STRANGERS shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vine-dressers. But ye shall be named the priests of the Lord: men shall call you the servants of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and enjoy their possessions. They shall rejoice that ye share with them, for in their land they shall possess double"—as Christ saith of them who find the hidden treasure in the field, that they go with joy (note, with joy!) and sell all that they have and buy the field.

Mic. 4:13 (318)

14.

MICAH, the prophet, speaketh thus, "Arise and thresh, O Zion, for I will make thine horn iron and I will make thy hoofs brass: and thou shalt beat in pieces many peoples and thou shalt consecrate their gain and all their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth." But who are these threshers? Hear how the Scripture saith, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he thresheth or treadeth out the corn." "Doth God take care for oxen?" saith Paul. "Or saith he it altogether for our sakes," for it is always written for our sakes.

15.

BEHOLD! The feet of him that bringeth good tidings and publisheth peace coming over the mountain! O Judah, celebrate thy joyous wedding festival! Bring and present thy freewill gifts!

16.

THE prophet Zechariah prophesieth: At that time (namely, that of the new covenant) there shall be in the house of the Lord no trader or merchant more.

17.

(319) SIRACH, the wise teacher, saith, "Lay up thy treasure according to the commandments of the most High, and it shall bring thee more profit than gold. Keep alms in the hand of the steward and it shall protect thee from all evil. Lose thy money for thy brothers' and thy neighbours' sake, and bury it not under a stone."

18.

MANY have fallen into great calamity for the sake of gold and money, and have found themselves facing destruction. It is a stumbling block to them that sacrifice unto it and serve it, and all the foolish fall over it. Blessed is the rich man who is found irreproachable and without blemish, and who hath not gone after gold. Who is such an one?

19.

(320) JOHN the Baptist, the herald of Christ, when he came, and the people asked him what they should do, taught them community, and said to them, "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise."

20.

THE devil doth falsely take possession of what is earthly and temporal for his property. For he saith thus to Christ, when he showeth Him the kingdoms of the world, "All this is mine." Even so do his children, who have this deceitfulness of Belial in their hearts. They take possession of property and possess temporal goods, each for himself. But it should not be so among the children of God, but what God doth lend them they have in common and use for the good of all.

21.

(321) THE Lord Jesus called His disciples, Simon Peter and Andrew his brother, also James (the son of Zebedee) and John his brother, and spake, "Follow me!" and they forsook their net, their boat, and their father and followed Him. Behold, how He calleth His own away from property, and how they forsake the same, and also their parents and friends, and follow Him on the way of gladly letting go and of community, which He went.

22.

THEREFORE saith Christ, "Blessed are the spiritually poor," that is, they who thus leave all that is temporal, giving up their possessions for the sake of Christ, having nothing of their own, but abiding and enduring in



(322) the community of the true Christian church. From this it followeth that they who do the opposite are in no blessed condition. For by the poor, He meaneth here not such as through laziness have naught, or such as have lost through their own fault what they had in gambling, debauchery, and drinking; or such as have naught and yet are as ungodly and vicious as others. But He meaneth those whom the Spirit maketh poor. In the same way as the Spirit drove Christ into the wilderness where the devil tempted Him, even so doth the Spirit drive them into poverty, so that they have naught of their own, like their master Christ. These are the spiritually poor. Hence, he that feareth poverty is also to be feared. He that avoideth community is also to be avoided.

23.

(323) THEREFORE doth He say to His disciples, "Ye are the light of the world"—not a light put under a bushel which lighteth and serveth only for itself, but a light on the candlestick, which is of use to the whole house. Even so are they with their good works. Therefore doth He name them salt—because they are of use to all and should show in everything the good which they have received from God. Light is in itself of no use, neither is salt nor leaven, but their use is in relationship to others. Even so with us—not our benefit, but that of others is demanded of us. Where the salt doth not savour it is no salt but something else. For if we do what is loving and good, then we shall also do good as an example to others.

24.

(324) NO man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon, that is, earthly riches and possessions. For the love and care of money doth control their heart like a lock. Therefore they make no mention of superfluity, and continue to bring in. For Christ saith it is impossible to cleave to and serve these two. Therefore thou shalt not say that it is possible. For if one master commandeth thee, "Thou shalt deny thyself," and the other, "Thou shalt draw to thyself what is not thine and add to what thou hast," the one desireth that thou shouldst live in community: the other that thou shouldst be selfish and possessive—how then is it possible that these contrary things can agree? Therefore, whoever is a servant of Mammon can certainly be no servant of Christ. One must take leave of the one if one would serve the other. No one can go two ways at once. No one can set his foot on more than one place. No branch can stand on two stems. No one can boil two soups in one pot. No one who is ill can be healed by water and fire—one must go. He who will have the one must let the other go. No man hath more than one heart. Thus no one can love God and serve Him, and at the same time temporal things and possessions, riches, money, and lands, which He here calleth a master (even as Paul calleth the belly a god), since (325) they trust money like God Himself, and serve it day and night, in the house and in the fields, on land and water, with the greatest diligence, with the greatest care, and with the greatest earnestness: so that they have not a tenth of this diligence, care, and earnestness for God and His service. But we are redeemed by Christ, therefore we should not serve money and gold and cleave to them, but give them up to God's poor. This preventeth that we be cast down to where the rich man was cast and tortured.

25.

LAY not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt,

(326) and where thieves do not break through or steal. Nor are they taken from you but remain your own. What is here, however, is transitory. It is here today: tomorrow it is gone. Today a lovely flower: tomorrow dry dust. Today a burning fire: smoke that is quickly gone, that goeth out at the chimney, and we cannot stop it. When we come again it is all consumed. Therefore can we attain naught with it. To this Christ addeth, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also," for certainly where one doth place his treasure, there doth he also place his heart, therefore the self-seeking man need not pretend so artfully that he can possess treasure and property and yet have his heart and mind with God—which thing cannot be. With their mouth only they pretend to be ardent, but with their heart they seek their own profit and covetousness. The same is their treasure as one doth see in many who so honour temporal, earthly things (327) and cleave to them. Rather than forsake them they believe and act worse than the heathen, for they have Christ in their mouths and their hearts in their coffers. Truly they are great idolaters.

26.

(328) NOW if one should say, "How now, why should I let what is mine, yea, mine own, out of my power?" to such a one Christ answereth, "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor have they barns wherein each doth gather his own; yet God doth feed them." How much more will God, the heavenly Father, care for you, who are much more than the birds—as He fed Elijah miraculously through the ravens, and the five thousand with five barley loaves. Therefore ye should not be anxious (for after all these things do the heathen seek: how each may care for himself, no matter what befalleth the other). "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness," saith Christ, "and all these things shall be added unto you," even though ye have no store of your own for many days and years, like the rich man. He desireth thus to lead us back to the first nobility of Adam, before he had care for food and shelter, for care belongeth to God, but work belongeth to us. Therefore also is community: that He may set us free from temporal care and covetousness and cleave to Him alone, that we may care for what is divine.

27.

(329) OUR own prayer, "Our Father," teacheth us also community. Christ hath not taught us to pray each for his own bread: not "Give me my bread," but "give us our bread"—that is, bread for all, therefore are they false prayers who pray, "Give us our bread," and when they receive it count it their own. He who hath of his own, may not pray to God. The Apostle Paul writeth, "Such as walk among you disorderly, working not at all but being busybodies, should eat their own bread," as a punishment. That they may be ashamed, saith he.

28.

(330) HE that liveth in property is false in the confession of his faith. For the Christian faith stateth a holy Christian church and a community of saints. Now where there is no community of saints, there is likewise no true, sincere Christian church. Therefore all lie who say, "Community is not necessary and is no basis of doctrine," for it is an article of the faith, yea, an institution of Christ and of the Holy Spirit and His teaching. Therefore, just as it is necessary for us to hold to the doctrine of the apostles, to prayer and to the breaking of bread, even so is it necessary for us to hold to community of goods. For community is no light matter, as though the apostles did the same out of capriciousness, but it is divine earnest, and is right and meet for us today as it was at Jerusalem and elsewhere.



29.

(331) "ENTER ye in at the strait gate," saith Christ, "for strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." For a Christian community life is a strait gate: to the carnal man the small eye of a needle. Yea, it is a furnace of surrender in which men are tried like gold in the fire. Therefore is it that few desire to enter in at this strait gate, and that few find this narrow way. They always think it is asking too much. They cannot believe that one must stand so bare, laying aside and giving up everything; and cannot enter in at the strait gate and door before which one must lay aside everything. But the broad way and the wide gate is the unsocial, owning life of the world, of all the self-seeking and covetous, of whom there are many, many who go in, yea, the whole world goeth in thereat, for, as they say, where money is, there mercenaries gather—even so do men to covetousness and property, and mock the surrendered Christ who saith, "Ye cannot serve or cleave to God as well as Mammon."

30.

(332) "THE birds of the air have nests," saith Christ to him who offered to follow Him and become His disciple; "and the foxes have holes, but the Son of man hath naught of His own, wherever to lay His head." As though He would say, "You must accept such surrender of self and deny property, if you would be my disciple, for the servant should not be greater than his lord, nor the disciple above his master." Therefore are they false disciples, tares sown by the enemy and quite the opposite, who turn back here and have not only that of their own whereon they lay their head, but also money and possessions, and, like the foxes and birds, desire each to keep and possess his own separate house and homestead.

31.

(333) "WHOSOEVER loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whosoever loveth son and daughter more than me is not worthy of me, and whosoever taketh not his cross upon him and followeth after me is not worthy of me." Now, he is not worthy of Christ who loveth more than Christ his parents and friends, who are bound by blood and with the most necessary bonds of nature and of kinship, and can I say of him—since also the man who loveth his own soul, than which we have naught closer, more than Christ is not worthy of him—for all the more doth it follow that he that loveth his own possessions more than Christ, who saith, "Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor," is absolutely unworthy of Christ and His glory and will not taste of His supper.

32.

(334) CHRIST saith, "That which was sown among thorns is he that heareth the word: and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word and it becometh unfruitful." Therefore these two cannot exist side by side. If the thornbush groweth, the Word must be choked and die out in the heart, but if the Word groweth in the heart, then possessive riches must go. Therefore he is deceived who desireth to keep and possess both side by side; for just as thorns tear and pierce what they come across, even so doth the desire to riches. Therefore have the rich a thorny wood-path, where they are held back; for ultimately it is as though under the thorns all manner of snakes and scorpions lie hidden. Even so is it with the deceitfulness of riches and of possessions, therefore one should eradicate the thorns with the grubbing-axe of the Word of God and with true community, cast on them the fire of the Holy Spirit, and burn them and drive away the pest of unclean beasts, that we, as good plowmen, may keep the land clean and have a straight footpath.

33.

(335) HENCE Christ saith, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hidden in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." Hence he who selleth not all that is his, will also not buy it. He speaketh not of superfluity, but of all that he had. Therefore he that findeth the Word of God, the divine truth, through faith, must give up all things and make himself quite free of what is temporal, and win the treasure which he found. And He saith here that this is done with great joy, not sadly like the rich young man. For, saith He, so is the kingdom of heaven, and it is as follows:

34.

"AGAIN," saith Christ, "the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." This meaneth the same as above.

(336) LIKEWISE if thou dost find a pearl and canst give twenty pounds and dost buy the pearl, thy twenty pounds are from henceforth of no more use to thee—thou canst gain no more therewith—thou must gain alone with the pearl and sell the same well: even so, if thou dost find the pearl of the Word of God, the divine truth, thou dost give all thy possessions for it, that thou mayest have and keep the pearl and seek thy riches, thy treasure, thy profit, through the same pearl. But if thou dost find the pearl and buyest it not because the twenty pounds are dearer to thee than the pearl, thou dost use thy money to thy damnation, for thou dost flee from that for the sake of which thou shouldst give thy property, and feed thyself from the same and not from the twenty pounds. For this purpose are the twenty pounds given thee: that thou mightest buy a treasure and pearl; where not, thou and the same money which thou hast not used will certainly come into eternal damnation with the worthless (unworthy) servant, who kept his money in the cloth or buried it in the earth.

35.

(337) CHRIST doth also teach us community by example, in that He once and again fed the five thousand, not counting women and children, and likewise the four thousand, who had come to Him in the desert. He told them to sit down on the grass, and served the bread to them in common, and also the little fishes. For the disciples gladly shared with others and were commanded to share what little they had, namely, the five barley loaves and two fishes; likewise the seven loaves. Which thing teacheth us that we, who like those leave our home, fatherland and friends, to cleave to the Word of God in this wilderness and follow it, should do the same today: that we most certainly should have and use temporal goods in common and for the good of all, out of love to our neighbour.

36.

(338) "IF any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." To shed his own blood is more than to give up money and goods: so likewise is to deny his own will. For we are a people of God, His property, and are not our own. How much less can one say of temporal things that they are his own, or have property and possess it with Christian rights! Therefore whoever thinketh to follow Christ or to be a disciple of Christ, without leaving all created things, and denying himself, believeth not in Christ.

37.

THE Lord spake to Peter, "Go thou to the sea and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth,



(339) thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee." That indicateth, in its depths, naught other than that they, as fishers of men, should catch out of the world those that believe with the word of preaching, and use their possessions in true community and for the need of all, like the church at Jerusalem. That is "for me and thee." Thus must the sea bring gifts to the name of the Lord, as Isaiah saith.

38.

(340) CHRIST saith to the rich young man, when he asketh, "What shall I do that I may be saved?" that though he had kept the law of the tables of stone, "yet lackest thou one thing if thou wilt be perfect; go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me." He nameth "perfection" to sell all, to give to the poor; for love, which this young man lacketh, is a bond of perfection. Where it dwelleth, it worketh perfect surrender and community—not in part or half, but complete and perfect. Therefore it is clear that they who keep their privilege, who cannot deny their property and give it to the spiritually poor in true community and for the use of all, cannot become disciples and followers of Christ. Therefore "sell all things" is a general command and not just advice given. For he that desireth to remain with his property and possessions doth not follow Christ, nor did He have any among His chosen that remained in his property. For even as a well or spring that doth not run out and from which one draweth no water, easily groweth stagnant, even so is it with the rich if they keep their riches to themselves. For the heart of him that possesseth and retaineth such is anxious only about his silver and gold (that is, that his treasure will be consumed) by rust, and (will become) ugly, withered, faded, and ruined.

(341) For if thou couldst see the heart of a covetous man, thou wouldst find it like a garment which is eaten by thousands of moths. For even so is it pierced by care, defiled by sin, and disunited in itself. As a physician doth first purge the wound before he healeth, even so doth God desire first to sweep out of His followers the subsidiary gods, upon which man putteth his hope, to which he hangeth and cleaveth, which he loveth beside and before God, in which his heart and soul rejoiceth.

"TO give to the poor," however, is not to be understood that the poor make him blessed, but being obedient to Christ and following Him in His Word and command—that maketh him blessed. Therefore he must first renounce his possessions—apart from this none can follow Him—and what one giveth away here on earth for Christ's sake, he will receive in the kingdom of God. There he will find it again. "He that loveth riches shall have no profit therefrom," saith the preacher Solomon.

39.

(342) TO the rich young man it was far too narrow a gate, that he should strip himself of his possessions—and he went away, sorrowful. Therefore doth Christ say, "O how hardly shall rich men enter into the kingdom of God. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." For just as it is not possible for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, even so is it also impossible for a rich man to be so small that he can enter into the kingdom of heaven. For we must become like children, who have nothing; so much must go from a rich man before he becometh a child and may enter into the kingdom of God—just as much as must go from a camel before it becometh a tiny animal that can go through a needle's eye. That is a hard saying—but still harder are the hearts of those who

(343) hear this and cease not to cleave to riches and covetousness: hence the

proverb, "Not hard the Word of God would be if from self-interest men were free."

40.

(344) THE disciples of Christ, who were so poor and had already left all that they had, were horrified for the whole world, and said, "Who then can be saved?" As though they would say, "They will be few who accept this, and follow us." "But Jesus beheld them and said unto them, With men this is impossible: but with God all things are possible." As though He would say, "It is no work or strength of man to free himself of all temporal things and property, but God can give one grace, that he is enabled to do this, and withdraw thus from his own, and swim out of the water." Therefore, O ye rich and self-seeking, how long will ye burden yourselves with much filth? How long will ye be weary and heavy laden and not seek rest for your souls?

41.

(345) PETER spake, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee." Even so must a disciple of the Lord be able to speak today. The Lord said, "Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life." For as Adam, the father of us all, desired other than God, and inclined to created things with his love and thus despised his Creator, even so all men fall with Adam through love to created things today; and Christ desireth to lead us back to His father from this love to created things. He cometh and calleth, "Repent!" and saith that one should leave and give up for God's sake all that one had previously loved more than God, turn one's heart away from the creatures and fix it once more on God. Therefore, mark, it is not said, "Remain in thy house, homestead and property," for that doth hinder greatly discipleship of Christ, and the Word cannot remain alive and bring forth fruit. Now if one promised thee to teach thee an art or good way whereby thou mightest keep the fruits of the earth for a long time, what wouldst thou gladly leave that thou mightst keep the fruits of the earth uninjured for many years! Here, however, Christ teacheth a way whereby what thou hast will remain well preserved in eternity, as a heavenly treasure—not only external goods, but thy body and soul can be preserved in eternity. Hence the preacher saith, "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days. Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth." "It is an evil plague," saith the preacher, "to keep wealth to one's own hurt." Therefore he that forsaketh all things shall find all things. For if we receive spiritual and heavenly things and lose physical, we suffer no hurt, but make a good exchange. The plowman ventureth a few little grains of corn, for he hopeth for a great harvest; how much more should we do this for the sake of those things which we confidently expect? Therefore let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of heaven for the sake of filth, or steer our little boat to the moorings full of straw and chaff, and so cause the devil laughter, but ourselves eternal sorrow. Hence the prophet Isaiah saith, "He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?"

(346) Isa. 44:20.

42.

(347) JESUS went into the temple of God and drove out all the buyers and sellers in the temple and overturned the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, "It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves." Therefore Christ desireth not to have them that buy and sell in



His house, as the prophet said aforetime; and such buying and selling is a sign whereby each must recognize the false church, in that he seeth that Christ once drove such out with whips.

43.

(348) "THOU shalt love God, thy Lord, with all thy heart. That is the first commandment, and the second is like unto it: thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The word "thyself" comprehendeth in it true community and all the works of love and mercy that one human being can show another. Yea, to love one's neighbour as oneself—that is a sample of true community and of all good things. Where this love is poured out by God into men's hearts, it teacheth true community through the Holy Spirit and the bond of peace. There no one desireth to have any privilege over his neighbour, but equality and common care for one another. It is not to love one's neighbour as oneself when one desireth to have, to keep, and to possess self-interest, property; for love is a bond of perfectness, a golden chain about the temple of God. He that hath one link must have all. For to love one's neighbour as oneself is not a part, not half, but having and enjoying all things in common, for the use of all. Without this it is but Pharisaic, heathen, and pretended love and not Christian love.

44.

(349) SUCH love and community Christ praiseth in His church, which is called His body in accordance with the Gospel with which He ended His last sermon and desireth to draw it out. On that day, when He will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for ye gave me meat; ye gave me drink; ye took me in; ye clothed me; ye visited me when I was sick, and ye came unto me. For, truly, what ye have done unto one of the least of these, my brothers, ye have done unto me. Ye cursed, however, on the left hand, depart into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. Ye gave me no meat; ye gave me no drink; ye took me not in; ye clothed me not, but ye have cared only for yourselves. Ye have fed only yourselves, given yourselves drink, clothed yourselves. Ye have sought and thought only of your own self-interest and your property—not how ye might take me in and receive me, but only of yourselves. For what ye have not done nor desire to do to the least of these that are mine, that ye have not done unto me nor desire to do." For as we do to our neighbours and fellow members in Christ, that we shall find the Lord will do to us. Since there are men now who wish they had lived in the time that Christ walked on the earth, so that they could dwell and live with Him and do good to Him—behold, this becometh us now much more, for He saith, "What ye do to one of the least of these, ye do unto me. He that receiveth you, receiveth me." Therefore we should consider the day when we shall stand before Christ's throne of judgment, and there ask Him to have mercy upon His and make us heirs with Him of His kingdom. Then Christ will present His own. He that hath not made himself an heir with Him of his property, will have to be dumb.

45.

(350) CHRIST speaketh of this likewise in the parable, when He saith, "As a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability," to trade withal and practice usury and put in the bank. But he that kept his money in the cloth was thrown into outer darkness. Now we understand by the talent or pound, that each should give according to his ability, whether it be to admonish by preaching, or to give in money, tem-

(352) poral possessions which he hath received, for that is likewise lent to the Lord at usury, or if thou canst benefit thy neighbour in any other way. For there is nothing more pleasing to God, than that thou shouldst live thy whole life to the Christian benefit of all. They who do this enter into the joy of their Lord. They, however, that keep their pound in a cloth are they that benefit their neighbour neither with words nor with temporal goods, nor wish to be in common with others, but have the malice of Belial in their hearts and desire to keep everything to themselves. Such worthless, self-seeking, unfaithful servants shall be thrown to destruction.

46.

(353) WHEN Jesus went throughout the towns and villages preaching the glad tidings, the Twelve went with Him, and certain women, whom He had healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto them of their substance. Mark how the women already here began community of goods with them.

47.

WATCH and beware of covetousness, for no man can live therefrom—that he hath complete sufficiency in his possessions. It is covetousness that continually desireth more than one's neighbour and fellow member. Regarding this He speaketh in a parable of selfishness, of the rich man whose field flourished, whom the devil led to midnight just as he thought all was well with him. Even so is it, saith He, with the man who layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich in God; for he cannot be rich whose heart is poor, and he cannot be poor who is rich in heart.

48.

(354) SELL that ye have and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, and which remaineth eternally for you. Here He teacheth once again that we should give up property and all that is temporary and strive for what is heavenly and eternal. He meaneth not alms, however, as the world giveth, where one giveth something to a wandering beggar in whom there is as much vice and ungodliness as in any rich man. One cannot say that this was done to Christ, since the same are not His members or surrender to Him; though it is no wrong thing, and is human pity, sympathy, and charity; but Christ speaketh here of complete alms in the community of saints, with all that one hath.

49.

(355) CHRIST likeneth His calling to the Christian church to a supper, for we are wedding guests and people invited to a supper who enjoy together what is given them as guests. "And when he sent his servant at supper time to say to the guests, Come, for all things are now ready, they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said, I have bought a field, and I must needs go and see it; and another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them." He had not the time. "And the third said, I have married a wife. Therefore I cannot come." He did not want to cause separation. "But the Lord was wroth and said, I say unto you, That none of those men shall taste of my supper." For as long as the love of earthly things, which are superfluous and transitory, hinders us, heavenly things can find no place with us. For if thou dost give thyself up to earthly things when heavenly things are set before thee, consider that thou dost revile Him that doth offer thee the same, in that thou despisest the heavenly and dost not fear to mistake them for earthly things.

(356)



(357) THERE went great multitudes with him: "And he turned and saith unto them, if any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath (mark, *all*), he cannot be my disciple." Thus each cannot and must not keep, possess, and remain with his own to be himself lord, steward, and ruler, for that would have two kingdoms, or inherit two properties. If we desire to receive the one, we must flee from the other; if we desire to lay hold on the one, we must lay aside the other; if we desire to respect what is heavenly, we must despise what is temporal; if we desire to promise ourselves the one, we must deny the other; he who desireth to have the one must let the other go. For as in illness and evil tumours, where one quencheth not first the matter that issueth and the uncleanness of the wound, no matter what medicine and plaster one may use, all is for nothing and in vain since the cause of the illness is not removed. Even so is it with us, if we make not our hearts empty and surrendered and refrain not our hands and wash them of covetousness, we cannot be sound and healthy as Christ's disciples should be.

(358) "MAKE to yourselves friends with unrighteous mammon; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into the everlasting habitation," which habitation is the true church of God. She will always accept them in their need and care for them spiritually and temporally. These are friends who offer each other their property completely as brothers, in equal love and in common. Therefore doth He say, "Make to yourselves friends with temporal goods and property"—which He doth call "unjust mammon."

(359) "HE that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much": and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If one is faithful in the administration of what is small and evil—that is, in temporal things—he is also faithful and true in what is great, that is, in spiritual things. For faithfulness in what is great, namely, in divine things, is the spring from whence faithfulness floweth into the least, that is, into what is temporal. Now, where no streams flow, what will be the state of the spring? For both go together. If one is not in the administration of temporal things and community as he should be in accordance with Christ's command and will, but is an Ananias, he is also unfaithful in the greatest, in divine, spiritual things, and worthless before God.

(360) "IF ye have not been faithful in unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who shall give you that which is your own?" Now if that which is temporal is called another's, whoever presumeth to possess and have it for his own is unrighteous and acteth unfaithfully, like the unjust steward. Who will now give him the heavenly possession, namely, the true riches? Therefore if one desireth to serve God, he must leave his own mammon. If one desireth to serve and cleave to mammon, he must forsake God. For he that still cleaveth to what is earthly doth testify that he still knoweth, seeketh, desireth, and asketh for naught better. For one always turneth to the better and more profitable, and gladly letteth the worse go if it hindereth the better. What great folly: that we desire not willingly to give the things which we receive again later richly and much

better, and which in any case are taken in displeasure from us—yea, which we must leave with much ado, whether we desire or not.

(361) THE Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided Him, as though they would say, "What a fool he would be, who giveth away all that he hath! What a pity if one cannot be blessed except through such a life!"—even as do the world today and all Pharisees. Luke Where one teacheth such true community they laugh and mock at it. 16:15. Christ spake unto them, "Ye are they which justify yourselves," namely, as though ye possess property for the good of your neighbour: that your heart cleaveth not thereto, but your heart is with God and your property ye keep as alms to the poor. "But God knoweth your hearts," namely, that is naught.

Mark AND Christ beheld how the rich cast money into the treasury, and many 12:41- that were rich cast in much. He beheld, also, however, a poor widow, who 44. threw in two mites, and He said, "Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance [as a sacrifice to God]: but she of her want hath cast in all that she had, even all her living" (note, all her living!). Therefore doth the Lord demand all the property, and the whole heart in Christian community, no matter how great or how little the property may be. And how can Christ show, teach, and command the true forsaking of all things and community yet more than He hath done? Of the rich He saith to the young man that they should give all that they have, and here (for the poor say, "I have little") He teacheth them to do the same. Therefore we ought all to practice Christian community, for there is none poorer than this widow in the Gospel who sacrificed two mites in the temple of God and who excelled all others because she gave all that she had. For God seeth not what thou sacrificest, but He is concerned with the heart and will of him that giveth.

(363) HENCE is the congregation and church of Christ also compared to a vineyard wherein He hath built a wine press; likewise Christ to a vine and the Father the vinedresser; we, however, are the branches, for we should live in such unity and community, or membership one of another, as doth the wood of the vine more than other woods, and should give, present, and use all our possessions, good fruits, and gifts for the common good of our neighbour; as a vineyard doth not have or bear its fruit or a branch its grapes for itself. Likewise, are we often compared in the Scriptures, with the same meaning, to good, fruit-bearing trees, and are grafted, against the nature of covetousness and self-seeking, on to the good olive tree of Christ.

(364) "THIS is my command," saith Christ, "that ye love one another as I have loved you." Now He so loved us that He forsook the glory that He had with the Father and for our sakes became poor and a servant, and had all things in common with His disciples. In the same way doth He command that we should now love one another. Out of great love hath He made us heirs in heaven, and we should make our brother fellow heir with us in earthly things. He hath made us fellow citizens with the angels and members of the household of God, and we should receive our brother under our roof and into our home, and continue to show love to him in outward as well as in spiritual things. Therefore doth John say in his epistle,



"Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and closeth his heart against him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

58.

(365) "A NEW commandment give I you, that ye love one another as I have loved you. Hereby will every man know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Thus the new command of love meaneth especially that we should have and show community, one with another, and place gifts and goods which we may have from God at the service of all. For in this way men will recognize especially in you above all peoples—if the branch of love doth blossom so among you, yea, if ye have such love that they are enabled to live a brotherly and Christian community life with you, to suffer weal and woe together—that ye are my true disciples and of one faith in Christ; for love is above all else a sign of devout, holy people. Therefore doth Paul admonish Titus to teach that one be sound in love, which love was not so perfect in the people of the old covenant

(366) that it could attain to such complete community. Therefore is it a new command, a greater and more perfect than in the old covenant, for Christ demandeth not of us that we love one another as friends love, but as the members of a body love one another. Greater love and care than this one cannot find.

59.

EVEN as Christ doth complete and perfect the law when He saith: "It was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill. But I say unto you, Thou shalt not be angry. It was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her. It was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself. But I say unto you, Swear not at all. . . . Ye have heard, . . . An eye for an eye. But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil"—even so doth Christ lead love with its way and working to perfection, for it was said by them of old, "Thou shalt not harden thine heart against thy poor brother, but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him and shalt lend him of thy goods and help him, and support him according to his need." In the New Testament, however, Christ desireth and commandeth to give all that thou hast to the poor, and to have all things in community. Hence doth He say, "Except your righteousness shall exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of God."

(367) Deut. 15:7, 8.

Matt. 5:20.

60.

"FATHER, all that is mine is thine, and what is thine is mine." Even so should it be with the children of God. Where this is not so, then one hath degenerated, hath grown unhealthy and cold in love and warm in covetousness, yea, hath turned away from Christ.

61.

(368) CHRIST desireth that all who believe in Him through His Word should be one, as the Father is in Him and He in the Father. Even so also are the believers one in them, for there is naught that can be compared with unity, community, and being of one loving will, for one is manifold. For if ten or more are one and together, we are no longer one, but each becometh tenfold, and thou findest in ten one, and in one ten, and if the ten have an adversary that doth attack one of them, it is as though he had attacked ten. Thus is he overcome, for he is resisted not by one alone but by ten. If one is in need, he is not in need, for he hath to overflowing in the greater part, that is, in the nine, and the part that is in need,

(369) as the smaller part, is covered by the greater part which hath to overflow-

22

ing. For such an one seeth not with his eyes alone, nor doth he go alone on his own feet, but with all those that are his friends. Hence doth Job say, "I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame." And he breatheth with ten souls, for he doth not care for himself alone, but also for the rest, even were they hundreds, for strength doth increase. Such is the excellence of the chains and bonds of love and of Christian unity or community, which the preacher Solomon desireth to touch upon, saying, "Two are even better than one, for they enjoy the reward of their work. If one falleth, his fellow lifteth him up: for he hath not another to help him up. If two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? One may be overcome, but two can withstand; and a three-fold cord is not quickly broken." Likewise is a brother that supporteth as a strong city, and they that hold to one another like a bolt upon the lock.

62.

CHRIST is the Captain of faith, our example and forerunner. When He came, He likewise set up community with His disciples, so that they had one common purse, of which Judas was steward and carried the purse and what was given. When, however, covetousness, the treachery of Belial and the devil, took possession of him, so that he betrayed Christ and hanged himself, Matthias received the same office, and was chosen and was appointed when he (Judas) went to his own place. Even so should it be still in the church of God—that each is not his own purser, but the server-out who is chosen for this purpose should manage the possession of poor and rich. They who do otherwise reject and revile the footsteps and example of Christ.

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63.

WHEN the Holy Spirit came and was sent He brought about Christian community in its perfection, so that the three thousand and the five thousand who were in Jerusalem, yea, all that believed, were together, and had all things common. They sold their possessions and goods, and shared them to all men, as every man had need. For this reason doth the apostle call it community of the Holy Spirit, for where He truly dwelleth He worketh and bringeth about the same.

64.

AGAIN, Luke doth describe it in chapter four, saying, "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet, and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need." It is not written, "Each took for himself whatsoever he desired." So should it be still today, if God permitteth and granteth a place, and all things should be held in common which serve to the praise of God. He that doeth this not, revileth and forsaketh the footsteps of the first apostolic church.

65.

HENCE, when Ananias with Sapphira his wife sold their possession, they likewise had the treachery of Belial in their hearts and kept back part of the money. They brought one part and laid it at the apostles' feet. The other part they kept—doubtless, that they might still have somewhat should they come to naught and be once more false or give up the cause. For this reason they had both to die a sudden death, and Peter said, "Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and

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23



to keep back part of the money? Thou hast not lied to men, but to God." And he fell down, and gave up the ghost. Now, if community were not a basis of doctrine and of the Holy Spirit as well as other articles of faith, Peter would have had to say to Ananias, "Thou hast not lied to God and to the Holy Spirit, but to men."

66.

Acts  
5:13.  
(374) HISTORY mentioneth one by name, called Joses and named Barnabas, a Levite from Cyprus, who had a field, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet, "and of the rest durst no man join himself to them," saith Luke. Mark, they received none unless he in his surrender committed himself to community of goods, to live with them in one spirit, soul, and heart, therefore is there no need that thou shouldst ask, "Can it not be other than this?" for each alike must thus present what is his and place it in community.

67.

Acts  
2:41,  
42.  
(375) "THEY that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine, in fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayer." Who then desireth with truth and honour to say that they forsook community? Though they were persecuted and could later not be together in such large masses, yet though fewer of them were together one cannot thereby observe that community among them failed, for it is a command of Christ and a fundamental doctrine, which we must not desert but fulfill—otherwise Ananias and his wife were treated too severely.

68.

THAT community was not dissolved or forsaken by them is proved clearly again and again, for Paul saith the church was in the house of Priscilla and Aquila. The church was also in Laodicea, in the house of Nymphas, as Paul writeth and sendeth it greetings. Archippus, Paul's fellow soldier, had also the church living in his house. Did they then live communally in the houses? Truly, in other things, too, they showed themselves as acting communally, as at Jerusalem. For they did not, as the world did and falsely named "brothers" do today, sit at one table and eat without shame, the one better and the other worse food, according as each could afford.

69.

(376) Acts  
1:3. THERE were in the church that was in Antioch certain prophets and teachers—Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, Saul and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch. And they came together for a whole year in the church, and who can say that it was not in all things as at Jerusalem, for they that were scattered in the tribulation regarding Stephen came down from Jerusalem. They established the church at Antioch and taught a great multitude, so that they were there first called Christians. Likewise, many were gathered together in the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark. Now if they gathered together as at Jerusalem, then they also did their housekeeping in community, as at Jerusalem, and continued therein—otherwise they would not have continued steadfast in the teaching of the apostles.

70.

(377) Gal.  
2:1. PAUL saith that fourteen years after his conversion he went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas and Titus, where Peter and John gave him the hand and agreed with one another that Paul and his helpers should preach to the heathen, but they to the circumcision. "Only they would that we should remember the poor: the same which I also was forward to do," saith Paul. Before the governor Felix, Paul saith likewise, "After many

24

Acts  
24:17. years had passed, I brought an alms to my nation and an offering to Jerusalem." Who will then say, "It did not last long in Jerusalem and community was soon abandoned"?

71.

(378) THE Apostle Paul saith of the brother Gaius of Corinth, that he was his host and the host of the whole church. When he wrote from there to the church in Rome he showeth also clearly that each was not his own host and steward as in the world, but that there was a common household, of which economy Gaius was in charge.

72.

II Cor.  
8:3, 4. LIKEWISE also did the church in Macedonia and kept community, which Paul himself praiseth and saith, "Beyond their power they were willing of themselves, and prayed us earnestly with much entreaty that we would receive the benefit and community of the ministering to the saints, and not (only) as we hoped, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us by the will of God." Is that not community as it was kept in Jerusalem? That no one can deny.

73.

(379) IN the same way the church at Thessalonica lived in the community of goods, for Paul doth write to them that they that walk disorderly and work not at all but are busybodies, should eat their own bread that they may be ashamed, therefore they ate communal bread. For Paul would not have needed to say that such an one should eat his own bread, if each did already eat his own bread—as false "brothers" do now, to say nothing of the world.

74.

Acts  
3:6. PETER the apostle saith to the man who was lame from his mother's womb, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus of Nazareth rise up and walk." Therefore he had naught that was his own, but all things common, though it was laid at the apostles' feet.

75.

(380) Acts  
28:16,  
30. PAUL, when he came as a prisoner to Rome and was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him, dwelt for two years in his own hired house, and received all that came to him. Even so should one receive others.

76.

Rom.  
12:1. "I BESEECH you, dear brothers, by the mercy of God, that ye present your bodies a sacrifice to God." If we should do that, how much more should we present our goods a sacrifice to His church as the church in Macedonia did?

77.

Rom.  
12:2. (381) "BE not conformed to the world: but let yourselves be transformed by the renewing of your mind." The world possesseth riches and treasures and they have property, for they are the ungodly, who go each his own way, each followeth his greed with all his power. Such cleave to such things as muck to a wheel, and rend and bite one another for the sake of mine and thine: much for me and little for thee: give me the present, and thou canst take what is to come. That is the sum total of the world's children in their hearts. Each looketh to his own profit. To such we should not be conformed.

78.

Rom.  
12:4-6. "AS we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office and work, even so are we, many, one body in Christ, and every one members one of another, having different gifts, according to the grace

25



that is given to us." Consider what that meaneth—to be as members of one body. Thou canst have no greater teaching of Christian community. "Let love be without dissimulation and sincere," saith he. Likewise, care for the needs of the saints and strive gladly to give them hospitality, that is, gladly to receive one another.

79.

(382) "RECEIVE ye one another, as Christ also received you to the glory of Rom. God." Here the apostle desireth not that each should look for a special 15:7. dwelling, or that each should have a special one, or receive and occupy one alone, but that that might take place which the prophet foretold: that they shall say, "They sat closer together, that I also might sit."

80.

Rom. "I GO now to Jerusalem to minister unto the saints, for it hath pleased 15:25- them of Macedonia and Achaia to prepare a common contribution for the 27. poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, it is also right that they should minister unto them in carnal things."

81.

I Cor. "GOD is faithful in his promise, whereby ye are called to the commu- 1:9. nity of his Son Jesus Christ, our Lord." Mark, we are called to the com- (383) munity of Christ.

82.

I Cor. "THEY that buy," saith the apostle, "should be as though they possessed 7:30, it not; and they that use this world, as though they needed it not." David 31. saith, "If riches come to you, set not your heart upon them." This is not the case with those who possess property, but with such as are living with all things in common.

83.

I Cor. "EVERY man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. And 9:25. this they do to obtain a corruptible crown; but we the incorruptible." Here the apostle giveth an example of true renunciation in true commu- (384) nity. There they also that take part in God's struggle under the banner and pennon of Christ and run toward the heavenly goal, should empty, rid, and free themselves of property and what is temporal.

84.

"LET no man seek his own profit, but the profit of another, as I also seek not what is desirable and profitable for me, but what is desirable and profitable for many, that they may be blessed. Be ye followers of me, even as I follow Christ." Here the apostle teacheth with precept and example that none should seek his own profit; so we must either seek community or let the common good go and have property—for these two cannot dwell in one heart.

85.

PAUL, right through the twelfth chapter of the first epistle to the Corin- (385) thians, teacheth in the parable of a body, and saith finally, "God hath so tempered the body together, having given more honour to that member that lacked, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another." Consider what the same care is.

86.

LOVE is long-suffering and kind, it is not jealous and envious. Love doth not seek its own profit. Now if it doth not seek its own profit, it seeketh certainly only community. Therefore such as have this love and are sound in love follow true community. Thus naught is so strongly commanded

us as love, for it is social and seeketh the common good. It containeth the whole law and all the prophets. But whosoever seeketh his own profit and property, hath no love in him. Yea, where this conception is in the heart and taketh the upper hand the branch of love withereth.

87.

(386) "LET all your things go in love. I beseech you, dear brothers, (ye know I Cor. the house of Stephanas, that it is the first fruits of Achaia, and that they 16:15, have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints), that ye submit your 16. selves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and worketh." Mark, how they addicted and gave themselves to the service of the saints, not to the service of property.

88.

II Cor. "AS ye abound in every thing, in faith, and in the word, and in knowl- 8:8. edge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also. I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love. For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." Therefore it is here His will that we also should gladly become poor for the sake of others, and so love one another as Christ hath loved us, if we have put on Christ and have put off the old man.

89.

II Cor. "NOW therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a willing mind, 8:11- so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have. For if there 15. be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened; but by an equality, that your abundance may serve their want at this hard time, that their abundance may likewise later serve your want that there may be equality: as it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack." By this the apostle desireth that the rich (should have) no more than the poor, and the poor neither more nor less than the rich, but that (388) there should be a Christian community and equality.

90.

II Cor. "CONCERNING the ministering to the saints, it is not necessary for me 9:1, 2, to write to you: for I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I 5-7. boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked many. But I thought it necessary to exhort the brothers, that they would go before you, and make up your promised bounty or gift beforehand, that the same might be ready, as a good gift and not as a matter of covetousness. But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so (389) let him give; not sadly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver." As, when the Lord through Moses commandeth Israel to bring a gift to the Lord for the work of the tabernacle of witness, that each should bring the Lord a gift with a willing heart—gold, silver, brass, yellow silk, and the like. Since it is still time, let us sow, that we may reap before the winter cometh. Then it will no more befit us. Now is the time to sow. After this time cometh the harvest and the reaper who desireth not to sow in summer but in the harvest is one to be laughed at. Now is the time to sow, therefore we have now not to reap but to sow and to scatter abroad. The time of sowing calleth to us to scatter and not to gather, to give and not to lay up, and in no way to spare temporal goods that we may obtain the



(390) stewardship an hundredfold. They that will not sow, however, and prepare themselves for the harvest must commonly go empty.

91.

II Cor. 9:12, 13. "FOR the administration of this contribution not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also in that many give thanksgiving to God by means of this service rendered, and praise God for your obedient confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your simple community with them and all men."

92.

FINALLY, after much teaching by the apostle admonishing to community, he wished them naught other than "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the community of the Holy Spirit be with you all, amen."

93.

(391) THE mystery and the purport of baptism teacheth us true community, for Paul saith, "For we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Greeks, bond or free." Therefore doth he say into one body, for there is no higher figure or example of unity. No one can find greater love and care than that to be found in a body. The members of a capable, healthy, body are all equally dear to the body—there is no distinction, no respect of persons, though among themselves they are unequal. Though the hand is not the eye, yet are they respected equally by the body, for all members of the body enjoy together and partake of all the good that God giveth them; and each member whatever it doeth, doeth it to profit and help the others. The eyes see not for themselves, the ears hear not for themselves, the hands work not for themselves, and the feet go not for themselves. In short, no member is his own, but the body's. None leaveth the other to suffer want. If the eye is in danger, the hand is in front of it. If one foot is about to slip, the other quickly supporteth it from fall. The one helpeth the other as himself. One suffereth with the other. One rejoiceth with the other. What befalleth one, befalleth also the other. They all share the necessity of the body. None is gladly away from the other. None is of any use without the other. There is pure unity, love, and service, and they agree wonderfully with each other. None can do without the other. Each alloweth gladly that the other be also cared and provided for. None hath aught of his own, but what he hath and can do is offered for the good of the whole body. What the hand earneth, it keepeth not to provide itself with gloves. What the feet do by walking is not only to provide themselves with shoes, but for all in common. Into such a spiritual body are we all baptized, that we may show such community in spiritual graces and gifts and also in temporal gifts and goods which are the lesser thing. Therefore are we often named a body in the holy Scripture and members one of the other. Because of such community are we baptized as he saith into one body. What is "into one body" other than that we should not be torn, but show and observe the highest unity and community among ourselves.

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94.

(394) IN the same way, in the mystery of the bread and wine of the Supper we are likewise really taught, exhorted, and witness to Christian community. For just because of the beautiful proportion and comparison did Christ use bread and wine: No matter how many grains of corn there may be each is a separate body; but when ground, they give their whole property, and when each hath lost what is his a loaf resulteth. Any grain, however, that remaineth whole in the bread is picked out and cast away. Thus, although each believer is a separate person and a special creation, yet, ground by the Word of God, they must be made one cake, and present all

that they have to the true community of the body of Christ, that is, to His church. Therefore are believers compared to good wheat. Likewise, though there are many grapes and berries, yet are they crushed in the wine press and so the juice of all becometh one drink. Thus they that believe should have and observe true unity and community, not alone in spiritual, as in the highest things, but also in temporal, as in the simplest things, with all their goods, to the honour of God and the benefit of their neighbour. But he that is not in this, is still a separate, special, unground grain of corn. Hence doth Paul say, "The bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ," since we eat of one spiritual meal, of the bread of the communion of the body of Christ, so let us also have community in spiritual love: since for many heathen, not that they eat at one table, but that they are citizens of one city sufficeth for friendship. We, however, who are the citizens of one city, who have one house, one table, one way, one gate, one root, and one life, who have one head, Christ, one shepherd, one king, one master, one judge, one creator and father, must not make ourselves unworthy of the same, in that we divide our heart and love not one another.

(395)

95.

(396) Gal. 3. TO the Galatians, Paul saith, "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized have put on Christ. Here is neither Jew nor Greek. Here is neither bond nor free. Here is neither man nor woman: for ye are all together one in Christ." If this is so, much more must our property be one property.

96.

Gal. 5:13. "BY love serve one another, for all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." For one to serve the other in love is not to do so for payment or recompense. If thou dost consider this service—how thou shouldst love thy neighbour as thyself—thou canst not but come upon the way of Christian community.

97.

(397) Eph. 4:15, 16. THE apostle doth admonish the Ephesians clearly and saith, "Let us be sincere in love and grow in all things unto him that is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body is fitly joined together and the one member cleaveth to the other through all the joints, in that the one doth serve the other according to the working of the Spirit within, which he doth work in each member in its own measure and maketh the body grow to its own betterment, and he doth all this in love." And where there is love there is certainly also membership in Christian community.

98.

Eph. 4:28. (398) "LET him who hath deceived and extorted, deceive and extort no more but let him labour and make something honest with his hands, that he may have to give to him that needeth." He doth not only command him to work, but in such a way that he can help the needy.

99.

Eph. 5:3, 5, 6. "LET not covetousness be named among you, as becometh saints. For this ye ought to have known that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolator, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disbelief. Therefore have no fellowship with them." He, however, is a covetous man, who desireth, seeketh, wanteth to have and keep more than



(399) his brother, fellow member and neighbour, who desireth at all costs to have privilege and property. Even such an idolater was Ananias, over whom the wrath of God came. For covetousness is idolatry. For, mark, they that have goods and money prepare instead of the temple a box where they place the idol. Thou sayest, however, "I worship it not." Even so will the other likewise say, "I worship the picture not, but the devil therein." Thus, even though thou dost not fall down before money and property, out of love to the same thou dost worship the devil who hath taken possession of thy heart, and all that the devil of covetousness doth suggest to thee thou dost obey and do.

100.

Eph. 5:29. "NO man hath ever hated his own flesh, but he nourisheth and preserveth it." So, since we are all members one of another and are all one flesh of His flesh and bones, we ought ever so to treat one another, and none despise the other, that we despise and forsake not ourselves. For even as man and wife are one body, and have all goods in common, even so is the Christian church. "The mystery is great," saith Paul. "I speak of Christ and his church." We say therefore that here Paul saw in the clear words and teaching of Christ that divine unity and true community should be observed and proved in the body of Christ, that is, in His church.

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101.

Phil. 2:1-9. TO the Philippians Paul saith, "If there be among you any exhortation in Christ, any comfort of love, any fellowship of the Spirit, any tender love and mercy, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be of one heart and one mind, having the same love. Do naught through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each look not to his own profit but to the profit of another. Let each be of the same mind as Christ, who, though he truly was in the form of God, regarded not equality with God as (a robber doth his) booty, but emptied himself and took the form of a servant and became as any other man and was found in fashion as a man. He humbled himself and was obedient unto death, yea, to death on the cross. Wherefore God hath also exalted him." He desireth hereby that we, likewise, even though we were glorious and rich in the world, should not regard the withdrawal of the same as robbery, but empty ourselves and take the form of a servant in the house of God, though we were previously ourselves lords in property. Now, however, we should become as any other believing man, our brother, and humble ourselves and become obedient not only in community of the Spirit, in the same love, and in the emptying oneself of one's own, but also to the losing of life. Then we shall be like-minded with Christ and have put Him on, and shall later be exalted with Him. He, however, that doth show the opposite of this hath not the mind of Christ but of the devil, with whom he also, if he so endeth, will be abased to the lowest depths in hell.

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102.

Phil. 3:7-9. "WHAT previously was gain to me, that I have for Christ's sake counted loss. For I count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord, for whose sake I count all possession loss, and count it dirt and filth that I may win Christ and be found in him." Therefore are the riches of this world naught but poverty, in comparison with heavenly riches, even as this life without that is death. Hence, whosoever cannot learn to estimate what is temporal thus meanly and let it go for the sake of truth, cannot win Christ. According to the apostle's own teaching here there is no distinction between laying up money and laying up dirt. Hence we should look to see on what we set our heart, and not conform to the world. For as worms live in the earth, even so do they live in what is

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earthly and temporal, and in the same way as horseflies have their joy, pleasure, and amusement in the dung of others, even so doth the world sojourn in what is foreign to it and have its joy, pleasure, and amusement in mammon, property, and wealth.

103.

Phil. 3:13-16. "BRETHREN, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded and walk by the same rule and be of the same mind." Behold how he doth teach the forgetting and letting go of what is temporal and to this doth add the virtues of the perfect. How then can they desire or shall they reach forth unto those things which are before who have not only not forgotten what is behind—their property—but fight mightily to keep the same?

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104.

Phil. 3:17-19. "BRETHREN, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly—an idol which they serve, as he saith in another place—and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." For if they have but good incense to offer to their belly, they are well pleased and serve and care for the same for ever and ever, planning, thinking, and considering day and night for the belly's sake. They fatten the same, but heed not their soul. They adorn the body and seek after gold pieces for clothing, like whores to whom clothes are dearer than the soul. The body they clean and adorn: the soul they leave lying in all manner of filth. The belly must be full. The soul they allow to starve to death. Thus certainly the belly is their god.

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105.

Phil. 4:18, 19. "I AM full, having received from Epaphroditus, that from you came an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable and well-pleasing to God. But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

106.

(406) TO the Colossians saith Paul, "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, and is vain and puffed up by his fleshly mind, and holdeth not to the Head; from which the whole body receiveth what is necessary through joints and bands, and knit together, groweth to the size God granteth." Note well here, what it meaneth that the members care for one another and are knit together, and let not thyself be turned by the adversary from the mind of Christ and His apostles.

Col. 2:18.

107.

Col. 3:14. "ABOVE everything put on love, which is the bond of perfection, and let the peace of God be ever victorious in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body"—that is naught else than to a true community and unity, to which bond of perfection Christ likewise called the rich young man when He said to him, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give it to the poor."

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Matt. 19:21.

108.

I Thess. 4:9-11. "BUT as touching brotherly love ye need not that we write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another, and indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you,



dear brothers, that ye become yet more perfect; and that ye strive to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you."

109.

I Tim. 6:6. (408) "GODLINESS with contentment is a great benefit. For we brought nothing into this world, therefore it is manifest that we will carry nothing out. If we have food and clothing let us be content. For they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For covetousness is the root of all evil, the mother of all evil things, a castle of all wickedness, a base of all sin, which doth grow and climb to the heights on the ladder of evil and leadeth to much sorrow. But thou, O man of God, flee from such!" For just as thou dost see a man bound hand and foot and with fetters about his neck, even so whomsoever covetousness and the lust for wealth doth once bind, it doth fetter with a thousand chains about his neck, and maketh him also love these bonds.

110.

(409) I Tim. 6:17-19. "TEACH them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God; that they do good, give gladly and have all things in common; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." Mark, here, how one should admonish and lead the rich in this world, teaching the forsaking of all things and having of all things in common.

111.

I Pet. 1:22, 23. (410) PETER the apostle saith, "Love one another with a pure heart fervently, as they who have been born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, namely, of the living word of God, which abideth for ever." Hence we are called reborn men and new creatures in that we ought to be welded together in love to true community. Which thing is not the way of the old carnal man and of the world. Consider well: Shall not they that have fervent love in their hearts share all that they have with one another, and place the same at the disposal of all?

112.

I Pet. 4:9, 10. "USE hospitality one to another without grudging, and serve one another, each with the gift that he hath received from God, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God"—to do which thing is completely contrary to property.

113.

II Pet. 1:5-8. "SO use all your diligence and in your faith bring forth Christian virtue, and in this virtue, knowledge; and in knowledge, humility and temperance; in humility, patience; in patience, the kindness of God; in the kindness of God, brotherly love; in brotherly love, love to all. For if these things be in you and abound, ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

114.

(411) II Pet. 2:1-3. "BUT there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in pernicious sects, and thus deny the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow them in their condemnation of others, and by them the way of truth shall be evil spoken of, and through covetousness (mark, through covetousness!) shall they with feigned words attack you and seek to win you." Even as today there are many such attackers, enticers, and ear ticklers, who, like the thieves and murderers

climbing in at a completely different place from the narrow door, seek to crawl in, one at the window and another by the chimney. They condemn the narrow way, and give the flesh play enough. They deceive themselves out of their unloving, covetous hearts that it is sufficient if they give alms and lend as much as they desire, in accordance with the love of the Pharisees, heathen, and the ungodly of this world, who do the same the one to the other and teach that one need not deny all things, and warn one not to sell and forsake all things and give to the poor. One can, nevertheless, go to heaven. "Yea," they say, "thou mayest truly keep and possess thy house and tiny farm, thy kitchen and small cellar and have thine own purse, as the world doth, and remain with what is thine, and nevertheless be devout and blessed, even though thou givest not what is thine for the use of all." Therefore saith the apostle, "Through covetousness shall they with feigned words and excuses deal with you and entice you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not."

115.

(412) I John 3. JOHN, the apostle and outstanding teacher of love, saith in his epistle, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us; and we all may have fellowship with the Father and with the Son, Jesus Christ. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." Therefore it followeth, conversely, that if we have not fellowship one with another, we are still walking in darkness. Therefore even as by night, when no light is present, wood, lead, iron, silver, gold, precious stones, and all other things are alike to us and we see no difference—not that the fault lieth in them, but in our weak eyes—even so are they that love and possess earthly things. (414) They cannot understand that they are deceived until they are freed from their blindness and awake from the night and their dream.

116.

I John 2:8-11. "A NEW commandment I write unto you, because the darkness is past and the true light now shineth. He that loveth his brother (naturally, as himself) abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes."

117.

I John 3:10, 11, 16. (415) "IN this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning that ye should love one another. Hereby perceive we love, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whosoever hath this world's goods or possessions, and seeth his brother have need, and hardeneth his heart against him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." Consider here what deed and truth is.

118.

I John 4. (416) "BELOVED, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us: that God sent his only begotten Son into this world, that we might live through him. Herein was love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if



God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." Because God, out of loving-kindness to the human race and out of love to us, gave us the dearest treasure of His riches and costliest jewel, His only Son, to be the propitiation for our sins, He desireth that we also should show such love to one another—how much more should we present our treasure of temporal things to the common use and benefit of our brothers. For if a man hath not so much love to his brothers, how doth he then desire to be so shameless and hope to enjoy the love of God in that He gave His beloved Son for us? If thou desirest to partake of the love of God, that He may allow thee to taste heaven and all eternal good together with all God's children, and dost cleave to thine own little beggar's wallet, which thou wilt not hand over and give to the children of God here, that they may have it in common with thee and thou with them—so dear are they not to thee—how then canst thou, thou gross and shameless man, confidently expect from God community of goods in heaven? As Job saith, "What is the hope of the hypocrite that he is so covetous? Will God hear his cry when fear cometh upon him?"

119.

"GOD is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. Let us love him, because he hath first loved us. If a man say he loveth God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." Therefore all the love and good that we would do God Himself and Christ, if we had Him present with us, we should do also to the brother who is a fellow member of the body of Christ. For, since we cannot have Him present in the body, for He is ascended up into heaven, He hath placed brothers at our side. If Christ still dwelt with us in the body, wouldst thou not most gladly share all that thou hast with Him, and even more? If this is true, then do the same now with thy brother. Then men will see thereby that thou dost, and wouldst have done it, unto Christ.

120.

III  
John  
1.  
(419)  
"BELOVED, thou dost faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to guests; which have born witness of thy truth before the church; and thou hast done well, that thou hast brought them forward on their way after a godly sort. I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church." Mark here, how the apostle rebuketh severely him that doeth to the contrary.

121.

Heb.  
6:10.  
TO the Hebrews the apostle saith, "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister; but we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end." Now mark, how the believers of old served and treated the saints and not their own property and covetousness.

122.

(420)  
Heb.  
10:24.  
"LET us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day

approaching." For such assembling of ourselves together is the difference between us and the beasts, not only in dwelling together but also in the bond of love. For the one helpeth the other, the one watcheth over the other, the one protecteth the other from harm. For if we have received from our Creator an infirm nature which can do naught of itself, this is turned to our benefit, for in these things is the well-being of our soul furthered, that our infirmities and wants are helped by the dwelling together of brothers; for what one lacketh should be supplied through the help of the others, whether it be in temporal or spiritual things. Hence saith Solomon, "Better is a neighbour that is near than a brother far off." It would take too long to recount what benefit one receiveth from this deep and loving life together. Therefore doth Christ say, "If thy brother sin against thee, rebuke him," for He knew and desired them to live, gathered together, as the three thousand and five thousand lived in Jerusalem. All were with one accord in the "shed of Solomon," and had one house, one table, and one soul. For the prophets prophesy much—especially Isaiah—concerning such coming together, unity and community: that it was to come to pass, when he saith, "They shall come from far: some from the north and west, and some from the land of Sinim, that is, from the south. Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, mark, gather themselves together and come to thee. And thou shalt clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth. Then shall the children which shall be born unto thee, who are barren, say in thine ears, The place is too strait. Press together, that I may sit. Behold, I will stretch out my hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall carry thy sons and thy daughters to thee upon their shoulders."

(421)

Isa.  
49:12,  
18.

(422)

123.

"CALL to remembrance the former days," saith Paul, "in which, after ye were enlightened, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in by bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better, enduring and undaunted, certain possession. Cast not away therefore your joy, which hath a great reward." For through the help and community in love which we practice one to the other, we can attain the joy of future things. It is a great possession—joy and freedom in the fight of affliction and in the letting go of all temporal things; that the man through his hope of eternal life freely placeth what is heavenly before what is of the present age—that is, a great and amazing possession: to be driven by no natural urge or human consideration, but through greatheartedness to overcome the weakness and grasping nature of the body. But still much greater and unbounded is the consequent future reward, which no human tongue, however eloquent, can express. Yea, it hath never entered into the heart of man what exceeding great and excellent glory God hath prepared for them that love him—yea, Paul telleth us—who look not on what is visible, but on what is invisible; for what is visible is temporal, but what is invisible is eternal.

(423)

(424)

124.

Heb.  
11.  
"ABRAHAM, a father and prefiguration of all believers, when he was called by God, obeyed, and went out from his home and from his kin and his fatherland, and dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. These all died in faith, not having re-



ceived the promises, but having seen them from afar, and were convinced of them and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had thought of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

(425) But now they desired a better country: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." How much more are we, in the new covenant, strangers and pilgrims on the earth! None hath a footbreadth that is his own, but as a stranger and wanderer in this inn and tent, doth take only what is necessary for his needs, and seeketh only the abiding, eternal city of complete good which is promised us in heaven. There, only, is our citizenship, our home, fatherland, and property. If one born of a noble house and excellent parents goeth to a foreign land where no one knoweth him and must sojourn there, and the same is reviled by some one, should he take offense as if he were at home there? On the contrary, if he knoweth that he is a pilgrim in a foreign land it persuadeth him to endure all things—whether scorn, hunger, thirst, or the like—submissively. If thou art taken by another to Persia that thou mayest see the same and immediately return again, and he commanded thee to build an house there, wouldst thou not rebuke his folly, as one who doth persuade thee to unnecessary expense? Even so is it with our pilgrimage here in this world.

125.

Heb. 11:23-26. "BY faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he had his eyes upon the reward." How much more should we, who have not by any means the possessions and wealth of Pharaoh's daughter, refuse and deny such, and choose rather to suffer evil and await good with the church of Christ than to have temporal prosperity and means of our own, as we, in our impatience, desire. For we should esteem the poverty of the church of Christ greater riches than the delight of the world and should have our eyes upon the reward of the devout, and, contrariwise, upon the end of the ungodly, who go to their fathers, where one never more seeth the light. What is in their house doth continue. Their dwellings remain and are called by their name on earth, but they remain not in such dignity, but die and lie in hell like sheep. Death shall gnaw them, and hell will be their dwelling.

126.

Heb. 13:1. (428) "LET brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Let your walk be without covetousness: and be content with such things as ye have, for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. To do good and to share forget not, for through such sacrifices is one reconciled with God."

127.

"IF ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself (mark, as thyself), ye do well: but if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convicted of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." Mark here, the apostle calleth it a royal law—that each should love the other as himself—for this reason: that it should be especially observed with all earnestness as a supreme command. Now they that love one another in truth will most certainly also give their temporal things to be used in common.

(429)  
Jas.  
2:14-  
17.

128.

"WHAT doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can empty faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, God advise you, be ye warmed and filled, but giveth him not what is needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead in itself." Therefore though a man confess and say he believeth in one holy Christian church and community of saints, while in his church there is no community, and he himself is not for community in deed and truth, then is his faith a dead faith and he himself is a liar and hath the deceitfulness of Belial.

129.

(430) JOHN, in the Apocalypse, writeth at the command of God to the church of the Laodiceans, which was neither cold nor warm, "Thou sayest I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, poor, blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me that which hath been tried in the fire." Here he desireth that they buy—that is, attain through earnest constancy in prayer and win from God—the ardent, divine, true love which can suffer no natural love but smelteth and consumeth everything that is of the earth. For no matter what a man may know, if he freeth not himself from the love of created things he knoweth not yet what he should know; for "Thou dost yet lack much," saith the Lord, "for thou dost love the creature before the Creator." For as long as man is not free and liberated from all created things, but is held by and entangled in the net of natural love, he cannot fly to God. Therefore it furthereth a man greatly to have a detached view of temporal things and to pay little heed to what is superfluous. This one can see in the example of the birds of the air, which pick up their food from the earth, and in a twinkling and as quickly as possible soar from the dust into the heights that they be not snared or caught. For whosoever desireth to follow too far the desires of the body, including natural love—to say naught of having property—will soon be caught by the guile of (the Old) Adam, for when poverty harmeth not, he maketh his snare of riches. There is naught that maketh man so subject to the devil as the natural love to pursue money and to be overcome by the desire to have much property. However much of truth thou mayest say to one whose heart is riveted to possessions and money, thou canst seldom do aught for him that is of any avail.

130.

I Cor. 16:2. THE world and false brothers say, however, "But Paul doth write clearly to the Corinthians that each on the first day of the week should lay by him in store for the poor saints what he can and what seemeth good to him."

I Cor. 3. ANSWER: Just for this reason doth Paul see a great lack in the Corinthians and saith, "I cannot speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk and not with strong meat, for ye could not bear it, neither can ye now. For ye are carnal." Therefore Paul had reason, because of the time, to have patience with them and to pass over certain things, and, indeed, he had to do so, but true community is not therefore finished and done with. He teacheth them, through the Macedonians, who according to their ability, and beyond their ability, had gladly given themselves utterly to the Lord and to His servants in community, that they should follow the same. As it is written, "He that gathered much had nothing over: and he that gathered little had no lack," that there may be equality. Here he desireth to draw them away from their halfhearted community and cold love to the complete, perfect community of the saints; as he then saith, "Since others are so dili-



II Cor. 8:8. gent, I seek to prove the sincerity of your love." For Paul preached to them no other gospel than John and Peter preached to the three thousand and five thousand at Jerusalem and others, who remained constant in community. Thus the worse the Corinthians did, the less are they to be taken as an example to be followed. For it was certainly never the mind and purpose of Paul, nor in his heart, that a Christian can keep and possess property for himself and use the same as pleaseth him; for all his letters testify against this. Thus, if Peter or Paul or an angel from heaven should teach a different community, as false brothers now teach and show, then they would bring a different gospel. Which thing is a curse.

131.

(434) THEY say likewise, "But one findeth that many lived separately, and had children with them. Also the widows had to provide diligently for their own and guide them well, that the children serve the parents."  
(435) ANSWER: They that dwell together must and can do that as well as they that dwell separately or where but a few house together. And we readily believe that it then took place, as can happen also today, that sundry for the sake of their husbands or wives lived separately; also that the church was not always able to live together in great numbers, not having place or opportunity because of tribulation or other reasons; likewise that they lived with their own, which, however, can take place in so far as it is in accordance with the order of the church—all this hath not abolished true community, but the view yet remaineth that they should truly have all their possessions in common with their fellow members, as the first surrender showeth; but the time demanded it and they could not be together.  
(436) For the believer should prove and observe community in love to his neighbour living with few as well as with many, and with many as well as with few. And at this time, when it is possible, we cannot use such words as a screen. Nor were they written by the apostles that true community should thereby be done away, and should never come into being: that truly was never their intention.

132.

(437) THEY bring forward, "But Simon the sorcerer of Samaria, who was accepted into the church as a brother, had money, for he offered the apostles money for the gift of God." Answer: Simon was just as much a Christian as Ananias and Sapphira, yea, as Judas Iscariot, who betrayed the Lord, and as all false brothers are today. Therefore did the Apostle Peter declare unto him that his heart was not upright, but was full of bitter gall, yea, packed full with iniquity. Therefore nothing is to be ratified by a false Christian, nor did the Apostle Philip begin or preach any other doctrine of community than the other apostles and Peter at Jerusalem.

133.

(438) THEY also cast up that one readeth of a woman disciple in the town of Joppa, named Tabitha, who in her life was full of good works and almsdeeds. "Now if she had had no money of her own or other possessions, she could not have been able to help others and give alms." Answer: Property is in no way to be confirmed or maintained herewith, because Luke writeth that among the believers, after the teaching and preaching of the Apostle Peter, none said of his goods that they were his own, but they had all things in common. And there are still (God be praised!) such women disciples and Christians in the church of God, who show themselves full of good works, almsdeeds and community without the possessing of goods of their own—which they have no longer, but have placed everything for the common use and good of all. Now, however, all their daily

work, skill, and gain is a pure almsdeed, for all their exertions are for the sake of their neighbours.

134.

(439) THEY say also, "Onesimus, one of Philemon's servants, took something from his master and then ran away. Now if Philemon had had no property, Onesimus could not have taken anything from him." Answer: That doth not meet the mark and hath no connection with property, to prove the same. Even today one might run away and carry off something from one of our elders or another or do some harm, but it followeth not that one among us hath his own property or money. Paul writeth to Philemon, mainly, "that he might receive Onesimus in love, in fellowship and kindness as a brother, and on no account withdraw himself. To show him that it is his duty to do this he layeth before him the basis of the doctrine given by the Holy Spirit, in that he saith, "Philemon, if thou dost regard me as thy comrade, receive Onesimus as myself. Albeit, Philemon, I do not say to thee that thou owest thine own self to me." (Mark, it is a debt.) Now if one understandeth not here that Paul requireth the community of saints, he must truly be blinded by the god of this world.

135.

(440) THEY continue their argument and say, "Paul and Peter write not to the rich that they should make their possessions common, but that they should not be proud, should give gladly, and use their money well." Answer: Here he doth not mean the rich in the church but the rich of this world. Therefore this is at most but a command to teach the rich of this world that they be rich in good works and in this way strive toward community.  
(441) But to the members of the church he prescribeth that none should seek his own benefit but the benefit of another: that they should live as members of one body, having the same care, one for the other, and showing the same love, brotherly love, love to all, loving their neighbour as themselves. Yea, that true love is that which seeketh not its own profit, but seeth that there is equality. That is, that they should receive one another as Christ hath received us, and that each should serve the other with the gift that he hath received from God—all of which doth utterly oppose and contradict the man that standeth for property. Thus if one desireth to speak of the right use of possessions, it can mean naught else than the usage of the first apostolic church, which was followed by the three thousand and five thousand at Jerusalem, and to act in accordance with the manifold teaching of Christ and the apostles which everywhere teacheth and pointeth to community.

136.

(442) THUS the world and the false comrades do cover themselves with this trapping of fig leaves, "Oh, I am but a steward of what is temporal. It is not mine but God's, and is but lent me by God for the good of my neighbour." Answer: If it is true that thou sayest it is not thine, and yet thou dost use it as thine, and dost quarrel with another over it as to whether thou shouldst call it thine or not, and dost possess what thou shouldst distribute, having nothing of thine own but what is common to all, then thou art thyself lord and ruler over it, who doeth and leaveth undone therewith what he will, acteth as his own heart impatiently desireth, as his own master and not the slave of Christ. Thou dost make thyself appear outwardly full of freedom from all things and of life, and avarice and death hath already pierced thine heart. Thou dost boast of faith in Christ, who owned not so much as that on which to lay His head. And thou dost become Protestant in order to obtain much property. Oh, weigh thyself



on the balance! Let us see how much thou hast for the benefit of thy servant, thy neighbour, and thy fellow!

137.

(443) THEY say also—the covetous and they that have grown cold in love, who wriggle about like a worm on the earth—that this referreth to spiritual community and distribution, to one doctrine, one faith and knowledge of the Son of God. Answer: One should know that where such spiritual community is in truth, there is also outward community of goods. Truly the one cannot be without the other or continue without the other—otherwise it would follow that the inner baptism of the Spirit is enough and the outward confirmation of the baptism of water is unnecessary. These two, likewise, would not be the one without the other. It would also follow, if one desired to make such a separation and disturbance, that it is the same as if the outward sign, or using of the bread and wine of the Supper, is not necessary, since one can inwardly and spiritually remember and thank Him for His death, the pouring out of His blood and His glorious redemption. No, both must be together. One should do the one, and not leave the other undone. For it is not only written, “They were all of one heart and one soul,” but also that they had one purse. For whosoever is unfaithful in what is small, that is, in temporal things, is also unfaithful in what is great, that is, he is unfaithful and good for nothing in spiritual things. For if such an one have not the love to present his goods and possessions to be used in common and equally in community, who will believe that he so loveth the brothers that he could lay down his life for them, as Christ and the apostles teach us?

138.

(445) THEY may also say, “It is written and Sirach saith it, Give not thy goods to another: lest it repent thee, and thou entreat for the same again.” Answer: That is well and rightly said by Sirach—especially in his time, and also now; for we teach also that if one hath not the good foundation and certainty of truth, and should later repent it, that such an one should keep his goods. That we say to each beforehand, before we accept him. Yea, we accept none without first warning him in this matter, that he knoweth, considereth, and counteth the cost before he doth present and surrender himself with what is his in community, that he cheat not himself. Then if he later falleth away we give him not the same again, owing him nothing, since what one giveth away as a gift *today* of his own free will, after considering well and without coercion, with good reason and understanding, with conscious knowledge, completely unhurried, is no longer his *tomorrow*. And even if they should later break their surrender and the word given at Christian baptism, we cannot break our word, make it invalid or deny it; and it is not in our power to give again to him that which he voluntarily presented to the Lord and His people, because it is the Lord’s matter, and they have made this bond and surrender with the Lord God, of which thing heaven and earth, also all the saints of God present, were taken as witnesses. For it was not lent, or given to be stored up, that the church should have to pay it back. We can make of the church and house of God no such pawnshop. In addition, we use the same at once for the common need, and spend it immediately for all manner of necessary food and clothing, so that often there is not a single halfpenny or farthing of it left. And if one had to give the same back it would be impossible for the church, since they that bring little or nothing to the church are many more than they that bring somewhat or much into the church. And if one should desire an account of what one brought, one must also have an ac-

count for those who brought naught, often with children, widows, and orphans, some weak and long ill, costing much. Who desireth to give the church aught again for this? Also, we have neither a story nor a command of Christ or of the apostles saying that such temporal things should be repaid to such as fall away. If the apostles had given it back, Ananias would not have needed to keep back part of his money that he might still have somewhat if he could not carry it out—it would all have become his again. Therefore whosoever hath not the confidence to endure with God’s help, had a thousand times better leave us alone. For we seek not what is theirs, but them and their salvation. Nor do we accept any for the sake of money. If one hath many hundred and thousand florins, but hath no right heart or good confidence, if we but know or sense this we desire neither him nor his money. But wherever we sense a right heart, zeal, and the knowledge of God, we accept him with joy, though he have not a farthing. Where, however, one that falleth away desireth modestly of us the cost of food or help, and acteth not too insolently, we send him not away empty and without food, even though he brought nothing to us.

139.

(448) WE are all called to one hope and to the same inheritance. For, where a father hath many children—unless they are bastards and disobedient, thereby disinheriting themselves—they are equally capable of his inheritance. Therefore, if we say that we have community in spiritual things (such as faith in God, the Gospel, Christ, and in the gift of the Holy Spirit), and desire to inherit the heavenly inheritance together, all the more should we show the same here in temporal things. Therefore are we called “the state of sonship” and not “a state of servitude,” where each hath for himself; but we are called children of God.

140.

(449) THEREFORE are we also brothers, in that we have and show brotherhood, as Christ saith, “Ye shall not be called master: for one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brothers.” Now they that are brothers share alike with one another, and the more alike, the more brotherly; they, however, that desire not to share alike with one another, but look each to his own privilege and treasure, and behave or act unfaithfully toward another—that is, not brotherly—though they call themselves brothers, yet are they false brothers. Thus is it, in accordance with truth, in the brotherhood of Christ, that they alone are called brothers that prove they are in deed. Therefore if our brother is our fellow heir in the kingdom of heaven, we should also make him our fellow heir here.

141.

(450) GOD desireth not that His children here on earth at this time should live like cattle, like a cow, like a donkey, and like a buffalo; for each doth but fill his belly and considereth much less than dogs, that know no satiety, or than the sows that want to take possession of the trough alone, and to leave only what is left over for the rest. But he desireth that his own should live here on earth as newborn men and as members of a body.

142.

COMMUNITY is or meaneth naught else than to have everything in common or everything alike out of love to one’s neighbour, and for none to have aught of his own. Which thing can take place in no higher, more perfect way than that each should give himself that the other may have the same benefit (as himself), as they that desire from henceforth to endure together evil and good, yea, joy and sorrow. Each desireth to be the other’s neighbour, faithful debtor, member, and devoted friend. That is



(451) the Christian church and community of saints. Which thing is not tyrannical or unnatural or impossible where love hath entered. For, if fathers according to the flesh live poorly and save from their own mouths in order to be able to advise and help their children; likewise a mother denieth her own hungry stomach somewhat, and holdeth it out to her loved child—should believers then not be able to have their temporal goods alike and in common with one another? That would be unchristian, because we should love our neighbour and fellow member as ourselves: have with him, want with him, suffer with him, endure ups and downs with him. That is no community, no unity, no membership one of another or equal benefit, when each hath his own possession, his own house, his own field and goods, his own kitchen, his own cellar, and his own table—let them say what they will.

143.

(452) THEREFORE doth property belong not to the Christian church, but to the world. It is in heathendom. It is among those that have not the love of God, yea, among those that live in accordance with their own will: for if the individual will were not, then ownership were not. But true community of goods belongeth to believers. For by divine right, saith Augustine, all things should be common, and no man should take to himself what is God's, any more than he can divide the air, rain, snow or water, also the sun, moon, and the elements. Even so temporal goods, which God in the same proportion and measure hath given for common use, should not and may not be made one's own. This cannot be in accordance with divine and Christian right, for owning and ownership is against the nature and character of His creation. Whosoever encloseth and maketh his own what is and should be free, acteth against Him who hath made and created it free, and that is sin, as *Theologia Germanica* saith. But through the acquired wickedness of man, through envy, through avarice each doth lay up everything in his bag. And the one saith, "That is mine!" and the other, "That is mine!" and so is a division come among men. Yea, a great (453) inequality in this life, and alas! it is come so far that could they reach the sun and moon and enclose the elements, they would make them their own and sell them for money.

144.

Matt. 19:12. Luke 14:33. (454) SOME desires are indeed necessary, for example, in the case of an animal, eating, drinking, and sleeping. Others are natural, but not necessary, namely, physical love. But the desire and love of money is neither natural nor necessary, but superfluous. For gold and silver for a long time lay hidden. Therefore is it an acquired evil, coming from the counsel of the serpent and of the devil which beguiled Eve with the apple. Even so doth the world with silver and gold. Of virginity Christ saith, "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it," but of money, "He that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." For one single soul cannot satisfy so many desires, but one always suppresseth the rest. For he that hath but one child loveth it beyond measure: he that hath many must divide his agreeableness. Therefore is it not possible for a man to devote his zeal and labour sufficiently to both things. And in the same way as it is most dangerous for a child to have a knife in his hands, or a madman a sword, even so is property and wealth harmful to men—yea, much more harmful. For the madman leaveth his madness and becometh quiet when he stabbeth himself with his sword, but not so the self-seeking and covetous man, for he receiveth daily thousands of wounds. Desires for money and wealth are things that comprise countless ills. Therefore we must drive these desires from our hearts.

145.

(455) COVETOUSNESS is a dangerous and evil disease, which blindeth man's eyes, stoppeth his ears, so that naught is more contemptible and tedious to him than to hear of community and letting all things go. It withereth the hands so that they are of no use for serving others. They lose understanding and know not what they do on earth or why they are on the earth. Covetousness letteth neither itself, the conscience, nor one's own soul know salvation, for the most base matter of metal doth control it and rule it, and yet the soul believeth itself to rule and be lord over others. Therefore is there nothing more foolish and nothing worse than to serve and cleave to money and covetousness. They rejoice to entangle themselves mightily in bonds, and are exceeding glad and filled with jubilation if they see themselves crushed down by the dog of covetousness. They give the same all the more to devour that he may become the more strong, and in this (456) way they make for themselves innumerable ways to hell. For just as fire, when one putteth much wood on it, groweth greater, even so is it with covetousness: the more one bringeth to it, the more it raiseth itself up. What they have they heed not, but put it away behind them and snatch at what is before them, and before long end as Aesop's dog did. Therefore we should consider this, flee from it with the greatest diligence, and seek for a remedy for this disease, that we may slay the cruel beast and pull covetousness out by the roots. This pestilential disease hath ruined the earth. This sin hath turned all things topsy-turvy, so that one pineth away with hunger and another destroyeth himself with fullness, one goeth about naked and another heapeth up clothes upon clothes, which are consumed by moths. Hence are there so many tramps and beggars that lament and cry for alms in every lane and before the houses. This crime and (457) deceit of Belial hath filled streets with blood and towns with weeping and wailing. It hath drawn us away from the most blessed service of Christ, and gnaweth our heart away from the Word and seed of God. For if we are already doing what is good, as soon as covetousness cometh thereto, it ruineth it and it goeth from bad to worse. Such a hateful crime is covetousness before God that "if there be any that calleth himself a brother, who is a covetous man, one should have naught to do with him and should not eat with him," saith Paul. For covetousness is accounted one of the accursed deadly sins that separate from the kingdom of God. It hath ruined for men the glorious likeness of God (who hath placed us upright that we should look upwards and over ourselves to what is heavenly), and doth strike them down to what is earthly so that they cannot raise themselves up, but, like a sow, are always drawn down to what is earthly by the devil and choose the life of the worms. This urge made Judas a traitor, ruined Ananias and his wife, covered Gehazi, who might have been a disciple and prophet, with leprosy. Yea, it is a common pest in the world; it alloweth none to be satisfied with what he hath. The eyes and the heart of such as seek alone how much money they receive behold naught but covetousness, and they never think how they should invest the money aright—mules and horses they adorn with gold; Christ, in them that are His, they leave to go naked.

146.

John 3:16. (459) GOD so loved the world that He gave and spared not His only begotten Son for our sakes. We should have been ashamed that we behaved not as befitteth such great love and, to our own hurt (for before long we shall be borne from it, naked), we desired to spare our money and refused to give a little of what is temporal for ourselves and them that are His. How shall we answer for this? If we see that a man suffereth for our sake, we



entrust to him all that is ours, and know not what we can do for his sake. How much more should we show such a measure of gratitude to Christ, in those that are His!

147.

(460) THAT believers did not have community of goods at Jerusalem only but also in many places is proved and testified by the old church histories such as Eusebius (*Histor: ecclesiastica*, Book II, Chapter 17). He quoteth from Philo's book, whose title is "Concerning the Contemplative Life" or "Concerning those that pray," that believing men and women were called servants of God and handmaidens of God. The origin of these words is that the Christians educated the souls of such as came to them, being still gross and without understanding, and like physicians healed them of their diseases and made them healthy. Or, since they were in the true service of God, enduring with a good conscience, they received this name on account of their life. But it is not of importance whether Philo was the first to give Christians this name on account of their works, or whether it was those who at the beginning lived in accordance with the Gospel before the name of "Christian" rang through the whole world, as long as the life showed to whom the name rightly belonged. Philo saith, "They, however, that devote themselves to this teaching and philosophy of the Christians, give up all their goods and possessions and withdraw from all the cares of this life. They avoid the cities and dwell in gardens and alcoves, and flee from inordinate society, for they know that all these things hinder those that dare to walk on the narrow way of virtue." Even so is it said that they lived who shone in a fervent, fiery faith. As one readeth in the Acts of the Apostles of them that lived in Jerusalem and believed with the apostles, that they sold their possessions and laid the money at the apostles' feet, that one gave and divided out to each what was necessary, and there were no poor among them. Philo thus writeth that it was even so with the believers in Alexandria. He saith also that in many places on the earth this kind of man was to be found—also in Greece among the barbarians, for there must have been many places which became partakers of this good thing. There are many such groups in Egypt in many places, especially about Alexandria, where many devout people have come from all directions and places, in the same way as the plowman hasteneth to where he findeth good fields.

(461) LIKEWISE in the year A.D. 92 Clement writeth to his brother in the faith James, the Lord's brother in Jerusalem, and saith, "A common life is necessary for all, especially for such as fight, blameless, for God and desire to follow the life of the apostles and their disciples; for truly in this world things should be held in common by all men, but through acquired wickedness, one saith: That is mine, and another, That is mine, and thus hath a division taken place among men—but not out of the counsel of God. Therefore hath the wisest of the Greeks said and recognized: Just as the sunlight cannot be divided, and the air—even so should one have all other things in common in this life, and not divide them." Thereupon he quoteth the 133d Psalm and the usage of the first church at Jerusalem—that everything hath been given for common use.

(462) AUGUSTINE, the old teacher, who ran his course some 370 years after Christ, doth let it be known that even in his time such was to be found, and saith, "A Christian is a distributor or steward of his goods, not a lord: and by divine right all things should be in common" (*August. Epist. 48*). And in another place, "By human right, and not by divine, one saith, The village is mine!"

(464) JOHN Chrysostomus, who lived in the year A.D. 390, in his exposition of John the evangelist saith among other teachings concerning the first chapter, "In what way can we become disciples of Christ? Even thus: if we use all things for the common good and not for our profit. For Christ did not please Himself." And he saith much in the same direction, but they soon let the perfect work go, and give in to men. Further, over the first chapter of John the evangelist, he saith among other things, "We should strive with all our power to be disciples of Christ, who saith, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head. This I would require of you, saith he. Perhaps many consider this very difficult, therefore through our weakness we have left this perfection. But I hold out before you that ye should not grasp and stare at money, but, even as I do in great weakness, strive toward this high virtue. Thus it behooveth you that ye withdraw yourselves from the greatest wickedness—that ye possess goods, not as a servant but as a lord—and be not possessed by them."

(465) THEOLOGIA Germanica saith, "Were there no self-will, there would be also no ownership. In heaven there is no ownership; hence there are found content, true peace, and all blessedness. If any one there took upon himself to call anything his own, he would straightway be thrust out into hell, and there would become a devil. Where one will have self-will, there is all manner of misery and wretchedness. So is it also here on earth. Thus, he who hath something, or seeketh or longeth to have something of his own, is himself a slave, namely, to what he desireth or hath; and he who hath nothing of his own, neither seeketh nor longeth thereafter, is free and at large, and in bondage to none."

(466) LIKEWISE, Christ, "Follow me!" But he who will follow Him must forsake all things, for He Himself was free of all things. Therefore He saith, "He that forsaketh not all that he hath and taketh the cross upon him, is not worthy of me. He is not my disciple and followeth me not."

148.

PAUL, the apostle, saith, "I live not, but Christ liveth in me." That is, "Christ is my life." Now in whomsoever Christ liveth, and not he himself, in him Christ will do even that which he himself did: namely, he will have all things in common with his disciples. He in whom Christ liveth, hath nothing of his own whereon to lay his head. With him in whom Christ liveth it is a case of, "All that is mine is thine, and what is thine is mine." Yea, he in whom Christ liveth shareth what little bread and what few fish he hath and doth possess in community with the four thousand and the five thousand.







