

We must now inquire what is man's chief good, which of course cannot be anything inferior to man himself. For whoever follows after what is inferior to himself, becomes himself inferior. But every man is bound to follow what is best. Wherefore man's chief good is not inferior to man. Is it then something similar to man himself? It must be so, if there is nothing above man which he is capable of enjoying. But if we find something which is both superior to man, and can be possessed by the man who loves it,



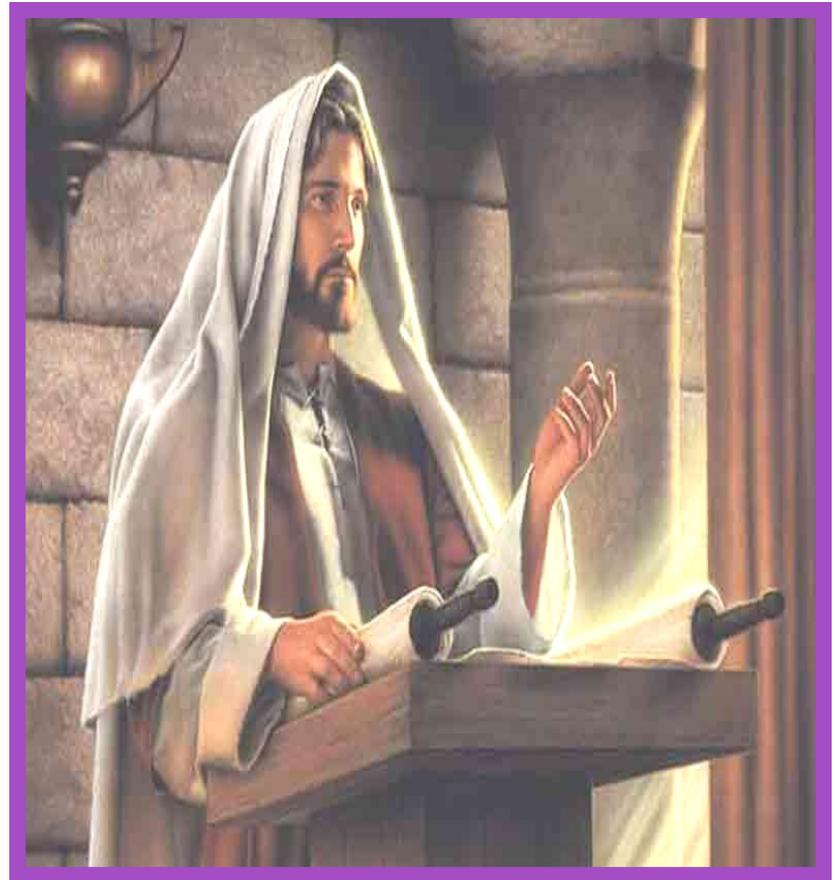
who can doubt that in seeking for happiness man should endeavor to reach that which is more excellent than the being who makes the endeavor. For if happiness consists in the enjoyment of a good than which there is nothing better, which we call the chief good, how can a man be properly called happy who has not yet attained to his chief good? Or how can that be the chief good beyond which something better remains for us to arrive at? Such, then, being the chief good, it must be something which cannot be lost against the will. For no one can feel confident regarding a good which he knows can be taken from him, although he wishes to keep and cherish it. But

if a man feels no confidence regarding the good which he enjoys, how can he be happy while in such fear of losing it?



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**SERMON ON
THE MORALS OF THE CHURCH
FROM THE FATHER'S OF THE CHURCH
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JESUS, OUR FIRST PREACHER!

THE MANICHEANS FALSEHOODS

Of the Morals of the Catholic Church

written by

St. Augustine of Hippo in A.D. 388.

It is laid down at the outset that the customs of the holy life of the Church should be referred to the chief good of man, that is, God. We must seek after God with supreme affection; and this doctrine is supported in the Catholic Church by the authority of both Testaments. The four virtues get their names from different forms of this love. Then follow the duties of love to our neighbor. In the Catholic Church we find examples of continence and of true Christian conduct.

How the Pretensions of the Manicheans are to Be Refuted

Two Manichean Falsehoods

Enough, probably, has been done in our other books in the way of answering the ignorant and profane attacks which the Manicheans make on the law, which is called the Old Testament, in a spirit of vainglorious boasting, and with the approval of the uninstructed. Here, too, I may shortly touch upon the subject. For every one with average intelligence can easily see that the explanation of the Scriptures should be sought for from those who are the professed teachers of the Scriptures; and that it may happen, and indeed always happens, that many things seem absurd to the ignorant, which, when they are explained by the learned, appear all the more excellent, and are received in the explanation with the greater pleasure on account of the obstructions which made it difficult to reach the meaning. This commonly happens as regards the holy books of the Old Testament, if only the man who meets with difficulties applies to a pious teacher, and not to a pro-fane critic, and if he begins his inquiries from a desire to find truth, and not in rash opposition. And should the inquirer meet with some, whether bishops or presbyters, or any officials or ministers of the Catholic Church, who either avoid in all cases opening up mysteries, or, content with simple faith, have no desire for more recondite knowledge, he must not despair of finding the knowledge of the truth in a case where neither are all able to teach to whom the inquiry is addressed, nor are all inquirers worthy of learning the truth. Diligence and piety are both necessary: on the one hand, we must have knowledge to find truth, and, on the other hand, we must deserve to get the knowledge.

But as the Manicheans have two tricks for catching the unwary, so as to make them take them as teachers—one, that of finding fault with the Scriptures, which they either misunderstand or wish to be misunderstood, the other, that of making a show of chastity and of notable abstinence,— this book shall contain our doctrine of life and morals according to Catholic teaching, and will perhaps make it appear how easy it is to pretend to virtue, and how difficult to possess virtue. I will refrain, if I can, from attacking their weak points, which I know well, with the violence with which they attack what they know nothing of; for I wish them, if possible, to be cured rather than conquered. And I will quote such testimonies from the Scriptures as they are bound to believe, for they shall be from the New Testament; and even from this I will take none of the passages which the Manicheans when hard pressed are accustomed to call spurious, but passages which they are obliged to acknowledge and approve. And for every testimony from apostolic teaching I will bring a similar statement from the Old Testament, that if they ever become willing to wake up from their persistent dreams, and to rise towards the light of Christian faith, they may discover both how far from being Christian is the life which they profess, and how truly Christian is the Scripture which they cavil at.

Happiness is in the Enjoyment of Man's Chief Good.

Two Conditions of the Chief Good: 1st, Nothing is Better Than It; 2d, It Cannot Be Lost Against the Will

How then, according to reason, ought man to live? We all certainly desire to live happily; and there is no human being but assents to this statement almost before it is made. But the title happy cannot, in my opinion, belong either to him who has not what he loves, whatever it may be, or to him who has what he loves if it is hurtful or to him who does not love what he has, although it is good in perfection. For one who seeks what he cannot obtain suffers torture, and one who has got what is not desirable is cheated, and one who does not seek for what is worth seeking for is diseased. Now in all these cases the mind cannot but be unhappy, and happiness and unhappiness cannot reside at the same time in one man; so in none of these cases can the man be happy. I find, then, a fourth case, where the happy life exists,— when that which is man's chief good is both loved and possessed. For what do we call enjoyment but having at hand the objects of love? And no one can be happy who does not enjoy what is man's chief good, nor is there any one who enjoys this who is not happy. We must then have at hand our chief good, if we think of living happily.