

Homily 36 on First Corinthians

Please help support the mission of New Advent and get the full contents of this website as an instant download.

Includes the Catholic Encyclopedia, Church Fathers, Summa, Bible and more — all for only \$19.99...

(<https://gumroad.com//na2>)

1 Corinthians 14:20

Brethren, be not children in mind; howbeit in malice

(<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07149b.htm>) be ye babes, but in

mind be men.

As might be expected, after his long argument and demonstration

he adopts a more vehement style and abundance of rebuke; and

mentions an example suited to the subject. For children too are

wont to gape after trifles and to be fluttered, but of things very great

they have not so much admiration. Since then these also having the gift of tongues, which was the lowest of all,

thought they had the whole; therefore he says, "Be not children," i.e., be not without understanding where ye ought to

be considerate, but there be ye childlike and simple, where unrighteousness is, where vain-glory

(<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06585a.htm>), where pride (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12405a.htm>). For he

that is a babe in wickedness (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05649a.htm>) ought also to be wise. Since as wisdom

with wickedness (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05649a.htm>) would not be wisdom, so also simplicity with folly

would not be simplicity, it being requisite both in simplicity to avoid folly, and in wisdom wickedness

(<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05649a.htm>). For as neither bitter nor sweet medicines in excess do good, so

neither does simplicity by itself, nor wisdom: and this is why Christ enjoining us to mix both said, "Be wise as serpents,

and harmless as doves." Matthew 10:16 (<http://www.newadvent.org/bible/mat010.htm#verse16>)

But what is it to be a babe in wickedness (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05649a.htm>)? Not even to know

(<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08673a.htm>) what wickedness (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05649a.htm>) is:

yea, such he willed them to be. Wherefore also he said, "It is actually reported that there is fornication among you." 1

Corinthians 5:1 (<http://www.newadvent.org/bible/1co005.htm#verse1>) He said not, "is done," but is "reported:" as if he

said, "you are not without knowledge (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08673a.htm>) of the thing; you have heard of it

some time." I say, he would have them both to be men and children; the one however in wickedness (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05649a.htm>), but the other in wisdom. For so even the man may become a man (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09580c.htm>), if he be also a child: but as long as he is not a child in wickedness (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05649a.htm>), neither will he be a man (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09580c.htm>). For the wicked (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05649a.htm>), instead of being mature, will be but a fool.

1 Corinthians 14:21

"In the law it is written, By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers will I speak unto this people; and not even thus will they hear me, says the Lord."

Yet surely it is no where written in the Law, but as I said before, he calls always the whole of the Old Testament (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14526a.htm>), the Law: both the prophets (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12477a.htm>) and the historical books. And he brings forward his testimony from Esaias the prophet (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12477a.htm>), again covertly detracting from the glory (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06585a.htm>) of the gift, for their profit; nevertheless, even thus he states it with praise. For the expression, "not even thus," has force to point out that the miracle (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10338a.htm>) was enough to astonish them; and if they did not believe (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02408b.htm>), the fault was theirs. And wherefore did God work it, if they were not to believe (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02408b.htm>)? That He might in every case appear to do His part.

2. Having shown then even from the prophecy (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12473a.htm>), that the sign in question is not of great use, he adds,

1 Corinthians 14:22

"Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02408b.htm>), but to the unbelieving: but prophesying is for a sign not to the unbelieving, but to them that believe (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02408b.htm>)."

1 Corinthians 14:23

"If therefore the whole Church (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03744a.htm>) be assembled together, and all speak with tongues, and there come in men unlearned or unbelieving, will they not say that you are mad?"

1 Corinthians 14:24

"But if all prophesy, and there come in one unbelieving or unlearned, he is reprov'd by all, he is judg'd by all:"

1 Corinthians 14:25

"And thus the secrets of his heart are made manifest; and so he will fall down on his face and worship God (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm>), declaring that God is among you indeed."

Great in this place is the difficulty which one seems to find arising from what is said. For if tongues are for a sign to them that believe (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02408b.htm>) not, how says he, if they that believe (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02408b.htm>) not should see you speaking with tongues, they will say that "you are mad?" And if prophecy (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12473a.htm>) be "not for the unbelieving, but for them that believe (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02408b.htm>)," how shall also the unbelievers gain thereby?

"For if there come in," says he, "when you are prophesying, one that believes (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02408b.htm>) not, he is reprov'd by all, and judg'd."

And not only this, but also after this another question hence springs up: since the tongue will appear on the contrary greater than the prophecy (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12473a.htm>). For if the tongues are for a sign to the unbelieving, but prophecy (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12473a.htm>) to them that believe (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02408b.htm>), that which draws in aliens and makes of the household, is greater than that which regulates those of the household. What then is the meaning of that expression? Nothing difficult nor obscure, nor contrary to what went before, but rather very agreeable to it, if we give heed: viz., that prophecy (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12473a.htm>) is suitable to both, but then tongue not so. Wherefore having said of the tongue, "it is for a sign," he adds, "not to them that believe (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02408b.htm>), but to the unbelievers," and to them "for a sign," i.e., for astonishment, not so much for instruction.

"But in the case of prophecy (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12473a.htm>) too," says some one, "he did the very same thing, saying, 'but prophesying serves not for the unbelieving, but for them which believe (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02408b.htm>).' For the believer has no need to see a sign, but requires only teaching and catechizing. How then do you say," says he, "that prophecy (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12473a.htm>) is of use to both, when Paul (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11567b.htm>) says 'not to the unbelieving, but to them which believe (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02408b.htm>)?'" If you will accurately examine, you will understand what is said. For he said not, "prophecy (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12473a.htm>) is not useful to them unbelieving," but, "is not for a sign," as the tongue, i.e., a mere sign without profit: nor is the tongue any way useful to believers (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05769a.htm>); for its only work is to astonish and to confound; the word "sign" being

one of those which may be taken two ways: as when he says, "show me a sign," Psalm 86:17

(<http://www.newadvent.org/bible/psa085.htm#verse17>) and adds, "for good:" and again, "I have become as a wonder unto many," Psalm 71:7 (<http://www.newadvent.org/bible/psa070.htm#verse7>) i.e., a sign.

And to show you that he introduced the term "sign" here, not as a thing which of course did some good, he added that which resulted from it. And what was this? "They will say," says he, "that you are mad." This however not from the nature (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10715a.htm>) of the sign, but from their folly. But when you hear of unbelievers, do not suppose that the same persons (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11726a.htm>) are in every case intended, but at one time they which are incurably diseased and abide uncorrected, and at another they which may be changed; such as were they who in the times of the Apostles admire the mighty things of God which they hear of; such as in the case of Cornelius. His meaning accordingly is this; that prophecy (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12473a.htm>) avails both among the unbelieving and among them that believe (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02408b.htm>): as to the tongue, when heard by the unbelieving and inconsiderate, instead of profiting by it, they rather deride the utterers as madmen. For, in fact, it is to them but for a sign, i.e., in order to astonish them merely; whereas they who had understanding used also to profit by it: with a view to which the sign was given. Even as then there were not only certain who accused them of drunkenness (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01274a.htm>), but many also admired them as relating the wonderful works (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10338a.htm>) of God (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm>). It appears then that the mockers were those without understanding. Wherefore also Paul (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11567b.htm>) did not simply say, "they will say that you are mad," but added, "unlearned and unbelievers."

But prophecy (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12473a.htm>) is not for a sign merely, but is also suitable and useful for faith (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05752c.htm>) and for profit unto both classes. And this, if not directly, yet in the sequel he more clearly explained, saying, "he is reprov'd by all. For, if all prophesy," says he, "and there come in one unbelieving or unlearned, he is reprov'd by all; he is judged by all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so he will fall down on his face and worship God (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm>), declaring that God is among you indeed."

So that not in this only is prophecy (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12473a.htm>) greater, in its availing with each class, but also in its attracting the more shameless of the unbelievers. For it was not the same wonder, when Peter convicted Sapphira, which was a work of prophecy (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12473a.htm>), and when he spoke with tongues: but in the former case all shrank into themselves; whereas, when he spoke with tongues, he got the credit of being even beside himself.

3. Having said then, that a tongue profited not, and having again qualified this statement by turning the charge upon the Jews (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08399a.htm>), he proceeds to signify that it even does injury. "And wherefore was it given?" That it might go forth with interpretation: since without this, it has even the contrary effect among them that are without understanding. "For if," says he, "all speak with tongues, and there come in unbelievers or unlearned, they will say that you are mad;" as indeed even the Apostles incurred the suspicion of being drunken: for "these men," it says, are filled with new wine: Acts 2:13 (<http://www.newadvent.org/bible/act002.htm#verse13>) but it is

not the fault of the sign, but of their unskillfulness; therefore he added, "unlearned and unbelievers," to show that the notion belongs to their ignorance (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07648a.htm>) and want of faith (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05752c.htm>); for, as I before said, his object is to rank that gift not among things that are disparaged, but among those which do not greatly profit, and this, in order to repress them, and bring them to a necessity of seeking for an interpreter. For since the greater part looked not to this, but made use of it for display and rivalry, this is what he especially withdraws them from, intimating that their credit is injured, they bringing on themselves a suspicion of madness (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08041a.htm>). And this especially is what Paul (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11567b.htm>) continually attempts to establish, when he wants to lead men away from any thing: he shows that the person suffers loss in respect of those very things which he desires.

And do thou accordingly likewise: if you would lead men away from pleasure, show that the thing is bitter: if you would withdraw them from vain-glory (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06585a.htm>), show that the thing is full of dishonor: thus also was Paul (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11567b.htm>) used to do. When he would tear away the rich from their love of money (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02148b.htm>), he said not merely that wealth (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15571a.htm>) is a hurtful thing, but also that it casts into temptations (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14504a.htm>). "For they that desire to be rich," says he, fall into a temptation (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14504a.htm>). 1 Timothy 6:9 (<http://www.newadvent.org/bible/1ti006.htm#verse9>) Thus, since it seems to deliver from temptations (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14504a.htm>), he attributes to it the contrary of that which the rich supposed. Others again held fast by the wisdom that is without, as though by it establishing Christ's doctrine; he signifies that not only it gives no aid to the cross (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04529a.htm>), but even makes it void. They held to going to law before strangers, thinking it unmeet to be judged by their own, as if those without were wiser: he points out that going to law before them that are without is shameful. They clave to things offered in sacrifice (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13309a.htm>) to idols (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07636a.htm>), as displaying perfect knowledge (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08673a.htm>): he intimates that this is a mark of imperfect knowledge (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08673a.htm>), not to know (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08673a.htm>) how to manage in the things which concern our neighbors. So also here, because they were wild about this gift of tongues, through their love (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09397a.htm>) of glory (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06585a.htm>), he signifies that this on the other hand more than any thing brings shame upon them, not only depriving them of glory (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06585a.htm>), but also involving them in a suspicion of madness (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08041a.htm>). But he did not at once say this, but having spoken very many things before, when he had made his discourse acceptable, then he brings in that topic so very contrary to their opinion. And this in fact is no more than the common rule; that he who intends thoroughly to shake a deep-rooted opinion and to turn men round to its contrary, must not at once state the opposites: otherwise he will be ridiculous in the eyes of them that are preoccupied by the contrary conviction. Since that which is very much beside expectation cannot be from the beginning easily received, but you must first well undermine by other arguments, and then give it the contrary turn.

Thus for example he did when discoursing of marriage: I mean, since many regarded it as a thing which brings ease, and he wished to intimate that the abstaining from marriage was ease; if he had said this at once he would not so easily have made it acceptable: whereas now, having stated it after much other matter and timing its introduction exactly, he strongly touched the hearers. This also he did in respect of virginity (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15458a.htm>). For before this having said much, and after this again, at last he says, "I spare you," and, "I would have you to be free from cares." 1 Corinthians 7:28-32 (<http://www.newadvent.org/bible/1co007.htm#verse28>)

This then he does in respect of the tongues, showing that they not only deprive of glory (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06585a.htm>), but also bring shame upon those who have them in the eyes of the unbelievers. But prophecy (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12473a.htm>), on the contrary, is both free from reproach among the unbelievers, and has very great credit and usefulness. For none will say in regard to prophesying, "they are mad;" nor will any one deride them that prophesy; but, on the contrary, will be astonished at and admire them. For "he is reprov'd by all," i.e., the things which he has in his heart, are brought forward and shown unto all: now it is not the same thing for any one to come in and see one speaking in Persian and another in Syriac, and to come in and hear the secrets of his own mind; as whether he comes in as a tempter and with evil (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05649a.htm>) mind (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10321a.htm>), or sincerely; or that such and such a thing has been done by him, and such another designed. For this is much more awful and more profitable than the other. For this cause (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03459a.htm>) therefore, whereas of the tongues he says, "you are mad;" not however affirming this of himself, but of their judgment: i.e., "they will say," says he, "that you are mad;" here, on the contrary, he makes use both of the verdict of the facts, and that of those who are the objects of the benefit. "For he is reprov'd by all," says he, he is judged by all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so he will fall down on his face and worship God (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm>), declaring that God is around you indeed. Do you see that this is not capable of two interpretations: how in the former case what is done may be doubted (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05141a.htm>) of, and here and there an unbeliever might ascribe it to madness (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08041a.htm>)? Whereas here there will be no such thing, but he will both wonder and worship, first making a confession by his deeds (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01115a.htm>), and then by his words also. Thus also Nebuchadnezzar (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10666c.htm>) worshipped God (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm>), saying, "Of a truth (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15073a.htm>), your God (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm>), He is the God that reveals secrets, seeing you could reveal this secret." Daniel 2:47 (<http://www.newadvent.org/bible/dan002.htm#verse47>) Do you see the might of prophecy (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12473a.htm>), how it changed that savage one and brought him under instruction and introduced him to faith (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05752c.htm>)?

1 Corinthians 14:26

4. "What is it then, brethren? When ye come together, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying."

Do you see the foundation and the rule of Christianity (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03712a.htm>)? How, as it is the artificer's work to build, so it is the Christian's (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03712a.htm>) to help his neighbors in all things.

But since he had vehemently run down the gift; lest it might seem to be superfluous, for with a view to pull down their pride (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12405a.htm>) and no more, he did this:— again he reckons it with the other gifts, saying, "has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue." For of old they used also to make psalms by a gift and to teach by a gift. Nevertheless, "let all these look to one thing," says he, the correction of their neighbor: let nothing be done at random. For if you come not to edify your brother, why do you come here at all? In fact, I do not make much account of the difference of the gifts. One thing concerns me, one thing is my desire, to do all things "unto edifying." Thus also he that has the lesser gift will outrun him that has the greater, if this be not wanting. Yea, therefore are the gifts bestowed, that each might be edified; since unless this take place, the gift will rather turn to the condemnation of the receiver. For what, tell me, is the use of prophesying? What is the use of raising the dead, when there is none who profits by it? But if this be the end of the gifts, and if it be possible to effect it in another way without gifts, boast not yourself on the score of the signs, nor do thou bewail yourself to whom the gifts are denied.

1 Corinthians 14:27

5. "And if any man speaks in a tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that in turn; and let one interpret."

1 Corinthians 14:28

"But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the Church (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03744a.htm>); and let him speak to himself, and to God (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm>)."

What do you say, tell me? Having spoken so much of tongues, that the gift is a thing unprofitable, a thing superfluous, if it have no interpreter, do you command again to speak with tongues? I do not command, says he, neither do I forbid; as when he says, "if any of them that believe (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02408b.htm>) not bid you to a feast and you be disposed to go," he says it not laying down a law for them to go, but not hindering them: so likewise here. "And let him speak to himself and to God (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm>)." If he endure not to be silent, says he, but is so ambitious and vain-glorious (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06585a.htm>), "let him speak by himself." And thus, by the very fact of so permitting, he greatly checked and put them to shame. Which he does also elsewhere, discoursing of converse with a wife and saying, "But this I say because of your incontinency." But not so did he speak, when he was discoursing of prophecy (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12473a.htm>). How then? In a tone of command and legislation: "Let the prophets (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12477a.htm>) speak, two or three." And he no where here seeks the interpreter, nor does he stop the mouth of him that prophesies as under the former head, saying, "If there be no interpreter, let him keep silence;" because in fact he who speaks in a tongue is not sufficient of himself. Wherefore if any has both gifts, let him speak. But if he has not, yet wish to speak, let him do so

with the interpreter's aid. For the prophet (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12477a.htm>) is an interpreter, but of God (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm>); whereas you are of man. "But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence:" for nothing ought to be done superfluously, nothing for ambition. Only "let him speak to himself and to God (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm>);" i.e., mentally, or quietly and without noise: at least, if he will speak. For this is surely not the tone of one making a law, but it may be of one who shames them more even by his permission; as when he says, "but if any hunger, let him eat at home:" and seeming to give permission, he touches them hereby the more sharply. "For you come not together for this purpose," says he, "that you may show that you have a gift, but that you may edify the hearers;" which also he before said, "Let all things be done unto edifying."

1 Corinthians 14:29

6. "Let the prophets (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12477a.htm>) speak by two or three, and let the others discern."

No where has he added, "at the most," as in the case of the tongues. And how is this, one says? For he makes out that neither is prophesy sufficient in itself, if at least he permits the judgment to others. Nay, surely it is quite sufficient; and this is why he did not stop the mouth of the prophet (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12477a.htm>), as of the other, when there is no interpreter; nor, as in his case he said, "if there be no interpreter let him keep silence," so also in the case of the prophet (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12477a.htm>), "if there be none to discern, let him not prophesy;" but he only secured the hearer; since for the satisfaction of the hearers he said this, that no diviner might throw himself in among them. For of this also at the beginning he bade them beware, when he introduced a distinction between divination (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05048b.htm>) and prophecy (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12473a.htm>), and now he bids them discriminate and spy out the matter, so that no Satanic teacher might privily enter.

1 Corinthians 14:30

"But if a revelation be made to another sitting by, let the first keep silence."

1 Corinthians 14:31

"For you all can prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted."

What may this be which is spoken? "If when you prophesy," says he, "and art speaking, the spirit of another stir him up, be silent thenceforth." For that which he said in the case of the tongues, this also here he requires, that it should be done "in turn," only in a diviner way here. For he made not use of the very expression, "in turn ?" but "if a revelation be made to another." Since what need was there further, that when the second was moved to prophesy the first should

speak? Ought they then both? Nay, this were profane and would produce confusion. Ought the first? This too were out of place. For to this end when the one was speaking, the Spirit moved the other, in order that he too might say somewhat.

So then, comforting him that had been silenced, he says, "For you all can prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted." Do you see how again he states the reason wherefore he does all things? For if him that speaks with tongues he altogether forbid to speak, when he has not an interpreter, because of the unprofitableness; reasonably also he bids restrain prophecy (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12473a.htm>), if it have not this quality, but creates confusion and disturbance and unseasonable tumult.

1 Corinthians 14:32

"And the spirits of the prophets (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12477a.htm>) are subject to the prophets (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12477a.htm>)."

Do you see how he put him to shame earnestly and fearfully? For that the man might not strive nor be factious, he signifies that the gift itself was under subjection. For by "spirit" here, he means its actual working. But if the spirit be subject, much more thou its possessor cannot justly (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08571c.htm>) be contentious.

7. Then he signifies that this is pleasing also to God (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm>), subjoining and saying,

1 Corinthians 14:33

"For God is not a God of confusion, but of peace, as [I teach] in all the Churches of the saints (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04171a.htm>)."

Do you see by how many reasons he leads him to silence and soothes him, in the act of giving way to the other? By one thing and that the chief, that he was not shut up by such a proceeding; "for you all can prophesy," says he, "one by one." By a second, that this seems good to the Spirit Himself; "for the spirits of the prophets

(<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12477a.htm>) are subject to the prophets

(<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12477a.htm>)."

Besides these, that this is according to the mind of God (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm>); "for God (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm>)," says he, "is not a God of confusion, but of peace:" and by a fourth, that in every part of the world this custom prevails, and no

strange thing is enjoined upon them. For thus, says he, "I teach in all the Churches of the saints

(<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04171a.htm>)."

What now can be more awful than these things? For in truth (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15073a.htm>) the Church (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03744a.htm>) was a heaven then, the Spirit governing all things, and moving each one of the rulers and making him inspired. But now we retain only the symbols (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14373b.htm>) of those gifts. For now also we speak two or three, and in turn, and when one is silent, another begins. But these are only signs and memorials of those things. Wherefore when we begin to speak, the people respond, "with your Spirit," indicating that of old they thus used to speak, not of their own wisdom, but moved by the Spirit. But not so now: (I speak of my own case so far.) But the present Church is like a woman (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15687b.htm>) who has fallen from her former prosperous days, and in many respects retains the symbols (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14373b.htm>) only of that ancient prosperity; displaying indeed the repositories and caskets of her golden ornaments, but bereft of her wealth (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15571a.htm>): such an one does the present Church resemble. And I say not this in respect of gifts: for it were nothing marvelous if it were this only: but in respect also of life and virtue (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15472a.htm>). Thus the list of her widows (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15617c.htm>), and the choir (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03693b.htm>) of her virgins (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15458a.htm>), then gave great ornament to the churches: but now she is made desolate and void, and the tokens only remain. There are indeed widows (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15617c.htm>) now, there are also virgins (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15458a.htm>); but they retain not that adornment which women (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15687b.htm>) should have who prepare themselves for such wrestlings. For the special distinction of the virgin is the caring for the things of God alone, and the waiting on Him without distraction: and the widow's (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15617c.htm>) mark too should be not so much the not engaging in a second marriage, as the other things, charity to the poor (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12327a.htm>), hospitality, continuing instant in prayers (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12345b.htm>), all those other things, which Paul (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11567b.htm>) writing to Timothy requires with great exactness. One may see also the married women (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15687b.htm>) exhibiting among us great seemliness. But this is not the only thing required, but rather that sedulous attention to the needy, through which those women (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15687b.htm>) of old shone out most brightly. Not as the generality now-a-days. For then instead of gold they were clothed with the fair array of almsgiving: but now, having left off this, they are decked out on every side with cords of gold woven of the chain of their sins (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14004b.htm>).

Shall I speak of another repository too emptied of its hereditary splendor? They all met together in old time and sang psalms in common. This we do also now: but then among all was there one soul (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14153a.htm>) and one heart: but now not in one single soul (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14153a.htm>) can one see that unanimity, rather great is the warfare every where.

"Peace," even now, "to all," he that presides in the Church (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03744a.htm>) prays (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12345b.htm>) for, entering as it were into his Father's house: but of this peace the name is frequent, but the reality no where.

8. Then the very houses were churches: but now the church itself is a house, or rather worse than any house. For in a house one may see much good order: since both the mistress of the house is seated on her chair with all seemliness, and the maidens weave in silence, and each of the domestics has his appointed task in hand. But here great is the tumult, great the confusion, and our assemblies differ in nothing from a vintner's shop, so loud is the laughter, so great the disturbance; as in baths, as in markets, the cry and tumult is universal. And these things are here only: since elsewhere it is not permitted even to address one's neighbor in the church, not even if one have received back a long absent friend, but these things are done without, and very properly. For the church is no barber's or perfumer's shop, nor any other merchant's warehouse in the market-place, but a place of angels (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01476d.htm>), a place of archangels, a palace of God (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm>), heaven itself. As therefore if one had parted the heaven and had brought you in there, though you should see your father or your brother, you would not venture to speak; so neither here ought one to utter any other sound but these which are spiritual. For, in truth (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15073a.htm>), the things in this place are also a heaven.

And if you believe not, look to this table, call to mind for Whose sake it is set, and why: consider Who it is that is coming forth here; tremble with awe even before the time. For so, when one sees the throne only of a king, in heart he rises up, expecting the king's coming forth. And do thou accordingly thrill with awe even before that thrilling moment: raise up yourself, and before you see the veils drawn aside and the choir (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03693b.htm>) of angels (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01476d.htm>) marching forth, ascend thou to the very heaven.

But the uninitiated knows (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08673a.htm>) not these things. Well then, it is necessary with a view to him also to introduce other topics. For neither towards him shall we want reasons able to stir him up thoroughly and cause (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03459a.htm>) him to soar.

Thou then who know (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08675a.htm>) not these things, when you shall hear the prophet (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12477a.htm>) saying, "Thus says the Lord," quit the earth, ascend thou also unto heaven, consider who it is that by him discourses with you.

But as things are, for a buffoon who is moving laughter or for a whorish and abandoned woman (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15687b.htm>), so vast an assemblage of spectators is set, listening in entire quietness to what is spoken, and this when none commands silence standest by, young or old, rebuke them, if thou seest it; reprimand them more sharply; if he take it not well, call the Deacon.}-->; and there is neither tumult, nor cry, nor any the least noise: but when God is speaking from heaven on subjects so awful, we behave ourselves more impudently than dogs, and even to the harlot women (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15687b.htm>) we pay greater respect than to God (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm>).

Does it make your flesh creep to be told of these things? Nay then, much rather let it creep when you do them.

9. That which Paul (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11567b.htm>) said of them that despised the poor and feasted alone, "What, have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? Or despise ye the Church of God (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03744a.htm>), and shame them that have not?" 1 Corinthians 11:22 (<http://www.newadvent.org/bible/1co011.htm#verse22>)— the same allow me also to say of those who make a disturbance and hold conversations in this place. "What? Have ye not houses to trifle in? Or despise ye the Church of God (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03744a.htm>), and corrupt those even who would be modest and quiet?" "But it is sweet and pleasant for you to converse with your friends." I do not forbid this, but let it be done in the house, in the market, in the baths. For the church is not a place of conversation, but of teaching. But now it differs not from the market; nay, if it be not too bold a word, haply, not even from the stage; in such sort do the women (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15687b.htm>) who assemble here adorn themselves more wantonly than the unchaste who are to be found there. Accordingly we see that even hither many profligates are enticed by them; and if any one is trying or intending to corrupt a woman (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15687b.htm>), there is no place, I suppose, that seems to him more suitable than the church. And if anything be to be sold or bought, the church appears more convenient than the market. For on such subjects also there is more talk here than in the shops themselves. Or if any wish to say or to hear any scandal, you will find that this too is to be had here more than in the forum without. And if you wish to hear any thing of political matters, or the affairs of private families (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05782a.htm>), or the camp, go not to the judgment-hall, nor sit in the apothecary's shop; for here, here I say are those who report all these things more accurately; and our assemblies are any thing rather than a church.

Can it be that I have touched you to the quick? I for my part think not. For while you continue in the same practices, how am I to know (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08673a.htm>) that you are touched by what has been said? Therefore I must needs handle the same topics again.

Are these things then to be endured? Are these things to be borne? We weary and distract ourselves every day that you may not depart without having learned something useful: and none of you go away at all the better, but rather injured the more. Yea, and "ye come together unto judgment," having no longer any cloak for your sin (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14004b.htm>), and you thrust out the more modest, disturbing them with your fooleries on every side.

But what do the multitude say? "I do not hear what is read," says one, "nor do I know (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08673a.htm>) what the words are which are spoken." Because you make a tumult and confusion, because you come not with a reverent soul (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14153a.htm>). What do you say? "I know (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08673a.htm>) not what things are said." Well then, for this very reason ought thou to give heed. But if not even the obscurity stir up your soul (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14153a.htm>), much more if things were clear would you hurry them by. Yea, this is the reason why neither all things are clear, lest you should indulge indolence; nor obscure, lest you should be in despair.

And whereas that eunuch and barbarian Acts 8:20 (<http://www.newadvent.org/bible/act008.htm#verse20>) said none of these things, but surrounded as he was with a crowd of so important affairs and on his journey, had a book in his hands and was reading: do you, both abounding in teachers, and having others to read to you privately, allege to me your excuses and pretexts? Do you not know (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08675a.htm>) what is said? Why then pray (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12345b.htm>) that you may learn: but sure it is impossible to be ignorant (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07648a.htm>) of all things. For many things are of themselves evident and clear. And further, even if you be ignorant (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07648a.htm>) of all, even so ought thou to be quiet, not to put out them that are attentive; that God (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm>), accepting your quietness and your reverence, may make the obscure things also plain. But can you not be silent? Well then, go out, not to become a mischief to others also.

For in truth (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15073a.htm>) there ought to be but one voice in the church always, even as there is but one body. Therefore both he that reads utters his voice alone, and the Bishop himself is content to sit in silence; and he who chants chants alone; and though all utter the response, the voice is wafted as from one mouth. And he that pronounces a homily pronounces it alone. But when there are many conversing on many and diverse subjects, why do we disturb you for no good? Since surely unless ye thought that we are but disturbing you for no good, you would not in the midst of our speech on such high matters, discourse on things of no consequence.

10. Therefore not in your conduct only, but in your very estimation of things, there is great perversion. And ye gape after superfluities, and leaving the truth (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15073a.htm>) pursue all sorts of shadows and dreams. Are not all present things a shadow and dreams, and worse than a shadow? For both before they appear, they fly away; and before they are flown, the trouble they give is much, and more than the pleasure. Let one acquire in this world and bury in the earth ever such abundance of wealth (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15571a.htm>), yet when the night is past, naked he shall depart hence, and no wonder. Since they too who are rich but in a dream (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05154a.htm>), on rising from their couch have nothing of what they seemed to have while sleeping. So also are the greedy of gain: or rather not so, but in a much worse condition. For he that dreams of being rich, neither has the money which he fancied he had, nor is any other mischief found to have accrued to him from this phantasy when he arises, but this man is both deprived of his riches, and has also to depart, filled with the sins (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14004b.htm>) which arise out of them; and in his wealth (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15571a.htm>) having but enjoyed a phantasy, the evils (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05649a.htm>) resulting from his wealth (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15571a.htm>) he sees not in fancy any more, but in the very truth (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15073a.htm>) of things; and his pleasure was in dreams, but the punishment ensuing on his pleasure turns out no more a dream, but is matter of actual experience. Yea rather, even before that punishment, even here he pays the heaviest penalty, in the very collecting of his wealth (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15571a.htm>) wearing into himself innumerable sadnesses, anxieties, accusations, calumnies (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03190c.htm>), tumults, perturbations.

In order therefore that we may be delivered both from the dreams and from the evils
(<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05649a.htm>) that are not in dreams, instead of covetousness
(<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04462a.htm>) let us choose almsgiving, instead of rapine, mercy to mankind
(<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09580c.htm>). For thus we shall obtain the good
(<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06636b.htm>) things both present and to come, through the grace
(<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06689a.htm>) and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ
(<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08374c.htm>), with Whom, to the Father
(<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm>), with the Holy Ghost (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07409a.htm>),
be glory (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06585a.htm>), power, honor
(<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07462a.htm>), now and ever, and world without end. Amen
(<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01407b.htm>).

About this page

Source. Translated by Talbot W. Chambers. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 12*. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1889.) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. <<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/220136.htm>>.

Contact information. The editor of New Advent is Kevin Knight. My email address is [feedback732 at newadvent.org](mailto:feedback732@newadvent.org). (To help fight spam, this address might change occasionally.) Regrettably, I can't reply to every letter, but I greatly appreciate your feedback — especially notifications about typographical errors and inappropriate ads.