Aurelius Prudentius Clemens, The Battle for the Soul of Man (Psychomachia)

Prologue: The faithful old man who first showed the way of faith became a father late in life: his sons became a race blessed by God and his name, Abram, which his father gave him, became Abraham when God spoke with him. He made a sacrifice of his first born and showed us that the only sacrifice pleasing to God is one which offers what is dearest to our hearts. He warned us that we must fight unholy men; he himself showed us that no child is pleasing to God or virtuous until the spirit kills the monsters lurking within the child's heart.

Vicious kings captured Lot and made him stay in Sodom and Gomorrah where he was known as a great man, though an alien. A messenger brought to Abram the news that his kinsman had been placed in bondage by barbarians. He armed his own servants, slaves who had always lived in his household, to pursue the enemy and catch them while they marched burdened by the victory and the great weight of booty they had seized. Abraham himself, filled with God's Spirit, took a sword and drove those insolent kings into a lumbering flight. He killed them and trampled their bleeding bodies; he broke the chains and released the plundered riches - gold, young women, children, jewels, mares, cups, clothing and cattle. Lot himself was freed, and straightened his neck and massaged himself where the chains had rubbed and blistered his skin.

Abram, after destroying that triumph, returned covered with glory because he had saved his brother's son from slavery so that their race would not be subjected to the rule of wicked, barbarian kings.

While Abram and his men were on the road from this slaughter, a priest stopped their journey and gave them heavenly food. This great priest, a mighty king, had no known mother and no known father: without parents, without children except those known only to God, he fed the father of undying sons Then a trinity of angels under the form of three men came to the old man's cottage for food and rest. Sara conceived and was astounded to find her old womb alive with the strength and promise of youth; she was becoming a mother after the time for bearing children had gone by. She rejoiced for the heir and regretted her laughter when she had heard the promise.

This picture of the ways of God and man has been drawn as a model for our lives to show again that our hearts must have faith and that every part of our captive flesh must be freed from the foulness of desire. We must see that we have servants enough from within our own house to overcome the evil that always rages in us. Christ himself, who is the only true Priest, the Son of one whose name cannot be said, will feed the victor and enter his heart to let it entertain the Trinity. The Spirit will embrace the childless soul and make it fertile with eternal seed; late in her life, this richly endowed soul will be a mother and produce an heir.

0 Christ, you have always been revered because you have always had compassion on the misery of man; you are always revered for the powers you share with the
Father - it is one power for it is only one God yet it is not merely one God that we worship since you too are also God born of the Father. Tell us, great King, how the soul is endowed with strength to fight and expel our sins from our hearts; when our thoughts are scattered and when strife rises within us, when evil desires rebel, tell us how to guard the liberty of the soul; tell us about our defenses against the fiend.

For you, good leader, have not left us here helpless before the onslaught of vice without the virtues to help us in battle and renew our courage; you yourself are in command of legions that fight this battle where the attack is worst. YOU yourself can arm the spirit with precious skills which permit it to resist and fight for you, conquer for you. The path to victory is there before your eyes. We must study the features of the virtues and the dark monsters waiting there to challenge their strength.

Faith is the first to appear on the field to face the uncertainty of this conflict. Her rough dress is disheveled, her shoulders are bare, her long hair is untrimmed and her arms are uncovered. The glow on her skin is caused by the prospect of sudden and unexpected battle. She bums to enter new contests, she ignores the demands of armor. Faith puts her confidence in her strong heart and arms. She scorns the dangers of hand-to-hand combat and intends to destroy her foe by exhausting him.

The first adversary approaches Faith; it is Worship-of-the-Old-Gods (we have no better name) who proposes to accept the challenge of Faith. But Faith strikes the enemy's head and it tumbles in the dirt where it lies, with its be-ribboned brows and the wide mouth that ate the warm red flesh of beasts.

Faith tramples the head and takes particular pains to squeeze the dead grey eyes out of the bloody skull; the monster's throat is dosed and its breath is throttled in its passages until it gasps a hard death. The spectators, who have been assembled by Faith from among the ranks of the martyrs, become brave enough to face the foe: she crowns her followers with blossoms and gives them robes of flaming purple.

The next person to step out on the grassy field is Chastity, the virgin, shining in armour. Lust, who has come from Sodom, is armed with torches. The vice thrusts a burning pine knot dipped in sulphur and tar into the maiden's eyes. But without fear she strikes the hand with a stone and the blazing torch is knocked away. With only one thrust of her sword, she pierces the throat of the whore and -stinking fumes with clots of blood are spat out; the foul breath poisons the near-by air. The virtuous queen then cries out:

'It is done, this will be your end - you will always lie prostrate, never again will you dare to spit your flames against the men and women who are God's; their hearts are kindled by the torch of 'Christ's pure love. Do you think, molester of men, that you can get your strength and be warmed again by the breath of life? Remember the head of Holofernes: it soaked the cushions of his couch with the blood of passion; Judith, an honest woman, refused his jewelled bed and stopped his fervour with one thrust of her dagger. Weak woman though she was, her hand never trembled as she fought for my cause with heavenly boldness. But perhaps you think that because such a woman acted under the old law, a physical law, she and others like her would be powerless
now that the battle has been moved to spiritual realms. But I tell you that feeble hands can still sever the heads of the mighty: a virgin has now borne a child. On that day when the flesh lost its nature and the power of God made for us a new flesh, a bride who never a wife conceived the Christ who is both man because of his mother and God because he was conceived by the Spirit of God. Ever since that day, all flesh is godlike since it conceives the Son of God and assumes his nature by a compact of partnership. The Word of God has not become another thing by taking flesh. The majesty of God is in no way reduced by the limits of bodily experience. But mankind is raised to understand nobler things: God remains as he always is though he begins to be something that he was not; we are no more as we had been because we have been born again to a be better condition. He give of himself to men, without detracting from what he is; he has not been diminished by taking what is ours, but by adding What is his to what is ours he has elevated us to the height of his gifts.

That you, foul Lust, lie here defeated in the dirt and cannot challenge me because of Mary is the gift of God to men. You are the way of death; you are the gateway to ruin. You stain our flesh and you plunge our spirits into the pit of Hell. Bury your head in the abyss of grief, you are a pestilence without power, you are frozen. Die, whore; go down to the damned. Mary be bound in Hell and be thrown in the dark crevasse of night; may the blazing rivers toss you on their currents; may the flood of darkness and the pools of sulfur fling you among the rapids of their roaring streams. Never again, Prince of fiends, will you tempt Christians; their bodies will be kept clean and pure for their King! That was the speech of Chastity. She washed her sword in the Jordan because the hammered steel was stained red by the blood that had gushed from the monster's wound. The victorious queen cleansed her blade in the stream, clipping it again and again until the dots had washed away. Then, because she was afraid that it might rust in its tight sheath, she consecrated it in a Catholic temple from which the river of God flows. in that place the sword cannot be dimmed.

When Chastity has retired, Longanimity or Patience comes on to the field. she is standing by the side watching the uproar of that combat: her quiet expression never changes as spears inflict their mortal wounds. Wrath, from a great distance, spies the easy-tempered virtue and all at once becomes enraged. Baring her teeth in anger and letting flecks of foam fall from her gaping black mouth, the vice darts her bloodshot eyes this way and that and challenges Patience to fight both by brandishing the weapons of combat and by making a speech: she mocks Patience for keeping a place on the side. infuriated by such reticence, Wrath throws a spear and abuses the meek, long-suffering virtue: "This is for fools like you who stand aside and watch the combat without expressing favour. Take this wound in your gentle breast without crying; you would be dishonoured to admit any pain! With these words a shaft of pine is hurled through the air. Thrown with a good aim, the long sharp shaft strikes against the belly of Patience but falls into the dust. The virtue has wrapped her body in a jacket of steel links: this garment is three layers in thickness and its fabric is stitched together with leather. Longanimity stands there quite unruffled while a storm of weapons falls at her brave feet; she keeps such a line of defence that nothing injures her. While she stands unmoving, Patience watches her foe rage in an uncontrolled frenzy. But Patience waits because Wrath will perish by her own violence. When that opponent has finally exhausted her strength and used all of her weapons her right hand is useless and the
ground is littered with weapons. Then she reaches-for a sword: raising the steel blade high over her head, she brings it down on the head of Patience, but a helmet of forged bronze only rings under that great blow. The sword its edge blunted, rebounds; the unbending helmet shatters it and Patience still stands there, unmoved, as she was before. The fury of Wrath is multiplied: with her sword scattered about her feet, she throws the hilt aside and finds herself without weapons. Only one thing remains: she had spent all her energies and won nothing for herself; her unreasoning anger turns on herself and she prepares for suicide. She picks up one of her useless weapons; she puts the shaft in the dirt and falls on the upturned point. Patience stands over Wrath and speaks: 'We have conquered. With no danger to life our accustomed virtue has won the day again. This is the way we live, wiping out the devils of passion and all their attendant evils by standing as they attack. Wrath is its own enemy, Fury kills herself.

As she turns away and walks among the martyrs, a noble man appears there as her escort. Job had stayed by her, enduring the battle with her. Before his expression was grave and he panted as he watched the conflict. But now he is smiling as he thinks of his healed sores and the scars he shows as his glory after thousands of 6rd-won fights. Heaven's King invited him to rest and he gave job those spoils of battle that he will never lose. Patience herself walks through the raging battlefield without injury. Patience allies herself with the other virtues and freely gives assistance wherever it is needed. No virtue enters the battle without the help of Patience. Only Patience has the strength needed by all the others.

It happens that Pride is riding about the field on a high, spirited horse. As usual, she is all inflated by her own great importance: she has laid a lion's pelt across die horse's strong shoulders so that she can look more important as she keeps her disdainful poise above the field. She has braided her hair high on her head so that there might be a lofty and more imposing peak above her haughty brows. A mantle made of fine Spanish linen is thrown across her shoulders and gathered high at the bosom so that her breasts are made more prominent. A long veil hangs from her neck like a transparent scarf; when the wind blows around her, it flows and billows like a vessel's-pennant. Her horse, a charger who cannot stand still, carries himself in haughty fashion unwilling to have his jaw curbed by the bit. Since the horse is restrained, he cannot enjoy the freedom he seeks: he stamps with rage because the reins press hard against his neck. in such fashion does this virago show herself Head and shoulders above the opposing troops, she parades up and down on her horse and glares at those confronting her. Her enemy is poor in arms and numbers, a force conscripted by Lowliness. Though noble, Lowliness has need of another since she cannot rely on her own resources. Hope is her friend, a virtue whose estate is rich and raised above the earth to be a place of wealth.

Mad Pride looks over Lowliness and her motley crew. She makes this speech: 'What kind of nonsense is this? Surely you must be ashamed, poor men, to challenge someone so famous as me with troops so tattered. How can you raise your swords against a tribe of such distinction whose skill at fighting has won it wealth and given it power to rule the richest lands? Can it be that some penniless upstart presumes to overturn a most ancient race of princes? Are we to see you as the new nobility bearing in your hands the sceptres that have been ours? Is it you who will plough a furrow
over plains whose sod was first broken by us? Will you poison our soil with alien steel and drive from the land those who have cultivated for our benefit? You are a pretentious crowd. When one of your own draws his first breath, we embrace the man that he is and pour our power into the newborn body; we and only we are masters of those new bones. Where in that person are you allotted a place? There is nothing for you; we possess everything. Both the house and its masters were born the same day. As the years I pass, we all grow together so that from the time when Adam, dressed in skins, left Eden, all that has happened to him and his race happened because we commanded and men rushed to obey.

What army is this that has come from God knows where to annoy us? You lack spirit, luck, elegance, and good sense. The rights you claim now have been assigned to those who claimed them first. I suppose that you trust those vain whispers which encourage wretches to do about some future good and console their hunger and unmanly laziness with expectations. What a silly hope that must be: it flatters them but still they ignore the bugle's call to battle and their courage does not strengthen their feeble SOUL. Chastity's frozen liver is of little use, and the sweetness of Brother Love is soon undone. 0 Mars, 0 my heart, such an enemy shames us: must we take up weapons against frivolity? Must we enter combat with a chorus of girls with whom are the beggars, justice and Honesty, parched Sobriety, Fasting with her pasty face, Purity and her bloodless cheeks, Simplicity exposed to every injury and Lowliness always bent double to the ground without freedom and so distressed that one must see her cheap spirit? This avenging horde will be trampled like stubble: we will not show the courtesy of using swords; we will not dip our blades into your sluggish blood, we will never win an unmanly victory,

Pride spurs his horse into a fierce gallop; she flies along with the reins slack hoping to stun her foe with her shield's weight and then trample Lowliness. But her horse stumbles and Pride is thrown in a pit that Deceit has already dug across the field. She is one of the vices - that damned pestilence - who is always busy with her tricks. She had seen the war about to break out and had touched the earth so that the enemy would be caught in the rush of their attack against the lines of the vices. She camouflaged the pit with branches overlaid with sod so that it all seemed to be quite solid. But Lowliness, not even presuming to know the ways of those more crafty than she, has not yet ordered her troops to advance and engage their foe. it was impetuous Pride, in all her grandeur, who galloped into a trap made for Lowliness. As the horse falls she clings to his mane and is thrown among his thrashing legs. The self-contained virtue, on finding her opponent crushed and nearly &4 walks calmly to her side, raises her face a bit, and combines a look of kindliness with her joy. She refuses to do anything more, but Hope, -her true companion, gives her the sword of vengeance and fills her meek spirit with a love of glory. She grasps the bloody foe by the hair, -drags her out, and turns the face toward her own. Pride implores her to have mercy, but Lowliness bends the head back, cuts it from the body and raises the grey face for everyone to see. Hope speaks to those around:

'This is the end; this is what your grand words produced. God shatters arrogance; even the great must fall. All bubbles burst; inflated Pride must be flattened. Do away with supercilious airs, watch out for the pit that may open up under your feet. Let all
men who are proud take a warning from this. How well we know the word of Christ that the lowly Will rise to high places while the proud are put down: we have seen how the mighty Goliath was felled by an infant's hand; a little stone from a sling struck a hole deep in the forehead of the giant. He was a terrible threat, boastful, menacing, and given to bitter speeches. At his pride's peak raging and preening himself, threatening the sky with his shield, one instant taught him what a child's toy can do. A bellicose man died by a boy's hand. I led that boy into that battle: from that day his courage ripened in my service; his mature spirit was part of me. Because I take my rest at the feet of our omnipotent Lord, all men who live as I command are taken there at last while their sins reach after us beseeching mercy.'

Lowliness strikes the resounding air with the wings that are touched with gold, at once she is in Heaven. The virtues see her go and are impressed by this. If the unending warfare did not constrain them, all the virtues would accompany Lowliness; instead they resume battle and prepare themselves to win the promised victory and just reward.

From the far edges of the world, where the sun sets, comes their enemy, indulgence. Reputation means nothing to her, for it is already lost. Her curls are perfumed, her restless eyes are not still her voice is languid and bored. She fives for pleasure, she wants all feelings to be calm and gentle, she finds delight in her unlawful games and she tries to destroy her mind by making it more feeble. As she arrives on the scene she is lazily belching because of a long feast she has just left. She comes with dawn because she has heard the trumpets calling her to fight. She leaves the cups of warm wine and her dizzy feet slip as she walks through puddles of wine and perfume; her bare feet crush the flowers on the pavement: drunkenly she goes off to war. in her chariot her beauty--inspires the army of her compatriots. It is a strange battle: she does not shoot arrows from her bow, no lances are hurled at the enemy's lines, she holds no sword. Rather she throws baskets of violets and roses and scatters blossoms over her fierce enemy. The virtues are won by her charms. Her sweetened breath dilutes their manly courage, her strong odours strike their lips and he’ so that their iron-clad strength is crushed.

Their courage fails; surely they have been defeated. They put down their spears and their feeble hands are still while they gaze at the chariot in which she came. They stare at the gold-encrusted tinkling harness and they are awed by the axle of solid gold. The costly spokes, made of purest silver, support the wheel's bright rim which is made of precious amber. As this happens, the entire army suddenly finds itself pervaded with an intense desire to surrender. More than anything else they hope to abandon their standards and become the slaves of luxurious Indulgence. They welcome the yoke of a dissolute mistress and the tavern's law. Sobriety, a virtue with a strong will, weeps at the sight of such a reverse. She weeps because an invincible army has been defeated without a battle, but she is a good general.

She plants her flags where each one can see and restores their courage with a speech: 'What blind madness troubles your confused minds? What is the fate you are seeking? To whom have you pledged allegiance? Are these fetters? You are men of iron, how can flowers restrain you? These yellow bouquets with white lilies, these
circlets of red flowers, is it by these that your strong hands, trained in the iron arts of warfare, will be bound? Must you now have your, hair wrapped in a gold turban with a band to soak the perfume? Are these the heads that once were anointed with oil in the King's sign, a sign that guaranteed his eternal favour? Is it your purpose to walk sedately and sweep your paths with expensive hems? Where is the tunic woven by Faith and given as a protection to the young hearts which she had already renewed?

You will be busy: you will attend great banquets that last through the night; huge foaming tankards. will spill wine and costly dishes will drip on the board; your couches will be soaked with drink and, their silk emblems will still be wet with yesterday's dew. Remember the thirst in the desert; remember the water that gushed from the side of the rock when the prophet's staff struck the stone and made a spring where there was none. Were your fathers' tents not filled with heavenly food? Was this food not like that which Christ gives us. today? After such a feast, can you let Drunkenness and Wantonness take you to the den of Indulgence? You are an army that has survived every threat. Neither the fury of Wrath nor Idolatry could halt you, but a drunken dancer has -you now.

'Do not go, I beg you. Remember who you are: remember Christ, who is our all powerful King; consider your people and your reputation; do not forget our Lord and our God. You are sons of Judah, your line reaches back to God's mother who gave flesh to the Son of God. Be awakened by the memory of David who never sought relief from the burden of war. Consider, too, Samuel who forbade his men to touch the booty they had seized in battle and who executed uncircumcised kings as soon as they were taken. He was afraid that if the captive survived he might again bring to them the ravages of war. He thought it wrong even to make them prisoners. You, on the other hand, desire to be conquered. Repent of your wish to pursue this pleasant sin; I beg of you, by the fear of God's justice, repent. If you beg his kind forgiveness your betrayal will not destroy you. Jonathan repented when he broke his long fast with a piece of honeycomb: intrigued by a wish to be king, he was careless, but he repented of that deed and we rejoice because his cruel fate did not occur. Come with me; do battle under the flag of Sobriety and all of the virtues will join me in forcing that vice, Indulgence, to pay the great penalty which she earned by tempting you to abandon Christ!

With these last words, she raises the cross of Christ high before the horses who draw the chariot of Indulgence. She pushes the holy wood against the bridles. The beasts are frightened and run away down a steep path; the chariot and its driver are dragged helplessly along. Dust blows in her face, she is thrown out and her body catches in the wheels so that she is the brake that stops the runaway. Then Sobriety strikes the death blow by hurling a great stone that she finds nearby. Chance found the stone and then Chance directs its short flight so that the nose and teeth of Luxury are smashed and her red lips are driven into the arch of her ruined mouth. The teeth are loose in their sockets, her throat is torn, and the chopped tongue spits out bits of its bloody flesh. This meal of her own body sickens her: she swallows the crushed bones and vomits the lamps she has eaten.

Sobriety speaks: 'Drink up. You drained many cups before, surely you can stomach
your own body. You have revelled in your excesses of sweetness; you should enjoy morsels like these. The taste of death must be bitter in your mouth; this last draught of wine must turn your previous pleasures to gall.' Then she dies. Those who enjoyed her company scatter in fear. Jest and impudence throw their cymbals away for they in their foolishness imagined that battles are won by instruments of noise. Lust also flees: pale with fear for his life, he abandons his darts tipped with poison; his bow slips from his shoulders and he leaves his quiver where it fell. Then Vanity, who parades in hollow grandeur, is stripped naked and her long flowing robes are swiftly dragged away. The garlands that adorn Allurement are shredded and left behind. The gold ornaments are broken and the confusion of Strife shatters her jewels. Pleasure is more than happy to, flee through the thorns with injured feet. She endures her painful exile because fear of dangers toughens her tender soles. Wherever the routed army turns as it runs seeking an escape, things are lost and left behind: hairpins, headbands, ribbons, buckles and little veils, body stays, diadems, and precious necklaces. Sobriety and all of her comrades refuse, because they remember Samuel and his command, to even touch these spoils. Their unpolluted feet trample the causes of sin into the dirt so that nothing can make a good man trip, nor compel him to turn his disciplined eyes to sinful joys.

It is said that Greed then folds her robes in a huge pocket and gathers up everything of value left behind. With her wide mouth open and gaping, Greed admires the trinkets as she sifts through the sand for broken bits of gold. When her pockets are filled, she stuffs money bags and purses with her treasure. As she works, the bag is held in her left hand while with her right she combs the field with fingers like rakes. This last monster is followed by her allied fiends, Care, Hunger, Fear, Anxiety, Perjury, Dread, Fraud, Fabrication, Sleeplessness and Sordidness. Among them are the crimes born and nurtured by Greed so that the brood grows strong on its mother's black. Like ravenous wolves, her young prowl across the field. If a soldier sees his brother wearing a jewelled helmet, he will not stop at murder to get it. If a son finds his father dead after battle, he stifles his grief and strips the corpse of its wealth. Civil war permits brother to steal from brother. Pride of Possession, who is never sated, spares no one; Gluttony robs even his own, children.

These follow the advent of Greed. Such a slaughter is set loose in the world that droves of living things are destroyed. One man blind and with his eyes pried from the pits of his skull is left to wander by night over every hurdle without a staff to help. She catches another with his eyes wide open by showing a grand dung. When he reaches for it, her sword catches him; he sighs as it finds his heart. Many men, like pigs, are driven to furnaces where gold is being burned out of its rock. Each man, though it dooms him to death by fire, stretches his hand into the glowing chamber hoping to find gold. The entire human race is seized by Greed; all men are destroyed before mortality can be saved. Of all the vices there is none more frightening: Greed wraps the lives of men in calamities that they only escape when they are thrown to Hell's fire. She even dies - it is too much, even I can scarcely believe such a horror - to tempt the priests whose pure lives are spent in the service of the Lord. They are the leaders who stand in the battle lines doing battle for the virtues and blowing horns to encourage and guide those who follow their steps. Greed will have attacked them and destroyed their bodies if Reason, the guardian of the tribe of Levi, has not covered her
foster sons with her great shield and saved all of them from the deadly rush of Greed. With the assistance of Reason, the priests are saved and remain strong and uninjured in the battle. Only a few of them feel the lance of Greed and they are only scratched. Most infamous pestilence that Greed is, she is astounded to see her spears turned away so neatly from her enemies' throats.

With a scream of rage, her passion begins to speak: 'We are losing. Because we lack stamina we cannot maintain our attack. Our power to hurt is feeble, though before no one could resist us. No man, not even a man with a will of iron, was so hard that he could ignore money or gold. Every kind of man has been sent to Hell by us: hearts that are tender and hearts that are rough and hard, minds that are learned as well as those that are not the stupid and the wise; the pure and the impure have, like all the others, been easy prey for us. I and I alone, avaricious Greed, have brought to the Styx all who have ever crossed that torrent. The greedy river has enjoyed the gifts of Greed. Hell was enriched by us and it is in our debt. How can it be that now our strength is turned aside while fortune turns her twisted smile on our weapons? Christians have no concern for faces stamped on coins; they have no concern for hammered silver; no treasure has value for they think its glory is tamish. What does this newly found fastidious pose mean? We won the Iscariot, one of Christ's chosen followers who even broke bread with his Master. With the most compelling reasons for loyalty, Avarice destroyed him with only a few coins. He sold the blood of God and bought an infamous field. He atoned for this deed with a strangled neck. The people of Jericho were destroyed by us when they found that their safety had turned to defeat. Though Achan enjoyed the victory of the Jews, he was destroyed because he touched the golden spoils. He picked a bright bauble from the city's ashes and covetously hid what he thought was his own. Nothing could save him from the curse of the prophet. His tribe's great prestige, his own descent from Judah, a patriarch from whom Christ would come so that all the sons of Judah would be favoured by God, all this meant nothing. Achan died for his avarice. Men who live for Greed are men who will the for Greed. I cannot win any battle if men know me. I will wear disguise and trick the sons of Judah and Aaron, their chief priest. I will recoup my loss. -Who cares if the battle is won by arms or tricks?'

She finishes her soliloquy and changes her bearing to one of nobility. She lays her weapons aside and changes her expression.

In the form and dress of simple austerity, she becomes the virtue that men have known as Thrift, a virtue who likes a moderate, saving life. In this new guise she looks like one who never takes anything with grasping hands. With her careful airs, she earns the reputation she has constructed. Bellona also wears the appearance of Thrift so that men will not see the liar that she is. With a delicate veil of maternal concern she hides her wanton hair so that the inner rage will be disguised. She hides her plundering thievery and miserly hoarding of stolen goods under the commendable name of care for her children. With deeds like these she tricks and fools gullible men. People follow this awful monster because they think her work is virtue. The wicked fiend finds them cheerful victims happy to live in her shackles. Meanwhile the strong battle line begins to falter. The virtues waver because their priestly leaders are confined while the rank and file is confounded. The monster's appearance easily
misleads them - since they cannot distinguish their friend from their foe: Greed's appearance is a fluid and changing thing that makes them doubt their unsteady eyes. Suddenly Good Works comes to the aid of her confused comrades. She enters the fight last but by putting her hand in the battle, she can guarantee their success. Every impediment is thrown aside, she moves through the ranks without armour or even a shield. She has lightened herself of many burdens. Once she had been heavy with riches and money but she is able to be freed by helping the poor. Generously she scatters her inheritance. Now, rich with Faith, she examines her empty purse and then estimates the value of her estate in Heaven with the interest that accrues to it. The sight of Good Works strikes Greed like a lightning bolt. Shivering with fear, her senses suddenly numbed, she cannot move because she knows her end has come. What more can she do? What tricks remain to her so that she can regain the wealth that she now has lost? The brave virtue leaps on her and before the vice can escape, her neck is seized by hands strong as iron. The virtue strangles her, squeezing blood from her throat until it is dry. Like steel bands beneath the chin, her hands press tight until life is finally gone. There is no wound, the breath is stopped and the body suffers inside itself the agonies of death. As the vice struggles, her victor presses a knee to her breast and stabs her through the ribs. After death, the virtue strips the body of its precious spoils. Nuggets of gold, decaying money bags, green coins, all these hoarded things are given to the needy. Then, with exultation, she speaks to her army:

'Take off your armour, honest men, drop your weapons. The cause of our troubles is dead. The pure can rest now that the desire for gain is gone. It is good to wish for nothing that is not needed. Simple food and only one coat are enough to refresh and case our weak bodies. With nature satisfied, there is no need for anything more.' When you set' out on a journey do not take a wallet nor should you worry about another change of clothes. Do not worry about tomorrow, for your food, our daily bread, comes to us as the sunlight comes. The birds live only for today; they do not care because they know that God will provide food for them. The fowls of the air trust in God; even sparrows have a certain belief that the Lord cares for them. They will not perish. But you are God's beloved and have a strong resemblance to his Son. Can he, your Creator, ever desert you? Do not fear: the giver of life will be the giver of food. - Look for nourishment in the teachings of Heaven; find your strength in the food that also enlightens, a food that strengthens the hope of unending life. The maker of all things also cares for their needs.'

At these words their troubles ended. Suffering, Fear, Violence, Crime and Fraud, which deny the faith, are driven from that land. Then the kind lady, Peace, with her enemies gone, expels the storms of war. All of the awful equipment is thrown aside. They unfasten their buckles and take off their belts. Their flowing robes fall to their feet and their quick step slows to the pace of men who are their own masters. The curved bugles are silent, the swords are returned to their sheaths, the dust of battle settles and light from Heaven begins to beautify all the place. The army is happy to see war end: they see the face of God, the Thunderer, smiling on them and Christ on his throne rejoices in their conquest and opens his Father's home for his followers.

Concord gives the command to take the victorious pennants and flags back to camp. There is no army that ever looked so fine, or so glorious, as she leads her troops
marching back in double columns. The foot soldiers sing psalms on one side of the line while the mounted soldiers sing hymns from the other. In the same way the victorious Israelites looked back to the Red Sea from their positions on the dry shore. The hanging mountain of water fell down hissing at their heels and caught in its fury the dark-skinned men of the Nile. The fish swam again in the channel over the sand that had been dry. God's followers beat drums in thanksgiving for what he had given them. The deeds of almighty God would be told again to every generation: A men would hear how the sea reared up walls so that a dry path was cut through the green waters; the wind was stilled and the depths of the sea were poised along each side of that miraculous highway.

With the defeat of vice, the virtues sing their psalms. The victorious army at last reaches camp. Suddenly a storm strikes at them. it is a storm made by some evil to trouble Peace and disturb this triumphal return with sudden disaster. Concord is struck in the side by a lurking vice: she is uninjured because the fabric of steel repels the point and the blow does not reach her flesh; yet an opening allows her skin to be scratched. When the army of vices had been driven off, Discord had slipped among the virtues in the guise of a friend; she had left her torn cloak and her snakes behind while she, with olive branches in her hair, joined in the celebration. But she had a knife hidden in her clothes because she wanted to hurt Concord, greatest of the virtues, with her deceit. But she fails in her intent. 'What has happened now?' said Concord. 'What enemy's hand is hidden hereto injure victory and trouble our. great joy? We have reduced the passions to control and brought goodness back to man. But of what use would this be if one of the virtues is attacked in peace time?'

Her comrades turn toward her and see her blood dripping through the armour. Fear betrays the attacker's face. - Her pale cheeks announce her guilt and her hands tremble as she finds herself discovered. The armed virtues surround her and demand of her that she tell them her name, her race, her nation and faith, who sent her and the name of the god she worships. In her fear she cannot lie. She says: 'I am known as Discord and sometimes men call me Heresy. I see God in various ways: now smaller and now greater, now in a twofold manner, now in a single. When I desire, he lacks substance and is a ghost, or he is my soul when I decide to mock him. Belial is my teacher, the world is my home.'

Faith will tolerate no more of such blasphemy. In a single thrust the queen of the virtues pins with a spear the tongue of Discord and stops her breath. Countless hands tear the deadly body of Discord and each of the virtues throws a bit of her flesh into the breeze or to the dogs or to the crows; pieces of her body are dropped in the sewers and flushed out to sea to be devoured by monsters. At last the entire corpse is fed to unclean beasts. Dreadful Heresy, torn limb from limb, has perished. With this last skirmish all men become free to live in the peace that has been given to all mankind.

All the virtues and he in whom they dwell are safe and settled behind the protection they have built in the centre of camp they raise a platform high on a hill, a place from which one sees every way without any obstruction. The two sisters, Faith and Concord, together stand there on the platform united by their sworn allegiance to our Lord. Since they share authority, they stand together and from that place they summon
all their followers. The entire camp assembles in that place. No part of man's soul
lurks idly in some forgotten niche of the body; all the tents are opened so that no one
can remain undiscovered and asleep. All wait there eagerly. With the end of war they
wonder what it is that Faith will give to them now. Concord speaks first: 'All glory has
come to -you now, faithful children of the Father and his Son. You have slaughtered
the savages that attacked the men who live in the holy city; you are victors. But the
peace of this nation demands that all men in field and town live together in harmony.
Quarrels at home upset the good common to all; difference from within will weaken
us abroad. Be watchful, brave soldiers: let there be no discord among us; let none of
us become foreigners because of disputes that are hidden among us. A will divided
always assuages disorder and will place two at variance within one heart. Let love unite
understanding; let our one life exist for one aim. Separation is not strength, just as
Christ can intervene between God and man joining mortality and divinity so that the
flesh and God's Spirit are kept together, so may it be that one spirit will form in us and
in the body be one action united.

'Virtues that are active will produce only peace. Peace is the end of labour; peace is
the prize won in war and danger. Peace is the standard by which the stars flourish and
the earth is always at rest. Without peace, nothing pleases God. He will not take your
gift at the altar if you hate your brother, if you should die for Christ by leaping in the
fire and letting its tresses envelop you but still. You kept some unkindly desire, your
sacrifice would mean nothing. Merit is perfected by peace. It is not swollen with
pride, it has no envy; it endures anything and believes everything it can be injured but
will not bear resentment; it forgives every offence and offers pardon before the, end of
day for fear the sun will set on its anger. If you wish to worship our God, make -your
offering in peace. Nothing is sweeter to Christ. only a gift freely given in peace
pleases him with its sweet aroma. God gives the dove the wisdom to see a make in
disguise; the wolf wraps himself in die soft skin of a lamb while he goes on with the
bloody business of death. By tricks just like these Photinus and Arius have disguised
themselves while remaining savage wolves. This threat to my health and this
superficial wound show what, danger to us rests in a-stealthy hand!

The assembled virtues all cry out in sorrow. Then Faith adds these last words: 'Do
not cry in sadness. This is the hour of our glorious victory. Concord has been hurt but
Faith has been defended. indeed concord stands by me and laughs at her wound.
concord has saved Faith, you can be sure; Faith is safe. There is only one remaining
task, my captains. The war is over and yours is Solomon's job.

He, though peaceful, was heir to a warring kingdom; he became the unarmed master
of an armed court. Because his father reeked with the warm blood of kings, Solomon
began the task of washing the stain from his father's house. A temple was erected and
an altar was set up in a golden place to be the house of Christ, the Messiah to come.'
That temple was the glory of all the kingdom. The wandering ark was set in the holy
place and God himself resided in Jerusalem. Let a holy temple be built here in our
camp, let us bad a holy of holies for our God. What good is it when we have driven
back with steel the great hordes of earthly sin if the Son of God comes down in the
city of the cleansed body to find it barren and without a shining temple?'
Faith and Concord together lay out the building. Her golden rod carefully measures the four sides so that the walls will be square and the corners true with no unequal side to break its symmetry. On the east side, nearest the rising sun, they place three gateways. To the south there are also three gates and to the west as well and also to the north. There is no building stone brought to that place, only a single gem through which the passageways are cut. That single stone spans the doors with a single arch and the one stone forms the entire court of entry. Over the twelve gateways are inscribed in gold the twelve names of the apostolic senate. With these labels the Spirit of God encompasses the soul's privacy by giving sentiments of love. Wherever we find the vitality of man, we see that the strength of the body is fourfold and approaches to the heart through the three gateways that are found in only one side. With pure desires the heart of man gives honour in its holy place. Whether it be during the dawn of childhood or in the strong burning heat of youth or the full day of maturity or in the feeble winter when old age is summoned to pray, three names present their power at this place where the four entryways meet and the power of the King is made real.

The same number of precious stones set in the walls sparkle; from their depths they pour into that temple living colours that pulse and throb like breathing things. A chrysolite of unusual size spotted with gold nuggets is set between a sapphire and a beryl so that their light is always changing. An agate is filled with colour by its neighbour, an amethyst, which scatters a flash of crimson. This brilliant redness strikes the sardonyx, jasper, topaz and carnelian which arc side by side. Scattered among these jewels are emeralds like grass growing in the spring: their green light pours out in waves. The bright chryosophase with its green and yellow bands is conspicuous among that bright crowd of stars. As these immense stones were raised to their high places the crane creaked and groaned with the unexpected weight. An inner chamber is also built in that place. It stands on seven pillars cut from a boulder of ice-like crystal and it is topped by a stone cut to resemble a shell holding a white pearl. It is the pearl of great price bought by Faith after she sold everything at auction and paid for it with a thousand talents. Here is Wisdom enshrined, and setting in place all her realm by framing laws to be the safety of mankind. That sovereign holds a sceptre that is a staff of green living wood. Cut from its trunk, it draws no nurture from the soil but bears leaves and roses red as blood with lilies. That stem never withers, those blooms will never will. This rod was suggested by the staff of Aaron, a staff which forced buds from its dry bark and opened a new life with the richness of hope bearing fruit.

To you, 0 Christ, most patient of teachers, we give thanks and with our loyal lips we give the honour that is your due, for our hearts have been fouled by sin. It was your wish that we find the dangers in us and recognize the struggle which our souls endure. We know, now, that in our murky hearts conflicting loves battle and as the fortunes of war vary we become strong in the ways of virtue but then we are weakened when virtue is captured and dragged away in bondage so that we and they are slaves to the most shameful sins and content to be damned.

How many times has sin been defeated and we have felt ourselves glow with God's presence; how often, then, have we cooled and given in to foul desire? The war flues in our bones and man's double nature is always in the throes of rebellion for flesh
oppresses the spirit like day while the spirit that was produced by the breath of God is always hot in the bleak prison of the heart, rejecting, even in its bondage, the filth that is the flesh. The opposing winds of light and dark are at war and we, body and spirit, have desires that are at odds with one another until Christ, our Lord, comes to help. He places the jewels of the virtues in their proper places and in the place of sin builds the courts of his temple; he makes for the soul ornaments from its dark past to delight Wisdom as she reigns forever on her glorious throne.