

On Charity and Lust

by St. Augustine

De Doctrina Christiana III, x, 15–16 (Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina XXXII, 87–88; *Christian Instruction* (John J. Gavingam, tr.) Fathers of the Church, vol 4, 130.

Non autem praecipit scriptura nisi caritatem nec culpat nisi cupiditatem et eo modo informat mores hominum. Item si animum praeoccupavit alicuius erroris opinio, quicquid aliter adseruerit scriptura, figuratum homines arbitrantur. Non autem adserit nisi catholicam fidem rebus praeteritis et futuris et praesentibus. Praeteritorum narratio est, futurorum praenuntiatio, praesentium demonstratio; sed omnia haec ad eandem caritatem nutriendam atque roborandam et cupiditatem uincendam atque extinguendam ualent.

16. — **Caritatem** uoco motum animi ad fruendum deo propter ipsum et se atque proximo **propter deum** ; **cupiditatem** autem motum animi ad fruendum se et proximo et quolibet corpore **non propter deum**. Quod autem agit indomita cupiditas ad corrumpendum animum et corpus suum, flagitium uocatur; quod autem agit, ut alteri noceat, facinus dicitur. Et haec sunt duo genera omnium peccatorum, sed flagitia priora sunt. Quae cum exinaniuerint animum et ad quamdam egestatem perduxerint, in facinora prosilitur, quibus remoueantur impedimenta flagitiorum aut adiumenta quaerantur. Item quod agit caritas, quo sibi prosit, utilitas est; quod autem agit, ut prosit proximo, beneficentia nominatur. Et hic praecedit utilitas, quia nemo potest ex eo, quod non habet, prodesse alteri. — Quanto enim magis regnum cupiditatis destruitur, tanto caritatis augetur.

But, Scripture commands only charity, and censures only lust, and in that manner moulds the character of men. Also, if a belief in some fallacy has impregnated their minds, men consider whatever Scripture has maintained differently as figurative. But it teaches only the Catholic faith in relation to things past, future, and present. It is a history of the past, a prediction of the future, and a delineation of the present. All these are effective in cultivating and invigorating charity and in vanquishing and destroying lust.

(16) I define **charity** as a motion of the soul whose purpose is **to enjoy God for His own sake and one's self and one's neighbor for the sake of God**. **Lust**, on the other hand is a motion of the soul bent upon **enjoying one's self, one's neighbor, and any creature without reference to God**. The action of unbridled lust in demoralizing one's own soul and body is called vice; what it does to harm another is called crime. These are the two classes of sin as a whole, but **vices** are first. When these have weakened the soul and brought it to a kind of destitution, it leaps into **crimes** in order to eliminate impediments to its vices or procure help for them. Likewise, what charity does for one's own benefit is **utility**; what it does for our neighbor's good is called **kindness**. In this case, utility leads the way, for no one can give another a benefit from a supply which he does not have. The more the power of lust is destroyed, the more the power of charity is strengthened.