201 Book (*Liber*)

A book is found to be fourfold, namely, of conscience, scripture, creature, and life.

Conscience is said to be a book because of the interior writing. For just as deeds are written, and it is computed concerning receipts and expenses and, in the end, an annual account is rendered, so in conscience are annotated the sins so before the priest they are counted, Isai. 8[:1]: “Take a great book and write in it.” And Apo. 1[:11]: “What you see,” you do, “write in a book,” namely, of conscience.

Again, Jer. 31[:33]: “I will give my law in their bowels.” And Rom. 2[:15]: “Who show the work of the law written in their hearts.” This book is figured by the written book which was placed by the precept of God “in an earthen vessel,” that is, in a fragile body, Jer. 32[:14]. But I fear that this book is rarely opened because it is signed with the seal of the devil, Apo. 5[:2-3]: “Who is worthy to open the book, and to loosen the seven seals thereof,” that is, to destroy the seven moral sins through confession, but “no man was able, neither in heaven,” as far as the proud, “nor on earth,” as far as the fallible, “nor under the earth,” as far as the avaricious, “to open the book,” namely in confession on account of the seal of the devil. Wherefore it is said in Isai. 29[:11]: “The vision of all shall be as the words of a book that is sealed, which when they shall deliver to one that is learned, they shall say: Read this: and he shall answer: I cannot, for it is sealed.” But this book sometimes is opened. Wherefore Dan. 7[:10]: “The judgment sat, and the books were opened.”

In our souls are two little pages of the living book and in one part it is written which by us will be made which is called conscience (*scinderesis*). In another part our works write, and this book can be opened and corrected if man wishes, because if not they will be opened at the end before the whole world, Apo. 24[:12]: “And I saw the dead, great and small, standing in the presence of the throne, and the books were opened,” that is, conscience.

Second, sacred Scripture is said to be a book because of its instruction. For we instruct those things which ought to be done, of what ought to be avoided. If we hold on to the instruction of which we will be liberated from evils, Baruc. 4[:1]: “This is the book of the commandments of God ... all they that keep it, shall come to life: but they that have forsaken it, to death.”

Again, concerning this book it is said in Ezech. 2[:9]: “Behold, a hand was sent to me, wherein was a book rolled up ... it was written within and without: and there were written in it lamentations, and canticles, and woe.” According to Gregory, *Super Ezechiele*, homily 9,[[1]](#endnote-1) there was written *Lamentations*, that is, penances of sins, *Songs*, that is the joys of the just, and *Woe*, that is, damnation of the reprobate.

Again, the book of Scripture can be said to be the body of Christ. For parchment is first stretched, scraped, and bound. On each part, it is inscribed, thus it is like Christ, Apo. 5[:1]: “I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne, a book written within and without.” And this can be said the book of eternal possession which up to now was written on papyrus in sign of eternal possession, because if the possession of the thing was preserved, it was preserved for another. Certainly the possession was lost, so it is concerning Christ, as long as he will be with us, Jer. 32[:11, 14]: “And I took the deed of the purchase that was sealed, and the stipulations, and the ratifications with the seals that were on the outside,” and it follows, “Take these writings, this deed of the purchase that is sealed up,” that is, Christ, “and this deed that is open,” in the passion, in the piercing of the hands and side, Apo. 5[:5]: “Behold the lion of the tribe of Juda, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book.” Wherefore he who does not want to himself to be imprisoned by the devil should read often in this book, Isai. 34[:16]: “Search diligently in the book of the Lord and read.”

Again, it is said concerning the book of scripture, Eccle. the last chapter [12:12]: “Of making books there is no end.” Therefore, Seneca says in *Epistula* 38,[[2]](#endnote-2) the multitude of books distracts a man. Therefore, since you cannot read as many as you have, it is enough to have as many as you read, but perhaps you say, “Now I want this book and now that.” But I say to a fastidious stomach there are many things to taste. Read through proven books, and if sometimes you divert to others one is free to return to previous ones. It is similar in nature according to the Philosopher, book 8 *De animalibus,* c. 6,[[3]](#endnote-3) the bee does not go from flower to flower collecting honey but settles down in one flower if he can find in it the matter for honey. So, the studious person ought to do according to Augustine, *Contra Faustum*, book 19 at the end.[[4]](#endnote-4)

¶ Concerning the third book, which is said to be of the creatures, Wis. 13[:5]: “For by the greatness of the beauty, and of the creature, the creator of them may be seen, to be known thereby.” And Rom. 1[:20]: “For the invisible things of God, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.”

¶ Concerning the fourth book, which is of life, Apo. 3[:5]: “He that shall overcome, shall thus be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life.”

Again, Dan. 12[:1]: “And at that time shall thy people be saved, every one that shall be found written in the book” of life. And Luke 10[:20]: “That your names are written in” the book of life. Here says Isidore, book one, *Etymologiarum*,[[5]](#endnote-5) that the names of the Roman soldiers have been written so it may be known, by which they may learn who has fallen in war and how many survived. Thus, God has the names of his soldiers written that they may be known who remain in life and who have gone to their death, in Psal. [138:16]: “In your book all shall be written.” But Exod. 32[:33] it is said, “He that has sinned against me, him will I strike his name out of my book.” The Lord said to Moses according to this it is said, Apo. 20[:12, 9]: “Another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books, according to their works.” And it follows “who was not cast into the pool of fire.” And note this that although the words of someone were found written in the book, if they were deeds they do not correspond, they will not be judged according to the words, but according to deeds as is evident concerning Solomon who wrote books of many books of many gifted words and yet he is believed by many that because of his evil deeds is damned.

Wherefore 4 Kings almost through the whole is said concerning the kings of Juda and the kings of Israel [3 Reg. 15:7]: “Are the rest not written in the book of the words,” etc., as if saying, nothing concerning them is written in the book of life that is worthy of approbation. Wherefore it is said, Apo. 5[:7]: “I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne, a book written within and without, sealed with seven seals.” As commonly the text of the book inside is written openly. Outside those things if they agree, the book is said to be good and true, if they do not agree it is said to be false. So spiritually the book written inside and out is said to be the soul, which is written rightly in the conscience of life, qualitatively in externals, and powerfully in conversation.

1. Gregory, *Homilia in Ezechielem* 1.9.34 (PL 76.885): Lamentationes videlicet, quia in eo scripta est poenitentia peccatorum. Carmen vero, quia ibi praenuntiantur gaudia justorum. Vae autem, quia illic expressa est damnatio reproborum. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Seneca, *Epistulae* 2.3-4 (LCL 75:6-7): Distringit librorum multitudo. Itaque cum legere non possis, quantum habueris, satis est habere, quantum legas. “Sed modo,” inquis, “hunc librum evolvere volo, modo illum.” Fastidientis stomachi est multa degustare; quae ubi varia sunt et diversa, inquinant, non alunt. Probatos itaque semper lege, et si quando ad alios deverti libuerit, ad priores redi.

And in reading of many books is distraction. Accordingly, since you cannot read all the books which you may possess, it is enough to possess only as many books as you can read. “But,” you reply, “I wish to dip first into one book and then into another.” I tell you that it is the sign of an over-nice appetite to toy with many dishes; for when they are manifold and varied, they cloy but do not nourish. So you should always read standard authors; and when you crave a change, fall back upon those whom you read before. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Aristotle, *History of Animals* 5.22 554a11-14 (Barmes 1.873): The bee gathers from every flower that is furnished with a calyx or cup, and from all other flowers that are sweet-tasted, without doing injury to any fruit; and the juices of the flowers it takes up with the organ that resembles a tongue and carries off to the hive. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Augustine, *Contra Faustum* 19.31 (PL 42:369-370): Proinde testimoniis vitae aeternae et resurrectionis mortuorum abundat illa Scriptura: sed hoc nomen, id est regnum coelorum, de nullo inde loco mihi occurrit; hoc enim proprie pertinet ad revelationem Novi Testamenti, quia ea corpora quae terrena fuerant, mutatione illa quam Paulus apertius commemorat, in resurrectione fient spiritualia (I Cor. XV, 42-44), ac per hoc coelestia, in quibus possideamus regnum coelorum. Quod ori ejus etiam nominandum servabatur, [Col.0370] quem regem ad regendos, et sacerdotem ad sanctificandos fideles suos universus ille apparatus veteris Instrumenti in generationibus, factis, dictis, sacrificiis, observationibus, festivitatibus, omnibusque eloquiorum praeconiis, et rebus gestis, et rerum figuris parturiebat esse venturum: qui plenus gratia et veritate (Joan. I, 14), et ad praecepta facienda adjuvando per gratiam, et ad promissa implenda curando per veritatem, venit Legem non solvere, sed adimplere. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Isidore, *Etymologiae* 1.24.1 (PL 82:99-100): militum nomina continebantur propria nota erat apud veteres, qua inspiceretur quanti ex militibus superessent, quantique [Col.0100A] in bello cecidissent. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)