The Philokalia

THE COMPLETE TEXT

compiled by

St Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain

and

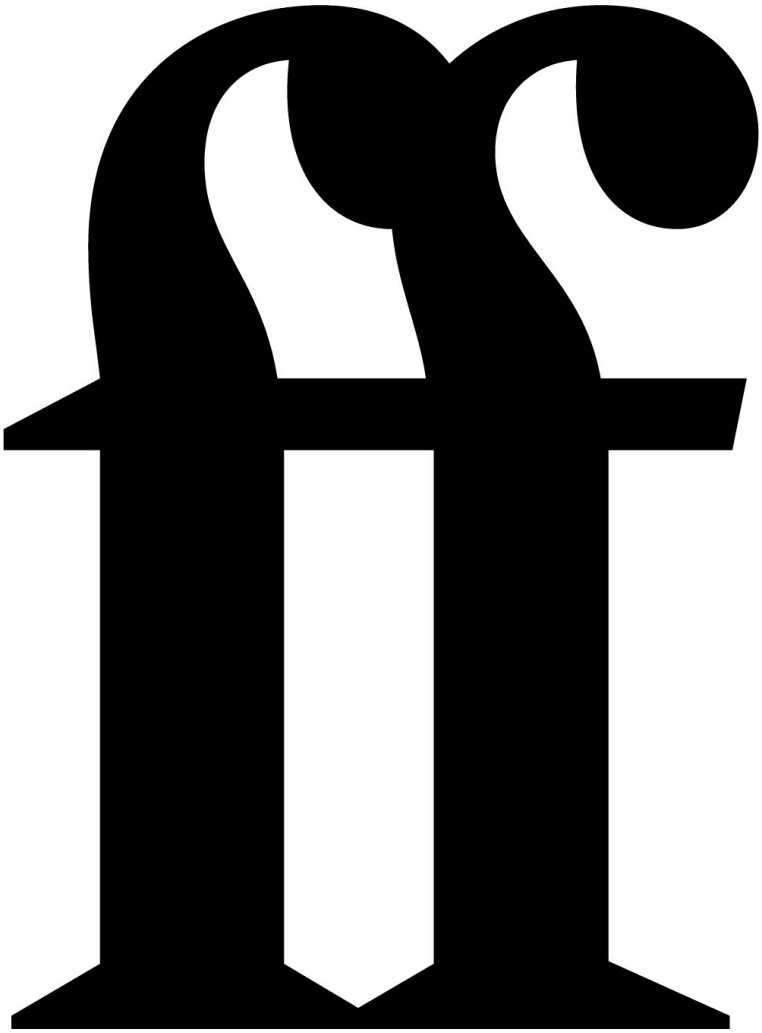
St Makarios of Corinth

VOLUME FIVE

Translated from the Greek and edited by

G. E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard and Kallistos Ware

ff



THE PHILOKALIA

THE COMPLETE TEXT
compiled by
ST NIKODIMOS OF THE HOLY MOUNTAIN
and
ST MAKARIOS OF CORINTH

translated from the Greek
and edited by
G. E. H. PALMER
PHILIP SHERRARD
KALLISTOS WARE

with the assistance of
THE HOLY TRANSFIGURATION MONASTERY
(BROOKLINE)
CONSTANTINE CAVARNOS
BASIL OSBORNE
NORMAN RUSSELL

VOLUME FIVE

faber

CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

NOTE ON BIBLICAL QUOTATIONS AND REFERENCES

ST KALLISTOS AND ST IGNATIOS XANTHOPOULOS
- Introductory Note
- On the Life of Stillness and the Monastic State: One Hundred Texts

THE BLESSED PATRIARCH KALLISTOS
- Introductory Note
- Texts on Prayer

KALLISTOS ANGELIKOUDIS
- Introductory Note
- On the Hesychastic Way of Life
- On Divine Union and the Contemplative Life

A SELECTION FROM THE HOLY FATHERS ON PRAYER AND ATTENTIVENESS

ST SYMEON ARCHBISHOP OF THESSALONIKI
- Introductory Note
- On the Holy and Deifying Prayer

ST MARK OF EPHESOS
- Introductory Note
- On the Words of the Divine Prayer ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me’

AN INTERPRETATION OF ‘LORD HAVE MERCY’

FROM THE LIFE OF ST MAXIMOS KAPSOKALYVITIS

FROM THE LIFE OF ST GREGORY PALAMAS
- That all Christians should Pray Unceasingly

GLOSSARY

ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS

INDEX
- Authors and Sources
- Subjects

COPYRIGHT

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

This, the fifth and final volume of the English translation of the Greek *Philokalia*, has been greatly delayed; and for this delay I alone am responsible. My two fellow editors both died some years ago: G. E. H. Palmer in 1984 and Philip Sherrard in 1995. Thus I bear sole responsibility for the translation, the footnotes, and the brief introductions before each author in this fifth volume. Prior to his death, however, Dr Sherrard undertook a thorough revision of all the material in this concluding volume; and, although I have not always followed his suggestions, his contribution has been of decisive importance.

I wish to express my gratitude to Fr Martin Laird, OSA, and to Professor Garth Fowden, who have rendered very significant help in the preparation of this fifth volume. I would also like to thank Sarah Goodall and Hannah Reinhold for their careful work in typing the text.

Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia
Oxford
September 2019

* * *

Metropolitan Kallistos had completed all his work on the text before his death on 24 August 2022. Eternal Memory!

His executors would like to express their gratitude to Archpriest Andrew Louth for his work on the indexing and final stages of publication and to Dr Julia Konstantinovsky for checking scriptural references.

NOTE ON BIBLICAL QUOTATIONS AND REFERENCES

All Biblical passages have been translated directly from the Greek as given in the original *Philokalia*. This means that quotations from the Old Testament are normally based on the Greek Septuagint text. Where this differs significantly from the Hebrew, we have indicated the fact by adding the Roman numeral LXX after the reference.

Even though we follow the Septuagint text, in giving references we use the numbering and titles of the Hebrew, as reproduced in the Authorized Version (King James Bible), since this is more widely familiar in the Western world. In particular the following differences between Hebrew and the Septuagint should be noted:

NUMBERING OF PSALMS

Hebrew (Authorized Version)	*Greek (Septuagint)*
1–8	1–8
9 and 10	9
11–113	*Subtract one from the number of each Psalm in the Hebrew*
114 and 115	113
116:1–9	114
116:10–16	115
117–146	*Subtract one from the number of each Psalm in the Hebrew*
147:1–11	146
147:12–20	147
148–150	148–150

TITLES OF BOOKS

Hebrew (*Authorized Version*)	*Greek* (*Septuagint*)
1 Samuel	1 Kingdoms
2 Samuel	2 Kingdoms
1 Kings	3 Kingdoms
2 Kings	4 Kingdoms

Where the authors in the *Philokalia* merely refer to a passage or paraphrase it, but do not quote it exactly, ‘cf.’ is added before the reference.

ABBREVIATIONS

P.G. J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*
E.T. English translation

ST KALLISTOS AND ST IGNATIOS XANTHOPOULOS

Introductory Note

The fifth and final volume of the English translation of *The Philokalia* is almost entirely devoted to authors bearing the name of Kallistos. In all probability three distinct persons are involved: Kallistos Xanthopoulos [Patriarch Kallistos II]; Patriarch Kallistos I; and Kallistos Angelikoudis, also known as Kallistos Tilikoudis or Kallistos Kataphygiotis.[1] All three lived in the second half of the fourteenth century, and all three belonged to the hesychast tradition, as upheld by St Gregory of Sinai and St Gregory Palamas.

It is possible that the authors of *The Exact Method and Rule*, Kallistos and Ignatios, were brothers, with Xanthopoulos as their family name; but St Symeon of Thessaloniki, who knew them personally and who is the main source of information concerning them, does not say that they were related, which we would surely expect him to do, had this in fact been the case.[2] Whether brothers or not, they both seem to have been natives of Constantinople, and together they settled in a small *kellion* or hermitage, situated in the city or its immediate environs. They may well have been the founders of this *kellion*, although this is not certain. Kallistos became Ecumenical Patriarch in May 1397, but died shortly after his appointment.[3] At the time of his election he was no more than a simple monk, not as yet ordained to the priesthood. Ignatios survived for a further quarter of a century, dying between 1423 and 1429. Sometimes Kallistos and Ignatios are said to have dwelt on Mount Athos, but this is almost certainly incorrect.

The *Exact Method and Rule* of the Xanthopouloi was probably written during the years 1380–95. It was composed, so we are told, in answer to a request from a ‘brother’ who was pursuing the hesychast way of life and who had asked for a ‘written rule’ (§ 4). It is thus intended for a hermit or solitary

– not for a monk living in a fully organized cenobitic community but for a recluse, who except on special occasions would have been praying on his own and who would have taken his meals by himself. None the less the *Exact Method* has proved to be of great spiritual value to many who are cenobites or, indeed, who are living as lay persons in the 'world'.

A striking feature of the *Exact Method* is the way in which it is full of quotations from Scripture and, more particularly, from previous Patristic authors.[4] The writers who appear most frequently are St John Klimakos and St Isaac the Syrian (Isaac of Nineveh), each of whom is cited more than fifty times. The Evagrian-Maximian 'current' is well represented, with some twenty *testimonia* from 'Neilos' (i.e. usually Evagrios, who is cited only once under his own name) and over twenty-five from St Maximos the Confessor. There are some thirty passages attributed to St John Chrysostom, a number of them taken from a spurious work dealing with the Jesus Prayer entitled *Letter to Monks* (*P.G.* lx, 751–6). St Basil of Caesarea and St Diadochos of Photiki are each quoted on some fifteen occasions, and St Mark the Monk (Marcus Eremita) nine times. Three authorities that somewhat unexpectedly are only quoted infrequently are the *Apophthegmata* or 'Sayings of the Desert Fathers' (seven or eight citations), the Macarian Homilies (six citations), and the writings attributed to Dionysios the Areopagite (four citations).

What is more surprising is the almost complete absence of any writers later than St John of Damaskos (eighth century). Ilias the Presbyter, *alias* 'the Ekdikos' (? twelfth century), appears seven times, and there is one quotation each from the *Vita* of St Paul of Latros (tenth century), from Symeon Metaphrastes (tenth–eleventh century), and from Peter of Damaskos (? eleventh–twelfth century). But there is nothing at all from St Symeon the New Theologian (tenth–eleventh century). The only fourteenth-century text represented in the *Exact Method* is the treatise *On Watchfulness and the Guarding of the Heart* by Nikiphoros the Monk, which is quoted on one occasion, a long passage dealing with the 'physical technique', to be used in combination with the Jesus Prayer. St Gregory of Sinai and St Gregory Palamas, however, are never once mentioned by name at any point in the *Exact Method*. What are we to make of this strange silence, in a treatise generally so full of quotations? The omission of the two Gregories cannot be other than deliberate.

In a broad sense, the *Exact Method* of the Xanthopouloi is undoubtedly a work conceived and executed in a Palamite spirit. The statements about the

divine light of Tabor conform exactly to the teaching of Palamas, and the phrase ‘uncreated grace’ is typically Palamite (§ 50). Yet the Xanthopouloi nowhere allude directly to the Hesychast Controversy of 1337–51, and there is likewise no explicit reference in the *Exact Method* to the Palamite distinction between the divine essence and the divine energies. It would seem that the Xanthopouloi have intentionally distanced themselves from the impassioned confrontation that dominated the middle years of the fourteenth century in Byzantium. Writing, as they are, a generation after the end of this dispute, in a work that has no polemical purpose but is intended as guidance for a recluse, they prefer to speak in a serene and eirenic spirit, avoiding controversy and partisan invective. That is doubtless the reason why they appeal almost exclusively to ancient rather than to recent authorities. This absence of controversial *animus* certainly enhances the appeal of the *Exact Method* to the modern reader.

While relying for the most part on previous writers, Kallistos and Ignatios do not underestimate the importance of living oral tradition and of personal experience. Thus in their analysis of the difference between true and false visions they observe (speaking in the singular, contrary to their usual practice): ‘Since, however, I heard about the matters mentioned above from a living voice, you too will hear about them in the same way at the right time. But now is not the right time’ (§ 63). In particular, according to Symeon of Thessaloniki, when they speak of the vision of divine light, they are referring to something that they had themselves experienced:

> They received the first-fruits of the divine light even in this present life, purified as they were through their contemplation and their actions, and they were granted the divine illumination revealed on the Mountain [Tabor], just as the Apostles were (cf. Matt. 17:1–8). This was clearly witnessed by many persons;[5] for their faces were seen to shine like Stephen’s (cf. Acts 6:15), since grace was poured out not only in their hearts but in their visible appearance. Thus they also resembled the great Moses (cf. Exod. 34:29–35; 2 Cor. 3:7), and their outer form shone like the sun, as those who saw them have testified. And so, having undergone this beatific suffering and having come to know these things by experience, they speak to us plainly about the divine light that is God’s natural energy and grace.[6]

This description of the bodily transfiguration of the Xanthopouloi calls to mind the account by Nicolas Motovilov, over four hundred years later, of the transformation by uncreated light experienced by St Seraphim of Sarov as he and Motovilov talked together in the winter forest.

Despite the abundance of quotations, the *Exact Method* of Kallistos and Ignatios is not merely an anthology, but it presents a distinctive and specific

understanding of the spiritual journey. It is noteworthy that the practical teaching about prayer and the daily programme of the hesychast, which occupies the greater part of the *Exact Method*, is set within a firmly sacramental framework. The Xanthopouloi begin their treatise by speaking about baptism. The fundamental aim of the ascetic and mystical life, they state, is nothing else than the rediscovery and activation of the grace of the Holy Spirit that was conferred upon us initially as a free gift in the sacrament of baptism (§§ 3–7); in our beginning is our end. Then at the conclusion of the *Exact Method* they speak about the eucharist: the reception of Holy Communion by the hesychast, they insist, should be nothing less than 'continual', and by this they evidently mean daily communion (§§ 91–92). In this way, for the Xanthopouloi as for their contemporary St Nicolas Kavasilas, life in Christ signifies precisely life in the sacraments. They are firmly convinced that there can be no genuinely Christian spirituality that is not founded upon the sacramental mysteries.

Along with the sacraments, a central place in the teaching of the Xanthopouloi is occupied by the Jesus Prayer. 'The beginning of every work acceptable to God', they affirm, 'is the invocation with faith of the saving name of our Lord Jesus Christ' (§ 8). They envisage that this 'invocation' will normally take the form 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me'. They do not propose the expanded version that was coming into use in the fourteenth century, with the addition of the words 'the sinner' at the end. Within the Jesus Prayer they discern a cyclical movement of ascent and return. As we say 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God', our intellect 'reaches up with all its being' to Christ the Saviour; then, as we end 'have mercy on me', it 'retraces its course and returns to itself' (§ 48).

The Xanthopouloi recognize that some people may find the formula indicated above, 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me', to be unduly long, and they may prefer to recite only the name 'Jesus' on its own (§ 50). In another text, not found in the *Exact Method* itself, they suggest that on occasion the hesychast may simply say 'My Jesus':

> The holy energy wells up from the heart, seizing hold, as it were, of the heart's affection and stirring the intellect from its very depths. It becomes so closely united to the divine energy itself that it cries repeatedly: 'My Jesus! My Jesus!' For as soon as the heart is opened up, this is all that the intellect cries out: 'My Jesus!' The intellect is incapable of saying the whole formula, 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me', because of the frequent openings of the heart; and it can only say 'My Jesus!' If anyone claims that while in this state he pronounces the whole prayer, he is deceiving himself; for when, as we have said, the intellect becomes attached to the divine energy and penetrates into the innermost depths of the heart, it is no longer able to

cry out anything but ‘My Jesus!’[7]

The use of the short phrase ‘My Jesus!’, as this passage makes clear, is not recommended by the Xanthopouloi as a normal practice, but it is something that happens to the hesychast only at exceptional moments, more or less spontaneously, when he is engulfed by the conscious experience of ‘divine energy’ and has approached close to a state of ecstasy. Similarly, when referring to the invocation of the name ‘Jesus’ on its own, they say that this is appropriate for ‘those who are advanced and perfect in Christ’. Those who are as yet ‘beginners’ should use the full form (§ 50).

The *Exact Method* displays in general a spirit of balance and moderation. Our body is not to be maltreated by excessive asceticism: ‘The divine fathers taught us to kill the passions, not the body’ (§ 34). If it is not a fast day, the hesychast is allowed two meals a day, accompanied by wine (§§ 31–34). In the case of illness, the rules of fasting are to be modified (§ 34). As much as five to six hours of sleep are permitted at night (§ 25), as well as a further hour in the daytime during the summer (§ 37). Our aim is to attain dispassion (*apatheia*), state the Xanthopouloi, but in this present life this can never mean total immunity from temptation: ‘Dispassion consists, not in no longer feeling the passions, but in no longer accepting them’ (§ 86). In cases of doubt, we should rely on the counsel of our *geron* or spiritual father (§§ 14–15).

‘A work … full of peace, devotion and a rare spiritual beauty’: so Fr Lev Gillet, ‘The Monk of the Eastern Church’, describes the *Exact Method*. ‘Even today, to those called by God to adopt the [Jesus] Prayer as their own particular path and in a position to organize their life around it, one cannot recommend a better guide – with some necessary adaptations – or at least a better imitation.’[8]

---

1 On the identity of these three, see Antonio Rigo, ‘Callistos Angelicude Cataphygiota Meleniceota e l’esicasmo byzantino del XIV secolo. Una nota prosopografica’, in N. Kauchtschischwili and others (ed.), *Nil Sorskij e l’esicasmo* (Bose, 1995), pp. 251–68; Kallistos Ware, *A Fourteenth-Century Manual of Hesychast Prayer: The Century of St Kallistos and St Ignatios Xanthopoulos* (Toronto, 1995), pp. 6–9.

2 Symeon of Thessaloniki, *On Prayer*295 (*P.G.* clv, 544A–D). On Symeon, see below, pp. 313–16.

3 Kallistos Xanthopoulos was the second Ecumenical Patriarch of that name during the fourteenth century. He is not to be confused with his better-known predecessor Kallistos I, who died in 1363 (see below, p. 139).

4 Quotations are, wherever possible, identified in the footnotes to our translation. Use has been made especially of the article by Antonio Rigo, 'Une *Summa* ou un Florilège commenté pour la vie spirituelle? L'oeuvre ΜΕΘΟΔΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΚΑΝΩΝ de Calliste et Ignace Xanthopouloi', in Peter van Deun and Caroline Macé (ed.), *Encyclopedic Trends in Byzantium*, Proceedings of the International Conference held in Leuven, 6–8 May 2009, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 212 (Leuven/Paris/Walpole, MA, 2011), pp. 387–437, especially pp. 400–22.

5 Presumably Symeon himself was among the 'many persons' who witnessed the bodily transfiguration of the Xanthopouloi.

6 Symeon of Thessaloniki, *On Prayer* 295 (*P.G.* clv, 544CD).

7 This text is to be found in David Balfour, *Saint Gregory the Sinaïte: Discourse on the Transfiguration*(offprint from the journal *Theologia*: Athens, 1983), pp. 147–8 (translation modified).

8 *The Jesus Prayer* (Crestwood, NY, 1987), pp. 61–3.

On the Life of Stillness and the Monastic State: One Hundred Texts

1. *An accurate treatise and rule, written with the help of God and illustrated with testimonies from the saints, concerning those who choose to live in stillness and in the monastic state, explaining their way of life, their customs and observances, and the many great blessings which stillness confers on those who pursue it with true intelligence. The present work is divided into a hundred chapters. The preface, which constitutes the first chapter, describes the divine and supranatural gift and grace that dwells within the faithful through the Holy Spirit.*

We who have been taught by God (cf. John 6:45; 1 Thess. 4:9), and in whom the new law, inscribed ineffably in our hearts (cf. 2 Cor. 3:2–3), shines more brightly than a beacon, are guided by the bountiful and most righteous Spirit, becoming children and 'heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ' (Rom. 8:17). For this reason, as Scripture tells us, we must live an angelic life and must not in any way be separated from Him who taught us, 'Know the Lord.' But from our earliest infancy we have turned aside from goodness and have lapsed into evil, and so we are now subject to the treachery and ruthless tyranny of the wily Belial. In this way we have become inclined most wickedly to run away from the saving commandments that make us godlike, casting ourselves headlong from the precipices that destroy our souls and, what is most lamentable, thinking and acting in a way destructive to our own selves. As the Bible says, 'There is no one who has understanding, no one who seeks God' (cf. Ps. 14:2); 'we have all gone astray and become useless' (cf. Ps. 14:3). Since, then, collectively we are all called 'flesh' (cf. Gen. 6:3), and are deprived of light-bringing divine grace, we need the encouragement and help of each other to turn us towards what is good.

2. *The treatise that follows was written in answer to a query put to us by a fellow monk. It also seeks to explain faithfully the precepts of the Fathers.*

Since you have a strong desire to search the divine and life-giving Scriptures, as the Lord exhorts us to do (cf. John 5:39), and to be initiated in a reliable way by us, useless though we are, you have frequently asked for direction and a written rule for your own benefit, and perhaps for that of others too, as you yourself say. Though we did not wish to do so earlier, we have now

decided that, with God's help, we must set aside our habitual indolence and, out of love for you and for your profit, must satisfy your praiseworthy desire. In view particularly of your zeal for what is good and of your assiduous ascetic practice, we accept you as our spiritual and dearly beloved child. But over and above this we fear the judgment with which God in a terrifying manner threatens all who hide their talent (cf. Matt. 25:25–30). In addition, we are fulfilling the injunction which our fathers and spiritual instructors have laid down for us, as they did for others beloved by God; for we place our trust in their teachings. May God, then, the Father of love and unfailing provider of universal bounty, place in our mouths appropriate words, slow and hesitant of speech though we are (cf. Exod. 4:10); for He has often inspired even dumb animals with speech for the benefit of those who hear them (cf. Num. 22:28). And may He give to you and to all who happen to read this work, each according to his understanding, the ability to absorb wisely and intelligently what is here written, and to advance without deviation upon the path that He desires. For without Him, as Scripture says, we can do nothing that is useful or that brings us to salvation (cf. John 15:5). For, 'unless the Lord build the house, those who build it labour in vain' (Ps. 127:1).

3. *In every undertaking the aim or purpose has to be considered first. The purpose of this work is to discover what is the foundation of our spiritual life.*

Every undertaking is determined by its purpose. Our purpose is to explain to the best of our ability all that leads to your spiritual growth, while your purpose is sincerely to live your life according to what we write. To start with, therefore, we must examine the ground on which the whole building that we envisage, structured according to Christ's precepts, is to be built, so that we may first give it a proper foundation. Then, in due time or, rather, when we have been blessed with abundant help from above, we will roof the spiritual temple in a way that is appropriate.

4. *The starting point in every undertaking that seeks to please God is to live our life according to the Saviour's commandments. The final aim is to return to the perfect grace of the holy and life-giving Spirit that was bestowed on us originally through divine baptism.*

To put it concisely, the starting point in every undertaking consonant with

God's will is that we endeavour in every way and with all our strength to lead our lives according to the precepts laid down in all the Saviour's deifying commandments. The final aim is, through keeping these commandments, to recover the gift bestowed on us originally from on high in the sacred font, thus achieving spiritual rebirth and perfect re-creation through grace. We can put this in another way by saying that this means to discard the old Adam with his activities and desires, and to clothe ourselves with the new spiritual Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Col. 3:9–10). St Paul refers to this when he writes, 'My children, with whom I am again in labour until Christ is formed within you …' (Gal. 4:19); and, 'All of you who have been baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ' (Gal. 3:27).

5. *On what grace is and how we can acquire it; and on which things sully it and which things purify it again.*

What grace is and how we can acquire it, and what sullies it and what purifies it again, is something we can learn from St John Chrysostom, whose soul and tongue are brighter that any gold. For he writes, 'What is the meaning of the words "When we behold the glory of the Lord we are transformed into the very image of that glory" (2 Cor. 3:18)? The sense of this was more clearly evident at a time when miracles were being worked. But even now it is not difficult to see what it means if one has the eyes of faith. For at the time of our baptism our soul shines forth more brightly than the sun because it has been cleansed by the Spirit. Not only do we gaze at the glory of God but we also receive from that glory a certain radiance. For when pure silver is illumined by a sunbeam, it in its turn sends out rays, not only from its own nature but also from the brilliant light of the sun. Similarly, when a soul has been purified and has become brighter than any silver, it receives rays from the glory of the Spirit which illumine its own innate glory; and these rays in their intensity truly reflect the working of the Lord who is the Spirit.'[1]

And a little further on St John Chrysostom writes, 'Would you like me to demonstrate this to you more vividly by taking as examples the Apostles themselves? Consider Paul, whose clothing worked miracles (cf. Acts 19:12), and Peter, whose shadow was endowed with power (cf. Acts 5:15). Their clothing and their shadow would not have had this effect had they not borne within themselves the royal image and had they not been unapproachable in their dazzling splendour. For royal apparel provokes fear even in robbers.

Would you like an example of how this glory also shines through the body? When the onlookers gazed intently at Stephen's face, they thought they were seeing the face of an angel (cf. Acts 6:15). But all this is as nothing in comparison with the glory that shines within. For what Moses once showed on his face (cf. Exod. 34:30) such men have experienced in their souls, only in a much greater degree. For the glory of Moses was more sensory, whereas that of Stephen was incorporeal. And just as sparks fly from fiery bodies onto neighbouring objects and transmit their brightness to them, so something similar also happens to the faithful. Those who experience this are thereby estranged from earthly concerns and imagine (alas) that they dwell in the heavenly realms. But in this life it is good to sigh bitterly, because whatever the state of the spiritual excellence we may have attained, we do not yet possess true knowledge of the realities communicated to us, since we quickly lose contact with what has been revealed to us and become distracted by sensible things. For this awful and ineffable glory remains in us for only one or two days. Then we extinguish it by letting in the storm of worldly concerns, thereby obscuring its rays with the density of the clouds.'[2]

And again elsewhere St John Chrysostom writes, 'The bodies of those who live in harmony with God will be clothed with such radiant glory that the light will be too strong for human eyes. God has granted us certain faint signs and traces of these things in both the Old and the New Testaments. In the former, Moses' face once shone with such radiant glory that the Israelites could not look at him (cf. Exod. 34:30). In the New Testament Christ's face shone much more brightly than that of Moses (cf. Matt. 17:2).'[3]

Have you harkened to these words of the Spirit? Have you understood the power of the mystery? Have you grasped the nature of the birth-pangs whereby in the sacred font we experience in ourselves a total spiritual re-creation? Do you appreciate how great are its fruits, its fulfilment and rewards? Do you realize that it depends on us whether this supranatural grace flows weakly or strongly within us – whether, that is to say, we obscure it or make it manifest, so far as this is within our power? What obscures grace in us is the tempest of worldly concerns and the murkiness of the passions to which they give birth. They overwhelm us like a hurricane or raging torrent and engulf our soul. They do not allow it to fulfil the purpose for which it was created, and to breathe or contemplate what is truly good and blessed. On the contrary, tossing and tormenting the soul in the swell and reek of sensual pleasure, they drag it under and plunge it into darkness. On the other hand,

whatever is engendered by the deifying commandments in those who live spiritually and not according to their fallen selves, as Scripture says, 'Live spiritually and do not gratify the craving of your fallen self' (Gal. 5:16), all this is profitable and leads us to salvation; like a ladder it takes us upward, even to the topmost rung of all: love, which is God (cf. 1 John 4:8).

6. *In holy baptism we receive divine grace as a free gift. We obscure this gift with the passions, but then we cleanse it again by keeping the commandments.*

In the divine womb – that is, in the sacred font – we receive divine grace as a free and entirely perfect gift. Subsequently, through the misuse of transitory things and through anxiety about the affairs of this present life, we have wrongfully covered over this supranatural splendour with the murk of the passions. Yet through repentance and the fulfilment of the deifying commandments we can uncover its surpassing radiance once more and repossess it, beholding its manifestation with the utmost clarity. The degree to which this grace is made manifest in each particular person depends on the fervour of his faith and, still more, on the help and good favour of the Lord Jesus Christ, as St Mark says, 'Since Christ is perfect God, He bestows the perfect grace of the Holy Spirit on those who are baptized. This grace does not receive any addition from us, but it is disclosed and made manifest within us according to the degree to which we keep the commandments. So it increases our faith, until "we all attain the unity of the faith and the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). Thus, if we contribute anything after we have been reborn in Him, this is something that comes from Him, and was already hidden within us by Him.'[4]

7. *To live according to God we have to obey all the commandments. The greatest part of this task is to determine which of these commandments take precedence over the others and are, so to speak, more comprehensive.*

The starting point and root of this whole undertaking, as we have said, is to live according to the saving commandments; its end point and fruition is the recovery of the perfect grace of the Spirit that was originally conferred upon us through baptism. Even though it is buried by the passions, this grace continues to dwell within us, for Scripture says that the gifts of God are

irrevocable (cf. Rom. 11:29), and it is once more revealed through observance of the deifying commandments. We should therefore do everything we can to fulfil all these commandments, so that the Spirit can manifest Himself within us in all His purity, and so that we can perceive Him with the utmost clarity. ‘Thy law’, the blessed David says to God, ‘is a lamp to my feet and a light to my paths’ (Ps. 119:105.LXX). He also says, ‘The commandment of the Lord is far-shining, enlightening the eyes’ (Ps. 19:8.LXX), and, ‘I directed my steps in accordance with all Thy commandments’ (Ps. 119:128.LXX). The disciple who rested on Christ’s breast writes, ‘All who fulfil His commandments dwell in Him, and He in them’ (1 John 3:24), and, ‘His commandments are not burdensome’ (1 John 5:3). And the Saviour Himself says, ‘He who loves Me keeps and fulfils My commandments; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him …. And if a person loves Me, he will fulfil My teaching, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode in him’ (John 14:21, 23); and, ‘He who does not love Me does not fulfil my teachings’ (John 14:24). We must, however, devote the greatest part of our labour especially to those among the commandments which are pre-eminent and most comprehensive and which, as it were, give birth to the rest. For in this way we may unfalteringly succeed in doing, with God’s help, what we have set out to do, namely, to make a good beginning and to attain the goal of our desire, the manifestation within us of the Spirit.

8. *The starting point of every holy work is the invocation with faith of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, together with the peace and love that issue from it.*

The starting point of every holy work is the invocation with faith of the saving name of our Lord Jesus Christ. He Himself made this clear when He said, ‘Without Me you can do nothing’ (John 15:5). This invocation is to be accompanied by peace – for prayer, says Scripture, must be ‘without anger and rankling thoughts’ (1 Tim. 2:8), and it is also to be accompanied by love, for ‘God is love, and he who dwells in love, dwells in God, and God in him’ (1 John 4:16). Peace and love not only make this prayer acceptable but are born from the prayer itself; they issue from it like twin divine rays and so they grow and are made perfect.

9. *Through each of these and through the three together an abundance of all God's blessings is poured out lavishly upon us.*

From these, or rather, through each of these and through all three together, through the invocation of the name, peace and love, an abundance of God's blessings is poured out plentifully upon us and inundates us. For through the invocation in faith of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ we assuredly hope to receive mercy and the true life that is hidden in Him (cf. Col. 3:3). These well up within us as from an eternal and divine spring, when in a state of purity we call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in our inward heart. Through the peace 'that surpasses all understanding and has no limits' (cf. Phil. 4:7; Is. 9:7), we are granted harmony with God and with one another. And through love, the glory of which is incomparable because it is the fulfilment and epitome of the law and the prophets (cf. Matt. 22:40) and because God Himself is called love (cf. 1 John 4:8), we are wholly united with God; for, through God's righteousness and through the adoption by grace wondrously wrought in us by love, we are set free from our sinful state. 'For love', says Scripture, 'will cover a multitude of sins' (1 Peter 4:8); and, 'Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things; love never fails' (1 Cor. 13:7–8).

10. *Our Lord Jesus Christ at the time of His saving passion and also after His resurrection left these precepts to His disciples as His parting commandments and as a divine inheritance.*

When our all-loving and most dear Lord Jesus Christ willingly embraced His passion for our sake, and likewise when He was seen by the Apostles after the resurrection, and also when He was about to return to the one who is His Father by nature and ours by grace, then like a true and loving parent He left these precepts to all His disciples as His parting commandments and as a gentle consolation. They constitute sweet and sure pledges or, rather, an irrevocable inheritance given by God. When His saving passion was near at hand, He said to His disciples, 'Whatever you ask in My name I will bring about' (John 14:13); and, 'I tell you in all truth that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have not asked for anything in My name; ask, and you will receive, so that your joy maybe complete' (John 16:23–24); and, 'On that day you will ask in My name'

(John 16:26). Again, after the resurrection He said, ‘Those who believe will perform these miracles: in My name they will cast out devils; they will speak with new tongues’, and so on (Mark 16:17–18). The disciple who rested on Christ’s breast adds the following, ‘And in the presence of His disciples Jesus performed many other miracles, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and so that believing you might have life through His name’ (John 20:30–31). The divine Paul says, ‘At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow’ (Phil. 2:10), and so on. And in the Acts of the Apostles the following is recorded, ‘Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Be this known to you all, and to all the people of Israel; it is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you fully healed”’ (Acts 4:8, 10). And just after that it is said, ‘There is no salvation in anyone else, for no other name is given to men whereby we must be saved’ (Acts 4:12). And again the Saviour says, ‘All power in heaven and on earth is given to Me’ (Matt. 28:18). In addition, prior to His crucifixion our Lord the God-Man said to His Apostles, ‘Peace I leave with you, My peace I give you’ (John 14:27); ‘These things I have spoken to you so that in Me you might have peace’ (John 16:33); ‘This is My commandment, that you love one another’ (John 15:12); ‘If you have love one to another, all will know that you are My disciples’ (John 13:35); ‘As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you; continue in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, even as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love’ (John 15:9–10). Moreover, it is evident that after the resurrection Jesus at various times revealed Himself to His disciples and often bestowed peace on them, saying ‘Peace to you’ (John 20:19). And to Peter, to whom the Lord Jesus Christ entrusted the leadership of the disciples, showing that the care of His flock was a kind of reward for Peter’s burning love towards Him, He said three times, ‘If you love Me, Peter, more than the others do, feed My sheep’ (cf. John 21:15–18). It could pertinently be said that through the three remarkable things mentioned above, the invocation of the name, peace and love, there are generated three other exceptional qualities, namely, the purification, illumination and perfection of the soul.

11. *All the virtues are interwoven with these qualities.*

Should you examine things carefully and with clear vision, you will find that the whole royal robe of the virtues, incorruptible and divinely wrought, hangs from and is interwoven with this threefold and, as it were, unbreakable cord (cf. Eccles. 4:12). For a life lived according to God is like a precious chain, a necklace of variegated gold, since each virtue fittingly depends on the next and all are joined together in a single unity. Thus they all contribute to the one task of deifying whoever cultivates them sincerely throughout his life. In this way, like bonds and links, they strengthen the faith and, we may also say, the hope and humility with which such a person repeats the saving invocation of the beloved name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and they enrich him with peace and love. These three form a thrice-perfect life-giving tree truly planted by God; and he who plucks its fruit at the right time and eats of it in an appropriate way will reap not death, like the first man, but indestructible and eternal life (cf. Gen. 2:17).

12. *The gift of the Holy Spirit and His coming to the faithful through God the Father is bestowed in Christ Jesus and in His holy name.*

The gift of the Holy Spirit and His coming to the faithful through God the Father is most certainly bestowed in Christ Jesus and in His holy name. As the divine Lord Jesus Christ, the lover of souls, Himself said to the Apostles, 'It is to your profit that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Paraclete will not come to you. But if I depart I will send Him to you' (John 16:7); and, 'When the Paraclete comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father …' (John 15:26); and again, 'The Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name …' (John 14:26).

13. *Our Holy Fathers, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit who dwells within them, rightly declare that we should pray to our Lord Jesus Christ and seek mercy from Him.*

With great wisdom, then, and through the guidance of the Holy Spirit who dwells within them, our illustrious guides and teachers instruct us to pray in the Lord and unwaveringly to seek mercy from Him, putting this above every other good work and pursuit. This is the teaching that they give to all of us, but especially to those who have chosen to enter into the struggle for deifying stillness, who devote themselves to God, separate themselves from worldly

preoccupations, and live reflectively in stillness. Moreover, they teach us to make His all-holy and most sweet name our constant study and meditation, to keep this name unceasingly in our heart and in our intellect and on our lips, to breathe and live and sleep and wake up, to move and eat and drink, in this name and with it, and, in a word, to try to do everything in a like manner. For just as without this name everything evil assails us or, rather, nothing benefits us, so when it is present within us everything hostile is expelled, we lack nothing that is good, and there is nothing that we cannot achieve. As our Lord Himself says, 'When a person dwells in Me and I in him, he produces an abundance of fruit, for without Me you can do nothing' (John 15:5). Now that we, unworthy as we are, have called in faith on this reality and name which, being above every reality and name (cf. Phil. 2:9), is to be feared and venerated by all creation, and now that we have fully spread the sails of our discourse concerning this name, we can proceed as follows.

14. *If you wish to follow the path of stillness without going astray, as the Lord ordains, you must first of all decide to live in total obedience combined with total renunciation.*

We are writing to you in the name of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who said, 'I am the light, the life and the truth, the way and the door that leads to God the Father' (cf. John 8:12; 14:6; 10:7), and, 'Whoever enters by way of Me will be saved, and will go in and out and will find pasture' (John 10:9), that is, salvation. Listen, then, attentively to what we say and we will give you true counsel.

First of all, together with the total renunciation enjoined by sacred Scripture, you must embrace in all sincerity a life of complete obedience. Do your utmost, that is to say, to find a reliable guide and teacher. Such he will be if what he says accords with the testimony of sacred Scripture; if he is imbued with the Spirit so that his life is consistent with his words; if his mind is lofty but he is humble in disposition and virtuous in other ways; and if as a true Christian teacher he transmits to you the counsel given by God. When you have found him and have attached yourself to him in body and spirit like a loving son to his true father, follow with complete fidelity what he tells you to do, and look on him as if he were Christ Himself rather than an ordinary man. Expel all disbelief and doubt, yes, even your own point of view and wishes, and in this way follow in the footsteps of your teacher simply and

uncritically, so that your own conscience becomes a mirror reflecting with clear assurance your unwavering and perfect obedience to your initiator. And if the devil, hostile to all goodness, should ever sow any rebellious thoughts in your mind, shun them as you would fornication or fire and skilfully rebut his deceitful ploys. Say to him, 'It is not the disciple who guides his master, but the master who guides his disciple'; and, 'I have not accepted responsibility for my elder, but he has for me'; and, 'I am not his judge, but he is my judge.' These and other similar statements accord with what St John Klimakos writes.[5]

If you have made a definitive decision to tear up the catalogue of your sins (cf. Col. 2:14) and to enrol yourself among those who are being saved, there is no sounder way of life than that of obedience. According to St Paul, when on our account the Lord Jesus, the Son of God and our God, dwelt as man among us and with great wisdom fulfilled the Father's purpose, this was the way that He followed; and through it as man He carried out the Father's will and was granted the crown of victory. For 'He humbled Himself,' writes St Paul, 'and was obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross. On this account God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name that is above every name' (Phil. 2:8–9). Who, then, if he aspires to attain the glory of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ and to receive the Father's blessing, would arrogantly, not to say ignorantly, refuse to follow the same path as our guide and teacher Jesus Christ? For the disciple who seeks to be like his teacher, just as an image reflects its perfect archetype, must with all the strength of his soul model himself on the life and actions of his mentor and must make every effort to imitate him daily. Moreover, speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ, Scripture says, 'He was obedient to His father and mother' (cf. Luke 2:51). And the Saviour Himself has told us, 'I came not to be served but to serve' (cf. Matt. 20:28).

But if someone chooses to live in a different way, pleasing himself and following his own will, without having a guide, can such a person be right in supposing that he is living a divine life in the correct manner? Surely not. For he does nothing of the kind, being far wide of the mark. St John Klimakos says, 'Just as the one who lacks a guide easily loses his way, so he who follows the monastic path while relying on his own judgment easily perishes, even if he possesses all the wisdom in the world.'[6] That is why most, if not all, of those who are not in obedience and who proceed without guidance, sow with labour and sweat, dreaming of a rich harvest, but in the event they

reap very little. Some, alas, gather tares instead of wheat, because they act, as we have said, according to their own self-will and so as to please themselves. Nothing is worse than this, as St John Klimakos testifies when he writes, 'If you have decided to strip yourself for the arena of spiritual struggle, to shoulder Christ's yoke, to place your burden on the back of your elder, to sell the contract of self-love and to purchase in exchange the charter of freedom, to swim across this great sea borne up on the arms of others – if you have striven to do all this, you should be aware that you have chosen to tread a short, rough path wherein there lies but a single wrong turning, that of following your own self-will. If you reject this wrong turning once and for all, as far as concerns everything that you imagine good, spiritual and in accordance with God's will, you will have reached your journey's end before you have even started. For to be under obedience is to distrust yourself throughout your whole life in regard to all the good actions that you seek to undertake.'[7]

If, then, you have grasped all this with understanding and have chosen to live a life of heavenly stillness, that 'good portion which cannot be taken away' (Luke 10:42), follow in the manner you have been shown the guidelines so excellently laid down for you. First of all, readily embrace obedience, and then stillness in the same way. For just as the practice of the virtues is the gateway to contemplation, so obedience is the gateway to stillness. Do not try to shift the landmarks which the Fathers, as Scripture says, have established (cf. Prov. 22:28). And, 'Woe to him who is alone' (Eccles. 4:10). In this way, if you start by laying good foundations you will with time, and through the master-artistry of the Spirit, set in place a splendid roof. For, as they say, when the beginning is slipshod the whole thing will be a failure, and, conversely, when the beginning is sound the whole edifice will be well ordered and rightly constructed, even though it sometimes happens that the opposite is the case. Which way things go depends, of course, upon our own choice and decision.

15. *The signs of true obedience to which we must hold fast if we are to be unfailingly obedient.*

Since this whole question of the life of obedience is many-sided and complex, and since consequently those who engage in such a life do so in different ways, we ought to provide you with some basic guidelines, as it

were, which you can keep by you as a rule and an unfailing standard, and so conduct your life in a holy way. This is what we advise.

It seems to us that to be truly obedient you must unquestionably possess the following five virtues. The first is faith. That is to say, you must have a pure and sincere faith in your spiritual father, to such a degree that you think that in him you see Christ and are under obedience to Christ. As the Lord Jesus Himself says, 'Whoever listens to you listens to Me; and whoever rejects you rejects Me; and whoever rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me' (Luke 10:16). As St John Klimakos states, 'Any action not based on faith is a sin.'[8]

The second virtue that you have to possess is truth. That is to say, you must be truthful in what you do and in what you say, and must scrupulously confess your evil thoughts. For 'the starting point of Thy words', says the Psalmist, 'is truth' (Ps. 119:160.LXX); and, 'The Lord requires truth' (Ps. 31:4.LXX). And Christ Himself says, 'I am the truth' (John 14:6), and He is indeed called absolute truth.

The third virtue is the renunciation of one's own will. It is well known that it is damaging for a person under obedience to insist upon his own will. He should always cut it off voluntarily, that is, before he is forced to do so by his spiritual father.

The fourth virtue is never to be contentious or quarrelsome, since contention and quarrelling have no place among the devout. St Paul writes, 'Should someone be quarrelsome, we have no such practice, nor do the churches of God' (1 Cor. 11:16). If such things are simply forbidden to all Christians in general, how much more so they are to monks, who have promised scrupulous obedience in accordance with God's will. Contention and quarrelling, we are told, spring from a mistrustful and arrogant state of mind. 'An arrogant monk', so it has been said, 'is aggressively contentious.'[9] The contrary is also true, namely, that not to be contentious and quarrelsome denotes a trustful and humble disposition.

The fifth virtue which you have to possess is to make an exact and sincere confession to your superior; for when we were tonsured we made a promise, as if standing before the dread judgment seat of Christ in the presence of God and the holy angels, that to confess the secrets of our hearts would be the starting point and final aim for our other promises and vows to the Lord. The holy David writes, 'I said, in self-accusation I will confess my iniquities before the Lord; and Thou hast forgiven the guilt of my sin' (Ps. 32:5). As St

John Klimakos says, ‘Wounds shown to the doctor do not get worse but are healed.’[10]

A person who wisely and consciously practises these five virtues that we have described should be assured that he will experience a foretaste, as it were, of the blessed life of the righteous. These virtues constitute the characteristics of holy obedience; they are, so to speak, its root or foundation. Now listen to what may be described as its branches and fruit, or its roof.

As again St John Klimakos states, from obedience comes humility; from humility, discrimination; from discrimination, spiritual insight; and from insight, foreknowledge.[11] This last is brought about by God alone and is given by Him as an exceptional, supranatural gift to those who attain a state of blessedness and are deified. In addition to this you should also be aware that the growth of humility in you depends on the degree of obedience that you have attained; the growth of discrimination depends on your humility; and so it is successively with the other qualities. You should do your utmost to advance without stumbling along the path of obedience, for in this way you will assuredly attain the qualities to which it gives access. And you should know that if you stumble before completing the first lap of obedience, you will not worthily finish the rest of the course on which you have set out, namely, the Christ-like way of life, nor will you receive the victor’s crown. Therefore, let obedience, together with the characteristics which we have said belong to it, be your guide, like the mark on which sailors keep their eye in order to steer a steady course. By keeping it constantly in view you will be able to cross the great sea of virtues and thus find anchorage in the haven of dispassion. If some storm or tempest should come upon you, this will be caused by your disobedience. Even the devil himself, as the Fathers say, cannot harm a person who is truly obedient. And in order to show you in brief how exalted the wonderful virtue of obedience is, let us recall yet another passage from St John Klimakos.

That brilliant luminary of life in Christ, that new Bezaleel (cf. Exod. 31:1–5) of the heavenly ladder, says, ‘The Fathers state that psalmody is a weapon, prayer a wall, and pure tears a cleansing bath. They call blessed obedience a confession of sins without which no one subject to the passions will see the Lord.’[12] That, it seems to us, constitutes a vivid description and praise of the inimitable excellence of blessed obedience. In addition, if we raise our mind to supernal realities and meditate on them, we will learn and recognize from

experience what was the cause of our fragmentation and mortality, for these things did not pertain to us when we were originally created. Moreover, we will be able to know what brings about our renewal and immortality. We will thus see that the cause of our corruption is the self-reliance, self-will and disobedience of the first Adam, which made him reject and transgress the divine commandment (cf. Gen. 3:6). We will also realize that what confers incorruption upon us is the obedience to the Father and union with His will displayed by the second Adam, our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, which led Him to fulfil the Father's commandment. 'For what I have spoken does not come from Myself,' says the Saviour, 'but the Father who sent Me has commanded what I should say and what I should utter, and I know that His commandment is life eternal; thus whatever I utter is uttered in accordance with what the Father has told Me to say' (John 12:49–50).

In our first ancestor, and subsequently in those like him, the root and mother of all grievous things is presumption, while in the new God-Man, Jesus Christ, and in those who desire to live like Him, the principle, source and foundation of all blessings is humility. We can observe that this same mode and order of things also applies to the sacred hierarchy of the godlike angels who are superior to us, as it applies likewise to the earthly Church of which we are members. As for those who defect from such an ordinance and wish to lead their lives in a crooked, not to say self-willed manner, we are taught and believe that they are cut off and banished from God, from the glorious inheritance of heaven, and from the catholic Church, and are cast out into the darkness and fire of Gehenna. That is what happened to those evil collaborators of Lucifer and to those speechifiers who appear from time to time declaiming heretical doctrines, as we know from sacred texts. These latter, it is said, because of their self-indulgence and pride have been pitifully excluded from divine glory and delight, and from the sacred community of the Church.

Now it has been said by a certain wise man that things are cured by their opposites. Thus, since the cause of every murksome thing is disobedience and arrogance, while that of every joyous thing is obedience and contrition, a person aspiring to live blamelessly must put himself under obedience to a reliable and tested father, who possesses authority because of his long experience and his knowledge of divine things and whose life is adorned with the garland of the virtues; and he must regard the instructions and advice of this man as the voice and will of God. 'For salvation', it is said, 'is to be

found in an abundance of counsellors' (Prov. 11:14), and, 'A person without counsel is an enemy to himself.' If none the less some celebrated Fathers have attained deifying stillness and divine perfection without practising such obedience, this was conferred upon them through revelation and has only occurred rarely. But the exception does not constitute the rule of the Church, just as a single swallow does not mean it is springtime. For your part, then, put your trust in true obedience, regarding it as the science that leads us to the beauty of stillness; disregard what has happened providentially in isolated instances and conform to what is commonly agreed by the venerable Fathers. For in this way you will by grace attain the rewards bestowed on those who live according to the law.

What, then, are we to say in conclusion? If a person does not yet have any experience of an unknown road, he will not set out upon it without a reliable guide, nor will he attempt to cross the ocean without a competent pilot. Similarly, he cannot learn any art or master any science without a reliable teacher. How, then, will he dare to embark on the practice of the art of arts and the science of sciences, or to take the path that leads to God, or to cross the infinite ocean of the intellect, that is to say, to embark on the monastic life, which may be compared with the life of the angels, believing that he will attain his goal without an experienced and authentic guide, pilot or teacher? Truly such a person, whoever he may be, deceives himself and goes astray before even setting out, because he does not practise the ascetic life according to the law.

Conversely, a person who follows directions laid down by the Fathers attains his end even before he sets out. How else can we learn either to fight properly against our unregenerate self, or to take up arms against passions and demons? For it is written that the vices are connected with the virtues and are as it were next door to them. How, then, shall we discipline the body's senses and bring the powers of the soul into harmony like the strings of the lyre? Or, rather, how shall we learn to assess the significance of prophetic utterances and revelations and consolations and divine contemplations, not to mention frauds and delusions and demonic apparitions? To put it briefly, how shall we be privileged to attain union with God and to celebrate sanctifying rites and mysteries, unless we have been initiated by an authentic and enlightened guide? This is impossible, truly impossible.

Take, for instance, St Paul, that vessel of election, that initiate into ineffable mysteries, that mouth of Christ, that light of the world, that

universal sun and teacher of the inhabited earth; he discusses and examines the Gospel with his fellow Apostles, and the reason for this, as he himself says, is ‘in case I should be running or have run in vain’ (Gal. 2:2). Moreover, wisdom absolute, our Lord Jesus Christ, states concerning Himself, ‘I came down from heaven to carry out not My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me’ (John 6:38); and He also states with regard to that holy and life-giving Spirit that ‘He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears, that will He speak’ (John 16:13). Appreciating the practical value of this principle, which holds together things in heaven and things on earth, we are filled with awe, amazement and anguish, as we reflect on our own worthlessness and sloth, and on those who out of folly and presumption choose to live perversely and rashly in accordance with their own self-will and without being under obedience. Truly our struggle is frightening; predators and their traps are legion, and the casualty rate is immeasurable.

For this reason, very few attain salvation (cf. Luke 13:23). But if people choose to live according to their own will, yet, as Scripture says, ‘The fire will test what sort of work each has done’ (1 Cor. 3:13); and, ‘Thou wilt reward everyone in accordance with what he does’ (Ps. 62:12). Above all, may the Lord grant understanding to all of us not superficially, in compliance with our own wishes, but as we ought to wish and to live. You for your part, together with everyone who desires to live according to God, do you seek through what we have said to learn as it were from its fringe the texture of the golden and spiritual garment of blessed obedience; and in this way do all you can, as we have already explained, to find a reliable and fully qualified teacher. ‘Solid food’, says St Paul the Christ-bearer, ‘befits those who are mature – those whose faculties have through long exercise been trained to discriminate between good and evil’ (Heb. 5:14).

By this means – seeking, that is to say, with diligence and faith – you will achieve your purpose. ‘Everyone who asks’, says Scripture, ‘receives, and everyone who seeks finds, and to everyone who knocks the door will be opened’ (Matt. 7:8). And your teacher, in proper sequence and order, will initiate you into all that is necessary and pleasing to God, and will guide you towards those spiritual and divine realities which should not be disclosed to everyone. But this he will do only when he sees that you rejoice with all your heart in moderation, frugality and simplicity in food, drink, shelter and clothing, and are satisfied with the things that are immediately useful,

serviceable and necessary, and do not desire what is superfluous and luxurious, the kind of things that delight those who thoughtlessly live a life of vanity and showy self-display, wielding a sword against themselves and their own salvation. As the great Apostle says, ‘Since we have food and clothes, let us be content with that’ (1 Tim. 6:8).

Do you ask for instruction, and to receive from us a written account as to what is appropriate for the beginning, middle and fulfilment of the life according to Christ? The request is praiseworthy, but a ready reply is difficult. Nevertheless, with Christ’s help we will try to respond to your request. On the firm, unshakeable foundation of renowned and perfect obedience we will seek to build up the whole noble structure of the spiritual life, by which we mean the life of deifying stillness; and what we say about this will be supported by the words of the Fathers inspired by the Spirit. In this way our teaching will rest as it were on firm pillars.

16. *First, if you genuinely desire to pursue the path of stillness in a manner that accords with God’s will, you must not only profess the Orthodox faith but must also strive to ensure that your life is full of good actions. Second, faith is twofold. Further, a hesychast must be peaceful, undistracted, free from care or anxiety, silent, still, and thankful in everything. He must acknowledge his own weakness, bear trials bravely, hope in God and gladly accept from Him whatever is to his profit.*

§ i The Saviour says, ‘Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of My heavenly Father’ (Matt. 7:21). If, then, well-beloved, you desire deifying stillness not just in bare words but in very truth, strive not only to profess the Orthodox faith but also to ensure that your life is full of good actions. For, to those who pursue it with sincerity, this stillness brings a clear vision of the heavenly kingdom and of God, which hereafter will become even more complete and perfect. Be at peace with everyone, so far as you can; be undistracted, utterly detached and free from anxiety, silent and still; be thankful in everything and acknowledge your own weakness. In short, with an unsleeping and watchful eye guard yourself against the various temptations that you encounter daily in so many different guises, and struggle with patience and endurance against every storm and affliction which will inevitably break upon you.

As regards the first and second points, that is, that you should not only

profess the Orthodox faith but should also adorn your life with good actions, St James, the renowned brother of our Lord, teaches you this clearly when he says, ‘Faith by itself, unaccompanied by actions, is dead’ (and the reverse is true as well); and, ‘I will demonstrate my faith to you through my actions’ (Jas. 2:17,18). And before him our Lord Jesus Christ, our universal teacher and mentor, said to His disciples, ‘Go and make disciples among all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all the commandments I have given you’ (Matt. 28:19–20). And St Gregory the Theologian says that God seeks the following three things from everyone who has been baptized; from the soul – genuine faith; from the body – self-restraint; and from the tongue – truth.[13]

§ ii *Faith is twofold.*

Take note that, according to the oracles handed down by God, faith is twofold. One kind is common to all Orthodox Christians, and is that into which we were baptized at the beginning of our lives and which we seek to follow until we die. The other pertains only to a few, to those who through the fulfilment of the deifying commandments have been restored to the image and likeness of God and hence have been enriched by the divine light of grace, and who now place all their hope in the Lord. So great, indeed, is their faith that, as the Lord has said (cf. Matt. 21:22), they do not doubt at all when they put their requests to God in time of prayer, but ask with faith and thus immediately receive what is profitable to them. These blessed people have acquired such sureness of faith through their holy actions that they have cast aside the kind of knowledge and discrimination that is marked by hesitation and anxiety, and have plunged themselves wholly into the divine intoxication of faith and hope in God and love for Him. In this way they have been transformed, as the psalmist expresses it, by the excellent and blessed change wrought by the right hand of the Most High (cf. Ps. 77:10.LXX).

This is not the place for a full exposition of the first kind of faith. It is, however, a very appropriate place for a discussion of the second kind, which, like a divine fruit, springs and flowers from the first. For faith may be said to be the root and culmination of what is rightly named deifying stillness. ‘For if you do not have faith,’ says St John Klimakos, ‘how will you practise stillness?’[14] The divine David says, ‘I possessed faith, and for this reason I have spoken’ (Ps. 116:10). The great Apostle Paul states, ‘Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen’ (Heb. 11:1);

and, ‘The righteous man will live by faith’ (Rom. 1:17). And when the Saviour was asked by His disciples to increase their faith, He replied, ‘If your faith is like a grain of mustard seed, and you say to this mulberry tree, “Uproot yourself and plant yourself in the sea”, it will obey you’ (cf. Matt. 17:20); and, ‘If you have faith and do not doubt, not only will you be able to do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, “Take yourself up and throw yourself into the sea”, it will be done. And so long as you have faith you will receive everything you ask for when you pray’ (Matt. 21:21–22); and, ‘Your faith has made you whole’ (Matt. 9:22).

St Isaac writes, ‘Faith is more subtle than knowledge, just as knowledge is more subtle than sensory things. All the saints have been given the grace to attain this mode of life, which is awestruck wonder at God, and they abide in the power of faith, in the joy of that supranatural state. By faith we do not mean simply belief in certain articles of faith, such as the distinction between the venerated divine hypostases, or the special and specific nature of the Divinity itself, or the wonderful and providential dispensation brought to pass for mankind through Christ’s assumption of our nature, sublime though these things are. On the contrary, we mean the faith which arises in the soul from the light of grace through the testimony of the mind, and which fortifies the heart, making it unwavering through the humble assurance of hope. This faith is not made known through the hearing of the ears, but reveals to our spiritual eyes the mysteries hidden in the soul and the secret divine riches concealed from the eyes of the sons of the flesh. It is something revealed in the Spirit to those who have a place at the table of Christ through meditation on His laws. For He said, “If you keep My commandments, I will send you the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, and He will guide you into all the truth” (cf. John 14:17; 16:13). Until the time when He comes, who is the fulfilment of the mysteries, and we are then granted a clear vision of these things, faith celebrates between God and the saints the liturgy of the ineffable mysteries. Through the grace of Christ Himself we are privileged to experience these mysteries in the present life as a foretaste of what is to come, while hereafter, along with those who love Him, we shall experience the substance and reality of their truth in the kingdom of heaven.’[15]

§ iii *You must be in a peaceful state.*

As for the third point, namely, that you must be at peace with everyone, the blessed David gives you clear advice concerning this, and so does St Paul,

whose voice sounds more plainly than a trumpet. The former says, ‘Great peace have they that love Thy law, and for them there is no stumbling block’ (Ps. 119:165.LXX); and, ‘With them that hate peace I was peaceable’ (Ps. 120:7.LXX); and, ‘Seek peace and pursue it’ (Ps. 34:14). The latter says ‘Strive to be at peace with all men, and aspire after holiness, without which no one will see the Lord’ (Heb. 12:14); and, ‘So far as you possibly can, live at peace with everyone’ (Rom. 12:17).

§ iv *You must be undistracted.*

With regard to the fourth point, namely, that you must be undistracted, let St Isaac be your teacher. ‘If it is the senses’, he says, ‘that give rise to desire, then let them hold their tongue who claim that though they are victims of distraction they possess peace of mind’;[16] and, ‘Do not keep company with those whose lives are full of distractions.’[17]

§ v *You must be free from worldly cares and anxiety.*

Where the fifth point is concerned, namely, that you must be free from worldly cares and anxiety with regard both to what is probable and what is improbable, you should take your cue from what the Lord says in the Gospels: ‘It is for this reason that I tell you not to worry about your life, about what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about how you will clothe your body. Surely life means more than meat and the body more than raiment? Think of the birds; they neither sow, nor reap, nor store things up in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Do you not rank much higher than they do? Which of you by worrying about it can add a single hour to his life? And why do you worry about clothes?’ (Matt. 6:25–28). And a little further on He says, ‘So do not worry, saying, “What shall we eat?” or, “What shall we drink?” or, “What shall we wear?” It is those ignorant of God who trouble themselves about such things; and yet your heavenly Father knows that you have need of them all. But strive first to attain the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will take care of itself. Sufficient for each day are its own troubles’ (Matt. 6:31–34). And St Isaac says, ‘Unless you are free from worldly cares, do not expect to find light within your soul, nor serenity and stillness so long as your senses are slack.’[18] And St John Klimakos says, ‘A single hair disturbs the eye and a small anxiety destroys stillness. For stillness means to be free from

conceptual images and from anxiety even with regard to what is right and proper. A person who has truly attained stillness will not even be anxious about his own physical existence, knowing that He who promised that this would be taken care of does not lie.'[19]

§ vi *You must be silent.*

The sequence of our discourse now impels us to speak about the sixth point, namely, the keeping of silence. About this, too, St Isaac has commented, saying, 'The person who prevents his mouth from uttering words of slander guards his heart from the passions; and he who cleanses his heart from the passions contemplates the Lord unceasingly;[20] and when you set all exterior ascetic practices on one side of the scales and silence on the other, you will find that the latter outweighs the former.'[21] And he also says, 'Love silence more than anything else, for it nurtures the ripening of the fruit within you, whereas talk impedes this. First let us force ourselves to refrain from speech, and then through such restraint something is born within us that guides us towards silence itself. May God grant that you experience what is born through refraining from speech! If you begin by adopting this discipline, I cannot describe the light with which you will be filled as a result.'[22] And again, 'Silence is a mystery of the Age to come; words are an instrument of this present world.'[23] And the voice of God spoke to St Arsenios a second time, saying, 'Arsenios, flee, be silent, be still, and you will be saved.'[24]

§ vii *You must be still.*

As for the seventh point, namely, that you must live in stillness, St Basil the Great says, 'Stillness is the beginning of the purification of the soul,'[25] while St Isaac says, 'The final aim of stillness is silence with respect to all things.'[26] With these statements they have succinctly indicated the beginning and end of stillness. The Old Testament puts it thus: 'You have sinned. Then be still' (Gen. 4:7.LXX); and, 'Be still and know that I am God' (Ps. 46:10). And St John Klimakos says, 'To achieve stillness, you must first detach yourself from everything, whether reputable or disreputable. If you get involved in what is reputable, you will inevitably then become entangled in what is disreputable. Second, you must pray diligently, and thirdly you must labour steadfastly within the inner sanctuary of the heart. An illiterate person

naturally cannot learn from books. It is even more impossible for those who have not acquired detachment to engage intelligently in prayer and in the heart's labour.'[27] Again St Isaac says, 'To desire stillness is to await death with constant expectation. If we attempt to enter the sphere of stillness without having acquired this state of expectation, we will not be able to endure what inevitably we have to suffer and endure.'[28]

§ viii *You must give thanks in everything.*
With regard to the eighth point, namely, that you must give thanks in everything, the admonition of St Paul should be enough for you, when he insists, 'Give thanks in everything' (1 Thess. 5:18). In addition, St Isaac says, 'The gratitude of the receiver spurs the giver to give yet greater gifts next time. If you do not give thanks in little things you will be untruthful and unjust in greater things.'[29] 'What draws down God's grace upon someone is a heart moved to give thanks unceasingly, while a heart continually inclined to grumble and complain brings the soul into temptation. If you always give thanks you will receive God's blessing; a heart unfaltering in its gratitude will be filled with grace.'[30]

§ ix *You must know your own weakness.*
How rich is the reward, and this is the ninth point, bestowed on the person who has come to know his own weakness! This is something you can learn from Psalm 6, in which the divine David says, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak' (Ps. 6:2). In another psalm he says, 'But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people' (Ps.22:6). St Isaac says, 'Blessed is he who knows his own weakness, because such knowledge constitutes the foundation, root and source of everything good within him. When you truly recognize and perceive your own weakness, you can then throttle the soul's sluggishness that obscures all knowledge, and can make it alert and watchful.'[31] He also says, 'The person who can plumb the depths of his own weakness has attained the heights of humility.'[32]

§ x *You must bear trials bravely.*
The final section of this discourse, the tenth, is about bearing bravely and withstanding with patience and long-suffering the various trials which will befall you. Listen then to how the relevant texts of sacred Scripture deal with

this theme. Thus the Christ-bearer Paul writes, ‘Brethren, we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against demonic powers and potentates, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against the spirit-forces of evil in the heavenly places’ (Eph. 6:12). Again he writes, ‘Discipline is the lot of everyone; if you are without discipline, then you are not sons but bastards’ (Heb. 12:8); and, ‘For the Lord disciplines those He loves, and chastises everyone that He acknowledges as His son’ (Heb. 12:6). St James the Brother of God says, ‘A person not tried by temptations is worthless’ (cf. Jas. 1:12). St Ilias the Presbyter says, ‘No Christian believing rightly in God should ever be off his guard. He should always be on the look-out for temptation, so that when it comes he will not be surprised or disturbed, but will gladly endure the toil and affliction it causes, and so will understand what he is saying when chants with the prophet “Prove me, O Lord, and try me” (Ps. 26:2.LXX). For the prophet did not say, “Thy correction has destroyed me”, but, “It has upheld me to the end” (Ps. 18:35.LXX).’[33]

Do not try to discover the causes of these trials or where they come from, but only pray to God that you may bear them gratefully. As St Mark says, ‘When tested by some trial you should try to find out not why or through whom it came, but only how to endure it gratefully, without distress or rancour.’ Again he says, ‘If it is not easy to find anyone conforming to God’s will who has not been put to the test, we ought to thank God for everything that happens to us’; and, ‘Every affliction tests our will, showing whether it is inclined to good or evil. This is why an unforeseen affliction is called a test, because it enables a man to test his hidden desires.’[34]

St Isaac, among many other things, says this, ‘To be put to the test profits everyone. Since it profited St Paul (cf. 2 Cor. 12:9–10), “let every mouth be stopped and let the whole world be accountable to God” (Rom. 3:19). Those engaged in spiritual warfare are tested so that they may add to their wealth. The sluggish are tested so that they may guard themselves from what inflicts injury on them. Those sunk in sleep are tested so that they may become vigilant, those far from God so that they may come close to Him, and those close to Him so that they may enter into yet more intimate communion with Him. Any son not tested does not receive the wealth of his father’s house, and so is deprived of his help. It is for this reason that God first tests us and afflicts us, and then bestows His gifts. Glory to the Lord whose harsh medicines bring us the enjoyment of health! There is no one who does not feel oppressed at the time when he is being disciplined, and there is no one

who does not find the time bitter in which he is forced to drink the virulent potion of tribulations. Yet without trials and temptations it is impossible to acquire a strong constitution. Of ourselves we lack the power to endure. For how can a clay pot withstand the flow of water unless it has been hardened by divine fire? But if we pray submissively and humbly with unceasing ardour, we too will receive through our endurance everything in Christ Jesus our Lord.'[35] For it is said in the Wisdom of Sirach, 'My son, if you are intending to serve the Lord, prepare your soul for trials' (Ecclus. 2:1); and, 'Set your heart right and be steadfast, and do not be hasty in times of affliction' (Ecclus. 2:2).

§ xi *You must hope in God and accept from Him what is to your profit.*
Anchor your hope in the God who can save you, and He will release you from trials and temptations in the way that is most to your profit. For 'God keeps faith', writes St Paul, 'and will not allow us to be tested beyond our powers, but with the affliction He will also provide the way out' (1 Cor. 10:13); and again he writes, 'Affliction produces patient endurance, endurance strength of character, and strength of character hope; and hope does not disappoint us' (Rom. 5:3–5). Elsewhere Scripture says, 'He who endures to the end will be saved' (Matt. 10:22); and, 'Through your patient endurance you will gain your lives' (Luke 21:19). The Brother of the Lord writes as follows; 'My brethren, count it all joy when you become subject to various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith brings about endurance. But your endurance must persist to the end, so that you may be perfect and entire, and not lacking in anything' (Jas. 1:24); and, 'Blessed is the one who remains steadfast under trial; for when he has stood the test he will receive a crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him' (Jas. 1:12). St Paul also writes, 'The sufferings of this time are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us' (Rom. 8:18); and the psalmist says, 'I waited resolutely for the Lord, and He was attentive to me and heard my prayer. He brought me up out of the pit of misery, out of the mire and clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and guided my steps. And He has put a new song into my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God' (Ps. 40:1–3). And the blessed Symeon Metaphrastes writes, 'A soul held fast with bonds of love for God counts suffering as nothing, but it takes pleasure in painful experiences and flourishes in adversity. Indeed, when it fails to suffer for the sake of the Beloved, it suffers all the more; and it shuns comfort and

self-contentment like the plague.’[36]

17. *On the twofold fear of God: the fear of spiritual novices and the fear of the spiritually mature.*

Here we should say something about the two forms of fear of God, even though, because of our decision to speak of the perfect kind of fear immediately after the ten subsections we have just completed, we have not spoken of the first kind of fear in the proper place; for according to the Holy Fathers this place is after the section on faith.

§ i *On the first kind of fear, that which pertains to spiritual novices.*
You should know then, beloved, that there are two forms of the fear of God, the first pertaining to spiritual novices and the second to the spiritually mature. About the first kind of fear the following has been written: ‘Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom’ (Prov.1:7.LXX); and, ‘Come, you children, hearken unto me and I will teach you the fear of the Lord’ (Ps. 34:11); and, ‘Through fear of the Lord everyone turns away from evil’ (Prov. 15:27a.LXX); and, ‘Where there is fear, there is the keeping of the commandments.’[37] St Isaac says, ‘The fear of the Lord is the beginning of virtue; it is said to be engendered by faith. It is sown in the heart when the mind cuts itself off from worldly distractions, and when by meditating on the coming restitution of things to their original state it draws its thoughts, dispersed through day-dreaming, back into itself’;[38] and, ‘The beginning of our true life is the fear of a God; but such fear does not consent to dwell in a soul distracted by day-dreams’;[39] and, ‘Teach yourself how to base your journey on the fear of God, and in a few days you will arrive at the gates of the kingdom without straying from the road.’[40]

§ ii *On the second and perfect fear of God.*
About the second, that is, the perfect fear of God, Scripture speaks as follows: ‘Blessed is he who fears the Lord; he will delight greatly in His commandments’ (Ps. 112:1); and, ‘Blessed are all those who fear the Lord, who walk in His ways’ (Ps. 128:1); and, ‘Fear the Lord, all you who are His saints, for those who fear Him will not lack anything’ (Ps. 34:9); and, ‘Behold, so shall the man who fears the Lord be blessed’ (Ps. 128:4); and,

‘The fear of the Lord is pure, and endures for ever’ (Ps. 19:9). St Peter of Damaskos writes, ‘The sign of the first kind of fear is hatred of sin and anger towards it, like someone wounded by a wild beast. The sign of perfect fear is the love of virtue and the fear of relapsing, since no one is unalterable. Thus in every situation throughout this present life we ought always to be afraid of falling.’[41] So absorb all this with understanding and, along with everything else we have spoken about, do what you can to keep always alive within you the first kind of fear; for it is like a treasure-house safeguarding every kind of good action. In this way you will be guided towards the fulfilment of all the commandments of our Lord Jesus Christ; and thus, through your desire for the virtues and through the mercy of our loving God, advancing on the way you will also attain the fear that is perfect and pure.

18. *For the sake of the commandments and of the faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that goes with them, we should not spare even our very life if the occasion calls for it.*

In addition to those things about which we have already spoken you should also realize that, for the sake of the life-giving commandments and the faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that goes with them, we should gladly give up even our very life if the occasion calls for it, not sparing our earthly existence and survival. For the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has said, ‘Whoever gives up his life for My sake and the Gospel’s will save it’ (Mark 8:35), provided we believe without doubt or hesitation that the God-Man Jesus the Saviour is Himself resurrection and life and everything that leads to salvation. For He Himself said, ‘I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die’ (John 11:25–26); and, ‘God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in Him should not perish but should possess eternal life’ (John 3:16); and, ‘I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly’ (John 10:10). So, ‘forgetting those things that are behind and reaching forward towards what lies ahead’, as Scripture says (Phil. 3:13), pursue your path unswervingly with the help of Jesus Christ our Lord. With this end in view, it seems to us desirable and very appropriate to explain first the physical method, expounded by the most blessed Nikiphoros, which enables us to enter into the heart by means of inhalation through our nose, since this method contributes to some extent to the

concentrating of the mind. In this way with the help of God our treatise will proceed in a logical sequence. Among many other things whose authority derives from the written testimonies of the saints, this holy man says what we repeat below.

19. *A physical method of entering and leaving the heart by means of inhalation through the nose, and about the Prayer which accompanies this, 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me'. Such a method contributes to some extent to the concentration of the mind.*

'You know, brother, that what we breathe is air. When we exhale it, it is for the heart's sake, for the heart is the source of life and warmth for the body. The heart draws towards itself the air inhaled when breathing, so that by discharging some of its heat when the air is exhaled it may maintain an even temperature. The cause of this process or, rather, its agents, are the lungs. The Creator has made these capable of expanding and contracting like bellows, so that they can easily draw in and expel their contents. Thus, by taking in coolness and expelling heat through breathing, the heart performs unobstructed the function for which it was created, that of maintaining life.

'Seat yourself, then, concentrate your intellect, and lead it into the respiratory passage through which your breath passes into your heart. Put pressure on your intellect and compel it to descend with your inhaled breath into your heart. Once it has entered there, what follows will be neither dismal nor glum. Just as a man, after being away from home, on his return is overjoyed at being with his wife and children again, so the intellect, once it is united with the soul, is filled with indescribable delight.

'Therefore, brother, train your intellect not to leave your heart quickly, for at first it is strongly disinclined to remain constrained and circumscribed in this way. But once it becomes accustomed to remaining there, it can no longer bear to be outside the heart. For the kingdom of heaven is within us (cf. Luke 17:21); and when the intellect concentrates its attention in the heart and through pure prayer searches there for the kingdom of heaven, all external things become abominable and hateful to it. If, then, after your first attempts you enter through your intellect into the abode of the heart in the way that I have explained, give thanks and glory to God and exult in Him. Continually persevere in this practice and it will teach you what you do not know.

‘Moreover, when your intellect is firmly established in your heart, it must not remain there silent and idle; it should continually repeat and meditate on the Prayer, “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me”, and should never stop doing this. For this prayer protects the intellect from distraction, renders it impregnable to diabolic attacks, and every day increases its love and desire for God.’[42]

That is what this blessed Father has to say. His chief aim is to show how, once this physical method has been put into operation, the intellect is delivered from its usual state of distraction, captivity and restlessness, and reverts to a state of attentiveness. So, through attentiveness, it returns to itself and is thus united with prayer. Then, together with the Prayer, it descends into the heart and remains there permanently. Similarly, another divinely inspired Father, experienced in sacred work of this kind, writes as follows, as though offering a further explanation of the practice described above.

20. *On the physical method of inhalation through the nose accompanied by the invocation of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

We should also explain the following to those anxious to learn. If we try to train our intellect to descend into the heart together with the air that we inhale, we will then accurately discover that, when it descends in this way, the intellect cannot enter there until it abandons every thought and becomes unified and naked, retaining nothing in its memory except the invocation of our Lord Jesus Christ. But when it emerges thence once more and comes into the external world, involuntarily its attention becomes diversified and fragmented.

21. *St John Chrysostom, together with other Holy Fathers from olden times, declares that we must pray in the name of Christ Jesus our Lord within the heart, using the Prayer, ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me’.*

St John Chrysostom says, ‘I beg you, brethren, never undervalue or despise the rule of prayer.’ And shortly after he continues, ‘Whether eating, drinking, sitting, performing some task, walking or doing anything else, a monk should unceasingly repeat the Prayer, “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me”.’ And he then comments, ‘In this way the name of the Lord Jesus, when it descends into the depths of the heart, will humble the serpent that

dwells there, and will save the monk's soul and give it life. Therefore, invoke the name of the Lord Jesus unceasingly, so that your heart absorbs the Lord and the Lord absorbs your heart, and the two become one.' Again he writes, 'Do not sunder your heart from God, but persevere, guarding it constantly through the remembrance of our Lord Jesus Christ, until the Lord's name takes root in your heart and it ceases to think of anything else; for in this way Christ will be glorified within you.'[43]

21. *Further texts on preserving the remembrance of Jesus in the heart through attentively breathing inwards.*

St John Klimakos, too, writes, 'Let mindfulness of Jesus cleave to your breathing, and then you will know the value of stillness.'[44] St Hesychios says, 'If you really wish to cover your evil thoughts with shame, to be still and calm, and to watch over your heart without hindrance, let the Jesus Prayer cleave to your breathing, and in a few days you will find that this is possible.'[45]

23. *Anyone who wishes to be noetically awake and watchful, especially a beginner, should sit at the time of prayer in a quiet and dark room, so that little by little in a natural way he can concentrate his intellect and mind.*

These testimonies, taken from the great Holy Fathers, explain to us, then, how through leading our breath into the heart it is possible, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God and through the power of His holy and saving name, for us to pray, meditate, and be vigilant and watchful, and how from Him we may seek mercy. Yet we should add that the divine Fathers and teachers who speak from their experience of this most blessed work also instruct those who wish to attain in their hearts a state of noetic vigilance, and especially beginners, to sit down in a quiet and dark corner, particularly at the appointed time of prayer. For when we look at visible things, this naturally distracts and disperses the mind, and thus troubles and fragments it. But when the mind is confined, as we said, within a dark, still room, its attention is no longer dispersed and fragmented among the things we look at. Thus the intellect, whether it wants to or not, achieves a certain measure of tranquillity and gets used to keeping itself to itself. As St Basil the Great says, 'The intellect, when not dissipated among external things and dispersed outwardly

through the senses, returns to itself.'[46]

24. *Freedom from distraction is granted to the intellect above all through our Lord Jesus Christ and through the invocation of His holy name in the heart with faith. The physical method of leading the breath through the nose into the heart, as well as sitting in a still, dark place and similar practices, also contribute to this to some extent.*

More importantly or, rather, most importantly of all, the intellect brings this struggle to a successful conclusion with the help of divine grace, and through the single-phrased and undistracted invocation of our Lord Jesus Christ, undertaken with a pure heart and with faith. It does not achieve its aim solely through the physical method we have described of breathing in through the nose and sitting in a quiet, dark place – far from it! For the divine Fathers devised these outward practices merely as an aid that helps the mind to some extent to attain concentration and attentiveness, and to return to itself by freeing itself from its habitual distractions, as we have said earlier. For it is in this way that unceasing, pure and undistracted prayer comes to birth in the intellect. As St Neilos writes, 'If you seek prayer attentively you will find it; for nothing is more essential to prayer than attentiveness. So do all you can to acquire it.'[47] On these matters we have now said enough. As for you, my son, since you desire life and long to see good days (cf. Ps. 34:12) and to live in the body as if you were bodiless, submit your life to the rule and discipline which we will now describe.

25. *On how a hesychast should spend the period between dusk and Matins. The beginning of more detailed instruction.*

When the sun has set and you have called for help on the all-loving and all-powerful Lord Jesus Christ, seat yourself on a low stool in a quiet, dark cell; and when you have gathered together your intellect from its habitual distraction and wandering among outward things, and have thrust it gently into your heart by way of your breathing through the nose, concentrate on the Prayer, 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me'. That is to say, as you breathe in unite the words of the Prayer in some way to your breath. This accords with the words of St Hesychios, 'With your breathing combine watchfulness and the name of Jesus, and likewise humility and the

unremitting study of death; for both these things may confer great blessing.'[48] In addition to the Prayer and the other things of which we have spoken, you should keep in remembrance the judgment and the requital that we shall receive for our good and bad deeds; and with all your soul you should regard yourself as more sinful than any other man and more foul than the demons themselves; you should therefore reflect that you will be chastised for all eternity.

Should any of these thoughts arouse compunction, grief and tears within you, meditate on that thought until the tears cease of their own accord. And if you have not yet been granted the gift of tears, struggle and pray with a humble mind that you may acquire it. For through the gift of tears we are purified of the passions and pollution, and we come to participate in the blessings of salvation. As St John Klimakos says, 'Just as fire consumes straw, so undefiled tears consume every type of foulness, whether physical or spiritual.'[49] And another Father says, 'If you want to get rid of evil you will get rid of it by weeping, and if you want to acquire virtue you will acquire it by weeping.'[50] And if you do not experience compunction, know that you are full of arrogance. For it is arrogance that prevents the soul from experiencing compunction.

If tears do not come, sit praying and concentrating on these thoughts for one hour. Then rise and sing Little Compline attentively. After that sit down again for half an hour and continue the Prayer with all your strength and purity and without distraction, that is, calmly, without any thought whatsoever or any kind of imagining, but with great vigilance. This accords with the precept, 'During prayer alienate yourself from everything except life and breath if you want to be with the intellect alone.'[51] Then mark yourself with the sign of the precious, venerable and life-giving cross, sign your bed in the same way and sit on it, and meditate on the joys and chastisements of the life to come, on the transience and deceptiveness of temporal things, and on the sudden debt of death that everyone has to pay, and on the dread calling to account which takes place both before and after the end of our life. After that examine in detail how you spent the day, recalling each of your sins concisely, and fervently asking forgiveness for them all. Then lie down, still continuing the Prayer, in accordance with the counsel, 'Let the remembrance of Jesus go to sleep with you,'[52] and sleep for five or six hours or, rather, regulate your sleep according to the length of the night.

26. *On how the time from Matins to daybreak should be spent.*

When you have woken up and have glorified God, and have called on Him again to help you, begin first with the most important work, that is, praying in the heart with purity and without distraction. Continue to do this for one hour. For at that time the intellect, generally speaking, is calm and unruffled. Moreover, we are commanded to offer to God in sacrifice that which is first and best (cf. Exod. 22:28–29), that is to say, unswervingly to offer in so far as we can our first thoughts to our Lord Jesus Christ through pure prayer in the heart. As St Neilos says, 'The man who always dedicates his first thoughts to God has perfect prayer.'[53] After this chant the Midnight Office. It may be that you have not yet attained the state of perfect stillness, and for this reason cannot make a start in the way we have said. It may also happen that you cannot do this for some other reason, as is often the case with those who are beginners in this work and indeed occasionally happens even with those who, although well advanced, have not attained perfection; for the perfect can do all things, thanks to the strength Christ gives them (cf. Phil. 4:13). In that case you should proceed as follows; when you have woken up and have gathered your wits about you as best you can, chant first the Midnight Office with the greatest attention and understanding. Then sit down and pray in your heart with purity and without distraction, as we have shown you, for one hour or, rather, for as long as the Giver of blessings allows you to. For as St John Klimakos says, 'At night give most of your time to prayer and only a short time to psalmody, and in the day apportion your time according to your strength.'[54]

If, however, after exerting yourself in this way you are still apathetic and listless and your intellect is clouded by some occurrence or other, rise up and rouse yourself as best you can until you attain the state you should be in when praying. Then sit down and apply yourself diligently to prayer in the manner we have said, concentrating your full attention, so that through pure prayer you may converse with God. Then, rising up, chant the six psalms of Matins, the fifty-first psalm and whichever canon you choose, paying attention to what you are saying. Then sitting down and remaining alert, pray devotedly for half an hour. Then rising up again chant Lauds and the usual Doxology, the First Hour and, when you have completed these, the dismissal.

Since it is to God that we are commanded to offer the fruit of our lips (cf. Heb. 13:15), let anything you say out loud be said in such a way that only

yourself can hear it. Give thanks with all your soul and mind to our loving, compassionate and all-wise God, who in His boundless mercy has granted us to sail smoothly across the sea of the previous night and to behold the bright dawn of the coming day; and beseech Him fervently to permit us to pass calmly through the wild and moonless tempest of the demons and passions, and to have mercy on us.

27. *On how to pass the time between daybreak and the morning meal.*

Once you have offered yourself wholly and completely to God who is whole and complete, and have prayed to Him with a contrite heart to help you in your weakness, indolence and indecision, so far as possible spend the time between daybreak and the midday meal in pure and undistracted prayer in the heart, and also in reading. Stand while reading the allotted psalms, the Epistle and the Holy Gospel, and while saying the prayers addressed to our Lord Jesus Christ and to the most pure Mother of God; but sit for the other readings from Holy Scripture. After this attentively chant the customary Hours prescribed in their wisdom by the Fathers of the Church. With all your strength banish sloth from your soul, for it is the teacher of every kind of vice, and expel passions together with their causes, even though these may appear to be trifling and harmless.

28. *On guarding oneself against idleness and on how even the hesychast must observe the order and usage of the Church.*

As St Isaac says, ‘Be on your guard, beloved brethren, against idleness, for certain death lies concealed within it. If a monk is free from idleness, he will not fall into the hands of those who try to take him captive. On the day of judgment God will not condemn us about psalmody or for omitting prayers, but because through neglecting these things we gave access to the demons. For when the demons find a way in, and enter and shut the doors of our noetic eyes, they tyrannically fill us with all the forms of impurity which bring those who practise such things under divine judgment and lead to the most dreadful chastisement. They enslave us through our neglect of those details to which with Christ’s help we should have given attention. As the wisest saints have written, “If you do not subject your will to God you will be subjected to His adversary.” Thus you should regard things which seem small to you as ramparts that defend us from the demons. Those responsible for the

discipline of the Church have wisely laid it down that we should raise ramparts such as these in our cell so that we may preserve our life within the spirit of revelation. Not to do this is regarded as of little importance by those lacking in understanding, and they are unaware of the harm their neglect can produce. For them the opening and middle stages of the spiritual path signify undisciplined freedom; and this is the mother of all the passions. It is better to make every effort not to neglect small things rather than to give occasion to sin by taking them lightly. For the upshot of this misbegotten freedom is harsh servitude.'[55]

Elsewhere St Isaac writes, 'How bewitching are the sources of the passions! Sometimes we can renounce the passions themselves, and feel inner peace through distancing ourselves from them; and we rejoice because we have put a stop to them. But to free oneself from the causes of the passions is beyond our power. That is why we are tempted even when we do not want to be. We regret our embroilment with the passions, but with pleasure we allow their causes to dwell within us. We do not desire sins, but we pleasurably entertain the sources which gave rise to the sins. It is because of this that the sources are able to activate the sins. If we welcome the impulsions of the passions we are, without wishing it, placing ourselves under their power and making ourselves their slaves. If we hate our sins we will stop committing them, and if we confess them we will be forgiven. But it is impossible to be free of the habit of sin until we learn to detest it, just as we cannot be forgiven until we have confessed our faults. The first is the ground of true humility, the second produces the compunction which arises in the heart as a result of our shame.'[56] And he comments, 'There is no sin for which you cannot be forgiven except that of which you have not repented.'[57]

Enough has been said about this. After the psalmody recited during the appointed Hours you should eat, continuing with the Prayer during the meal, so that in this way you may by the power of grace make it a habit to pray without ceasing, as the commandment says (cf. 1 Thess. 5:17). But let our discourse on the food which supports the body by the ineffable wisdom of the Creator wait a little; and let us speak first about the food which supports and gives life to the soul – the food which the saints call sacred and divinizing prayer. This is the right order to follow, since the soul is more precious than the body.

29. *On prayer and on how one must pray at all times.*

Just as our body without the soul is dead and putrid, so the soul that does not impel itself to pray is dead, wretched and foul. That we should regard our failure to pray as more bitter than any form of death, the great prophet Daniel rightly teaches us when he says that he would die rather than be deprived of prayer for a single moment (cf. Dan. 6:10; 9:3). St John Chrysostom likewise gives good teaching about this, when he says, 'Everyone who prays converses with God, and everyone knows how great a thing is such converse with God. Yet no one can describe in words the high value of prayer, for it transcends even the majesty of the angels.'[58] And elsewhere he writes, 'Prayer is common to both angels and men, and where prayer is concerned there is nothing that separates men from the angels; on the contrary, it is prayer that distinguishes men from animals and unites them with the angels. If you devote your whole life to prayer and to the worship of God, you will soon be transported into the realm of the angels and will share in their mode of life, their dignity and nobility, their wisdom and understanding.'[59] And elsewhere, 'When the devil sees a soul fenced about with the virtues, he does not dare to come near it, because he is afraid of the power and strength furnished by prayer, which nourishes the soul better than food does the body.'[60] And, 'The sinews of the soul are prayers. For just as the body is held together and united by sinews, and stands and lives and is made firm through them, so that if someone cuts them he disrupts the whole harmony of the body, so souls are set in order and integrated through holy prayer and thus pursue the path of holiness without difficulty. If you deprive yourself of prayer, it is as if you were to pull a fish out of water. For, just as water is life for the fish, so prayer is life for you. Through prayer you can wing your way through the air as the fish moves through water, and you can ascend into heaven and draw near to God.'[61] And, 'Prayer and supplication make men temples of God. Just as gold, precious stones and marble make the palaces of emperors, so prayer makes men temples of Christ. What, then, can be said in greater praise of prayer than that it builds temples of God? And He whom the heavens cannot contain enters into the soul when it lives on prayer.'[62]

St John Chrysostom also says, 'One may gain some knowledge of the power of holy prayer from the following. St Paul, who sped through the whole world as if borne on wings, and who was imprisoned, suffered

scourgings, wore chains, lived amid bloodshed and among dangers, cast out demons, raised the dead, and cured diseases, did not in any of these circumstances trust in the salvation that comes from men but fortified his soul with prayer. After performing miracles and resurrecting those who had died he immediately resorted to prayer, as an athlete who aspires to win his laurels makes for the sportsground. For it is prayer that brings about the resurrection of the dead and of every other thing. For the power that water gives to trees prayers give to the lives of the saints.'[63] And, 'Prayer is the ground of salvation, the harbinger of immortality, the unbreachable rampart of the Church, the inviolate stronghold, bringing terror to the demons and salvation to the godly.'[64] And, 'Just as when a queen enters a city all the opulence of her retinue must follow behind her, so when prayer enters the soul every virtue enters with it.'[65] And, 'What the foundations are for a house prayer is for a soul. We must first establish prayer as a foundation or base in the soul, and then diligently build onto this foundation self-restraint, care for the poor, and all the laws of Christ.'[66] And, 'Fervent prayer is light for the understanding and for the soul, an unquenchable and continual light. It is because of this that the Evil One litters our minds with countless putrid thoughts; when we pray he scrapes together things that have never entered our mind and tips them into our soul.'[67] And, 'Prayer is a great weapon, a great safeguard.'[68]

St Gregory the Theologian says, 'It is more essential to be mindful of God than to breathe.'[69] And again, 'Invoke God in your thoughts more frequently than you breathe.'[70] And St Isaac says, 'Without ceaseless prayer you cannot approach God.' And, 'To turn the mind to some other concern after the toil of prayer brings about a loss of concentration.'[71] And, 'All prayer in which the body does not labour and the heart is not afflicted must be regarded as abortive; for such prayer is soulless.'[72] And St John Klimakos says, 'Prayer is essentially converse and union of man and God. Its effect is to hold the world together and to bring about reconciliation with God; it is both the mother and daughter of tears, expiation for sins, a bridge across temptations, a bulwark against tribulation, the annihilation of conflict, the work of angels, the food of all incorporeal beings, a delight in store, boundless activity, the source of virtues, the harbinger of grace, unseen advancement, food of the soul, the

illumination of the intellect, an axe against despair, a manifestation of hope, release from distress, the wealth of monks, the treasure of hesychasts, the abating of anger, a mirror of progress, an unveiling of our human potentiality, a disclosure of our inner state, a revelation of things held in store, the hallmark of glory. For him who truly prays prayer is the law court, the judgment seat and tribunal of Christ preceding the last judgment.'[73] And again, 'Prayer is nothing other than detachment from the world, both visible and invisible.'[74] And St Neilos says, 'If you long for prayer, renounce all to gain all.'[75] And, 'Prayer is the ascent of the intellect to God.'[76] And, 'Prayer is communion of the intellect with God.'[77] And, 'Bread is food for the body and holiness is food for the soul; spiritual prayer is food for the intellect.'[78]

Such is the nature of prayer. Now it is time to speak as concisely as we can of the bodily mode of life, as regards the balance to be kept between quantity and quality.

30. *On the bodily mode of life; how a hesychast should feed himself.*

It is written, 'Son of man, you shall eat your bread by weight and drink your water by measure' (cf. Ezek. 4:10, 11), in such a way as to allow the person engaged in spiritual warfare enough to keep alive. If you do not give blood, someone has said, you will not receive the Spirit.[79] St Paul says, 'I discipline my body strictly, and bring it into subjection, lest after having preached to others, I myself should not stand the test' (1 Cor. 9:27). And David the Psalmist says, 'My knees have grown weak through fasting, and my flesh is changed for want of oil' (Ps. 109:24.LXX). St Gregory the Theologian says, 'Nothing serves God so well as mortification, and He requites tears with His compassion.'[80]

St Isaac says, 'Just as a mother cares for her child, so Christ cares for the body that endures mortification, and He is close to such a body at all times.'[81] And again, 'The knowledge of the mysteries of God is not found in a full belly.'[82] And, 'Just as those who sow in tears reap in sheaves of jubilation (cf. Ps. 125:5), so mortification undergone for the sake of God is followed by joy.'[83] And, 'Blessed is he who renounces all self-indulgence which separates him from his Creator.'[84] And again, 'After long being tempted from both the

right and the left,[85] and having often been put to the test in these two ways and having received countless blows from the adversary, and having secretly been granted powerful aid, I have gained much experience in the course of many years; and through this testing and the grace of God I have learned the following: that the foundation of all blessings, and the soul's recovery from the enemy's clutches, and the road that leads to light and life, consist in these two things: to gather oneself together in a single place and to fast constantly.

'In other words, we must wisely and sensibly order our life so that we have mastery over the belly, do not shift our dwelling-place, and apply ourselves ceaselessly to divine study and meditation. Hence come the subjugation of the senses and watchfulness of the intellect; hence the body's wild passions are subdued and thoughts become gentle; hence come the mind's enlightenment and diligence in the holy practice of virtue; hence arise fine, exalted intellections and countless tears and mindfulness of death; hence pure self-restraint, free from all the fantasies that trouble the mind; hence perspicacity and clear-sighted knowledge of distant events; hence the deeper awareness of mystical ideas which the mind apprehends through the power of the Holy Scriptures; hence the inner workings of the soul; hence the discrimination which enables us to distinguish between evil spirits and holy powers, between bogus fantasies and true visions; hence comes also the awe that we feel at the pathways and wendings of the vasty deep of the mind – an awe that puts a stop to laziness and negligence; hence come the fire of zeal which tramples underfoot every danger and transcends every fear, and the warmth which spurns every sensual desire and obliterates it from the mind and, along with all the rest, relegates to oblivion every remembrance of what is transitory.

'In short, it is through these two things, to gather oneself together in a single place and to fast constantly, that we discover the freedom of the true self, joy of soul, and resurrection and repose with Christ in the kingdom of heaven. If you neglect these two virtues, you must know that you not only deprive yourself of all the things that we have listed, but also in scorning these two you undermine the foundation of all the other virtues as well. And just as for the one who keeps a hold on these two virtues and perseveres in them, they constitute the fount and mainstay of divine activity in the soul, and the door and way which lead to Christ, so whoever abandons and departs from them ends up with what is directly contrary to them – namely, an unsettled, roving mode of life combined with an uncontrolled gluttony.'[86]

Elsewhere St Isaac says, ‘Those who from the start of the monastic life are lazy and sluggish become frightened and bewildered not only by these struggles and the effort they require, but even by the sound of the leaves on a tree; they are defeated by some small need, by fear of hunger or by some small weakness, and they give up and return to their former ways. But those who are genuine and mature do not even feed on green vegetables; they live on the roots of dried herbs, and they do not allow themselves to eat anything before the appointed mealtime. Moreover, they sleep on the ground, their bodies enervated and in anguish, and their eyes dulled from extreme bodily privation. And even though perforce they come close to death they do not on that account give up and surrender, such is the strength of their resolution. For they long ardently to exert themselves to the utmost in their love for God; and they prefer to work hard for virtue rather than enjoy this transitory life and all the relaxation to be found in it. When temptations come upon them, they are all the more delighted because through these temptations they are brought to true fulfilment and become perfect. Nor do they waver in their love for God when they suffer trials and tribulations, but to the end of their lives are eager to confront all onslaughts bravely; and they do not give way before them, since it is through them that they attain perfection.’[87]

Thus since we, too, follow in the steps of such people and of those like them, and are obedient to Him who commanded, ‘Go by the king’s highway, and do not turn aside to the right hand or to the left’ (cf. Num. 20:17), we will set before you a model and rule which keeps to the mean, and which may be formulated as follows.

31. *How a person engaged in the spiritual struggle should eat on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.*

On three days of the week, that is, on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, eat only once a day at the ninth hour (3.00 p.m.). Allow yourself six ounces of bread, and eat dry food, with restraint, though sufficiently, and drink as many as three of four glasses of water if you wish. Follow the sixty-ninth canon of the Holy Apostles, which says, ‘If a bishop, priest, deacon, reader or cantor does not fast during the holy forty days before Pascha, or on Wednesdays, or on Fridays, let him be removed from office, unless he is prevented from fasting by some bodily infirmity; if he is a layman, let him be excommunicated.’[88] The practice of fasting on Mondays was added later by

the Holy Fathers.

32. *How to eat on Tuesdays and Thursdays.*

On the other two days, that is, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, you may eat twice a day. At lunchtime you may eat six ounces of bread, partake sparingly of cooked vegetables, and have a little dried food as well. You may drink some wine mixed with water, if you need it – as many as three or four glasses. In the evening you may eat three ounces of bread and some dry food or some fruit, and drink one glass of wine with water, or at the most two if you are very thirsty. For thirst, together with the keeping of vigils, is a great help in producing tears. As St John Klimakos says, 'Thirst and vigils have afflicted my heart; and from this affliction have sprung tears.'[89] And St Isaac says, 'Thirst for the sake of God, that He may fill you with His love.'[90] Should you choose to eat only one meal on these two days, you are acting aright, since the source, mother, root, fount and foundation of every blessing is fasting and self-restraint. A non-Christian writer says, 'Choose the best life, and familiarity will make it sweet to you.' And St Basil says, 'Where there is resolution there is no obstacle.'[91] And another of the inspired Fathers says, 'The fruit begins in the flower and the ascetic life starts with self-restraint.'[92]

Perhaps what we have said, and what we are going to say later, will seem difficult to some or, indeed, impossible. But if you bear in mind the fruit that these things produce, and the great glory to which they usually give birth, you will regard them as feasible. With the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by exerting yourself as much as you can, you will demonstrate, both through your words and through your actions, that they are in fact very easy to practise; and so you will confirm the validity of what we are saying. St Isaac states, 'Frugal food from the table of a holy man cleanses from every passion the soul of whoever eats it.' And, 'From the table of those who fast and keep vigils and labour in the Lord, help yourself to the elixir of life and rouse your soul from its moribund state; because the Beloved reclines in the midst of such people, sanctifying their food and transforming the harshness of their ascetic life into His inexpressible sweetness. And His spiritual and angelic ministers overshadow them and their holy food.' And, 'Sweet-smelling is the man who fasts, and to encounter him gladdens the hearts of the discerning.' And, 'The life of a man who practises self-control is most pleasing to God.'[93]

33. *The regimen for Saturdays. Also about vigils, and how to eat at such times.*

On every Saturday, except that of Holy Week, you should have two meals, as we have already prescribed for Tuesdays and Thursdays. This is in accordance with the sacred Canons, and because you must observe a vigil before all the Sundays of the year except for the Sunday preceding Great Lent. But if one of the great feasts of the Lord or of the major saints happens to fall on the Sunday in question, in the preceding night you should keep the vigil of the feast of the Lord or of the saint, and not the Sunday vigil. But in either case have two meals on Saturday. It is always beneficial to force yourself to observe the night vigils. Hence if a vigil happens to fall in the middle of the week, it will be greatly to your profit to keep the Sunday vigil as well. As Scripture says, 'Thus will your light break forth as the morning, and your healing will spring up speedily' (Isa. 58:8).

As St Isaac says, 'The first step in every struggle against sin and lust is to keep vigils and fasts, especially when you are contending against the sin which is within us. In the case of those engaged in spiritual warfare, the sign of their hatred of sin and lust is to be seen precisely in their observance of vigils. Nearly all the attacks of the passions begin to grow weaker as a result of fasting; and after fasting it is the night vigils that help us most in the ascetic life. Whoever throughout his life loves the company of these two things, fasting and vigils, will have self-restraint as his friend. Just as pandering to the belly, together with lust-enkindling, sluggish indulgence in sleep, are the beginning of every evil, so the holy highway to God and the foundation of every virtue is fasting, combined with keeping vigil and alertness during divine worship.'[94]

Again, St Isaac says, 'Over the soul made radiant day and night by mindfulness of God and by sleepless vigils, the Lord forms a cloud to keep it safe, covering it by day and at night illumining it with the light of fire (cf. Exod. 13:21–22); and light will shine forth from within its darkness.'[95] And, 'Choose for yourself a labour of delight, the constant keeping of night vigils, through which all the Fathers shed their fallen self and were granted renewal of the intellect. During the hours of vigil the soul becomes conscious of immortal life; and in thus becoming conscious, it strips from itself the darkness of the passions and receives the Holy Spirit.'[96] And again, 'Value

the labour of keeping vigil, so that you may find consolation in your soul.'[97] And, 'Do not think, O man, that in all a monk's labours there is any practice greater than the keeping of night vigils.' And, 'Do not regard a monk who keeps vigils with discrimination of intellect as being still clothed with flesh; for to keep vigil in this way is truly the work of angels.' And, 'A soul that labours in this angelic practice of keeping vigils will acquire the eyes of the cherubim, and his gaze will ceaselessly scrutinize and contemplate heavenly visions.'[98]

Pass these vigils in prayer, psalmody and reading with purity, without distraction, and with a sense of compunction. You may keep vigil either on your own or with friendly and like-minded companions. At the end of each vigil, as a slight restorative after the effort you have made, take some food and drink, equivalent to what you would take for the evening meal; that is, eat three ounces of bread, supplemented by a sufficient amount of dry food. And drink three glasses of wine with water. Take care that on a day when you should fast until the ninth hour you do not dispense yourself from the fast because of the vigil. For you must do the one and not leave the other undone (cf. Matt. 23:23). As for the refreshment when the vigil has been completed, we have already said what you should do.

34. *On the diet for Sundays and on certain other matters. Also on toil and humility.*

On all Sundays you should eat twice a day, as on Saturdays. Adhere strictly to this rule unless you are sick; for these days have been declared by the Holy Fathers to be non-fasting days, both on account of long-established custom and for more recent reasons, divine or otherwise. On these days we do not limit ourselves to a single meal or to dry food. We partake of everything that is beneficial and not forbidden; and we eat vegetables, with moderation of course, and not exceeding the prescribed amounts. For it is always best to exercise self-control in all things. In the event of sickness, as we have said, without feeling any sense of shame, we should eat all lawful foods that are nourishing and strengthen the body. For the Holy Fathers have taught us to kill, not the body, but the passions. [99] Thus it is fitting for you to eat a little of all that has been sanctioned as permissible for monks, to the glory of God and with thanksgiving to Him, and also in order to avoid self-conceit. But refrain from what is superfluous. 'For to be frugal', as St Isaac says, 'teaches us self-

control even against our will; but when we partake of things freely and without restraint, we lose all control of ourselves.'[100] Do not cherish bodily repose. 'For a soul that loves God', again it is St Isaac who speaks, 'finds its repose in God and in Him alone.'[101] Rather, along with toil and hardship, choose humility. 'For toil and humility', says one of the saints, 'have Jesus as their reward.'[102]

35. *How to eat and how to conduct ourselves during the holy fasts and especially in the Great Fast.*

Regarding diet, as well as the manner of life you should lead during the holy fasts, we consider it superfluous to dwell on details and particulars. For what you have already been instructed to do on the days on which you fast until the ninth hour is the same as what you are required to do during the holy fasts, except for Saturdays and Sundays. Indeed, if possible follow these instructions even more strictly and attentively, especially during the holy and great fast of Lent; for this is a tithe of the whole year, and on the divine and light-filled day of the Lord's resurrection it rewards with trophies those who in His name have proved themselves victors.

36. *On certain aspects of discrimination, and how ascetic labour in moderation is invaluable. On obedience.*

Furthermore, with regard to what we have discussed above and to similar matters, you should put them into practice with accurate discrimination, thereby achieving an harmonious and peaceful coexistence of body and soul. For it is written, 'Through wisdom is a house built, and through understanding it is established; and through insight will its storerooms be filled with riches of all kinds, precious and beautiful' (Prov. 24:3–4). And the holy Thalassios writes, 'A reasonable and discreet indigence and poverty is the royal highway; thus both an undiscriminating mortification and uncontrolled laxity are unprofitable, since both are contrary to good sense.'[103] And St Isaac says, 'Relaxation of the body leads to derangement and confusion of thoughts; immoderate work leads to listlessness; and listlessness leads to derangement. There is a difference between these two kinds of derangement. The first kind, due to relaxation, causes the monk to be attacked by lechery; the second, due to listlessness, causes him to abandon

his monastery and to wander from place to place. Ascetic labour undertaken moderately and assiduously is of inestimable value. To reduce such labour is to increase self-indulgence; but to labour immoderately brings about derangement.'[104] And the great Maximos says, 'Do not devote all your time to your body but apply to it a measure of asceticism appropriate to its strength, and then turn all your intellect to what is within. "Bodily asceticism has only a limited use, but true devotion is useful in all things" (1 Tim. 4:8).'[105]

If the body outweighs the soul on the scales and brings it under its sway and oppresses it, the proper balance will be upset, and turbulent, soul-destroying impulses will gain the upper hand. For it is written, 'The desires of the flesh are contrary to those of the spirit, the desires of the spirit are contrary to those of the flesh' (Gal. 5:17). Thus you should curb the flesh with the bridle of self-control and mortify it until it becomes tractable, however unwilling it may be, and submits to the soul. Remember the words of St Paul, 'To the extent that our outer self wastes away, our inner self is renewed day by day' (cf. 2 Cor. 4:16). And St Isaac says, 'Fight the ascetic battle to the point of death rather than live in heedlessness, for martyrs are not only those who have received death because of their faith in Christ; they are also those who die because of their observance of the commandments.'[106] And, 'It is better for us to die in the struggle than to go on living in our fallen state.'[107] Above all, do not do anything without consulting and questioning your spiritual father. In this way, with Christ's grace, even what is burdensome will appear light, and an uphill task will seem as easy as walking down a gentle slope. But we must return to our previous theme.

37. *On how a person engaged in spiritual warfare should spend the time between the midday meal and sunset; and on how he must believe that divine gifts are bestowed on us according to the burden and measure of our ascetic labour.*

After taking your midday meal as a person engaged in spiritual warfare should, and as St Paul indicates when he says that everyone engaged in such warfare 'exercises self-control in all respects' (1 Cor. 9:25), sit down and read for a length of time, especially from the writings of the Fathers on vigilance. And then sleep for one hour if the days are long. Then rise and

work with your hands for a little while, still continuing with the Prayer. After this, pray in the manner we have already explained. Read, meditate and study, so that you may become humble and consider yourself inferior to everyone else. For 'whoever exalts himself', says Scripture, 'will be abased; and whoever humbles himself will be exalted' (Matt. 23:12); and, 'Let him who thinks he is standing beware lest he fall' (1 Cor. 10:12); and, 'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble' (Jas. 4:6); and, 'The source of pride is ignorance of the Lord' (cf. Ecclus. 10:12); and 'The proud have greatly transgressed' (Ps. 119:51.LXX); and, 'Do not be haughty, but associate with those who are humble' (Rom. 12:16).

St John Chrysostom says, 'Truly to know oneself is to regard oneself as nothing; for God does not hold anything more precious than that one should reckon oneself as last of all.'[108] And St Isaac says, 'The mysteries are revealed to those who are humble in mind' (cf. Ecclus. 3:19);[109] and, 'Where humility flowers, there the glory of God flourishes';[110] and, 'Humility is the forerunner of grace, whereas self-conceit leads to punishment.'[111] And St Varsanuphios says, 'If you really wish to be saved, listen and act accordingly. Don't drag your feet along the earth but raise your intellect to heaven, and make that your study night and day. With all your strength look upon yourself with contempt, and strive to regard yourself as lower than everyone else. This is the true way, and apart from it there is no other for anyone who wishes to be saved through Christ, the source of our strength. Let him who so desires run in the race, and let him run in such a way as to gain the prize (cf. Phil. 3:14). I bear this testimony before the living God, He who wishes to bestow eternal life on all who desire it' (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4).[112] And St John Klimakos writes, 'David did not say, "I have fasted", "I have kept vigils", "I have slept on the bare earth", but "I humbled myself, and the Lord quickly saved me" (Ps. 116:6).'[113]

Before all else, strive to account yourself as nothing. For, as St Varsanuphios says, 'To be detached from all cares brings you close to the city; and not to regard yourself as of any importance among men enables you to dwell in the city; and to die to everyone makes you heir to the city and to its treasures. [114] If, then, you wish to be saved, account yourself as nothing and strive to attain that which you seek.'[115] 'To account oneself as nothing,' according to this saint's disciple, St John, 'is not to regard yourself as equal

to anyone, and not to say about any good work, “I too have done that”.’[116]

Then sit down again and pray with purity and without distraction until evening falls. Then sing Vespers as usual and bring the service to a close. And trust with a sincere heart that we shall be granted by God gifts and rewards, strength and consolation, in accordance with the degree to which we have laboured and suffered for the sake of virtue and in proportion to the effort we have made; as the Psalmist says, ‘According to the multitude of the sorrows within my heart Thy consolations have gladdened my soul’ (Ps. 94:19.LXX). And the Saviour says, ‘Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest’ (Matt. 11:28). And St Paul says, ‘If we suffer with Christ, it is so that we may be also glorified with Him. For I consider that what we suffer at this present time is not to be compared with the glory which in the future will be revealed to us’ (Rom. 8:17–18).

St Maximos, wise in all things divine, also states, ‘Divine blessings are bestowed according to the measure of faith in each person. Similarly, the strength of our faith is revealed by the zeal with which we act. Thus our actions disclose the measure of our faith, and the strength of our faith determines the measure of grace that we receive. Conversely, the extent to which we fail to act reveals the measure of our lack of faith, and our lack of faith in turn determines the degree to which we are deprived of grace. Hence the person who out of jealousy envies those who practise the virtues is more than misguided, for the choice of believing and acting, and of receiving grace according to the measure of his faith, clearly depends on him and not on anybody else.’[117] Let us ask with all our soul that we may persevere in faith during the time that is still left to us, so that the end of our life may be Christian, free from pain, not blighted by shame, and peaceful, and that in addition to this we may give a good account of ourselves when we stand before the dread tribunal of our Lord and God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

38. *Pure prayer is better than any form of outward activity.*

In addition to what has already been explained, you should also know, brother, that every pursuit and rule and, moreover, every kind of outward activity has been laid down and prescribed in this way because we are not yet able to pray in the heart with purity and without distraction. For when through the favour and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we have achieved such prayer, then we may lay aside the many varied activities that fragment us, and

we can be united directly, in a way that surpasses all description, with Him who is one, unitary and unifying; for, as the renowned Theologian says, ‘God is united with and known by those who are deified.’[118] This union is nothing else than the personal illumination of the Holy Spirit within the heart, born, as we have said, as a result of pure, undistracted prayer of the heart. It occurs but rarely, scarcely one in a thousand being empowered by the grace of Christ to advance to this state. As for going beyond it and being granted spiritual prayer, thus experiencing the revelation of the mysteries of the Age to come, this is a privilege given by divine grace to extremely few people in any single generation.

As St Isaac writes, ‘Just as among ten thousands of people scarcely one attains purity of soul through consistently fulfilling the commandments and the observances which have been laid down, so there is found but one in a thousand who through diligent self-watchfulness is enabled to attain not only pure prayer but also the mystery of spiritual prayer that lies beyond it. For only a few, and not by any means many, are granted pure prayer, while scarcely one in any generation passes by the grace of Christ beyond this and experiences the mystery of spiritual prayer.’ And he adds, ‘If scarcely anyone attains pure prayer, what shall we say about spiritual prayer? Spiritual prayer is always free from any kind of fluctuation. Any prayer that is subject to fluctuation falls short of spiritual prayer.’[119]

Thus if you, too, wish with Christ’s help to attain these strange mysteries truly and effectively, that is to say, in actual experience, you should make every effort to pray in your heart with purity and without distraction at all times, at all hours, and in everything you do. For in this way you may advance from being an infant at the breast to the state of full maturity whose measure is Christ Himself (cf. Eph. 4:13); and in the company of the faithful and prudent steward (cf. Luke 12:42–43) you will then hear yourself acclaimed as blessed since you have managed things with discernment, that is, you have followed a wise way of life. As a result you will never be knocked off your balance. As St Philimon writes on this matter, ‘Brother, whether it is at night or during the day that God grants you the gift of praying with a pure intellect, undistractedly, put aside your own rule, and reach towards God with all your strength, cleaving to Him. And He will illumine your heart about the spiritual work which you should undertake.’[120] And another of those wise in God says, ‘If, being in the body, you wish to serve

God as though you were bodiless, acquire ceaseless prayer secretly in your heart, and before you die your soul will become like an angel.'

St Isaac writes in the same vein. When asked by someone to describe the summation of all the labours of this way of life, that is, the way of stillness, so that when one attains it one knows one has attained perfection in it, he replied as follows: 'It is when a person has been granted uninterrupted prayer. For when he has achieved this, he has gained the crown of all the virtues, and from then on he becomes the dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit. For if he has not truly received the grace of the Holy Spirit, he cannot fully experience this unceasing prayer. Once the Spirit dwells within him, he will never stop praying, for the Spirit Himself never stops praying. Hence, whether he is asleep or awake, the prayer goes on in his soul uninterruptedly. Indeed, whether he is eating or drinking or sleeping, or whatever he is doing, even in the deepest slumber, the fragrance and perfume of prayer arise effortlessly in his heart. When he has reached this state, his prayer never ceases, but the whole time, even if it seems outwardly to have become quiescent, it continues to be at work within him in a hidden way. One of the Fathers who bore Christ in his heart calls prayer the silence of the pure, since the thoughts of such people are divine movements. For the movements of a pure heart and mind are gentle voices, with which they sing secretly to the hidden God.'[121]

Many other writers among the inspired Fathers, initiated by the experience of grace itself, have written of countless such wonderful things; but we will omit what they say, so as not to render our discourse too long.

39. *On the number of prostrations to be made in the course of twenty-four hours.*

As regards the number of prostrations, we know that three hundred have been prescribed by our Holy Fathers, which we must execute every twenty-four hours on five days of the week. On Saturdays and Sundays, however, and indeed on certain other days and even weeks specially set apart by custom, we are commanded for certain mystical and arcane reasons to abstain from making prostrations. There are some, though, who on the other days exceed the number that is prescribed; and there are some who fall short of it, each according to his strength and resolution. You, therefore, should do what is in keeping with your strength. Nevertheless, a person who in all things related to God always puts pressure on himself is truly blessed, many times over. For

‘the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and it is the violent who take it by force’ (Matt. 11:12).

40. *Divine gifts are bestowed not only in accordance with the degree to which we engage in the struggles and trials of the ascetic life, as we have already said, but also in accordance with our inner state and capability, with our belief and with our inherent disposition.*

We should also know that divine gifts are bestowed on us not only in accordance with the degree to which we engage in the struggles and trials of the ascetic life, as we have already said, but also in accordance with the inner state and capability with which we practise this way of life, and indeed with our belief in the goals set before us and with our own inherent disposition. St Maximos says, ‘The intellect is the origin of wisdom, the intelligence that of spiritual knowledge. The natural sense of assurance common to both intellect and intelligence is the organ of the faith established in each of them, while natural compassion is the organ of the gift of healing. For, corresponding to every divine gift, there is in us an appropriate and natural organ capable of receiving it – a kind of capacity or intrinsic state or disposition. Thus he who purges his intellect of all sensible images receives wisdom. He who makes his intelligence the master of his innate passions, that is to say, of his incensive and desiring powers, receives spiritual knowledge. He whose intellect and intelligence possess an unshakeable assurance concerning divine realities receives the faith with which all things are possible. He who has acquired natural compassion receives, after the utter annihilation of self-love, the gifts of healing.’[122]

In addition, make sure that no one knows about the spiritual work in which you are engaged except the one who is directing and guiding you. And pray for unworthy people like ourselves who speak about what is good but do not practise it, so that we may be enabled to do the things that accord with God’s will before we teach and exhort others. For the Lord says that it is the one who keeps the commandments and teaches them to others who will be called great (cf. Matt. 5:19). May the almighty and merciful Lord strengthen and lead you so that you may not only listen to these things with understanding, but also practise them with great zeal; for, as St Paul says, it is not those who hear the law that are righteous in the sight of God, but those who practise it (cf. Rom. 2:13). And may you be guided towards every good

and saving work and be led spiritually through the prayers of the saints to the noetic and sacred task that lies before you. Amen.

Since we have already said something about practical discrimination, it is fitting that we should also briefly discuss, in so far as we can, the integral and perfect kind of discrimination; for, according to our illustrious Fathers, this is the greatest of all the virtues.

41. *On all-embracing and perfect discrimination; and on the one who lives according to his fallen and exterior self in a state contrary to nature, on the one whose life is soul-directed and in accordance with nature, and on the one who lives on the supranatural and spiritual plane.*

The person who lives and orders his life according to his fallen and exterior self in a state contrary to nature has totally destroyed his power of discrimination. The person who has renounced sin and has begun to practise the virtues, in accordance with the injunction, 'Turn away from evil and do good' (Ps. 34:14), is in the initial stages of the spiritual life; he harkens to instruction, and so acquires some slight sense of discrimination, congruent with his immature stage. The person whose life is soul-directed and in accordance with nature, inasmuch as he conducts himself in a right-minded and intelligent manner, is said to be at the intermediate stage; thus he perceives and discriminates in regard both to what pertains to himself, and to what pertains to those in a similar state, according to the insight granted to him. The person who lives on the supranatural and spiritual plane has transcended the state of domination by the passions, has progressed beyond the initial and intermediate stages of spiritual life, and by the grace of Christ has advanced to the state of perfection, that is, to a state of actual inner illumination and perfect discrimination; thus he perceives his own self and discriminates in regard to himself with the utmost clarity, and indeed perceives other people and discriminates in regard to them with unerring accuracy, while he himself, even though physically visible to others, actually transcends their perception and their discriminative capacity. In fact he is recognized and acknowledged to be a truly spiritual person, not because of his ability to put pen to paper, but because of his actions and the grace that fills him. As St Paul says, 'He who is spiritual is capable of judging all things, yet he himself is not to be judged by anyone' (1 Cor. 2:15).

42. *More on discrimination, with analogies.*

The person who lives according to his fallen and exterior self is like a man travelling in pitch darkness on a black moonless night. Thus he loses his way and cannot make anything out because of the impenetrable darkness. Not only is he unable to perceive his own self or to distinguish anything, but also he cannot make out where he is going or putting his feet. As the Saviour says, ‘He who walks in the dark does not know where he is going’ (John 12:35). On the other hand, the person who has renounced sin and has begun to practise the virtues is like a man travelling under a clear night sky shining with stars. Thus, since his way is lit dimly by starlight, he proceeds slowly, often stumbling over stones which he fails to notice and falling down. Such a person therefore perceives his own self and makes things out only in an indistinct way, as if in shadowy outline; for it is written, ‘Awake, you who sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light’ (Eph. 5:14). Again, the person who is soul-directed is like a man travelling on a calm night lit by the full moon. Thus, since he is guided by the light of the moon, he travels without losing his way and reaches his destination. He perceives himself as in a mirror and makes out those who travel with him; for it is written, ‘You do well in observing the law as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts’ (cf. 2 Pet. 1:19). But the person who lives on the supranatural and spiritual plane is like someone travelling at high noon with the pure rays of the sun shining upon him. Such a person therefore both perceives his own self perfectly by the light of the sun, and can distinguish other things; also he can rightly understand most people or, rather, can understand everyone, as St Paul says (cf. 1 Cor. 2:15). Indeed, he can rightly understand almost everything that happens to him, whatever it may be and however it may occur, since he himself travels without going astray and unerringly leads those who follow him to the true light and to life and truth. Of such people it is written, ‘You are the light of the world’ (Matt. 5:14). And St Paul says, ‘God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ’ (2 Cor. 4:6). And the blessed David says, ‘The light of Thy face has set its seal upon us, O Lord’ (Ps. 4:6.LXX), and, ‘In Thy light shall we see light’ (Ps. 36:9). And the Lord says, ‘I am the light of the world; he that follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life’ (John 8:12).

43. *On change and flux, which affect everyone; and on the supreme glory of humility.*

We would also like you to know that those who have reached perfection through purification and illumination have done so only in so far as this is attainable in our present temporal life. For there is no complete perfection in this imperfect phase of life, but only an incomplete perfection; and thus such people, because of their natural infirmity and the pride which sometimes steals upon them, are always exposed to changes of inner state. Indeed, such changes and stealthy intrusions may be sent to them by way of testing them, so that as a result of being tested they may receive greater help from God. Any teaching opposed to this is, the Fathers declare, the teaching of wolf-like predators, for uninterrupted stability and immunity to change pertain solely to the life hereafter. At the present time there are moments of purity, peace and divine consolation, and there are moments of confusion, disturbance and dejection, depending on the quality of each person's way of life, on his degree of progress, and on reasons known only to the Lord, and also so that through these changes we may truly recognize our weakness. 'For blessed is he who knows his own weakness', says Scripture (cf. Job 37:7.LXX). 'We should not trust in ourselves', says St Paul, 'but in Him who raises the dead' (cf. 2 Cor. 1:9). In this way we constantly have recourse to God through humility, repentance and confession.

'How many times', St Isaac says, 'have not some people, after falling into sin, then healed their souls through repentance, so that grace abounds in them! For all thinking creatures without exception are subject to change, and alterations are continually taking place in everyone. The frequency with which such changes occur is evident to anyone of intelligence, especially if he watches himself inwardly and sees how many temptations he undergoes every day, and how many changes with respect to gentleness and forbearance his mind experiences, and how without any apparent reason its state of tranquillity suddenly becomes one of turmoil, and how he falls into great and unspeakable danger. This is what the blessed Makarios had in mind when he wrote with such clarity, forethought and diligence to remind and teach his brethren not to sink into despair when things hostile to us render us subject to fluctuation; for just as the weather gets cold from time to time, so those who adhere to the discipline of purity continually suffer falls although they have not been negligent or lax. Indeed, even when they are following their rule in a

disciplined way, they experience falls contrary to the goals which they have set themselves.'

St Isaac continues, 'So what happens then? Changes, St Makarios tells us, occur in each person as they do in the weather. Note that he says "each person", because nature is one. He does not want you to think that he is speaking only about the weaker and lesser brethren, and that the perfect are free from change and stand unshakeably in a different class, untouched by impassioned thoughts, as the Euchites assert;[123] that is why he uses the expression "each person". How then is this so, Makarios? In the same way, Makarios tells us, as it is cold, and then after a little while there is fine weather. Something similar happens in our ascetic life. There is warfare and there is the help of grace; at times the soul meets with winter and rough waves dash against it, and then there is a change again when grace visits the heart and fills it with God-given joy and peace and with tranquil thoughts full of restraint and moderation. In speaking here of such self-restrained and moderate thoughts, St Makarios implies that there have been previous thoughts that were brutish and impure.

'Thus St Makarios encourages us saying, "If after having such self-restrained and gentle thoughts we should be attacked, let us not grow despondent or lapse into despair. On the other hand, when we are refreshed by grace let us not be boastful but in the time of joy let us expect affliction." And he goes on, "You should know that all the saints engaged themselves in this tussle. So long as we remain in this world, after affliction we will receive unaccustomed secret solace." For every day and every hour we are required to put our love for God to the test by wrestling and struggling with temptations. And when St Makarios tells us not to be grieved he means that we must not grow listless in the struggle. And he continues, "In this way you are set on the right road. If you want to turn aside or deviate from it, you will place yourself in the company of wolf-like predators."'

How wonderfully has St Makarios endorsed in a few words this kind of spiritual endeavour and shown it to be full of good sense, in this way banishing all doubt from the mind of the reader! If, he says, you deviate in these matters and place yourself in the company of wolves, you will be attempting to travel where there is no road. You will have set your mind on pursuing a path of your own choice, one not trodden by the Fathers. And a little later St Isaac says, 'Humility, even without ascetic practice, remits many sins. But ascetic practice without humility is, on the contrary, profitless.' And

a little further on: ‘As salt is to food, so is humility to every virtue; and it is able to destroy the power of many sins. We should therefore continually yearn for it with lowliness of mind and with a sorrow born of our recognition that we do not possess it. Should we attain it, it makes us sons of God, and brings us into God’s presence without us having to undertake ascetic labours. And unless we have it, all our ascetic practice, all our virtues, and all our undertakings are in vain. God, then, desires from us a change of mind, for our progress depends upon the state of our mind; it alone, without other assistance, can stand in the presence of God and speak on our behalf.’ And he goes on, ‘One of the saints has said that, when a feeling of pride steals over you and makes you think how virtuous you are, you should respond to it by saying to yourself, “Dotard, keep in mind how debauched you are.”’[124]

44. *On repentance, purity and perfection.*

‘Every mode of action’, writes St Isaac, ‘comes to perfection through these three virtues; repentance, purity and perfection. What is repentance? It is to abandon our former ways and to grieve over them. And what, briefly, is purity? It is a heart full of compassion for all created beings. And what is perfection? It is the deepest humility, which consists in relinquishing our attachment to all visible – that is, sensory – things and likewise to all invisible – that is, noetic – things, and in not being anxious about them.’ And again, ‘Repentance is a freely embraced twofold dying to all things. A compassionate heart is a heart that burns with love for the whole creation, for human beings and birds and animals and demons and every creature.’[125] And again, ‘As long as we are in this world and are still living in accordance with our fallen self, even if we are raised up to the vault of heaven we cannot dispense with ascetic labour and toil, nor can we live in total freedom from all anxiety. Our aim (forgive me) is first of all the consummation of the ascetic life. Beyond this lies meditation – meditation without discursive thought.’[126]

St Maximos says, ‘The cultivation of virtue produces dispassion in one’s will but not in one’s nature. But when dispassion has been attained in one’s will the grace of divine pleasure becomes active in the intellect.’[127] And also, ‘He who has had experience of the distress and pleasure of the flesh may be described as tested because he has experienced both the pleasant and the

unpleasant aspects of the flesh. A perfect man is one who with the power of his intelligence has struggled against the pleasure and pain of the flesh and has overcome them. An entire man is one who keeps both his practice of the virtues and his contemplative life unvarying through the intensity of his longing for God.'[128] It is for this reason that discrimination has been declared to be greater than all the other virtues, since those in whom it is engendered, by the favour of God, are illuminated with divine light and are able to discriminate accurately with respect to things divine and human and to mystical and hidden visions.

But now it is time, as we promised, to elucidate briefly though more explicitly, in so far as we can, the basic principles of sacred and deifying stillness. May God guide us in what we are about to say.

45. *On the five activities to be undertaken by those engaged in the initial and, as it were, introductory stages of the life of stillness, namely, prayer, psalmody, reading, meditation and manual labour.*

A person who has recently embarked on the initial stages of the life of stillness must serve God by engaging day and night in five activities. The first is prayer, or the ceaseless remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ conjoined, as we have already explained,[129] with the breath calmly inhaled through the nose and made to descend into the heart, and then exhaled again in the same way, with lips pressed together, and every other thought or mental image rigorously excluded. Such prayer practised in the cell with sincere humility is attained through all-inclusive self-control over the belly and over sleep and the other senses. The second is psalmody, with, thirdly, reading from the sacred psalter, from the Epistles of St Paul, from the Holy Gospels, and from the writings of the inspired Holy Fathers, particularly texts on prayer and watchfulness, as well as other inspired utterances of the Spirit. The fourth activity, meditation, consists in calling to mind with heartfelt pain the sins that we have committed, and in meditating on God's judgment, or on death, or on chastisement, or on the joy of heaven, and similar subjects. The fifth is light manual labour as a safeguard against listlessness.

After this, the novice must turn again to prayer, even if he has to exert himself forcibly, until his intellect becomes used to dispelling distractions without difficulty through one-pointed meditation on the Lord Jesus Christ, through ceaseless remembrance of Him, and through constantly directing its

attention towards the inner shrine and firmly rooting itself there, that is to say, in the hidden abode of the heart. For St Isaac writes, 'Strive assiduously to enter into your inner shrine and so you will find the shrine of heaven. For the two are one and the same, and there is but one single entry to them both.'[130] And St Maximos says, 'The heart rules over the whole human organism, and when grace takes possession of the pastures of the heart, it reigns over all a man's thoughts and members. For the intellect and all the thoughts of the soul are located there.'[131] That therefore is where we must look to discover if the grace of the Holy Spirit has inscribed its laws within us. Where must we look? Into the controlling organ, the throne of grace – into the heart, that is to say, where the intellect and all thoughts of the soul are to be found.

46. *How those who wish to embrace the life of stillness in the correct manner ought to begin; and what is its starting point, its growth, progress and perfection.*

The initial and as it were introductory training for novices,[132] who have chosen to embrace the life of stillness in the correct manner, may be characterized as follows. Starting with fear of God, they must fulfil all the deifying commandments to the best of their ability, be detached from all things whether attractive or distasteful, and above all they must have faith, shun sin completely, and cultivate a genuine devotion towards that which truly exists, as we have already said. Thus they advance through confident hope until they attain the state of full maturity whose measure is Christ (cf. Eph. 4:13). This comes to pass through the wholly divine and excelling love generated by pure and undistracted prayer in the heart, and it is brought to perfection by the unwavering and undeviating spiritual prayer that springs from perfect love. Such prayer takes the form of immediate ecstasy, alone to the Alone, as we are united in rapture with Him who is our supreme desire. Through ascetic practice we progress unswervingly and ascend to contemplation. This is what David, the ancestor of God, experienced; and having been changed by that blessed change (cf. Ps. 77:10), he cried out, 'I said in my ecstasy: Every man is a liar' (Ps. 116:11.LXX). And another of the eminent writers in the Old Testament affirms, 'The eye has not seen, and the ear has not heard, and the human heart has not conceived the things which God has prepared for them that love Him' (cf. Isa. 64:4; 52:15; 1 Cor. 2:9).

And St Paul adds in conclusion, ‘But God has revealed these things to us through His Spirit; for the Spirit fathoms everything, even the depths of God Himself’ (1 Cor. 2:10).

47. *On the way beginners should practise the life of stillness.*

Thus, as we have already said, a beginner must not be constantly leaving his cell. He must avoid meeting people and speaking with them, except in case of great necessity, and then rarely and with great care and caution. As St Isaac says, ‘With regard to everything, bear in mind that you are helped more by keeping a watch over yourself than you are by engaging in sundry activities’;[133] for the latter induce distraction and confusion not only in beginners but even in those who have already made some progress. As St Isaac says, ‘Moderate relaxation harms only the young, whereas a general lack of control harms both the young and the old.[134] Stillness deadens the external senses and stimulates one’s inner energies, but spending time outside one’s cell does the opposite; it arouses the external senses and deadens one’s inner energies.’[135] Here St Isaac is referring to ascetic practice and to the right course to be followed in the pursuit of stillness. St John Klimakos has in mind the person who is advancing along this course when he writes, ‘A hesychast is a person who strives to confine what is bodiless within his bodily house, paradoxical though this is’; and, ‘A hesychast is a person who says, “I sleep but my heart keeps watch” (Song of Songs 5:2)’; and, ‘Shut the door of your cell to your body, the door of your tongue to speech, and your inward door to evil spirits.’[136]

48. *On prayer in the heart acquired through attentiveness and watchfulness, and on the way it operates.*

As we have said, prayer arises in the heart through attentiveness and watchfulness and through the dispelling of every other thought or fantasy. Through the Prayer ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God’, the intellect in a non-material and wordless manner is silently elevated towards the Lord Jesus Christ whom it calls to mind. Then through the words ‘have mercy on me’, it retraces its course and returns to itself, since it cannot desist from praying for itself. But when it has drawn near to love, then with the first part of the Prayer it is wholly elevated to the Lord Jesus Christ through direct experience

and union, while with the second part it receives from Him clear assurance of His mercy.

49. *On how the Holy Fathers teach us to say the Prayer, on the different ways in which we may say it, and on what the Prayer is.*

Not all the Holy Fathers teach us to repeat invariably the whole of the Prayer, but one of them tells us to say all of it, another, half of it, another, a smaller part. They teach us to say it various different ways, allowing perhaps for the capacity and state of the one praying. In the following passage St John Chrysostom teaches us to say the whole of the Prayer: 'I beseech you, brethren, never neglect the rule of prayer or be indifferent to it. For I once heard some of the Fathers say, "What kind of monk is he who neglects the rule of prayer or is indifferent to it?" On the contrary, whether he is eating, or drinking, or sitting down, or performing some service, or on a journey, or doing anything else, the monk should ceaselessly cry out, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me", with the result that this remembrance of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ provokes the enemy to attack him. A person who really exerts himself is able through this remembrance to perceive everything, both good or bad. First he will be able to see the evil in his heart, and then what is good. For remembrance can both rouse and crush the serpent. It can expose the sin which dwells within us (cf. Rom. 7:17), and can overcome the adversary and gradually eradicate all his power from the heart. Thus when the name of the Lord Jesus Christ descends into the depths of the heart it crushes the serpent that holds sway there and saves and vivifies the soul. Abide, then, ceaselessly with the name of the Lord Jesus, so that your heart may swallow the Lord and the Lord your heart, and the two may become one. But this is not a task that can be completed in one or two days; it takes a long time, for we need to struggle hard over an extended period before the enemy is dislodged and Christ comes to dwell within us.'[137]

St John Chrysostom writes further, 'We must watch over the intellect, and bridle and curb it, and we must chastise every evil thought and impulse through the invocation of our Lord Jesus Christ. And where the body is, there let the intellect be also, so that no wall or barrier can stand between God and the heart, throwing its shadow over the heart and separating the intellect from God. And should something lay hold of the intellect, it should not dally with the thoughts this provokes, lest consent to those thoughts should be an act

laid to its charge on the day of judgment in the presence of Christ, when God judges what is hidden within us (cf. Rom. 2:16).

'Continually keep yourself inwardly free, then, and devote yourself to the Lord our God until He has mercy upon you (cf. Ps. 123:2). Seek nothing except mercy from the Lord of glory. And when seeking mercy, ask for it with a humble and merciful heart. And repeat from dawn until dusk, and if possible all night too, the words "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me." And force your intellect to persist in this task until death. For it is a task which calls for great exertion on your part, because "narrow is the gate and hard is the way which leads to life" (Matt. 7:14); and it is those who force themselves to make this effort who enter into it, for "the kingdom of heaven suffers violence" (Matt. 11:12). Hence I beseech you not to separate your hearts from God, but continue protecting them through the remembrance of our Lord Jesus Christ at all times, until the name of the Lord takes root in the heart and you think of nothing else but that Christ may be glorified in you (cf. 2 Thess. 1:12).'[138]

St Paul, writing about the Lord Jesus long before St John Chrysostom, stated, 'If your lips acknowledge the Lord Jesus, and your heart believes that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For if your heart believes, then you will be led to righteousness; and if your lips acknowledge the Lord, you will attain salvation' (Rom. 10:9–10). And he also says, 'No one can say "Lord Jesus" except in the Holy Spirit' (1 Cor. 12:3). He adds the words 'except in the Holy Spirit' to signify that it is from the Holy Spirit that the heart receives the energy whereby it prays. This is the case with those who have made some progress and in whom Christ manifestly dwells.

It is in accordance with this that St Diadochos writes, 'When we have blocked all its outlets by means of the remembrance of God, the intellect requires of us imperatively some task which will satisfy its need for activity. For the complete fulfilment of its purpose we should give it nothing but the Prayer "Lord Jesus". "No one", it is written, "can say 'Lord Jesus' except in the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:3). Let the intellect continually concentrate on these words within its inner shrine with such intensity that it is not turned aside to any mental images. Those who meditate unceasingly upon this glorious and holy name in the depths of their heart can sometimes see the light of their own intellect. For when the mind is closely concentrated upon this name, then we grow fully conscious that the name is burning up all the filth which covers the surface of the soul; for it is written, "Our God is a

consuming fire" (Deut. 4:24; Heb. 12:29). Then the Lord awakens in the soul a great love for His glory; for when the intellect with fervour of heart maintains persistently its remembrance of the precious name, then that name implants in us a constant love for its goodness, since there is nothing now that stands in the way. This is the pearl of great price which a man can acquire by selling all that he has, and so experience the inexpressible joy of making it his own (cf. Matt. 13:46).'[139]

St Hesychios, writing of the name 'Christ Jesus', adds the following: 'If the soul has Christ with it, it will not be disgraced by its enemies even at death, when it rises to heaven's entrance; but then, as now, it will boldly confront them. But let it not tire in calling upon the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, day and night until the time of its departure from this mortal life, and He will speedily avenge it in accordance with the promise which He Himself made when speaking of the unjust judge (cf. Luke 18:1–8). Indeed, He will avenge it both in this present life and after its departure from its body.'[140] St John Klimakos, speaking of the name 'Jesus' by itself, writes, 'Flog your enemies with the name of Jesus, for there is no more powerful weapon in heaven or on earth.'[141] And he adds nothing else. Again he says, 'Let your breath cleave to the remembrance of Jesus, and then you will know the value of stillness.'[142]

50. *The mystery of the words of this sacred and divinizing prayer has been spiritually unveiled not only by the Holy Fathers whom we have cited but also by the chief Apostles Peter, Paul and John.*

The mystery of the sacred words of this prayer has been unveiled not only by the inspired Fathers whom we have cited, and by others like them, but also before these by the first and chief Apostles themselves, Peter, Paul and John. For St Paul, as we have already seen, says, 'No one can say "Lord Jesus" except in the Holy Spirit' (1 Cor. 12:3). St John says, 'Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ' (John 1:17); and, 'Every spirit which acknowledges that Jesus Christ has appeared in human form is from God' (1 John 4:2). And St Peter, the leader of Christ's disciples, in reply to the question 'Who do men say that I am?', put by the Saviour and Teacher Himself to the Apostles, made in his reply a most blessed profession of faith, saying, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God' (Matt. 16:16). This is why those who came

after the Apostles – our own famous teachers and especially those who have led the celibate, eremitical life of stillness – have recognized that these scattered and partial phrases, announced with such foreknowledge by these three pillars of the holy Church, constitute divine utterances revealed through the Holy Spirit and attested by three most reliable witnesses – and we know that every utterance supported by three witnesses is firmly established (cf. Matt. 18:16). On this account they have linked these phrases together with the utmost skill, and with the help of the Holy Spirit that dwelt within them they have shown how they fit together, thus constituting a concise memorial of how to pray; and they have handed on this memorial to those who came later, for them to serve and guard in the same form.

Observe now the order and sequence of the phrases, and see how marvellously full of heavenly wisdom they are. For St Paul says ‘Lord Jesus’, St John ‘Jesus Christ’, and St Peter ‘Christ, Son of God’, each following the other and all adhering closely to each other on account of the harmony and bond which exists between them. For you can observe how in each of these expressions the ending of one forms the beginning of the next, and so on for all three. The same thing happens also when they refer likewise to the Spirit. For St Paul writes, ‘No one can say “Lord Jesus” except in the Holy Spirit’ (1 Cor. 12:3). The word which comes at the end of this text, namely ‘Spirit’, is taken up by St John in his opening words when he says with his ‘voice of thunder’, ‘Every spirit which acknowledges that Jesus Christ has appeared in human form is from God’ (1 John 4:2). They have written these phrases down for us not as products of their own mind, or as something coming from themselves, but because they have been guided by the hand of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, St Peter’s revelatory profession of faith was similarly brought about by the Holy Spirit. It is as Scripture says, ‘All things are wrought by one and the same Spirit, who distributes gifts to each persons as He wishes’ (1 Cor. 12:11).

Thus the threefold, unbreakable cord of deifying prayer (cf. Eccles. 4:12), plaited, woven and spun together with such wisdom and knowledge, comes down to us and is preserved by us in the same form. The words ‘have mercy on me’ were added by the Holy Fathers who came later, and they were placed after the saving words of the Prayer – that is, after ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God’. This addition was made especially for those who are still young children in the order of virtue, that is, for beginners and the imperfect. In the case of those who are advanced and perfected in Christ, the opening words of

the Prayer – ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God’ – are enough; and sometimes the single word ‘Jesus’ is sufficient for them. For, taking to heart and embracing this holy name, they find in it the whole efficacy of the Prayer, since through this one word they are filled with a delight and joy which surpasses everything apprehended by intellect, sight and hearing. In this way these thrice-blessed hesychasts detach themselves from material and worldly things, quieten their senses and, seized by love through the divine gift and grace which dwells within them in an ecstatic and blessed way, are purified, enlightened and perfected; for they now perceive indistinctly as in a mirror (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12) and as, so to say, by way of a foretaste, the supranatural, unoriginate and uncreated grace of the supraessential Godhead.

As we have said, for their remembrance and meditation just one of the revealed names of the theandric Logos is enough, and through this one name they have been exalted by the Holy Spirit and have been granted unutterable raptures, knowledge and revelations. So that we may be manifestly convinced and assured of these things in the clearest way, our sweetest Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and lover of souls, whose utterances are acts and whose words, as He Himself says, are spirit and life (cf. John 6:63), proclaimed with the utmost clarity, ‘Without Me you can do nothing’ (cf. John 15:5), and, ‘If you ask anything in My name, I will do it’ (John 14:14), and, ‘Whatsoever you ask in My name, that will I do’ (John 14:13), and so on, in accordance with what we have explained.

51. *On how even beginners may sometimes say the whole of the Prayer, and sometimes only part of it, reciting it continually within the heart. And on how one must not frequently change the words one uses.*

Even beginners may sometimes say the whole of the Prayer, and sometimes only part of it, reciting it continually within the heart. According to St Diadochos, ‘He who dwells continually within his own heart is detached from the attractions of this world, for he lives in the Spirit and cannot know the desires of the flesh. Such a man henceforth walks up and down within the fortress of the virtues which keep guard at all the gates of his purity. The assaults of the demons are now ineffective against him.’[143] And St Isaac writes, ‘The heart of a man who continually watches over his soul is full of joy on account of the revelations he receives. And he who concentrates his contemplative powers within himself beholds the light of the Spirit. He

whose intellect rejects all distraction contemplates his Master within his heart.'[144] He must not frequently change the words of the Prayer, lest his intelligence through such constant switching and changing grows accustomed to a certain instability and dislocation, and remains rootless and unfruitful, like trees which are frequently dug up and transplanted.

52. *Much time, as well as exertion and forcefulness, are needed before prayer in the heart is brought to fruition. In general, every blessing is attained with great effort sustained over a long period.*

To be able to pray ceaselessly in the heart, let alone to advance even beyond that, is not a simple fortuitous achievement, to be accomplished with but brief and feeble effort, even if, through the ineffable dispensation of God, there are rare exceptions to this rule. On the contrary, before we can attain such blessings, much time is needed and much toil, along with great exertion and effort on the part of both body and soul. For the gift and grace in which we hope to participate will be bestowed on us in accordance with the strength of our efforts and the time we devote to making them; and the result of such efforts is, according to our holy teachers, that the enemy is ejected from the pastures of the heart and Christ comes to dwell manifestly within it. St Isaac says, 'He who wishes to see the Lord contrives to purify his heart through the continual remembrance of God; for in this way, in the clarity of his mind, he will see the Lord at all times.'[145] And St Varsanuphios says, 'Unless inner spiritual practice, with God's help, assists you, your outer ascetic practice is labour in vain. It is inner practice, with travail of heart, that brings about purity, and purity brings about the true stillness of the heart. Stillness in its turn produces humility, and through humility you become the abode of God. As a result of this indwelling the demons together with the passions are expelled, and you become a temple of God, full of holiness, illumination, purity and grace.'[146] Blessed is he, then, who sees his Lord as in a mirror in the sanctuary of his heart and pours out his supplication with tears in the presence of His goodness. And St John of Karpathos says, 'Great effort and much time are needed in prayer, before through struggle we can reach a state in which our mind is no longer troubled, and so attain the inward heaven of the heart, where Christ dwells. As the Apostle says, "Do you not know that Jesus Christ dwells in you? Unless indeed you fail to meet the test" (cf. 2

Cor. 13:5).'[147] And the great Chrysostom says, 'Abide, then, ceaselessly with the name of the Lord Jesus, so that your heart may swallow the Lord and the Lord your heart, and the two may become one. But this is not a task that can be completed in one or two days; it takes a long time, for we need to struggle hard over an extended period before the enemy is dislodged and Christ comes to dwell within us.'[148] But that is enough on this point. We must now return to the orderly development of our theme.

53. *On prayer in the heart which is not pure, and on how one attains pure and undistracted prayer.*

By persevering in pure and undistracted prayer in the heart along the lines we have described, those pursuing the spiritual path will reach the state in which they pray purely and truly, without constraint and distraction, even if prior to that their prayer, because it is impeded by predispositions and intrusive thoughts, is not entirely pure and undistracted. That is to say, they learn to make their intellect abide in their heart. They no longer need forcefully, and because of their shortcomings, to draw it into the heart through inhaling, after which it straight away jumps out again; but they keep their intellect there continually and thus pray without ceasing. St Hesychios says, 'If we have not attained prayer that is free from thoughts, we have no weapon to fight with. By this prayer I mean the prayer which is ever active in the inner shrine of the soul, and which by invoking Christ scourges and sears our secret enemy.'[149] And again, 'Truly blessed is the man whose mind and heart are as closely attached to the Jesus Prayer and to the ceaseless invocation of His name as air to the body or flame to the wax. The sun rising over the earth creates daylight; and the venerable and holy name of the Lord Jesus, shining continually in the mind, gives birth to countless intellections radiant as the sun.'[150]

54. *On undistracted and pure prayer in the heart and on the warmth or ardour enkindled by it.*

What we have said shows what is meant when we speak of pure and undistracted prayer in the heart – prayer that enkindles a certain warmth or ardour in the heart, as indicated by the words, 'My heart grew hot within me, and in my meditation a fire was kindled' (Ps. 39:3.LXX). This is the fire

which the Lord Jesus Christ came to kindle in the fields of our heart, which previously because of the passions were full of thorns, but which now through God's grace are full of the Holy Spirit. As our Lord Jesus Christ Himself says, 'I am come to cast fire on the earth; and would that it were already kindled!' (Luke 12:49). This is the fire which once warmed and inflamed Cleopas and his companion, making them cry out in ecstasy to one another, 'Did not our heart burn within us as we were walking?' (Luke 24:32). And St John of Damaskos in one of his troparia in honour of the all-holy Mother of God says, 'The fire in my heart impels me to sing with love in praise of the Virgin.'

And St Isaac writes, 'Forceful spiritual practice enkindles an intense ardour, inflaming the heart with the fervent apperceptions that arise in a new and strange way in the mind. The fervour of such vigilant spiritual practice refines the intellect and confers on it the power of vision.' And he continues, 'This ardour, brought about through the grace of contemplation, gives rise to tears, and these, when they flow incessantly, free the soul from distractive thoughts. Such freedom in its turn exalts us to purity of intellect, and through purity of intellect we are enabled to perceive God's mysteries.' A little further on he says, 'It is after this that the intellect attains to the vision of revelations and signs, like those which the prophet Ezekiel saw';[151] and, 'Tears, and beating our head during prayer, and casting ourselves on the ground with fervour, arouse a corresponding pleasurable warmth in the heart, with the result that it wings in surpassing ecstasy towards God and cries, "My soul has thirsted for Thee, O God, the mighty, the living; when shall I come and appear before the face of Thee, O God?" (cf. Ps. 42:2.LXX).'[152]

And St John Klimakos says, 'When fire comes to dwell in the heart, it resurrects prayer. And when prayer has been revived and taken up into heaven, fire descends into the cenacle of the soul.'[153] And, 'Who, then, is the faithful and wise monk? He who has kept his fervour unquenched, and to the end of his life has not ceased to add every day fire to fire, fervour to fervour, desire to desire, and zeal to zeal.'[154] And St Ilias the Presbyter says, 'Whenever the soul, paying no attention to external things, is concentrated in prayer, then a kind of flame surrounds it, as fire surrounds iron, and makes it wholly incandescent. The soul remains the same, but can no longer be touched, just as red-hot iron cannot be touched by hand. Blessed is he who in this life is granted the experience of this state and who sees his body, which

by nature is of clay, become incandescent through grace.’[155]

55. *That warmth or ardour has different sources, and that the paramount form of ardour is kindled as a result of pure prayer in the heart.*

You should know that such warmth or ardour originates and subsists in us in a variety of ways, as has been made clear by the words of the saints which we have cited and, though we hesitate to say it, from our own experience. Perhaps the paramount form of ardour is that which comes from pure prayer in the heart, and which grows continually in accordance with such prayer, culminating in the sabbath rest of personal illumination – that is to say, according to the Fathers, the person who experiences it is truly filled with divine light.

56. *On the consequences of the warmth or ardour enkindled in the heart.*

The immediate consequence of ardour arising in the heart is the expulsion of whatever formerly prevented prayer from being perfectly accomplished in a pure manner. For our God is fire (cf. Heb. 12:29), a fire which consumes the wickedness of the demons and of our passions. For St Diadochos says, ‘When the heart feels the arrows of the demons with such burning pain that the man under attack suffers as if they were real arrows, then the soul hates the passions violently, for it is just beginning to be purified. If it does not suffer greatly at the shamelessness of sin, it will not be able to rejoice fully in the blessings of righteousness. He who wishes to cleanse his heart should keep it continually aflame through practising the remembrance of the Lord Jesus, making this his only study and his ceaseless task. Those who desire to free themselves from their corruption ought to pray not merely from time to time but at all times; they should give themselves always to prayer, keeping watch over their intellect even when outside places of prayer. When someone is trying to purify gold, and allows the fire of the furnace to die down even for a moment, the material which he is purifying will harden again. So, too, a man who merely practises remembrance of God from time to time, loses through lack of continuity what he hopes to gain through his prayer. It is a mark of one who truly loves holiness that he continually burns up what is worldly in his heart through practising the remembrance of God, so that little by little evil is consumed in the fire of this remembrance and his soul

completely recovers its natural brilliance with still greater glory.'[156]

Thus, when the intellect dwells in the heart unimpeded, it prays in a pure and undeviating manner. As one of the saints says, 'Prayer is true and undeviating when the intellect while praying watches carefully over the heart.'[157] And St Hesychios writes, 'A true monk is one who has achieved watchfulness; and he who is truly watchful is a monk in his heart.'[158]

57. *On the desire and longing engendered by ardour, attentiveness and prayer.*

Through such ardour, together with attentive or pure prayer, we engender in our hearts desire, divine longing and love for the Lord Jesus whom we continually keep in remembrance. As it is written, 'Young maidens have fallen in love with me, they have drawn me to them' (cf. Song of Songs, 1:3–4); and, 'I am wounded with love' (Song of Songs 2:5). And St Maximos says, 'All the virtues cooperate with the intellect to produce this intense longing for God, pure prayer above all. For by soaring towards God through this prayer the intellect rises above the realm of created beings.'[159]

58. *On the tears of the heart, and again on desire and longing for God.*

From such a heart flow an abundance of tears, purifying and refreshing the person whom love has thus enriched, not enervating or desiccating him. The tears provoked by fear of God purify, while those provoked by divine longing bring refreshment, generated as they are by an intense and unrestrained desire and longing for the Lord Jesus Christ whom we call to remembrance. And the heart in ecstasy cries, 'Thou hast bewitched me with desire, O Christ, and Thou hast transformed me with Thy divine longing.'[160] And, 'Thou art all sweetness, O Saviour, all desire and yearning inexhaustible, all irresistible beauty.'[161] And with St Paul, herald of Christ, it exclaims, 'The love of Christ compels us' (2 Cor. 5:14). And, 'What can separate us from the love of Christ? Affliction, or distress, or persecution, or hunger, or destitution, or danger, or the sword?' (Rom. 8:35) And again, 'I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor authorities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing can separate us from the love of God made known in Christ

Jesus our Lord’ (Rom. 8:38–39).

59. *A warning not to seek what is excessive, and an exhortation to remember our Lord Jesus Christ unceasingly in the heart.*

Who deserves to be granted such things, and indeed all that comes after them? Now is not the right time to speak of that; for it is said, ‘Do not seek prematurely what will come of its own accord in due time’; and ‘The good is not good when it does not happen in the right way.’ And according to St Mark, ‘It is not helpful to know what comes later before you have done what comes first. For knowledge without action “puffs up” but love “edifies” (cf. 1 Cor. 8:1) because it “patiently accepts all things” (1 Cor. 13:7).’[162] So, as we have said, we should strive zealously and struggle continually to remember the Lord Jesus Christ ceaselessly in the depths of our heart and not just externally or superficially. As the same St Mark says in this connection, ‘Unless the innermost, secret and purified recesses of our heart are opened through all-embracing noetic hope, we cannot truly become aware of Him who dwells there, or know whether our spiritual offerings have been accepted or not.’[163]

60. *On fervent zeal, on the manifestation of God within us, and on the personal illumination of grace.*

In this way we will have no difficulty in shunning not only evil actions but also passion-charged thoughts and unseemly fantasies. It is as Scripture says, ‘Walk by the Spirit and do not gratify the desires of your fallen self’ (Gal. 5:16). Or, rather, we will expel every distractive thought and every fantasy because in our fervent zeal for virtue we burn up and destroy all evil impulsions, whether physical or mental, to which we had been subject, as well as the vice-delighting demons that prompted them. As St Isaac says, ‘He who with fervent zeal uproots the briars planted in him by the enemy terrifies the demons and is dear to God and His angels.’[164] And his progress will be such that even in this life he will be fully assured of God’s love for him and of the manifest presence within him of the personal and truly divine illumination of grace. Or if you prefer, he will return with joy to the God-given nobility of spiritual adoption brought to pass within us through grace of baptism.’ And again St Isaac says, ‘This is the Jerusalem and the kingdom of

God which according to the Lord's word is hidden within you (cf. Luke 17:21). This land is the cloud of God's glory into which only the pure in heart will enter in order to see the face of their Lord.'[165] But you should not by yourself try to lay hold of God's manifestation, lest you grasp him who is in fact darkness and only feigns to be light (cf. 2 Cor. 11:14).

61. *On divine energy and demonic energy.*

Should your intellect perceive light in spite of not having gone in pursuit of it, you should not welcome it but neither should you reject it. As St Mark says, 'There is an energy of grace not understood by beginners, and there is also an energy of evil which resembles the truth. It is advisable not to scrutinize these energies too closely, because one may be led astray, and not to condemn them out of hand, because they may contain some truth; but we should lay everything before God in hope, for He knows what is of value in both of them.'[166] In such circumstances you should question someone who has received from God the grace and power to teach and discriminate.

62. *On an enlightened and trustworthy teacher.*

Should you find someone to teach you not only about what he has learned from Holy Scripture but also about what he has himself experienced in all blessedness through divine illumination, you should give thanks to God. But if you have not found such a person, it is better not to give your assent to any vision but humbly to take refuge in God, with a sincere heart regarding and calling yourself unworthy of such honour and vision. What we say here accords with what we have already said and with what we shall go on to say, and likewise with what we have been taught through Christ's grace by truthful people, whose counsel is inspired by the Holy Spirit, by the God-given Scriptures, and by their own degree of personal experience.

63. *On true and false illumination, that is, on divine light and light produced by the devil.*

In a number of their writings our renowned Fathers give some indication of the signs of true and deceptive illumination. For instance, the thrice-blessed Paul of Mount Latros said in reply to the disciple who questioned him on this

matter, ‘The light produced by the devil is fiery and smoky and similar to material fire, and whenever a humble and purified soul sees it, it feels disgust and loathing for it. The light that comes from the good God, on the other hand, is good, most beautiful and pure, and when it comes it sanctifies the soul and fills it with light, joy and gladness, making it gentle and compassionate.’[167] And other Fathers say similar things. Yet since these things I have spoken about came to me by word of mouth, you, too, will hear about them in the same way when the time comes. Now is not the right time.

64. *Unseemly and beneficial fantasy and on how one must deal with each kind.*

A short while ago we spoke of fantasy, and more particularly of unseemly fantasy; so it will be useful to say briefly what we can about this or, rather, about every kind of fantasy. For this accursed tendency within us is most antagonistic to pure prayer of the heart and to unitary and unwavering working of the intellect. Hence the divine fathers have frequently spoken about it and against it. For fantasy, variegated like the mythological Daidalos and multi-headed like the Hydra,[168] has been described by the saints as a bridge for the demons. For by means of it these murderous wretches insinuate themselves into us, blending and mingling in some way with the soul and turning it into a hive of drones and the haunt of fruitless and passion-charged thoughts. Fantasy must be rejected totally, except when, in order to evoke repentance, contrition, grief and humility, or, more importantly, in order to study and observe existent reality, we make use of beneficial fantasy, and even employ it as a counterpoise to some unseemly fantasy. For if you set one fantasy against the other, and bring them into conflict, and in this way compel the ignoble and shameless fantasy to retreat, you will succeed in triumphing over it. If you act in this way, you will not only avoid harm but will actually profit, since like someone who directs his affairs with faultless judgment you will neutralize the unseemly fantasy by means of the beneficial fantasy, and will deal a mortal blow to the enemy with his own weapons, just as the divine David once did to Goliath (cf. 1 Sam. 17:51).

65. *In order to pray with purity and to maintain the intellect in a simple and unitary state, the saints reject not only unseemly but also beneficial fantasies.*

What we have just said applies to those in the early stages of spiritual practice. But those who have gradually made progress totally expel both unseemly and beneficial fantasies, extirpating them, liquidating them and dissolving them like wax before the face of fire (cf. Ps. 68:2). They do this in order to attain a state of pure prayer and to free the intellect from any imprint imposed by objects or by their images. In this way the intellect is enabled to apprehend God nakedly or, if you prefer, it is able to receive God into itself and to be joined to Him in a formless and uncompounded union. For St Hesychios says, 'Every evil thought produces in the intellect the image of some material thing; for since the devil is an intellect, he cannot deceive except by making use of the things we are in the habit of perceiving by means of the senses.'[169] And St Diadochos says, 'Because every thought enters the heart in the form of a mental image of some sensible object, the blessed light of the Divinity will illumine the heart only when the heart is completely empty of everything and so is free from all form. Indeed, this light reveals itself to the pure intellect in the measure to which the intellect is purged of all concepts.'[170]

St Basil the Great says, 'Just as the Lord "does not dwell in temples built with hands" (Acts 7:48), so He does not dwell in mental representations and formulations. For these envelop and shut off the fallen soul that is unable to gaze in a pure way at the truth but still sees only in an obscure manner as in a mirror (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12).'[171] And Evagrios the Solitary says, 'God is said to be seated where He is known. It is for this reason that a pure intellect is said to be a throne for God. Thus the intellection of God will not be found among the intellections which impress a form upon the intellect, but among those which do not impress a form upon it. Hence the person who prays must free himself entirely from the intellections which impress a form upon the intellect. For it is one thing for an intellect to receive a certain form when it contemplates some other intellect, and another for it to be brought into a particular state when it contemplates its own inner principle. In this way we learn that spiritual knowledge frees the intellect from the intellections that impress a form upon it, and by keeping it free from form brings it into the presence of God.'[172]

St Maximos, in one of his *scholia* on the great Dionysios, says, 'Fantasy is one thing and intellection is another. For they arise from different faculties and differ in the way they operate. Intellection is an energy or a creative act,

while fantasy is a passive state or an impression imprinted by some object that is sensory or seems to be so. The senses perceive things according to their immediate concrete form. The intellect apprehends things, that is to say, it perceives them, in another way and not as the senses do. In the case of the material or spiritual realities which constitute, as we have said, the objects of sense perception, the mode of operation is passive and representational, while so far as the soul and the intellect are concerned it is exercised through critical judgment and apprehension. Thus our imagination must also be assigned to the apprehending faculty of the soul. Our imagination has three aspects. The first aspect transforms what has been apprehended into images so that we can become conscious of it in a sensory way. The second forms a representative image of the residue of what has been apprehended, although such images are not based upon anything concrete. This power, too, is properly ascribed to the imagination. The third aspect is that in which everything pleasurable and seemingly good, or distasteful and evil, is given an imaginative form. Thus, as we have said, there is no place for fantasy in regard to God; for God altogether and absolutely transcends every thought and concept.'[173]

Again St Basil the Great says, 'The intellect, when not dissipated among external things and dispersed outwardly through the senses, returns to itself, and through itself it ascends to the perception of God; and illumined by that beauty it forgets its own nature.'[174] Knowing these things, then, strive at all times with God's help to pray without fantasy, without representations, without expressed forms, and with an intellect and soul wholly pure in every way. Once again we may quote St Maximos.

66. *On the purity and perfection of the intellect, soul and heart.*

On the pure intellect:
'A pure intellect is one divorced from ignorance and illumined by divine light.'[175]

On the pure soul:
'A pure soul is one freed from passions and constantly delighted by divine love.'[176]

On the pure heart:

‘A pure heart is one which offers the mind to God free of all image and form, and ready to be imprinted with His own archetypes, by which God Himself is made manifest.’[177] To these quotations we may also add others.

On the perfect intellect:
‘A perfect intellect is one which by true faith and in a manner beyond all unknowing supremely knows the supremely Unknowable; and which, in surveying the entirety of God’s creation, has received from God an all-embracing knowledge of the providence and judgment which govern it, so far, of course, as all this is possible to man.’[178]

On the perfect soul:
‘A soul is perfect if its passible aspect is totally orientated towards God.’[179]

On the perfect heart:
‘A perfect heart is perhaps one which has no natural propulsion towards anything in any manner whatsoever. When in its extreme simplicity such a heart has become like a writing-tablet beautifully smoothed and polished, God comes to dwell in it and writes there His own laws.’[180]

On the pure intellect:
Moreover, the power of purifying the intellect, according to St Diadochos, belongs solely to the Holy Spirit.[181] And the power bringing the intellect into a state of stillness likewise belongs, according to St John Klimakos, to the Holy Spirit alone.[182] And St Neilos says, ‘If you wish to see the state of your intellect, put aside all conceptual images and then you will see it like sapphire or sky-blue colour.’[183] And again, ‘The state of the intellect is a noetic elevation, in colour like sky-blue, and the light of the Holy Trinity comes upon it in times of prayer.’[184] And St Isaac says, ‘When the intellect puts off the old self and puts on the new self born from grace (cf. Col. 3:9), it will see its own purity like the colour of the sky, which the elders of the sons of Israel called the abode of God when they saw it on Mount Sinai (cf. Exod. 24:9–10).’[185] If, then, you act in the way of which we have spoken – if, that is to say, you pray with purity, without fantasy and without expressed forms – you will be following in the footsteps of the saints. If you do not, you will become

a fantast instead of a hesychast,[186] and instead of grapes you will gather thorns. May this not befall you!

67. *How the prophets have used their imagination.*

If some think that the visions, apparitions and revelations of the prophets are fantasies arising through natural processes, they should know that they are vastly mistaken and far from the truth. For it was not through some natural process of imagining that the prophets and contemporary mystical writers saw and imagined what they did see and imagine, but the forms and images were imprinted on their intellect in a divine and supranatural way through the ineffable power and grace of the Holy Spirit. As St Basil the Great says, 'On those who possess an intellect that is pure and free from distraction, images are imprinted by some indescribable power; it is as if the divine Logos reverberated within them.'[187] And again, 'What the prophets saw was imprinted on their intellects by the Holy Spirit.'[188] And St Gregory the Theologian says, 'The activity of the Holy Spirit was first manifest in the angelic and heavenly powers, then in the fathers and the prophets, of whom some conceived images of God or acquired knowledge of Him, while others foreknew the future, their intellects being imprinted in this way by the Holy Spirit, so that things to come were as things present for them.'[189]

68. *More on the products of the imagination and on the profusion and variety of visions.*

Some are still sceptical, supposing that they have received communications in the form of images and of a profusion and variety of visions; and they contradict us, thinking somehow that they are following the saints. For they say that St Gregory the Theologian maintains that the intellect represents God not according to what He is in Himself but according to what pertains to Him, according to His attributes, and in this way the intellect unites many images into a single image of the truth.[190] They say also that, according to St Maximos, unless the intellect has received many varied spiritual visions, it cannot attain a state of dispassion simply through the practice of the virtues.[191] And other saints, they say, have held similar views.

But those who contradict us on these grounds should know that the

passages from these blessed writers which we have cited do not refer to the spiritual profit and grace that is received as a free gift and that is gnostic and contemplative in character, uniting a person with God in a truly experiential manner; they refer to the spiritual profit resulting from active application and effort, which consists in discerning the spiritual meaning of things from the wisdom, analogy and order of their created existence. In this way we obtain a faint idea of God Himself which many people or, rather, everyone can participate in and reflect on. This distinction will be clearly understood if you carefully examine the texts cited from the writings of the saints and other similar passages. For, so these passages affirm, it is by analogy from the grandeur and beauty of created things that we form an image of their Maker (cf. Wisdom 13:1; Rom. 1:20); we do not form it from the worldly, secular, verbose and vain learning of this world. Such learning, like an insolent servant conceited about his sophistical pseudo-scientific dialectic dexterity, untutored by evangelical faith, humility and a genuine recognition of things divine, should be banished far from the sacred gates.

We will now speak of perfect and personal illumination, that is to say, the illumination through which the chief Apostles who ascended Mount Tabor with Jesus ineffably experienced a beautiful and truly blessed change, when they were granted the power to see through their sensible eyes His kingdom and divinity that none may contemplate. This kingdom and divinity they were able to behold, because their sensible eyes had been transformed into something more divine, that is, when their eyes had been made spiritual by the right hand of the All-Holy Spirit (cf. Matt. 17:1–8; Ps. 77:10.LXX). For as far as the east is from the west and the sky from the earth, and to the degree that the soul is more excellent than the body, so the spiritual profit and grace received as a free gift differs from that which results from active application and effort. For such application and effort are as it were an outward process, as we said, whereby from the regular production, order and concourse of existent things we form various images that we then combine into a single representation of the truth. In this way we reach up to God in faith. The spiritual profit and grace received as a free gift, on the other hand, is bestowed within the heart in a direct and personal manner by God Himself. It is sometimes bestowed also externally, in which case the body, too, is manifestly endowed in an inconceivable manner with the radiance and the most divine illumination that comes from this spiritual profit and grace. For the heart, according to the most wise Maximos, may receive uncreated

deification in a supranatural way, but it cannot itself bring this about. He defines uncreated deification as 'the particularized personal illumination of the Godhead; it is not created but is manifested in an inconceivable manner in those who are worthy of it'.[192]

The great Dionysios concurs with this when he writes, 'We should know that our intellect possesses an intellective power through which it perceives intelligible realities. It also possesses the possibility of attaining a union which transcends its own nature and through which it is united with things beyond itself.'[193] And St Isaac says, 'We have two eyes in our soul, as the Fathers say, each of which has a different function in contemplation. With one eye we see what is hidden in the nature of existent things, that is, the power and wisdom of God and His providential care for us, which we apprehend from the holiness with which He guides us. With the other eye we see the glory of His holy nature, when God sees fit to initiate us into the spiritual mysteries.'[194]

St Diadochos says, 'Wisdom and spiritual knowledge are both gifts of the one Holy Spirit, as are all the divine gifts of grace; but each has its own distinctive energy. For this reason the Apostle testifies that to one is given wisdom, to another spiritual knowledge by the same Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12:8). Such knowledge unites man to God through experience, but does not move him to express outwardly what he knows. Some, then, of those who practise the solitary life are consciously illuminated by spiritual knowledge, yet do not speak about God. But when wisdom, with the fear of God, is given to someone at the same time as spiritual knowledge – and this seldom happens – it leads him to express outwardly the inner energies of this knowledge within him; for spiritual knowledge illuminates men through its inner energy while wisdom does so through being expressed outwardly. Spiritual knowledge comes through prayer, deep stillness and complete detachment, while wisdom comes through humble meditation on Holy Scripture and, above all, through grace given by God.'[195]

In addition to this St Maximos says in one of his *scholia*, 'Jacob's well (cf. John 4:5–15) is Scripture. The water is the spiritual knowledge found in Scripture. The depth of the well is the meaning, only to be attained with great difficulty, of the obscure sayings in Scripture. The bucket is learning gained from the written text of the word of God. The Lord does not Himself acquire learning of this kind because He is the Logos in person. Thus what He

confers on believers is not the knowledge that comes from learning and study, but He grants to those found worthy the ever-flowing waters of wisdom that spill from the fountain of spiritual grace and never run dry. For the bucket, that is to say, learning, can only grasp a very small amount of knowledge and leaves behind all that it cannot lay hold of, however hard it tries. But the knowledge which is received through grace, without study, contains all the wisdom that man can attain, springing forth in different ways according to his needs.'[196]

And again St Diadochos says, 'Our intellect often finds it hard to endure praying because of the straitness and concentration which this involves; but it joyfully turns to theology because of the broad and unhampered scope of divine speculation. Therefore, so as to keep the intellect from expressing itself too much in words or exalting itself unduly in its joy, we should spend most of our time in prayer, in singing psalms and reading the Holy Scriptures, yet without neglecting the speculations of wise men whose faith has been revealed in their writings. In this way we shall prevent the intellect from confusing its own utterances with the utterances of grace, and stop it from being led astray by self-esteem and dispersed through over-elation and loquacity. In the time of contemplation we must keep the intellect free of all fantasy and image, and so ensure that with almost all our thoughts we shed tears. When it is at peace in times of stillness, and above all when it is gladdened by the sweetness of prayer, not only does it escape the faults we have mentioned, but it is more and more renewed in its swift and effortless understanding of divine truth, and with great humility it advances in its knowledge of discrimination. There is, moreover, a prayer which is above even the broadest scope of speculation; but this prayer is granted only to those who fully and consciously perceive the plenitude of God's grace within them.'[197]

Have you taken note of this? St Diadochos says that there is a form of prayer that is above even the broadest scope of speculation and that it is granted only to those whose hearts fully and consciously, that is to say, in a personal and supranatural manner, are filled with the divine illumination of grace. This is what St Isaac calls 'unfigured mindfulness', mindfulness that is unalloyed, one-pointed and free from shape or form. And other Holy Fathers describe it in different ways.

69. *On the five faculties of the soul. On forms of imagination that pertain to*

the soul and those that pertain to the intellect. On how during pure prayer and when the intellect's activity is simple and one-pointed we must shun completely all imaginative forms, all figurations, representations and appearances.

As we have said, the soul forms images not merely in response to demonic provocation but through its own nature, since it possesses the five faculties or powers of intellect, reason, supposition, imagination and sensation, just as the body possesses the five senses of sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch. The imagination, then, is one of the soul's powers, its image-forming power. Thus if the soul wishes to govern and dispose itself rightly it must struggle to activate and raise wholly towards God those powers which above all unite it with God in this present life and in the life to be. With regard to its other powers it should nurture, activate and deploy them as is fitting.

We must, then, enquire what the Fathers say about these powers and about what is likely to strengthen them. St Maximos states, 'Since the soul in itself, or in its essence, is deiform and noetic, it quite clearly possesses its own personal existence. And since it possesses its own personal existence it will act according to its own nature, both on its own account and in combination with the body; it will perceive things intellectually, will cogitate, and will continually exercise the noetic powers which belong to it by nature. For whatever belongs to any being by nature cannot be taken away from it so long as it remains in existence. Thus by virtue of its own being and nature the soul, continuously existent and subsistent in the way that God created it, is always noetic, reflective and cognitive, both on its own account and in combination with the body. There is nothing, therefore, that can separate the soul from what belongs to it by nature and not because of the body, and this continues to be the case even after the dissolution of the body.'[198]

As we ourselves know and as the saints have revealed to us, the intellect and our reasoning power revolve around God and cooperate with Him both in this present life and in the life to come; the other powers do so only in this present life, for that is their specific sphere of activity. Thus the soul, being in control of its own powers in the manner of a skilful helmsman, should direct its energies not only to this present life but also, above all, to the life to come; it should make every effort to raise intellect and reason towards God, directing them towards Him and uniting them with Him while engaged in pure prayer and in noetic, one-pointed and non-discursive activity, separating

the intellect entirely from the imagination and its other powers. For according to St Neilos, ‘The state of prayer is one of dispassion, which by virtue of the most intense love transports to the noetic realm the intellect that longs for wisdom.’[199] When the soul acts in this way, it preserves the noble dignity of its true nature.

70. *More on the intellect.*

Similarly, the intellect itself, being the indivisible, simple, self-sufficient, pure and luminous substance that it is, should watch over itself and avoid any participation in the activity of the imagination, keeping itself separate from this; for it possesses of itself a natural power which enables it to do this, so that it can return to itself, becoming recollected and acting in a manner free from all constraint. For such is the state conferred by grace upon the intellect. As St John Klimakos says, ‘Only the Holy Spirit can stabilize the intellect.’[200] Now the intellect as a power of the soul is in some measure impelled and governed by the latter, and so it serves as the soul’s eye both in name and in reality; but at the same time, as we have said, it possesses its own natural, simple and self-sufficient power. So long, however, as the intellect continues to depend naturally on the soul and its powers, it is an intellect only in potentiality and so is described as the ‘natural’ and ‘unspiritual’ man (1 Cor. 2:14). But when it assumes its own natural, simple and essential dignity and its indivisible, self-sufficient and self-determined splendour, in other words, when it frees itself from the natural relationships and activities of the body and soul, and is enabled by grace to change from being a potential intellect to being a fully actualized and spiritual intellect – that is to say, when it attains a supranatural and spiritual state – then it always returns undeviatingly to itself, and through itself it ascends without constraint and in an absolute and integral manner to the unfigured, formless and unalloyed perception of God. As St Basil the Great says, ‘The intellect, when not dissipated among external things and dispersed outwardly through the senses, returns to itself, and through itself it ascends to the perception of God; and illumined by that beauty it forgets its own nature.’[201] In this way the intellect reassumes and regains its true character as an intellect in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen. 1:26); and through itself it is directly and spiritually united with and assimilated to the divine intellect, God Himself.

This restoration and return of the intellect to itself, and its union with itself

and then through itself with God, is a circular movement; and it is something truly authentic and unerring, for it is a union that takes place without any constraint and in a direct manner – a union beyond all intellection, and a vision that is more than a vision. As the great Dionysios says, 'The soul's movement is circular when it enters into itself and simultaneously turns away from things external, thus achieving a unified concentration of its spiritual powers. This gives it as it were a fixed and circular orbit, and makes it return from the multiplicity of things external and draws it together first into itself, and then, when it has become unified, unites it with those powers that are themselves joined together in unity. In this way it is guided to the Beautiful and the Good that transcends all things, that is one and the same and has neither beginning nor end. The soul moves in a spiral fashion whenever, in accordance with its capacities, it is illuminated with divine knowledge in a manner appropriate to it, not through intellectual intuition or in a unitary way but by means of its discursive reason and, as it were, through an interconnected and progressive process. It moves in a straight line when it does not enter into itself and is not impelled towards spiritual unity – this, as I have said, is the circular movement – but it goes forth to the things around it, perceiving these external things as a varied and multiple complex of symbols through which, by means of its own powers of contemplation, it is restored to a non-composite and unified state.'[202]

St Maximos says, 'When the intellect attains immediate union with God, it can neither perceive things noetically through its own innate power nor be so perceived through such a power by other beings. As soon as it allows this power to function and through it perceives that which is sequent to God, it severs the union which transcends intellection and which it possessed when united to God. So long as the intellect is joined to God in this union that surpasses nature, and thus has become god through participation in God Himself, it displaces the law of nature as if removing an immovable mountain.'[203] And again, 'A pure intellect, that through union with its source has attained a state which transcends intellection, suspends its many-branched natural movement towards things sequent to its source and cuts off its attachment to them. Instead, having attained its ineffable goal, it cleaves solely and in a way that transcends the normal modes of knowledge to the blessed silence that lies beyond intellection. Thought and intellection are utterly incapable of describing this silence. Only the experience, derived from actual participation in it, of those granted this supraintellective state of repose

is capable of disclosing what it is. Evidence of this state of blessed silence, easily recognizable and clear to all, is the soul's complete detachment from the things pertaining to this present life and its entire unawareness of them.'[204]

Thus, when the intellect is not assisted by the soul in its continual aspiration for union with God, or when it does not of itself succeed in realizing this goal of returning to itself, and of thus unconstrainedly ascending to the vision of God – or, rather, when neither the soul nor its own efforts bring it to fruition but instead it is embroiled with fantasy – then it is already fragmented and far removed from God.

71. *More on pure prayer.*

St Neilos says, 'Try to make your intellect deaf and dumb during prayer; you will then be able to pray.'[205] And, 'I shall say again what I have said elsewhere: blessed is the intellect that is completely free from forms during prayer.'[206] And St Philotheos says, 'It is very rare to find people whose intelligence is in a state of stillness. Indeed, such a state is only to be found in those who through their whole manner of life strive to attract divine grace and blessing to themselves.'[207] And St Basil the Great says, 'Good prayer is that which brings about a distinct sense of God in the soul. This is God dwelling within us, when through our mindfulness of Him He is rooted in us and when the continuity of such mindfulness is not interrupted by worldly concerns, nor is the intellect disturbed by unexpected passions, and when by shunning all things in our love for God we take refuge in Him.'[208]

72. *Dispassion of the intellect is one thing, while true prayer is another and greater thing.*

One should also know this, that, in the words of St Maximos, 'unless various successive spiritual contemplations also occupy the intellect, the practice of the virtues by itself cannot completely free it from the passions'.[209] Thus, again according to the divine Neilos, it is possible to have achieved dispassion and yet not to pray truly, for the intellect may still be dispersed among various things and so be far from God. This Father describes such a situation in the following way: 'If the intellect has not risen above the

contemplation of the created world, it has not yet beheld the realm of God perfectly. For it may be occupied with the knowledge of intelligible things and so involved in their multiplicity.'[210] And, 'One who has attained dispassion has not necessarily achieved pure prayer. For he may still be occupied with thoughts which, though dispassionate, distract him and keep him far from God.'[211] And, 'When the intellect no longer dallies with dispassionate thoughts about various things, it has not necessarily reached the realm of prayer; for it may still be contemplating the inner essences of these things. And though such contemplation is dispassionate, yet since it is of created things, it impresses their forms upon the intellect and keeps it away from God.'[212] And St John Klimakos says, 'Those whose intellect has learned to pray truly converse with the Lord face to face in the fullest sense (cf. Exod. 33:11), like courtiers who have the ear of the Emperor.'[213]

From these and similar examples you can see precisely what the difference is between these two states, that is, the one which is given as a free gift and the other which is the result of active application and effort, and how there is no comparison between them. The second involves mental concentration and various forms of interpretation and exegesis, while the first is a matter of pure prayer. You will also perceive that the dispassion of the intellect is one thing and true prayer is another, and that according to the saints if you have been granted true prayer your intellect will inevitably be in a state of dispassion. On the other hand, the fact that your intellect is in a state of dispassion does not necessarily mean that you have been granted pure prayer. That, then, is how these things are. But let us now return to our theme. For since not only what we have said above but even mindfulness itself of things good and evil is liable in some way to produce direct figurations in the intellect and to stimulate the imagination, we must say something on this point too.

73. *More on fantasies and on figurations in the intellect, and on the signs of delusion and of truth.*

When you are practising stillness and wish to be with God alone, never accept anything you may see, whether sensible or intelligible, inward or external, even if it seems to have the form of Christ, or the appearance of an angel or of a saint, or is a luminous image figured in the intellect. Never give

credence to it but be on your guard against it, even if it is good, until, as we have said, you have questioned someone of experience. This is the most useful way of treating it and the one most conformable and acceptable to God. Always keep your intellect free from colour, figure, form, shape, quality and quantity, and give your attention only to the words of the prayer, meditating on them and pondering them within the inner movement of the heart. St John Klimakos is referring to this when he says, 'The beginning of prayer consists in expelling by means of the single-phrased Jesus Prayer all demonic provocations as soon as they appear; the middle stage consists of confining the mind to what is being said; the final stage is rapture in the Lord.'[214]

St Neilos says, 'The highest form of prayer is that of the perfect and consists in the rapture of the intellect and in the complete transcending through ecstasy of all that is sensory. At the same time the spirit invokes God with sighs too deep for words (cf. Rom. 8:26); for God sees the heart's disposition laid open before Him like a book, revealing its desire with voiceless signs. It was in this way that Paul was rapt to the third heaven, not knowing whether he was in the body or out of the body (cf. 2 Cor. 12:2–3). It was in this way, too, that Peter saw the vision of the sheet when he went up to the top of the house to pray (cf. Acts 10:11–16). The second kind of prayer, inferior to the first, is to say the words while the intellect follows them with compunction and knows to whom it is directing its supplication. But disjointed prayer and prayer invaded by bodily concerns is far from being genuine prayer.'[215] Act, then, always according to these guidelines, and do not accept any others until such a time as the passions have died down and until you can put questions, as we have said, to persons of experience. These things of which we have spoken, and others like them, are brief indications of the signs of delusion. Let us now glance at the signs of truth.

The signs of truth and of the bountiful, life-generating Spirit are love, joy, peace, patient endurance, generosity, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-control, and so on, as St Paul lists them, calling these the fruits of the Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:22). St Paul also says, 'Walk as children of light, for the fruit of the Spirit is found in all that is good and right and true' (Eph. 5:8–9), delusion being the complete opposite. And one of those wise in God, in reply to someone's question, says, 'With regard to the infallible path to salvation about which you ask, my beloved, you should know that there are many ways which lead to life and many which lead to death.' And he continues, 'Yours is one of the

ways which lead to life, the keeping of the commandments of Christ. In these commandments you will find every form of virtue, especially these three virtues: humility, love and mercy. Without these no one will see the Lord (cf. Heb. 12:14).' And a little further on he says, 'These three things, humility, love and mercy, are invincible weapons which the Holy Trinity has given us against the devil. The whole swarm of demons finds it impossible to confront them. For there is no trace of humility in the demons; it was because of their self-inflation that they became full of darkness and everlasting fire was prepared for them (cf. Matt. 25:41). Where in them is there any shadow of love or mercy, nursing as they do a relentless hatred against the human race and never ceasing to wage war against it? Let us therefore arm ourselves with these weapons, for whoever girds himself with them cannot be caught by the enemies.' And a little further on he says, 'Let us regard this threefold cord which the Holy Trinity has spun and twisted together (cf. Eccles. 4:12) as something which is both three and one. It is three in name, or, if you prefer, three in subsistent entities; but it is one in its power and operation, one in its proximity to God, in its gravitation towards Him and in its affinity with Him. It is with reference to these three things that the Master said, "My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matt. 11:30). And the beloved disciple said, "His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3).' And later the same author states, 'For this reason a soul which has become one with God through its purity of life, through the keeping of the commandments, and through these three weapons, which are God Himself, has been clothed in God; by adoption such a soul has itself become a god through humility, mercy and love. And having transcended the dualism of matter and form and having ascended beyond the fulfilment of the law, which is love (cf. Rom. 13:10), it is united with the supraessential and life-originating Trinity, communing with it without intermediary, adding light to light and rejoicing with an eternal and everlasting joy.'[216]

This, however, is enough on this theme. But as we have discussed some of the characteristics and fruits of delusion and truth – and it is from their fruits, as St Paul tells us, that we can recognize according to what spirit people act[217] – so we should also add something from the teaching of the Fathers on the kind of grace that comes from each, that is, on genuine divine grace and on that which is counterfeit and diabolic. On this subject St Diadochos has the following to say.

74. *On consolation divine and counterfeit.*

‘When our intellect begins to perceive the grace of the Holy Spirit, then Satan, too, importunes the soul with a sense of deceptive sweetness in the quiet times of the night, when we fall into a kind of light sleep. If the intellect at that time cleaves fervently to the remembrance of the glorious and holy name of the Lord Jesus and uses it as a weapon against Satan’s deception, he gives up this trick and for the future will attack the soul directly and personally. As a result the intellect clearly discerns the deception of the evil one and advances even further in the art of discrimination.

‘The experience of true grace comes to us when the body is awake or else on the point of falling asleep, while in fervent remembrance of God we are welded to His love. But the illusion of grace comes to us, as I have said, when we fall into a light sleep while our remembrance of God is halfhearted. True grace, since its source is God, gladdens us consciously and impels us toward love with great rapture of soul. The illusion of grace, on the other hand, tends to shake the soul with the winds of deceit; for when the intellect is strong in the remembrance of God, the devil tries to rob it of its experience of spiritual perception by taking advantage of the body’s need of sleep. If the intellect at that time is remembering the Lord Jesus attentively, it easily destroys the enemy’s seductive sweetness and advances joyfully to do battle with him, armed not only with grace but also with a second weapon, the confidence gained from its own experience.

‘Sometimes the soul is kindled into love for God and, free from all fantasy and image, moves untroubled by doubt towards Him; and it draws, as it were, the body into the depths of that ineffable love. This may occur when the person is awake or else beginning to fall asleep under the influence of God’s grace, in the way I have explained. At the same time, the soul is aware of nothing except what it is moving towards. When we experience things in this manner, we can be sure that it is the energy of the Holy Spirit within us. For when the soul is completely permeated with that ineffable sweetness, at that moment it can think of nothing else, since it rejoices with uninterrupted joy. But if at that moment the intellect conceives any doubt or unclean thought, and if this continues in spite of the fact that the intellect calls on the holy name – not now simply out of love for God, but in order to repel the evil one – then it should realize that the sweetness it experiences is an illusion of grace, coming from the deceiver with a counterfeit joy. Through this joy,

amorphous and disordered, the devil tries to lead the soul into an adulterous union with himself. For when he sees the intellect unreservedly proud of its own experience of spiritual perception, he entices the soul by means of certain plausible illusions of grace, so that it is seduced by that dank and debilitating sweetness and fails to notice its intercourse with the deceiver. From all this we can distinguish between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. It is impossible, however, for someone consciously to taste the divine goodness or consciously to realize when he is experiencing the bitterness of the demons, unless he first knows with assurance that grace dwells in the depths of his intellect, while the wicked spirits cluster round only the outside of his heart. This is just what the demons do not want us to know, for fear that our intellect, once definitely aware of it, will arm itself against them with the remembrance of God.'[218]

You have now heard enough on this theme and it should be as much as you need to hear. For, as the popular proverbs have it, 'No one can walk out beyond Cadiz', and 'Should you find honey, eat sparingly, lest overindulgence make you sick (Prov. 25:16).'

75. *On the divine pleasure that wells from the heart.*

It might be more apposite to say, 'Who can describe the sweetness of honey to those who have never tasted it?' Yet it is incomparably more difficult to describe the divine pleasure and the life-imbued, supranatural delight that wells up as a result of pure and genuine prayer in the heart and gushes forth incessantly. As the God-Man Jesus says, 'Whoever drinks the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again; the water that I will give him will become within him a spring of water welling up to eternal life' (John 4:14). And again, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and let him drink. If anyone has faith in Me, as the Scripture has said, from his depths will flow rivers of living water.' He said this, adds the disciple who lay on Jesus' breast, concerning the Spirit that those who have faith in Him will receive (John 7:37–38; cf. Isa. 55:1, 58:11). And St Paul says, 'God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father' (Gal. 4:6).

76. *This spiritual pleasure has many names and yet it is nameless.*

This spiritual pleasure is described mystically as supranatural, life-imbued

and personal illumination, as darkness that is brighter than light, as beauty beyond conception, the desire of all desires, revelation, vision of God and deification. Yet, after every attempt to express it, it remains inexpressible; after every attempt to know it, it is still unknown; and after every attempt to conceive it, it is still inconceivable. The great Dionysios says, 'We pray that we may come to this darkness which is brighter than light, and through relinquishing sight and knowledge may see and know Him who is beyond sight and knowledge, for this is truly to see and know. And we pray that by detaching ourselves from all things we may transcendently praise Him who transcends all being.'[219] And, 'The divine darkness is the unapproachable light in which God is said to dwell (cf. 1 Tim. 6:16). It is invisible because of its surpassing clarity, and unapproachable because of the extreme intensity of the supernal light which pours from it. All who are privileged to know and see God enter into this darkness, experiencing what is beyond sight and knowledge through not seeing and not knowing, and knowing only this, that they are in a realm that lies beyond all that pertains to the sensible and to the intelligible world.'[220]

And St Basil the Great says, 'The flashes of divine beauty are utterly indescribable and inexpressible. Speech cannot embrace them, hearing cannot absorb them. Even should you invoke the brilliance of the morning star, or the brightness of the moon, or the light of the sun, these cannot give any real idea of this glory, and in comparison with the true light they fall as far short as does a pitch-black moonless night compared with the brightness of midday. Bodily eyes cannot perceive this beauty; only the soul and the mind can apprehend it. And whenever it has illumined any of the saints, it has goaded them with unbearable longing for God. Disgusted with this present life they have said, "Alas, my exile has lasted too long" (Ps. 120:5.LXX); and, "My soul thirsts for God, the mighty, the living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of my God?" (Ps. 42:2); and, "Much better to die and be with Christ" (cf. Phil. 1:23); and, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word" (Luke 2:29); for they regarded this life as a place of imprisonment. And as their contemplation of divine beauty left them thirsting for more, they used to pray that their contemplation of the Lord's glory might be extended throughout eternity.'[221]

And St Gregory the Theologian says, 'Where there is fear, there the commandments are kept. Where the commandments are kept, there the fallen

self is cleansed of the cloud that envelops the soul and prevents it from seeing the divine radiance clearly. Where there is such purification, there illumination dawns; and illumination fulfils the desire of those who long for things supreme, and for Him who is supreme or more than supreme.'[222] And St Gregory of Nyssa says, 'If through diligent spiritual practice you cleanse yourself of the filth coating your heart, the divine beauty will illuminate you. This is exactly what happens with iron. For when the rust is honed off, then the iron, previously black, glints and glistens in the sun. Similarly, our inward being, which the Lord calls the heart, once the rust-like pollution with which the evil one has encrusted its beauty is scraped off, will recover its similitude to its archetype and will be filled with goodness. For a like goodness is always attracted to the Good Itself.'[223] And St Neilos says, 'Blessed is he who has attained the ignorance inseparable from prayer.'[224] And St John Klimakos says, 'The depths of grief have glimpsed consolation; and purity of heart has received illumination. Illumination is an ineffable activity which is invisibly seen and unknowingly apprehended.'[225]

Thrice blessed, then, are those who like Mary of old have chosen that better portion or way of life, which is spiritual and cannot be taken away (cf. Luke 10:42); they have been granted a divine inheritance, so that they are visibly inspired, as St Paul was, and can with great ecstatic joy declare, 'The bounty and love of God our Saviour has been made manifest; and He saved us, not because of any righteous deeds we had done, but in His mercy towards us, through the washing of baptism which brings about regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, and which He poured out upon us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour. In this way, having been justified by His grace, we inherit the hope of life eternal' (Tit. 3:4–7). And again, 'It is God who has anointed us and marked us with His seal, and has given us the pledge of the Spirit in our hearts' (2 Cor. 1:21–22). And, 'We have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcending power belongs to God and not to us' (2 Cor. 4:7). That is what St Paul and others affirm. May we, too, through the supplications which they offer with faith to the Lord, become to some degree like them, through mercy and grace.

77. *To practise stillness as you should you have to possess a gentle heart.*

So, my child, it is now time to learn before other things and along with them

that, just as to shoot well you do not draw your bow unless you have a target to aim at, so to practise stillness you have to set your sights on attaining a constant gentleness of heart. St Isidoros says, 'To attain virtue it is not enough simply to practise asceticism; you have also to be moderate in your ascetic endeavours. For if we pursue the struggle for gentleness but thwart it with a turbulent will, that is equivalent to wishing to attain salvation while being unwilling to do the things that contribute towards it.'[226] And before him the divine David said, 'He will guide the gentle in judgment, He will teach the gentle His ways' (Ps. 25:9). And Sirach said, 'To the gentle the mysteries are revealed' (Ecclus. 3:19). And the most sweet Jesus said, 'Learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find repose for your souls' (Matt. 11:29), and, 'To whom will I look, but to him who is gentle and possesses stillness, and who trembles at My words?' (Isa. 66:2.LXX) and, 'Blessed are the gentle, for they will inherit the earth' (Matt. 5:5). By 'earth' here is meant the heart, which brings forth fruit by grace, thirtyfold, or sixtyfold, or a hundredfold (cf. Mark 4:20), according to whether someone is a beginner, or at the intermediate stage, or is perfect. A gentle person is never the cause of disturbance, nor is he himself disturbed, unless it be in defence of true piety.

78. *On how we may attain gentleness and on the three aspects of the soul, the incensive, the appetitive and the intelligent.*

You will attain gentleness easily if you detach yourself from all things, predispose your soul to love, keep silent for the most part, eat in moderation, and pray without ceasing. As the Fathers have said, 'Bridle your soul's incensive power with love, quench your soul's desire, and the light of your intellect will never be darkened.'[227] And, 'Apt silence bridles anger; moderation in food bridles mindless desire; and the single-phrased Jesus Prayer bridles unruly thought.'[228] And again, 'There are three virtues which always enlighten the intellect: not to give heed to another person's wickedness; to endure whatever happens without being perturbed; and to do good to those who do evil. These three virtues give birth to three other even greater virtues: not to give heed to another person's wickedness produces love; to endure whatever happens without being perturbed gives birth to gentleness; and to do good to those who do evil induces a state of peace.'[229]

And again, ‘There are three main inner states characterizing the life of the monk. The first consists in not sinning in actions; the second in not allowing the soul to dally with impassioned thoughts; the third in being able to contemplate dispassionately in the mind the forms of women and of those who have given one offence.’[230]

79. *When you deviate from the right path, you should quickly repent and in this way wisely safeguard yourself for the future.*

Should anything happen that throws you into disarray or makes you fall into sin and stray from the right path, you must quickly be reconciled with the person who has given you offence or whom you have offended, and you must repent with all your soul. You must grieve inwardly, shed tears and blame yourself, and in this way you will in the future be watchful and will wisely safeguard yourself. As the Lord Jesus Christ teaches, ‘If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift in front of the altar, and first go and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift’ (Matt. 5:23–24). And St Paul says, ‘Drive out from yourselves all bitterness, wrath, anger, brawling, blasphemy and every kind of wickedness, and be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you’ (Eph. 4:31–32). And, ‘Be angry, but do not sin; do not let the sunset find you still full of anger’ (Eph. 4:26). And, ‘Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, but leave room for God’s wrath’ (Rom. 12:19). And, ‘Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good’ (Rom. 12:21). This was said with reference to people being reconciled one with another.

80. *On falling and repenting.*

With regard to falling, St Isaac says, ‘We should not be grieved when we have fallen into some sin, but only when we stay in that state. For falls happen frequently, even to the perfect; but to remain in that fallen state is total death. The grief which we feel on account of our lapses is bestowed upon us by divine grace as an occasion for spiritual effort. To fall again with the expectation that we will again be able to repent is to deal dishonestly with God. Death will take such a person unawares, and he will find that he has not the time in which to carry out the acts of virtue that he had hoped to

perform.'[231] And, 'We should always be aware', he says, 'that we need to repent at every moment throughout the twenty-four hours of the night and day. The meaning of the word "repentance", as we have come to recognize from the true nature of things, consists in approaching God with fervent supplication at all times through prayer full of compunction, so that we may be forgiven for past sins and be granted grief as a protection against sinning in the future.'[232] And again, 'As grace after grace repentance is given to men. It is a second rebirth from God; that which we originally received through faith as a pledge we subsequently receive through repentance as a gift.[233] Repentance is the door of mercy, open to those who seek it. Through this door we draw near to divine mercy, and unless we pass through it we shall not find mercy; for all have sinned, according to sacred Scripture, and are justified as a free gift by God's grace (cf. Rom. 3:24). Repentance is a second grace and it is engendered in the heart by faith and fear. Fear is God's paternal rod guiding us to the spiritual paradise, and when we arrive there it leaves us and disappears. Paradise is God's love, in which is contained the joy of all the beatitudes.'[234] And again, 'Just as it is impossible to cross the great sea without a ship, so no one can cross over to the realm of love without the help of fear. We are able to cross the foul sea of passions that lies between us and the spiritual paradise by means of the ship of repentance, and this ship is propelled by the oarsmen of fear. If the oarsmen of fear do not pilot this ship of repentance by which we cross the foul sea of this world towards God, then we sink into the sea and are drowned.'[235]

81. *More on repentance, fear, love, grief, tears and self-reproach.*

St Isaac continues, 'Repentance is the ship; fear is the pilot; love is the divine harbour. Thus fear places us in the ship of repentance and transports us across the foul sea of life and brings us to the divine harbour, which is love. All those who "labour and are heavy laden" (Matt. 11:28) reach this harbour through repentance. And when we have attained the realm of love, we have attained God; our voyage has ended and we have come to the island that lies beyond the world, where are the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.'[236]

Concerning grief undergone for the sake of God, the Saviour says the following: 'Blessed are those who grieve, for they will be comforted' (Matt. 5:4). And on tears the same St Isaac says, 'Tears shed in prayer are a sign of

God's mercy granted to the soul that has repented. They are also a sign that the soul has been accepted by God and that through its tears it has begun to enter into the realm of purity. For unless we are freed from thoughts of transient things, and unless we rid ourselves of earthly expectations and despise the world, unless, moreover, we lay up provisions in readiness for our departure from this world, and unless thoughts of heavenly realities begin to stir in our soul, our eyes will not be able to shed tears. For tears come from pure and undistracted meditation, from many unwavering and uninterrupted thoughts, and from the recollection of some incident the memory of which distresses our heart. On account of all these things tears flow ever more abundantly.'[237]

And St John Klimakos says, 'Just as fire consumes straw, so undefiled tears consume every type of impurity, whether physical or spiritual.' And, 'Let us acquire for ourselves pure and guileless tears in readiness for our departure from this life. For in such tears there is nothing fraudulent and no self-esteem, but only purification and progress in love for God, the washing away of sin, and dispassion.' And, 'Do not trust your flow of tears before you have attained perfect purification, for wine is not to be trusted if it has been bottled straight from the wine-press.' And, 'Tears produced by fear are themselves secure from attack. But those produced by love which has not attained perfection may in some cases be easily plundered, unless when they flow the thought of eternal fire enkindles the heart. And it is wonderful how at such a time the greater the humility the greater is the security.' And, 'Tears over our departure from this life produce fear; when fear begets fearlessness, joy dawns; and when incomprehensible joy comes to an end, holy love breaks into flower.'[238]

With regard to self-reproach, St Antony the Great says, 'This is a person's great task, to take responsibility for his own errors before God, and to expect temptation until his last breath.'[239] And another Holy Father, when asked, 'What was the most important thing that you have discovered following this path?', replied, 'To reproach myself in all things.' At this his questioner praised him and said, 'There is no other way apart from this.'[240] And Abba Poemen said, 'With cries of sorrow have all the virtues come into the world; take one of them away and without it you will find it hard to stand firm.' And they asked him, 'Which virtue do you have in mind?' And he said, 'That of constant self-reproach.'[241] And he added, 'If you reproach yourself, whatever

the harm, dishonour or affliction that befalls you, it will never disturb you, since you assume in advance that you deserve it.'[242]

82. *On attentiveness and wisely safeguarding oneself.*

With regard to attentiveness and safeguarding oneself, St Paul says, 'See that you walk circumspectly, not as the foolish but as the wise, making the most of the opportunities given to you, for the days are evil' (Eph. 5:15–16). And St Isaac says, 'O Wisdom, how wonderful you are, and how you foresee things long before they happen! Blessed is he who discovers you, for he has been liberated from the lax indolence of youth. Whoever purchases the healing of the great passions for the small price of a little attentiveness strikes a good bargain. For this is love of wisdom, always to be watchful in whatever one does, however trivial and insignificant it may be. If you do this you will store up great repose for yourself, yet for fear that something inimical may happen you will not lapse into slumber. Instead, you will cut off the cause of any such possibility before it can manifest itself. You will put up with a minor pain provoked by trifling incidents, and by this means you will eliminate greater pain and will make progress. That is why a wise man says, "Be alert and watchful with regard to your life; for sleep of the mind is akin to real death and is its image." And the hierophant St Basil says, "He who is sluggish in small things cannot be expected to excel in anything of real significance."'[243]

83. *The hesychast should meditate on all that we have said; and above all he should be still and gentle, and should strive to call upon the Lord Jesus Christ in a pure way within his heart.*

Meditate, then, on all these things, above all so that you may call upon the Lord Jesus Christ within the depths of your heart quietly, gently and with a clear conscience, as we have said. For in this way divine grace will repose in your soul as you go on your way. For St John Klimakos also says, 'Let no one troubled by anger, self-esteem, hypocrisy or rancour ever have the audacity to embark upon the way of stillness, lest he gain nothing except the loss of his sanity. But if someone is free from these passions, he will know what is to be gained from stillness, though I think that not even he will actually know this.'[244] And not only will grace repose in your soul, but your

soul will also be completely free from the demons and passions that formerly troubled it. And if they trouble it again, they will not be able to have any effect, because the soul shows no partiality for them and does not desire the pleasure which they proffer.

84. *On excellent, ecstatic love and on divine beauty.*

The whole longing of such a hesychast, and all the ecstatic love in his heart, and his whole disposition are directed towards that most blessed and surpassing beauty which the Fathers call the desire of all desires. St Basil the Great says, 'When a devout love possesses the soul, every kind of assault seems absurd to it, and everything that attacks it because of what it desires delights it rather than wounds it.' And again, 'What is more wonderful than divine beauty? What thought is more delightful than that of the majesty of God? What inner longing is as piercing and unbearable as that awakened by God in a soul purified of all evil that cries out with true sincerity, "I am wounded by love" (Song of Songs 2:5.LXX)?'[245]

85. *On warfare, on how God recedes in order to educate us, and on how He abandons us when we reject Him.*

The hesychast, then, is subjected to warfare because God recedes in order to educate him, not because God has abandoned him due to his own rejection of God. What is the reason for this? It is to prevent his intellect from exalting itself because of the blessings granted to it. For when it is assailed and disciplined, it always gains in humility; and through humility alone not only does it defeat those who in their pride wage war against it, but it is continuously granted even greater gifts. In so far as this is possible for human nature, shackled and constrained as it is by inescapable chains and the burden of its mortal coil, the intellect advances towards dispassion and Christ-like perfection.

St Diadochos says, 'The Lord Himself declares that Satan fell from heaven like lightning (cf. Luke 10:18); this was to prevent him, in his hideousness, from looking on the dwelling-places of the holy angels. But if he may not share the company of the righteous servants of God, how then can he dwell together with God Himself in the intellect of man? It will be said that this is possible because God recedes a little and makes room for him. But

this explanation is inadequate. For there are two different ways in which God recedes. First He recedes in order to educate us. But this receding does not by any means deprive the soul of divine light. As I have said, all that happens is that grace often hides its presence from the intellect, so that the soul may advance through resisting the attacks of the demons by seeking help from God with great humility and fear; and in this way it gradually comes to know the wickedness of its enemy. A mother does much the same when she finds her child rebellious over feeding; she pushes it away for a moment so that, being alarmed by the sight of some animals or rough-looking men, it will return crying with fright to her breast. The second kind of receding is when God withdraws altogether from the soul that does not want Him; and this indeed delivers the soul captive to the demons. We, however, are not children from whom God has withdrawn – heaven forbid! We believe ourselves to be true children of God's grace, which nurses us by briefly concealing its presence and then revealing itself once more, so that through its goodness we may grow to our full stature.'[246]

And St Diadochos continues, 'When God recedes in order to educate us, this brings great sadness, humility and even some measure of despair to the soul. The purpose of this is to humble the soul's tendency to vanity and self-glory, for the heart at once is filled with fear of God, tears of thankfulness, and great longing for the beauty of silence. But the receding due to God's complete withdrawal fills the soul with despair, unbelief, anger and pride. We who have experienced both kinds of receding should approach God in each case in the appropriate way. In the first case we should offer Him thanks as we plead in our own defence, understanding that He is disciplining our unruly character by concealing His presence, so as to teach us, like a good father, the difference between virtue and vice. In the second case, we should offer Him ceaseless confession of our sins and incessant tears, and practise a greater seclusion from the world, so that by adding to our labours we may eventually induce Him to reveal His presence in our hearts as before. Yet we must realize that when there is a direct struggle between Satan and the soul – and I am speaking here of the struggle that takes place when God recedes in order to educate us – then grace conceals itself a little, as I have said, but nevertheless supports the soul in a hidden way, so that in the eyes of its enemies the victory appears to be due to the soul alone.'[247]

And St Isaac says, 'Without the tests and trials permitted by God you cannot become skilled in spiritual warfare or appreciate how God takes care

of you, or perceive God Himself, nor can your faith be secretly fortified; for all this depends on the strength of the experience you have gained. And when in His grace God sees that self-esteem has begun little by little to creep into your thoughts and that you have begun to think highly of yourself, He at once permits the tests and trials to increase and grow stronger until you understand your own weakness and, full of humility, turn to God and take refuge in Him. In these ways you grow to spiritual maturity, with faith and hope in the Son of God, and you are raised up towards the realm of love. It is wonderful how God's love reveals itself to someone when he finds himself in situations which destroy his hope. It is then that God shows His power, through the deliverance that He sends. For you can never come to know the divine power while living in a flaccid, self-indulgent manner. And God never reveals His active presence in a way of which you can be consciously aware except when you dwell in stillness and solitude, and in places remote from society and free from the turmoil of human company.'[248]

86. *On dispassion and its human implementation.*

In addition to what we have already said we must now also add a few words about dispassion and perfection, and in this way we will shortly bring our treatise to a close. Thus St Basil the Great says, 'He who has become a lover of God, and longs to possess even a fraction of His dispassion, and to taste spiritual holiness, serenity, tranquillity and gentleness, as well as the joy and gladness born from these, must strive to divert his thoughts from every material passion which beclouds the soul. He must contemplate divine realities with a pure, unshadowed eye, and be enfolded with insatiable longing by the light that comes from them. Having trained his soul to root itself in this state, he will be assimilated to God, becoming like Him in so far as this is possible, and he will be embraced and beloved by God. For he has endured a great and onerous contest and, in spite of the materiality with which he is commixed, he has been able to a certain extent to purge and free his mind from intercourse with the bodily passions, and to enter into communion with God.'[249]

That is what St Basil says about dispassion. On the question of its human implementation St Isaac writes as follows: 'Dispassion does not mean that one does not feel the passions; it means that one does not accept them. Because of the many and varied virtues, both visible and hidden, which the

hesychast has acquired, the passions have grown weak and cannot readily rise up against the soul. Nor does his mind need to be continually on guard against them, for in its intellections it is at all times filled with meditation and reflection upon the wonderful themes that arise in the intellect as a result of its spiritual understanding. Thus when the passions begin to stir and to grow unruly, the mind is suddenly delivered from them in ravishment by some intuitive insight arising in the intellect, and the passions recede from it, becoming ineffective.

'As the blessed Mark has said, "An intellect which by the grace of God is proficient in the practice of the virtues and is close to the realm of spiritual knowledge is but slightly affected by the evil and mindless aspect of the soul; for this knowledge seizes hold of it and bears it on high, estranging it from everything worldly." Because of his purity, and the subtlety, lightness and alertness of his intellect, as well as his ascetic practice, the intellect of the hesychast is purified and becomes transparent, for through his long devotion to the life of stillness his sensual nature has been dried up. For this reason his inherent power of contemplation easily and swiftly gains the mastery within him, and leads him to the state of amazement that is characteristic of it. In this way his visionary powers increase enormously, his mind never lacks material for the understanding to work on, and he always enjoys those things which the fruit of the Spirit produces in him (cf. Gal. 5:22). And with the passage of time the memories which rouse the passions in the soul, as well as the power that the devil exercises over him, are erased from his heart. For when the soul, because it is constantly occupied with something else, does not keep company with the passions and does not prostitute itself by thinking about them, the strong claws of the passions cannot overpower its spiritual senses.'[250]

And St Diadochos writes, 'Dispassion is not freedom from attack by the demons, for to be free from such attack we must, as the Apostle says, "go out of the world" (1 Cor. 5:10); but it is to remain undefeated when they do attack. Troops protected by armour, when attacked by adversaries with bows and arrows, hear the twang of the bow and actually see most of the missiles that are shot at them; yet they are not wounded, because of the strength of their armour. Just as the attacks against them are defeated because they are protected by iron, so we can break through the black ranks of the demons if, because of our good works, we are protected by the armour of divine light and the helmet of salvation. For it is not only to cease from evil that brings

purity, but actively to destroy evil by pursuing what is good.'[251]

And St Maximos in the following passage divides dispassion into four types: 'The first type of dispassion is abstention from the body's impulsion towards the actual committing of sin. The second is the complete rejection of impassioned thoughts in the soul; through this rejection the impulsion of the passions mentioned in the first type of dispassion is quelled, since there are now no impassioned thoughts to incite it into action. The third is the complete quiescence of passionate desire, and through this the second type is generated, since it is brought into being by purity of thought. The fourth type of dispassion is the complete exclusion from the mind of all sensible images. This in its turn produces the third type, since the mind no longer possesses those images of sensible things which produce in it imaginings of the passions.'[252] And, 'Dispassion is a peaceful condition of the soul in which the soul is not easily moved to evil.'[253]

87. *More on dispassion and perfection.*

St Ephraim has the following to say about dispassion and perfection: 'For the dispassionate, who with a longing that is never satisfied aspire to attain the desire of all desires, perfection is limitless, for there is no limit to the blessings of eternity.' And he adds, 'Perfection, in so far as it lies within human power to attain it, can indeed be fully attained. But it is also limitless since it continually surpasses itself through daily increase, and it is constantly exalted ever higher in its ascent to God.'[254] Similarly, St Neilos says the following about perfection: 'We should distinguish between two kinds of perfection, the one temporal, the other eternal. It is with respect to the latter that the Apostle writes, "When that which is perfect comes, then that which is imperfect will cease to be" (1 Cor. 13:10). The expression, "when that which is perfect comes", signifies that in this life we cannot contain the plenitude of divine perfection.'[255] And, 'St Paul recognizes two kinds of perfection, and he knew that the same person could be both perfect and not perfect. For he says that someone may be perfect with respect to this present life, yet not perfect in relation to Him who is truly perfect. That is why he says, "Not that I have become perfect yet" (Phil. 3:12), while a little later he says, "Those of us who are perfect must think in this way" (Phil. 3:15).'[256]

88. *On passionateness, self-indulgence, impassioned craving and dispassion.*

St Ilias the Ekdikos says, ‘Passionateness is the evil matter of the body; self-indulgence, that of the soul; impassioned craving, that of the intellect. Touch is responsible for the first; the rest of the senses for the second; and a perverse disposition for the third.’ And, ‘The self-indulgent man is close to the impassioned man; and the man of impassioned craving to the self-indulgent man. Far from all three is the dispassionate man.’[257]

89. *What it is to be passionate, self-indulgent, subject to impassioned craving and dispassionate; and on the curing of the first three of these states.*

St Ilias continues, ‘The impassioned man is strongly prone to sin in thought, even though for a time he does not sin outwardly. The self-indulgent man actually commits the sin suggested in thought, even though he suffers inwardly. The man of impassioned craving is given over freely or, rather, servilely, to the various modes of sinning. The dispassionate man is not dominated by any of these degrees of passion.’ With regard to the curing of impassioned states, St Ilias says the following; ‘Passionateness is removed from the soul through fasting and prayer; self-indulgence through vigil and silence; and impassioned craving through stillness and attentiveness. Dispassion is established through remembrance of God.’[258]

90. *On faith, hope and love.*

The beginning, middle and end of every good thing, or, if you like, its dispenser and governor, is faith, hope and love, that threefold cord fashioned by God (cf. Eccles. 4:12) – especially love, for God is and is called love (cf. 1 John 4:8). Thus it is not right to complete this treatise without saying something about them. Or since, according to Isaac, it is when we are granted perfect love that we receive the perfection of the many fruits of the Holy Spirit, let us first say something about love.[259]

St John Klimakos writes, ‘And now, after all that I have said, these three remain, as the bond that binds and secures all things: faith, hope and love; but the greatest of these is love (1 Cor. 13:13), for God Himself is called love (cf. 1 John 4:8). For my part I see faith as a ray, hope as light, and love as a disk, and the three together as a single radiance and a single splendour. Faith can

make and create all things; hope is encircled by God's mercy and so it never disappoints us (cf. Rom. 5:5); love never falls, nor does it stop in its course, nor does it permit respite to anyone wounded by its blessed madness.' And, 'The quality of love is known to the angels, and even to them only according to the degree of their enlightenment. God is love (cf. 1 John 4:8). He who wishes to set a limit to God is like a blind man trying to count the grains of sand on the ocean bed. Love, by reason of its nature, is likeness to God, in so far as this may be attained by human beings; in terms of its activity it is an intoxication of the soul; according to its particular quality it is a fountain of faith, an abyss of long-suffering, a sea of humility. Love is in the true sense a rejection of every thought that is contrary to it, for love thinks no evil (cf. 1 Cor. 13:5). Love, dispassion and divine adoption differ only in name; as light, fire and flame combine to form a single entity, so I think do love, dispassion and adoption.'[260]

St Diadochos says, 'All spiritual contemplation should be governed by faith, hope and love, but most of all by love. The first two teach us to be detached from visible delights, but love unites the soul with the excellence of God, searching out the Invisible by means of intellectual perception.'[261] Again, 'The natural love of the soul is one thing, and the love which comes to it from the Holy Spirit is another. The activity of the first depends on the assent of our will to our desire. For this reason it is easily taken over and perverted by evil spirits when we do not keep firmly to our chosen course. But the love which comes from the Holy Spirit so inflames the soul that all its parts cleave ineffably and with utter simplicity to the delight of its love and longing for the divine. The intellect then becomes pregnant through the energy of the Holy Spirit and overflows with a spring of love and joy.'[262]

And St Isaac says, 'The love which originates in some object is like a small lamp which is fed by oil and thus maintains its light. Or it is like a torrent surging after rain; it stops completely when the water which supplies it is exhausted. But the love whose source is God is like a gushing spring, and its flow never ceases. For God alone is the source of love, and what flows from such a source is inexhaustible.'[263] And again, when he was asked, 'What is the perfection of the many fruits of the Spirit?', he replied, 'It is when one is granted the perfect love of God.' And again, when he was asked, 'How does one know when one is granted this?', he said, 'By the fact that whenever the remembrance of God stirs in your mind, your heart is at once

moved by love and your eyes flow with tears in abundance. For it is a characteristic of love to awaken tears whenever one calls to mind those whom one loves. And if you have been granted perfect love you will never be without tears, for you will never be without the love that brings the thought of God into your mind, so even in sleep you commune with Him. It is a characteristic of love to bring such things about; and it is love that constitutes human perfection in this earthly life.'[264]

Again St Isaac says, 'God's love is by nature fervent, and if it fills you immeasurably it rouses your soul into a state of ecstasy. It is for this reason that if you experience it your heart cannot contain it or offer resistance to it. Instead, depending on the degree and strength of the love that fills you, you will change in a remarkable manner, of which the perceptible signs are the following: your face becomes sanguine and full of joy, and your body is always warm; you feel no fear or shame, and become as it were ecstatic; you no longer retain the power that keeps your mind under control and you become like one who has lost his senses; you reckon dread death a joy, and your intellect's contemplation of things celestial is unbroken; when you are far away you speak as though you were present, without anyone seeing you; your natural mode of understanding and of seeing leaves you, and your senses lose their awareness of the way you move among things; for if you do anything you are not completely conscious of it, since your intellect is rapt in contemplation, and your mind is always as if engaged in conversation with someone else. The Apostles and martyrs were drunk with such spiritual intoxication. The Apostles travelled throughout the whole world, labouring and reviled (cf. 1 Tim. 4:10); the martyrs, their limbs hacked to pieces, poured out their blood like water, yet in spite of suffering the most terrible things they did not flinch but withstood their torments courageously; although wise they were regarded as fools. Others wandered across deserts and over mountains and through caves and dens in the earth (cf. Heb. 11:38), apparently in disarray yet in reality not at all so. May God account us worthy of attaining a folly like theirs!'[265]

91. *On Holy Communion and on the many blessings conferred on us through continual communion with a pure conscience.*

Nothing assists and contributes more to the purification of our soul, the illumination of our intellect, the sanctification of our body, and to the

transformation of both intellect and body into something more divine and to their immortality – and indeed to the repulsion of the passions and the demons or, to put it more directly, to union with God and to divine and supranatural attachment and intermingling with Him – than continual participation and communion, with as sincere a heart and disposition as possible, in the holy, pure, immortal and life-creating sacrament of the precious Body and Blood of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus. For this reason we must certainly say something on this theme before bringing our discourse to a close.

The truth of what we have just affirmed is evident not only from what the saints say, but much more so from the actual words of Him who is life itself and truth itself. For He says, 'I am the bread of life' (John 6:48). And, 'This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that whoever eats it will not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live eternally. And the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world' (John 6:50–1). And, 'Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life' (John 6:53–4). And, 'For My flesh is true food and My blood is true drink. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood dwells in Me and I dwell in him. As the living Father has sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he that eats Me will live because of Me. This is the bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread shall live for ever' (John 6:55–8). And Paul the Christ-bearer says the following: 'Brethren, what I received from the Lord I have passed on to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night that He was betrayed took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My Body, broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way, after supper He also took the cup saying, "This cup is the New Testament decreed in My Blood: each time you drink from it, do so in remembrance of Me." For each time that you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death, until the time that He comes. Thus whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily sins against the Body and Blood of the Lord. So let everyone examine himself, and then let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For whoever eats and drinks unworthily condemns himself in so doing, for he fails to recognize that what he eats and drinks is the Lord's Body. It is for this reason that many among you are weak and sickly, and that many die. For if we examined ourselves carefully, we would not be judged by

the Lord. Yet the Lord's judgment leads us onto the right path, so that we will not be condemned along with the rest of the world' (1 Cor. 11:23–32).

92. *We must learn about the miracle of the Holy Eucharist; what it is, and why it was given, and how it benefits us.*

St John Chrysostom writes, 'We must learn about the miracle of the Eucharist; what it is, and why it was given, and how it benefits us. We are one body (cf. Rom. 12:5) and members of the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ and of His bones (cf. Eph. 5:30). Let those who have been initiated attend carefully to what we say. So that we may not only become one body through the bond of love but may in actuality be permeated by the Lord's flesh, He gave us the food through which this is accomplished, for He wished to show us the love He has for us. For this reason He mingled Himself with us and mixed His body with ours, so that we might become one with Him, just as a body is united with its head. This is what happens to those who are possessed by fervent longing. It is what Job hinted at when he related that his servants, by whom he was greatly loved, in order to show their love exclaimed, "Who will give us his flesh so that we may eat our fill of it?" (cf. Job 31:31. LXX). This, then, is why Christ did this very thing, to lead us to a greater love, and to show His love for us, giving Himself in such a way that those who long for Him are able not only to see Him but also to touch Him, to eat Him, to be grafted into His flesh, to be intertwined with Him, and so to be filled totally with fervent longing.'[266]

St John Chrysostom continues, 'Those who partake of the most holy Body and precious Blood are ranked with the angels, the archangels and the heavenly powers, for they have put on the royal robe of Christ and bear spiritual weapons. But as yet I have said nothing, for they are clothed in the King Himself. Because He is great, terrible and awe-inspiring, if you come to Him with purity you will attain salvation, while if you come to Him with an evil conscience you will receive chastisement and retribution. For whoever eats and drinks the Body and Blood of the Lord unworthily condemns himself in so doing (cf. 1 Cor. 11:27). For if those who defile the imperial purple are punished in the same way as those who tear it apart, it is not at all unreasonable that those who receive Christ's Body with an unclean mind should suffer the same penalty as those who pierced it with nails. Take note, then, of how dreadful St Paul shows the penalty to be when he says, "If

someone broke Moses' law, and two or three witnesses confirmed it, he was put to death without mercy. How much worse a punishment, do you think, will the person deserve who has trodden the Son of God underfoot and has regarded as unholy the Blood of the New Testament with which he has been sanctified?" (Heb. 10:28–29).[267] When, therefore, we partake of this Body and drink this Blood, let us keep in mind that we feed on Him who is enthroned in heaven, who is worshipped by the angels, and who is encompassed by the inviolate power of God. Alas! How many paths to salvation there are for us! He made us His Body; He gave us His own Body. Yet none of this turns us away from our sins. What hardness of heart! What insensitivity!'[268]

Again, Chrysostom writes, 'A wonderful old man once told me what he had been privileged to see and hear; that if those who are about to depart from this life commune in the eucharistic sacrament with a pure conscience, when they die a retinue of angels bears them from this world because of the communion they have received.'[269]

Furthermore, St John of Damaskos said, 'Because our nature is twofold and composite, our birth must also be twofold; and similarly our food must be composite. Thus our birth is given us by water and the Spirit; and our food is the bread of life itself, our Lord Jesus Christ who came down from heaven. And just as in the case of baptism, since people are accustomed to wash with water and anoint themselves with oil, He conjoined the grace of the Spirit to oil and water and made this a washing of regeneration, so in the same way, since we are accustomed to eat bread and drink water and wine, He conjoined His own divinity to these things and made them His Body and Blood, so that through what is ordinary and natural we might attain what is supranatural. The body, born of the holy Virgin, is truly united with His divinity. This does not mean that the actual body in which Christ ascended comes down from heaven, but that the bread and wine are themselves transformed into the Body and Blood of God. If you ask how this takes place, it is sufficient for you to hear that it takes place through the Holy Spirit. It is as with the incarnation; we know that it was with flesh taken from the holy Mother of God that the Lord through the Holy Spirit created His own body, but beyond that we know nothing except that the Logos of God is true, effective in His actions, and all-powerful; but His manner of acting is inexplicable. Thus those who receive communion worthily and with faith are granted the remission of sins, life

eternal, and the protection of soul and body. But those who commune unworthily and without faith receive chastisement and retribution, since they are guilty of the Lord's death.

'Nor are the bread and wine a mere token of the Body and Blood of Christ. God forbid! They are the actual deified Body of Christ and His actual Blood. "For My flesh", He says, "is true food, and My blood is true drink" (John 6:55). The Body and Blood of Christ bring about the restoration of our soul and body; they do not lose their efficacy, or become waste matter that is expelled from the body; on the contrary, they nourish our being and sustain us, cleansing us of all pollution. And if the gold in our nature has become adulterated, let us purify it here and now with the fire of judgment that separates the true from the spurious, so that in the life to come we will not be condemned along with the rest of the world (cf. 1 Cor. 11:32). When we have been purified with this fire, we are united with the Body of Christ and with His Spirit and we become the Body of Christ. This bread is the first-fruit of the bread in store for us, the bread necessary for our existence (cf. Matt. 6:11). For in the Lord's Prayer, the Greek word *epiousion*[270] signifies either the bread in store for us, that is, the bread of the Age to come, or else the bread that sustains our essential being. The Lord's flesh is life-creating Spirit because it was conceived by the life-creating Spirit, and "that which is born of Spirit is Spirit" (John 3:6). I say this not in order to deny the physical nature of the body, but because I wish to stress that which is life-creating and divine in it. The bread and the wine, then, are called "antitypes" of our future state, not because they are not truly the Body and Blood of Christ, but because in this life we participate in the divinity of Christ through them, whereas in the life of eternity we will participate in His divinity noetically through the beatific vision alone.'[271]

And St Makarios says, 'Just as wine mingles with all the limbs of the person who drinks it, and the wine permeates him and he permeates the wine, so the person who drinks the Blood of Christ receives within himself the Spirit of His divinity, and the Spirit is mingled with his perfect soul and his soul with the Spirit; and since his soul is sanctified in this way, it is made worthy of the Lord. "For", says Scripture, "we have all been made to drink from the same Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13). And through the bread of the Eucharist those who commune in truth are enabled to participate in the Holy Spirit, and through participating in this way are granted eternal life. And just as the life of the body is not self-sustaining but depends on what is outside itself, that is

to say, on the fruits of the earth, so it was God's will that the soul should have the food, drink and raiment which are its true life, not from its own nature but from His divinity, from His own Spirit and light. For the divine nature contains within itself the bread of life, namely Him who said, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:48), as it also contains within itself living water, wine that gives delight (cf. Ps. 104:15), and the oil of jubilation (cf. Ps. 45:7).'[272]

And St Isidoros says, 'Participation in the holy mysteries is called communion because it confers on us union with Christ and makes us partakers in His kingdom.'[273] And St Neilos says, 'A believer cannot be saved, receive forgiveness for his sins, and attain the kingdom of heaven unless with fear, faith and love he participates in the mystical and pure Body and Blood of Christ.'[274] Similarly, St Basil the Great writes in his letter to the Patrician Kaisaria, 'To communicate every day and to receive daily the holy Body and Blood of Christ is right and profitable, since Christ Himself clearly says, "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood dwells in Me and I dwell in him, and he has eternal life" (cf. John 6:56, 54). For who can doubt that to participate constantly in life is nothing other than to live in many different ways? As for us, we receive communion four times a week, on Sundays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, and on other days should it be a saint's day.'[275] I suspect that St Basil also celebrated the Liturgy on those days. He was not able to do so every day because he was burdened with such great cares.

And St Apollo said, 'A monk must, if possible, receive communion every day. For if you keep yourself away from the Eucharist, you keep yourself away from God, while if you commune continually, you continually receive Christ's body. For Christ Himself says, "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood dwells in Me and I dwell in him" (John 6:56). Thus to remember Christ's passion continually is of great benefit to monks. A monk should be ready every day and must prepare himself, so that he is always in a fit state to participate in the holy sacrament. For in this way God releases us from our sins.'[276]

And St John Klimakos says, 'If a body's energy changes when it touches another body, how will a person who touches God's body with innocent hands not be changed?'[277] And it is written in the Sayings of the Elders, 'John Vostrinos, a holy man with authority over unclean spirits, questioned the demons dwelling in some young girls, who were maddened and possessed

by them in a terrible manner. He asked them, “What things do you fear from Christians?” And they replied, “Truly you have three great things. One is that which you wear round your necks; another is the water with which you have been washed in church; and another is that which you eat in the Liturgy.” And when he asked them again, “Which of these do you fear the most?”, they replied, “If you guarded carefully that of which you partake in the Liturgy, none of us would have the power to harm a Christian.” The things, then, which our adversaries fear most of all are the cross, baptism and communion.’[278]

93. *The end of the detailed exposition of our various themes, and a word of encouragement for our questioner.*

See, dear child, with the help of God your request has been fulfilled. Whether it has been fulfilled as you would wish or as you intended, we cannot tell. But this is the best we can do, and God likes us to do our best. But make sure that your zeal for knowledge and your diligence do not stop here, and that you put your zeal and diligence outwardly into practice. For the renowned Brother of God says, ‘My beloved brethren, put what you hear into practice instead of merely listening to it and so deluding yourselves. For if you merely hear what the law says, but do not put it into practice, you are like a person who glances at his face in a mirror; he observes himself, goes off and immediately forgets what he was like. But the person who carefully studies the faultless law of freedom and steadfastly lives by it, and is not simply a hearer who forgets what he has heard but puts it into practice, will be blessed in what he does’ (Jas. 1:22–5).

94. *How one must listen to and take note of the spiritual sayings of the Fathers.*

Above all, you should take note of the divine and spiritual sayings of the Fathers and listen to them with faith and due reverence. For St Makarios says, ‘Spiritual realities are beyond the reach of those who lack experience. But the Holy Spirit enters into communion with the sanctified and faithful soul so that it apprehends them. For the heavenly treasures of the Spirit are revealed only to those who have actually experienced them; but by the uninitiated they cannot in any way be perceived. Listen, then, with devout attention to what is

said about them until you attain such faith that you come to experience them yourself. Then you will know by the evidence of your soul's eyes how great are the blessings and mysteries in which the souls of Christians can participate even in this life. With this knowledge you will swiftly reap the fruits and the benefit of what you have read and heard. And from being under instruction and discipline you will make progress until you are able to teach others and to guide them through your experience towards what is more divine and beyond the understanding of the majority. May this be your lot, since you rely on the all-powerful hand of the Lord Jesus Christ and are guided by Him. Amen.'[279]

But since too many words are as bad for the ears as too much food is for the body, and moderation in all things is best, we too must avoid excess and embrace moderation. We will add only what in effect is a brief recapitulation of the present treatise, and then we will drop the anchor of our discourse.

95. *A recapitulation on how one should pray, and on true illumination and divine power.*

The Fathers say that, if you wish to achieve true watchfulness, strive to pray with purity and without distraction in your heart, coupling the prayer with your breath as you breathe in through the nose. You should fix your attention on nothing but the words of the Prayer, 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me', and meditate and reflect on them. You should do this until your intellect is illuminated in your heart. As St Diadochos says, 'Those who meditate unceasingly upon this glorious and holy name of the Lord Jesus in the depths of their heart can sometimes see the light of their own intellect.'[280] When with the help of God this happens, we will thereafter complete the remaining portion of our life in God unerringly and without stumbling, since we walk in the light or, rather, since we are the sons of light, as Jesus the giver of life says: 'While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become sons of light' (John 12:36); and, 'I am the light of the world; he that follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life' (John 8:12). And David cries out to the Lord, 'In Thy light shall we see light' (Ps. 36:9). And the most divine Paul says, 'God, who commanded the light to shine out of the darkness, has shone in our hearts' (2 Cor. 4:6).

By this light, as by an inextinguishable and resplendent lamp, those who truly possess faith are guided, and they gaze upon things that lie beyond the

perception of the senses; and since they are pure in heart the heavenly gate leading to the sublime and angelic realm of life is opened to them. By this light, as by the sun, they are illumined with the power to analyse, to discriminate, to perceive with insight, to foresee what is to come, and so on; and in general through it they are enlightened with the full disclosure and revelation of the invisible mysteries. They are filled in spirit with supranatural and divine power; and through this supranatural power their body is lightened or, rather, their material flesh is refined and uplifted and ascends on high.

Through this luminous power bestowed by the Holy Spirit some of the Holy Fathers, though still living in the flesh, passed, as though they were immaterial and incorporeal, dry-shod over unfordable rivers and over seas crossed only by ships. In the twinkling of an eye they completed long journeys which ordinarily would have taken many days. And they did other extraordinary things, in the sky, on land, in the sun, in the sea, in deserts, in cities, in every place and country, among wild beasts and reptiles and, in a word, throughout the whole creation and in all the elements, and they have been glorified by all these things. When they stood in prayer, their holy and precious bodies rose from the ground as if they were furnished with wings, their physical mass and indeed their weight reduced to ashes by the consuming, divine and immaterial fire of grace. Lightly were they borne aloft, and they were miraculously transformed and refashioned into something more divine by the deifying hand of the power and grace dwelling in them. And after death the venerable bodies of some of them remain incorrupt, manifestly bearing witness to the supranatural grace and power which dwells in them as in all those who possess strong faith.

And after the general cosmic resurrection, having grown wings, as it were, through this spiritual power of illumination, they ‘will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air’, as St Paul, that initiate into God’s ineffable mysteries, affirms (1 Thess. 4:17), and so they will always be with the Lord. In addition, the inspired David sings, ‘They will walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance, and in Thy name they will rejoice all the day long, that is to say, throughout eternity, and in Thy righteousness they will be exalted. For Thou art the boast of their strength, and in Thy gracious favour will our horn be exalted’ (cf. Ps. 89:15–17). And again, ‘God’s mighty ones are greatly raised up from the earth’ (Ps. 47:9.LXX). And Isaiah, sublime in all he utters, says, ‘They who wait upon the Lord will grow wings, they will

renew their strength' (cf. Isa. 40:31).

And St Makarios says, 'Every soul that through its own effort and faith is privileged in this present life to put on Christ completely in the power and full assurance of grace, and to unite with the heavenly light of the incorruptible image, is initiated here and now substantively into the knowledge of all the heavenly mysteries. Moreover, in the great day of the resurrection the body also will be glorified with the same heavenly image of glory; it will be caught up by the Spirit to the heavens (cf. 1 Thess. 4:17), will be given a form like the body of Christ's glory (cf. Phil. 3:21), and will reign together with Him in both soul and body throughout eternity.'[281]

96. *A further recapitulation.*

The origin and source of this more than inexplicable renewal is the stillness, attentiveness and prayer about which we have spoken, combined with complete detachment. These virtues possess as their sure foundation and impregnable defence the fulfilment, in so far as this is possible, of all the deifying commandments. From detachment, stillness, attentiveness and prayer come that motivation and fervour in the heart which burns up the passions and the demons, purifying the heart as if it were in a furnace. And from this comes a yearning and ceaseless longing for the Lord Jesus Christ. As a result of this the fountain of the heart's tears begins to flow sweetly, purifying as if by hyssop and nourishing soul and body through repentance, love, thanksgiving and confession. These give birth to serenity and to that peacefulness of thought to which there is no bound because it surpasses all understanding (cf. Phil. 4:7). From these come illumination, as brilliant as sunlight on snow. Finally come dispassion, in so far as human beings can attain it, and the soul's resurrection prior to that of the body, its reformation and return to that which is in the image and likeness of God through ascetic practice, contemplation, faith, hope and love, and its intense striving towards God and immediate union with Him. This is accompanied by ecstasy, repose and stability – in the present life dimly as in a mirror (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12) and as a foretaste, but in the life to be as the entirely perfect participation in God and the eternal enjoyment of Him 'face to face' (1 Cor. 13:12).

97. *The stillness that comes through obedience constitutes the true and unerring way of life according to God that we have inherited from the*

Fathers, and it is justly called by the saints 'a life hidden in Christ'.

This path or noetic way of life according to God, this sacred practice performed by faithful Christians, is clearly the true, unerring and genuine 'life hidden in Christ' (cf. Col. 3:3). It was inaugurated and traced out for us by the God-Man, the most sweet Jesus. Along this path the divine Apostles travelled, and following faithfully in their footsteps there came their successors, our renowned guides and teachers, who from the time that Christ was first present on earth until now have shone as bright stars in the world (cf. Phil. 2:15) with the radiance of their vivifying teaching and of their miracles. Up to our own time they have passed on from one to the other the good seed (cf. Matt. 13:24), the sacred leaven (cf. Matt. 13:33), the holy first-fruit (cf. Rom. 11:16), the unbroken tradition (cf. 1 Tim. 6:20), the grace and power from on high (cf. Luke 24:49), the pearl of great price (cf. Matt. 13:46), the divine inheritance from the Father, the treasure hidden in the field (cf. Matt. 13:44), the foretaste of the Spirit (cf. 2 Cor. 1:22), the royal sign, the living and flowing water (cf. John 4:14), the divine fire, the venerable salt, the gift, the seal, the light, and so on. All this has been given as our inheritance, to be transmitted mystically from one generation to another until the second coming of Christ on earth. For truthful is He who promised, 'And see, I am with you always, even to the end of the world' (Matt. 28:20). Amen.

98. *Although there are other paths leading to salvation, yet this path is pre-eminent and sovereign, and it leads to divine adoption.*

There are of course other admirable paths and ways of life and other forms of spiritual practice which lead to the salvation and stillness of those who participate in them – just as there are also those that lead to and result in slavery and servitude – for the Saviour says that there are many dwelling-places in His Father's house (cf. John 14:2). Yet this path is the pre-eminent and sovereign path, surpassing all other spiritual practices as the soul surpasses the body. It renews all who follow it aright, and from being dust and ashes (cf. Gen. 18:27) it leads them to divine adoption. By the power of the Spirit, in a miraculous way, it turns human beings into gods (cf. John 10:34–35). As St Basil says, 'When the Holy Spirit dwells in someone's soul it gives him life and immortality, and raises him when he has fallen.'[282] That

which has been activated by the eternal movement of the Holy Spirit becomes alive and holy; and when the Holy Spirit dwells in him, man, previously dust and ashes, acquires the status of a prophet, an Apostle, an angel, a god.

99. *Because of the lofty nature of its spiritual practice this way of life has many names.*

For this reason the divine Fathers honour this way of life with many different and illustrious names. They have called it the path of spiritual knowledge, laudable practice and timely contemplation, prayer on the highest plane, watchfulness of the intellect, noetic activity, a work of the Age to come, an angelic way of life, a heavenly mode of being, a divine manner of existence, the land of the living (cf. Ps. 116:9), a mystical vision, a spiritual banquet, a deifying paradise, heaven, the celestial kingdom, the kingdom of God, dazzling darkness, the life that is hidden in Christ (cf. Col. 3:3), the vision of God and deification, the utterly transcendent, and so on. Since we follow the divine Fathers, though we pass our lives ‘with mortar and the making of bricks’ (Exod. 1:14), with malicious and unclean thoughts, words and actions, yet we too have striven, dearly beloved, to fulfil your request, as you desired. As we said in the preface to this work, for the sake of your love and in obedience to the instruction of the fathers, we have not shrunk from speaking in a manner beyond our powers. The prime mover of this angelic way of life is the new and ineffable dispensation and incarnation of the Logos and Son of God, along with the good will of the unoriginate Father and the cooperation of the Holy Spirit.

100. *We, too, with the help and grace of God, must strive and struggle as we can, so that from now on we may become worthy of such great and supranatural gifts, as a foretaste of things to come, and also so that we may not lose them through some minor negligence on our part, which God forbid.*

Since such great gifts are set before us, not merely in expectation and as things promised in the future, but as present and genuine actualities, let us exert ourselves and offer supplication while we still have time. Let us press on, let us struggle, so that we too may be granted these blessings that are conferred upon us in return for our small and passing efforts and our brief travail, but for the most part through the bounty and grace of God. For 'the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us' (Rom. 8:18), says the divine herald, St Paul, and we should listen to his words. Or, rather, he says that even now if we strive we can receive the first-fruits and the foretaste of this glory (cf. Rom. 8:23; 2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:14). Those who have been called from a lowly estate to enjoy the kinship and society of kings exert themselves to the utmost through word, deed and thought. They attempt what lies beyond their power and frequently despise even their very life for the sake of a glory and honour which are transient and temporary, and which sometimes result in complete disaster and not in what is of profit to them. How much more, then, should we not strive and exert ourselves? For we have been invited to communion, marriage and union with God, the King of kings and Creator, who alone is incorruptible and eternal, and who bestows on those who are His a glory and honour as splendid as it is unfading.

And this is not all, for we have been given the power to become children of God. To those who have received Him and have believed in His name, says Scripture, He has given the power to become sons of God (cf. John 1:12). He gives us power; He does not drag us tyrannically or coerce us against our will. For tyranny always provokes in its victims resistance against the oppressor, so that they seek to cure evil by evil. God, on the contrary, respects our primordial prerogative of self-determination, so that the good which is achieved, although entirely the product of His favour and grace, He attributes to our own diligence and dedication. Since He is God and Lord, He has done everything Himself; for He created all of us in the same manner and

He died for all of us, so that He might also save us all. On us, however, He has conferred the power to draw near to Him, to put our trust in Him, to make ourselves His own, and to worship Him with awe, devotion and love. For He is our compassionate lord and guardian who so truly loved us that He was even willing to undergo a voluntary and shameful death for our sake, in order to free us from the tyranny of our enemy the devil, the author of evil, and to reconcile us with God the Father, making us heirs of God and co-heirs with Himself. How marvellous this is! And most blessed!

Let us then not alienate ourselves from such rich blessings, rewards and sources of joy through some small fleeting indolence or neglect, or because of some counterfeit pleasure, but let us do everything we can and make every effort. For His sake let us not spare even our life itself, if need be, just as He did not spare His life for our sake, even though He was God. In this way we will be granted even in this life all manner of gifts and crowns. May we all attain this through the favour and grace of our supremely loving and merciful Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who humbled Himself so much for us and who richly grants to those who likewise humble themselves the actual presence here and now of His supranatural and deifying grace. For to Him is due all glory, honour and worship, together with His unoriginate and most sacred Father and His coeternal, all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and always and through the endless ages of ages. Amen.

---

1 *Homilies on* 2 *Corinthians* 7, 5 (*P.G.* lxi, 448).

2 Ibid. (*P.G.* lxi, 449).

3 *To a young widow* 3 (*P.G.* xlviii, 603); ed. B. Grillet and G. Ettlinger (*Sources chrétiennes* 138: Paris, 1968), p. 130.

4 St Mark the Ascetic (Mark the Monk), *On Baptism* (*P.G.* lxv, 1028BC); ed. G. M. de Durand (*Sources chrétiennes* 445: Paris, 1999), pp. 394–6.

5 *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 4 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 681A); E.T., C. Luibheid and N. Russell (*The Classics of Western Spirituality*: New York, 1982), p. 93.

6 Ibid., Step 26 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 1089B); E.T., p. 259.

7 Ibid., Step 4 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 680BC); E.T., p. 92.

8 Ibid., Step 4 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 681A); E.T., p. 93; cf. Rom. 14:23.

9 Ibid., Step 23 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 965D); E.T., p. 208.

10 Ibid., Step 4 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 681B); E.T., p 93.

11 Ibid., Step 4 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 717B); E.T., p. 114.

12 Ibid., Step 4 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 681A); E.T., p. 93.

13 *Apophthegmata*, alphabetical collection, Gregory the Theologian (of Nazianzos) 1: E.T., Sister Benedicta Ward, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*: *The Alphabetical Collection* (2nd ed., London/Oxford, 1981), p. 45.

14 *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 27 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 1113B); E.T., p. 271.

15 St Isaac the Syrian (Isaac of Nineveh), *Ascetical Homilies*, Greek translation, ed. Nikiphoros Theotokis and Joachim Spetsieris (Athens, 1895), pp. 261–2; E.T., A. J. Wensinck (Amsterdam, 1923), pp. 252–3; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery (Boston, 1984), pp. 262–3. This homily does not appear in the critical edition of the Greek text of Isaac, ed. Marcel Pirard (Monastery of Iviron, Holy Mountain of Athos, 2012).

16 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 216; E.T., Wensinck, p. 3; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 5.

17 Cf. Evagrios the Solitary, ‘Outline Teaching on Asceticism and Stillness in the Solitary Life’; E.T., G. E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard and Kallistos Ware, *The Philokalia*, vol. 1 (London/Boston, 1979), p. 33.

18 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 365; E.T., Wensinck, p. 89; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 19.

19 *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 27 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 1109D); E.T., p. 269.

20 Isaac (John of Dalyatha), *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 803; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 84; not in Wensinck.

21 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 684; E.T., Wensinck, p. 302; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 310.

22 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 683; E.T., Wensinck, p. 302; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 310.

23 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, pp. 697–8; Wensinck, p. 315; E.T.,

Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 321.

24 *Apophthegmata*, alphabetical collection, Arsenios 2; E.T., p. 9.

25 *Letter*2; ed. Roy J. Deferrari, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA, 1926), p. 13.

26 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Theotokis, p. 304; E.T., Wensinck, pp. 104–5; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 112; not in Pirard.

27 *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 27 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 1109B); E.T., p. 268.

28 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 688; E.T., Wensinck, p. 310; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 316.

29 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 225; E.T., Wensinck, p. 7; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 10.

30 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Theotokis, p. 284; E.T., Wensinck, p. 215; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 229; not in Pirard.

31 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 327; E.T., Wensinck, pp. 70–1; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 67.

32 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 550; E.T., Wensinck, p. 215; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 229.

33 *A Gnomic Anthology* 1; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 3 (London/Boston, 1984), p. 34.

34 St Mark the Ascetic (Mark the Monk), *On Those who Think that They are Made Righteous by Works*, §§ 185, 187, 191 (*P.G.* lxv, 960AC); ed. de Durand (*Sources chrétiennes* 445), pp. 180–90; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, pp. 142–3 (§§ 198, 200, 204).

35 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, pp. 663–4; E.T., Wensinck, p. 287; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 296.

36 Cf. St Symeon Metaphrastes, *Paraphrase of the Homilies of St Makarios of Egypt*129–35; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 3, pp. 342–6.

37 St Gregory of Nazianzos, *Oration* 39, 8 (*P.G.* xxxvi, 344A); ed. C. Moreschini and p. Gallay (*Sources chrétiennes* 358: Paris, 1990), p. 164.

38 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 213; E.T., Wensinck, p. 1; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 3.

39 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 216; E.T., Wensinck, p. 2; E.T.,

Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 4.

40 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 219; E.T., Wensinck, p. 4; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 6.

41 *Twenty-Four Discourses* iv, 'The Two Kinds of Fear'; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 3 (London, 1984), p. 218.

42 Nikiphoros the Monk, 'On Watchfulness and the Guarding of the Heart'; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 4 (London, 1995), pp. 205–6.

43 *Letter to Monks* (ed. Panagiotis G. Nikopoulos, *Hai eis ton Ioannin ton Chrysostomon esphalmenos apodidomenai epistolai* [Athens, 1973], pp. 482–3). It is generally agreed that this text is not by Chrysostom. It seems to be considerably later, dating perhaps from the eleventh or twelfth century.

44 *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 27 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 1112C); E.T., p. 270.

45 *On Watchfulness and Holiness* 182; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, pp. 194–5.

46 *Letter* 2; ed. Deferrari, vol. 1, pp. 12–14.

47 Neilos (Evagrios the Solitary), *On Prayer* 149; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, p. 71.

48 *On Watchfulness and Holiness* 189; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, p. 196.

49 *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 7 (*P.G.*, lxxxviii, 808B); E.T., p. 139.

50 *Apophthegmata*, alphabetical collection, Poemen 119; E.T., p. 184.

51 Ilias the Ekdikos, *Gnomic Anthology* II, 93; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 3, p. 44.

52 St John Klimakos, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 15 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 889CD); E.T., p. 178.

53 Neilos (Evagrios the Solitary), *On Prayer* 126; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, p. 69.

54 *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 27 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 1116C); E.T., p. 272.

55 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, pp. 403–4; E.T., Wensinck, pp. 141–2; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 151.

56 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Theotokis, p. 218; E.T., Wensinck, pp. 142–3; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, pp. 151–2; not in Pirard.

57 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 225; E.T., Wensinck, p. 7; Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 10.

58 *On Prayer* 2 (*P.G.* l, 779). This is one of the many writings attributed to Chrysostom but in all probability not actually his work.

59 Ibid. (*P.G.* l, 779–80).

60 Ibid. (*P.G.* l, 780).

61 Ibid. (*P.G.* l, 781).

62 Ibid. (*P.G.* l, 783).

63 Ibid. (*P.G.* l, 783).

64 Ibid. (*P.G.* l, 784).

65 Ibid. (*P.G.* l, 786).

66 Ibid. (*P.G.* l, 786).

67 Cf. *On Prayer* 1 (*P.G.* l, 775).

68 Cf. *On Prayer* 1 (*P.G.* l, 778).

69 *Oration* 27, 4 (*P.G.* xxxvi, 16B); ed. P. Gallay and M. Jourjon (*Sources chrétiennes* 250: Paris, 1978), p. 78.

70 *The Sentences of Sextus* 289; ed. Henry Chadwick (Cambridge, 1959), p. 44.

71 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 366; E.T., Wensinck, p. 89; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 98.

72 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Theotokis, p. 297; E.T., Wensinck, p. 89; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 98; not in Pirard.

73 *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 28 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 1129AB); E.T., p. 274.

74 Ibid., Step 28 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 1133C); E.T., p. 297.

75 Neilos (Evagrios the Solitary), *On Prayer* 37; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, p. 60.

76 Ibid., 36; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, p. 60.

77 Ibid., 3; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, p. 57.

78 Ibid., 101; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, p. 67.

79 *Apophthegmata*, alphabetical collection, Longinus 5; E.T., p. 123.

80 *Oration* 24, 11 (*P.G.* xxv, 1181B); ed. J. Mossay and G. Lafontaine (*Sources chrétiennes* 284: Paris, 1981), p. 62.

81 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 310; E.T., Wensinck, p. 57; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 54.

82 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 270; E.T., Wensinck, p. 34; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 33.

83 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 261; E.T., Wensinck, p. 29; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 29.

84 Isaac (John of Dalyatha), *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Theotokis, p. 181; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 88; not in Wensinck or Pirard.

85 Compare St Maximos the Confessor, *Various Texts* IV, 96; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 2 (London/Boston, 1981), p. 259: according to Maximos 'the right' is interpreted to signify self-conceit, and 'the left' to signify the passions of the flesh.

86 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, pp. 495–7; E.T., Wensinck, pp. 188–9; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, pp. 197–8.

87 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Theotokis, p. 217; E.T., Wensinck, pp. 187–8; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, pp. 195–6; not in Pirard.

88 Henry R. Percival (ed.), *The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church: Their Canons and Dogmatic Decrees*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, vol. 14 (Oxford/New York, 1900), p. 598.

89 *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 6 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 796B); E.T., p. 133.

90 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Theotokis, p. 185; E.T., Wensinck, p. 24; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 24; not in Pirard.

91 *Homily exhorting the faithful to receive holy baptism* 6 (*P.G.* xxxi, 437A).

92 Cf. St Hesychios the Priest, *On Watchfulness and Holiness* 165; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, p. 191.

93 These four texts are all taken from Isaac (John of Dalyatha), *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Theotokis, pp. 181–2; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, pp. 88–9; not in Wensinck or Pirard.

94 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 449; E.T., Wensinck, p. 160; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 171.

95 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 309; E.T., Wensinck, p. 56; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 54.

96 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 696; E.T., Wensinck, p. 315; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, pp. 320–1.

97 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 264; E.T., Wensinck, pp. 30–1; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 31.

98 These three texts are all taken from *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, pp. 369–70; E.T., Wensinck, pp. 91–2; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 101.

99 *Apophthegmata*, alphabetical collection, Poemen 184; E.T., p. 193.

100 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 227; E.T., Wensinck, p. 39; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 38.

101 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 260; E.T., Wensinck, p. 28; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 29.

102 *Apophthegmata*, systematic collection, X, 129; ed. Jean-Claude Guy (*Sources chrétiennes* 474: Paris, 2003), p. 98.

103 Thalassios, scholium on Klimakos, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 1093A).

104 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Theotokis, p. 220; E.T., Wensinck, p. 144; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 154; not in Pirard.

105 *Centuries on Love* IV, 63; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 2, p. 108.

106 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Theotokis, p. 184; E.T., Wensinck, p. 22; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 23; not in Pirard.

107 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 764; E.T., Wensinck, p. 361; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 359.

108 St John Chrysostom (attributed to), *Selections from various homilies* 7 (*P.G.* lxiii, 618).

109 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 273; E.T., Wensinck, p. 36; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 35.

110 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 301; E.T., Wensinck, p. 52; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 50.

111 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Theotokis, p. 284; E.T., Wensinck, p. 215;

E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 229; not in Pirard.

112 St Varsanuphios of Gaza, *Questions and Answers* 450; ed. F. Neyt and P. de Angelis-Noah (*Sources chrétiennes* 451: Paris, 2001), pp. 530–2.

113 *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 25 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 992D); E.T., p. 221.

114 St Varsanuphios of Gaza, *Questions and Answers* 38; ed. Neyt and de Angelis-Noah (*Sources chrétiennes* 426: Paris, 1997), pp. 238–40.

115 Ibid., 138; ed. Neyt and de Angelis-Noah (*Sources chrétiennes* 427: Paris, 1998), p. 512.

116 St John of Gaza, *Questions and Answers* 272; ed. Neyt and de Angelis-Noah (*Sources chrétiennes* 450: Paris, 2000), p. 256.

117 *Various Texts* III, 35; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 2, p. 218.

118 St Gregory of Nazianzos, *Oration* 38, 7 (*P.G.* xxxvi, 317C); ed. Moreschini and Gallay, p. 116.

119 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Theotokis, pp. 135–6; E.T., Wensinck, pp. 113–14; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, pp. 117–18; not in Pirard.

120 *A Discourse on Abba Philimon*; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 2, p. 349.

121 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, pp. 470–1; E.T., Wensinck, p. 174; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 182.

122 *Various Texts* III, 33; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 2, p. 217.

123 The Euchites or Messalians were an extreme ascetic movement which originated in Mesopotamia during the second half of the fourth century, and which spread rapidly to Syria, Asia Minor, Egypt and elsewhere. According to their opponents, the Messalians taught that through continual prayer it was possible to reach a state of perfection even in this present life, after which a person became impervious to temptation and could no longer fall into sin. They were condemned at the Third Ecumenical Council (Ephesus, 431).

124 St Isaac the Syrian, *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, pp. 720–7 (for the opening sentence, see Theotokis, p. 199); E.T., Wensinck, pp. 332–6; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, pp. 335–8. The quotations from St Makarios are taken from *The First Syriac Epistle of St Makarios of Egypt*, to be found in the Holy Transfiguration

Monastery translation of the *Ascetical Homilies* of St Isaac the Syrian, pp. 451–9.

125 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, pp. 735–6; E.T., Wensinck, p. 341; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 344.

126 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 734; E.T., Wensinck, p. 340; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 343.

127 *Various Texts* IV, 36; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 2, p. 244.

128 *Various Texts* III, 96; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 2, pp. 233–4.

129 See § 19 above (pp. 45–6).

130 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, pp. 226–7; E.T., Wensinck, p. 8; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 11.

131 This is in fact a quotation, not from St Maximos (as the Greek text in the *Philokalia* states), but from St Makarios, *Spiritual Homilies* (Collection II) xv, 20; ed. H. Dörries, E. Klostermann and M. Kroeger (*Patristische Texte und Studien* 4: Berlin, 1964), p. 139; E.T., A. J. Mason (London, 1921), p. 116. The same passage is quoted by St Gregory Palamas, *In Defence of Those who Devoutly Practise a Life of Stillness* (E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 4, p. 334), where it is correctly attributed to St Makarios.

132 Reading *archarion* instead of *archaion.*

133 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 579; E.T., Wensinck, p. 233; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 245.

134 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 588; E.T., Wensinck, p. 238; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 249.

135 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 458; E.T., Wensinck, p. 166; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 175.

136 *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 27 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 1097B, 1100A); E.T., pp. 262–3.

137 St John Chrysostom (attributed to), *Letter to Monks* (*P.G.* lx, 752–3). See p. 47, n.1.

138 Ibid. (*P.G.* lix, 751–2).

139 *On Spiritual Knowledge and Discrimination* 59; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, pp. 270–1.

140 *On Watchfulness and Holiness* 149; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, p. 188.

141 *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 21 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 945C); E.T., p. 200.

142 Ibid., Step 27 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 1112C); E.T., p. 270.

143 *On Spiritual Knowledge and Discrimination* 57; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, p. 270.

144 Isaac (John of Dalyatha), *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Theotokis, p. 176; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 84; not in Wensinck or Pirard.

145 Ibid., p. 177; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 85; not in Wensinck or Pirard.

146 *Questions and Answers* 119; ed. Neyt and de Angelis-Noah, p. 452.

147 *For the Encouragement of the Monks in India* 52; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, p. 310.

148 *Letter to a Monk* (*P.G.* lx, 753); already quoted in § 41 (p. 79).

149 *On Watchfulness and Holiness* 21; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, p. 165.

150 Ibid.196; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, p. 197.

151 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, pp. 362–3; E.T., Wensinck, p. 87; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 96.

152 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 366; E.T., Wensinck, p. 90; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 99.

153 *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 28 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 1137A); E.T., p. 279.

154 Ibid., Step 1 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 644A); E.T., p. 80.

155 *Gnomic Anthology* II, 105–6; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 3, p. 46.

156 *On Spiritual Knowledge and Discrimination* 97; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, pp. 293–4.

157 This is a quotation from *The Three Methods of Prayer*, attributed to St Symeon the New Theologian; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 4, p. 70.

158 *On Watchfulness and Holiness* 159; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, p. 190.

159 *On Love* I, 11; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 2, p. 54.

160 From the Second Canon at Matins on the Feast of the Transfiguration (6 August), canticle 9: *The Festal Menaion*, tr. Mother Mary and Kallistos Ware (London, 1969), p. 494; said by the priest in the Divine Liturgy before receiving Holy Communion.

161 These words are also said in some places by the priest before receiving Holy Communion.

162 St Mark the Ascetic, *On the Spiritual Law* 84; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, p. 116.

163 St Mark the Ascetic, *On Baptism* 4 (*P.G.* lxv, 996C); ed. de Durand, p. 322.

164 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 805.

165 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 806.

166 St Mark the Ascetic, *On Those who Think that They are Made Righteous by Works* 28; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, pp. 127–8.

167 *The Life of Paul the Younger of Mount Latros* 38; ed. H. Delehaye (*Analecta Bollandiana* 11 [1892]), p. 153.

168 In classical mythology Daidalos designed the labyrinth in Crete in which the Minotaur (half human and half bull) was confined; and one of the ‘Labours’ imposed on Hercules was to slay the many-headed Hydra of Lerna. Fantasy, in the negative sense, is as tortuous and confusing as a maze, and as complex as a many-headed monster.

169 *On Watchfulness and Holiness* 180; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, p. 194.

170 This quotation is not from St Diadochos, but from St Hesychios, *On Watchfulness and Holiness* 89; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, p. 177.

171 This is not from St Basil, but can be found in Michael Psellos, *On the Ladder of Paradise*, *Opuscula Theologica* 30; ed. P. Gautier, *Michaelis Pselli Theologica* (*Bibliotheca Teubneriana*: Leipzig, 1989), p. 125.

172 *On Thoughts* 41: ed. P. Géhin, C. and A. Guillaumont (*Sources chrétiennes* 438: Paris, 1998), pp. 292–4; E.T., Evagrios of Pontus, *The Greek Ascetic Corpus*, tr. R. E. Sinkewicz (Oxford, 2003), p. 181.

173 *Scholia on Dionysios the Areopagite* (*P.G.* iv, 201AC).

174 *Letter* 2; ed. Deferrari, vol. 1, pp. 12–14.

175 *On Love* I, 33; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 2, p. 56.

176 *On Love* I, 34; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 2, p. 56.

177 *On Theology and the Incarnate Dispensation of the Son of God* II, 82; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 2, p. 158.

178 *On Love* III, 99; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 2, p. 99.

179 *On Love* III, 98; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 2, p. 99.

180 *On Theology and the Incarnate Dispensation of the Son of God* II, 81; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 2, p. 158. The text of Maximos as given in *The Philokalia* reads ‘A pure heart’; instead of this the Xanthopouloi read ‘A perfect heart’.

181 Cf. *On Spiritual Knowledge and Discrimination* 28; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, p. 260.

182 Cf. *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 28 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 1132C).

183 Neilos (Evagrios the Solitary), *Skemmata* 2; ed. J. Muyldermans, ‘Evagriana’, *Le Muséon* 44 (1931), p. 38 (374). Cf. Evagrios, *On Thoughts* 39; ed. Géhin and Guillaumont, pp. 286–8.

184 *Skemmata* 4; ed. Muyldermans, ‘Evagriana’, p. 38 (374).

185 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Theotokis, p. 140; E.T., Wensinck, p. 118; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 121; not in Pirard.

186 There is a play on words here in the Greek. By ‘fantast’ is meant a victim of fantasy (in the negative sense), a day-dreamer, subject to wandering thoughts.

187 *Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah* 6 (*P.G.* xxx, 440A).

188 *Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah*, preface (*P.G.* xxx, 124B).

189 *Oration* 41, 11 (*P.G.* xxxvi, 444AB); ed. Moreschini and Gallay, p. 338.

190 Cf. *Oration* 28, 6 (*P.G.* xxxvi, 33A); ed. Gallay and Jourjon, pp. 110–12. Cf. Maximos, *On Love* I, 100; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 2, p. 64.

191 *On Love* II, 5; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 2, p. 65.

192 *Questions, To Thalassios* 61; ed. C. Laga and C. Steel (*Corpus Christianorum* 22: Turnhout/Leuven, 1990), p. 111.

193 Dionysios the Areopagite, *On the Divine Names* VII, 1; ed. B. R. Suchla (*Patristische Texte und Studien* 33: Berlin/New York, 1990), p. 194; E.T., C. Lubheid and P. Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works* (*The Classics of Western Spirituality*: New York/Mahwah, NJ, 1987), p. 106.

194 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 540; E.T., Wensinck, p. 210; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 223.

195 *On Spiritual Knowledge and Discrimination* 9; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, pp. 254–5.

196 *Various Texts* II, 29; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 2, pp. 193–4.

197 *On Spiritual Knowledge and Discrimination* 68; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, pp. 275–6.

198 *Letter* 7 (*P.G.* xci, 436D–437A).

199 Neilos (Evagrios the Solitary), *On Prayer* 53; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, p. 62.

200 Cf. *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 28 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 1132C); E.T., p. 276; see also above, § 66 (p. 95), n. 4. Cf. Gregory of Sinai, *On Prayer* 3; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 4, p. 277.

201 *Letter* 2; ed. Deferrari, pp. 12–14. See also above § 65 (p. 94), n. 2.

202 *On the Divine Names* IV, 9; ed. Suchla, pp. 153–4; E.T., Luibheid and Rorem, p. 78.

203 *Questions, To Thalassios* 33; ed. C. Laga and C. Steel (*Corpus Christianorum* 7: Turnhout/Leuven, 1980), pp. 231–3.

204 *Questions, To Thalassios*, prologue; ed. Laga and Steel (*Corpus Christianorum* 7), p. 9.

205 Neilos (Evagrios the Solitary), *On Prayer* 11; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, p. 58.

206 Ibid. 117; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, p. 68.

207 *Forty Texts on Watchfulness* 3; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 3, p. 17.

208 *Letter* 2; ed. Deferrari, pp. 17–19.

209 *On Love* II, 5; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 2, p. 65.

210 Neilos (Evagrios the Solitary), *On Prayer* 58; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, p. 62.

211 Ibid., 56; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, p. 62.

212 Ibid., 57; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, p. 62.

213 *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 27 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 1100AB); E.T., p. 263.

214 Ibid., Step 28 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 1132D); E.T., p. 276.

215 *On Voluntary Poverty* 27–8 (*P.G.* lxxix, 1004AC).

216 The Xanthopouloi give no indication who is the author of this passage.

217 The Xanthopouloi are thinking of the words of Christ rather than of Paul (Matt. 7:16, 20).

218 *On Spiritual Knowledge and Discrimination* 31–3; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, pp. 261–3.

219 Dionysios the Areopagite, *The Mystical Theology* 2; ed. G. Heil and A. M. Ritter (*Patristische Texte und Studien* 36: Berlin/New York, 1991), p. 145; E.T., Luibheid and Rorem, p. 138.

220 Dionysios the Areopagite, *Letter* 5; ed. Heil and Ritter, p. 162; E.T., Luibheid and Rorem, p. 265.

221 *The Longer Rules* 2 (*P.G.* xxxi, 909C–912A); E.T., W. K. L. Clarke, *The Ascetic Works of Saint Basil* (London, 1925), p. 154.

222 *Oration* 39, 8 (*P.G.* xxxvi, 344A); ed. Moreschini and Gallay, p. 164.

223 *On the Beatitudes* 6; ed. J. F. Callahan (*Gregorii Nysseni Opera* VII, 2: Leiden/New York/Cologne, 1992), p. 143.

224 Neilos (Evagrios the Solitary), *Gnostic Chapters* III, 88; ed. A. Guillaumont (*Patrologia Orientalis* xxviii, 1: Paris, 1958), p. 134.

225 *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 7 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 813B); E.T., p. 143.

226 Isidoros of Pelusium, *Letters* I, 468 (*P.G.* lxxviii, 440A).

227 Maximos the Confessor, *On Love* IV, 80; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 2, p. 110.

228 Ilias the Ekdikos, *A Gnomic Anthology* IV, 65; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 3, p. 56.

229 Isaias of Sketis, *Ascetic Discourses* 7; E.T., John Chryssavgis and Pachomios Penkitt (*Cistercian Studies Series* 150: Kalamazoo, MI, 2002), p. 81.

230 Maximos the Confessor, *On Love* II, 87; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 2, p. 80.

231 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Theotokis, pp. 243–4; E.T., Wensinck, p. 238; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, pp. 249–50; not in Pirard.

232 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 729; E.T., Wensinck, p. 337; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 340.

233 The initial grace is that conferred at baptism; repentance is a further grace, 'a second rebirth from God', renewing the grace of baptism.

234 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 541; E.T., Wensinck, pp. 210–12; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 223.

235 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, pp. 543–4; E.T., Wensinck, p. 212; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, pp. 224–5.

236 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 544; E.T., Wensinck, p. 212; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, pp. 224–5.

237 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 626; E.T., Wensinck, p. 258; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, pp. 269–70.

238 *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 7 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 808BC; 816B; 813BC); E.T., 139–40, 144, 143.

239 *Apophthegmata*, alphabetical collection, Antony 4; E.T., p. 2.

240 Ibid., Theophilus 1; E.T., pp. 80–1.

241 Ibid., Poemen 134; E.T., p. 186.

242 Not among the sayings attributed to Poemen in the alphabetical collection; but cf. Poemen 81 and 95; E.T., pp. 178, 180.

243 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Theotokis, p. 115; E.T., Wensinck, pp. 193–4; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 202; not in Pirard.

244 *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 27 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 1108A); E.T., p. 266.

245 *On the Martyr Barlaam* 2 (*P.G.* xxxi, 485B); *The Longer Rules* 2 (*P.G.* xxxi, 1108A); E.T., p. 153.

246 *On Spiritual Knowledge and Discrimination* 86; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, p. 286.

247 Ibid. 87; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, pp. 286–7.

248 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, pp. 756–7; E.T., Wensinck, pp. 356–7; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 355.

249 Basil (attributed to), *Ascetical Constitutions*, preface 2 (*P.G.* xxxi, 1324C–1325A).

250 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, pp. 742–3; E.T., Wensinck, p. 345; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, pp. 347–8. The text here attributed to Mark the Ascetic is in fact by Evagrios the Solitary, *Praktikos* 66; ed. A. and C. Guillaumont (*Sources chrétiennes* 171: Paris, 1971), p. 650.

251 *On Spiritual Knowledge and Discrimination* 98; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, p. 294.

252 *Various Texts* III, 52; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 2, p. 222.

253 Maximos the Confessor, *On Love* I, 36; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 2, p. 56.

254 Scholium on Klimakos, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 29 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 1152CD).

255 Scholium on Klimakos, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 29 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 1152D–1153A).

256 Scholium on Klimakos, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 29 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 1153A).

257 *Gnomic Anthology* I, 71–2; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 3, p. 41.

258 *Gnomic Anthology* I, 73–4; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 3, pp. 41–2.

259 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 473; E.T., Wensinck, p. 175; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 183.

260 *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 30 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 1153D–1156B); E.T., pp. 286–7.

261 *On Spiritual Knowledge and Discrimination* 1; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, p. 253.

262 *On Spiritual Knowledge and Discrimination* 34; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, p. 263.

Ascetical Homilies, ed. Pirard, p. 623; E.T., Wensinck, p. 256; E.T.,

263 Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 268.

264 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 473; E.T., Wensinck, pp. 175–6; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 183.

265 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, pp. 432–3; E.T., Wensinck, p. 148; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, pp. 158–9.

266 *Homilies on St John* 46, 2–3 (*P.G.* lix, 260).

267 *Homilies on St John* 46, 3 (*P.G.* lix, 262).

268 *Homilies on the Epistle to the Ephesians* 3 (*P.G.* lxii, 27).

269 *On Priesthood* VI, 4 (521); ed. J. A. Nairn (Cambridge, 1906), pp. 147–8.

270 A word only found in Greek in the Lord's Prayer and references to it (a *hapax legomenon*): usually translated 'daily', with the support of St John Chrysostom and the Old Latin; sometimes, e.g. by Origen, split into its components, *epi* and *ousion*, and rendered 'super-substantial' or 'super-essential'.

271 *On the Orthodox Faith* IV, 13; ed. B. Kotter (*Patristische Texte und Studien*, vol. 12: Berlin/New York, 1973), pp. 192 –8. The Xanthopouloi abbreviate and paraphrase the text of John of Damaskos.

272 *Spiritual Homilies* (Collection I) xxii, 1, 7–8; ix, 3, 5–6; ed. H. Berthold, vol. 1 (*Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller*: Berlin, 1973), pp. 222, 132.

273 Isidoros of Pelusium, *Letter* I, 228 (*P.G.* lxxviii, 325A).

274 Neilos, *Letter* III, 280 (*P.G.* lxxix, 521D).

275 *Letter* 93; ed. Deferrari, vol. 2, p. 144.

276 *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* VIII, 56–7; E.T., Norman Russell, *The Lives of the Desert Fathers* (London/Oxford, 1981), p. 78.

277 *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 28 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 1137C); E.T., p. 280.

278 Cf. Anastasios of Sinai, *Narrations* 11.

279 Cf. *Spiritual Homilies* (Collection I) lxiii, 2, 3–4; ed. Berthold, vol. 2, p. 210.

280 *On Spiritual Knowledge and Discrimination* 59; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, p. 270.

281 *Spiritual Homilies* (Collection I) lviii, 2, 4; ed. Berthold, vol. 2, p. 184; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 3, pp. 348–9.

282 *On the Spirit* (*P.G.* xxix, 769B).

THE BLESSED PATRIARCH KALLISTOS

Introductory Note

In the first edition of *The Philokalia* (1782), St Makarios and St Nikodimos included a short series of fourteen *Texts on Prayer*, attributed to Patriarch Kallistos. In the second edition (1893), the editor Panagiotis Tzelatis added a further series of sixty-nine texts, which he also attributed to Patriarch Kallistos. He called these 'the missing texts', and considered them to be a continuation of the fourteen texts already included in *The Philokalia* by St Makarios and St Nikodimos; accordingly he gave to these further texts the enumeration 15–83, and before § 15 he added the title 'On the Garden of Eden as an Image of Man', although strictly this applies only to § 15, and not to the series as a whole. In reality §§ 1–14 and §§ 15–83 are two separate works, by different authors. The *Texts on Prayer* are almost certainly by Patriarch Kallistos I (but are attributed by some to Patriarch Kallistos II Xanthopoulos); the so-called 'missing texts' seem to be the work of Kallistos Angelikoudis.

Kallistos I was Patriarch of Constantinople from 1350 to 1353, and 1355 to 1363; he died in 1363. He spent his early career as a monk on Mount Athos and he was a disciple of St Gregory of Sinai. As patriarch he presided over the Council of Constantinople (1351), which reaffirmed the teaching of St Gregory Palamas. The short series of fourteen texts is a selection from a longer work, *A Hundred Texts on Purity of Soul*,[1] probably written around 1360. The dominant theme in these fourteen texts is the 'spring of water welling up to eternal life', about which Christ spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:14). As in the standard hesychast teaching, the 'rays of divine light' (§ 3) are carefully distinguished from the images of light suggested by the devil (§ 13).

---

1 The texts are in fact 109 in number; the Greek of the full series has been edited (with Italian translation) by Antonio Rigo, 'Callisto I

Patriarca, I: 100 (109) Capitoli sulla purezza dell'anima. Introduzione, edizione e traduzione', in *Byzantium* 80 (2010), pp. 333–407. Our English translation of the fourteen texts makes use of Rigo's edition of the Greek.

Texts on Prayer

1. If you wish to discover the truth, take as your model the lyre player. For he lowers his head and, his ear concentrated intently on the music, he strikes the strings with the plectrum. And when through his art the strings vibrate together, the lyre gives out the melody, and the player's heart throbs with sweetness.

2. Take this model, most diligent worker in the vineyard, as a sure guide, and put your trust in what I tell you. For if, like the lyre player, you concentrate your attention in this way – on, that is to say, the depths of your heart – you will easily find what you seek. For a soul that has been totally mastered by divine love cannot turn back. As the psalmist David says, 'My soul cleaves closely to Thee' (Ps. 63:8).

3. The lyre, my beloved, is the heart. The strings are the senses. The plectrum is the mind. When the mind constantly operates according to its spiritual power, it brings about the remembrance of God. Such remembrance fills the soul with ineffable delight and causes rays of divine light to shine forth in the pure intellect.

4. If we do not close and shut off the body's senses, the gushing water which the Lord gave to the Samaritan woman will not well up within us. She asked for ordinary water, but she found the water of life gushing forth within her (cf. John 4:14). For just as the ground naturally contains water and at a particular moment lets it gush forth, so the ground of the heart naturally contains water that also wells up and gushes forth. This water is like the light from God the Father which Adam lost through disobedience.

5. Just as water perpetually rises from a spring, so the living and gushing water (cf. John 4:14) wells up from the soul. This living water was present in the soul of the divinely inspired Ignatios, and prompted him to say, 'There is no fire of material longing within me, but a water that is active and that speaks to me.'[1]

6. This blessed or, rather, thrice-blessed noetic watchfulness of the soul is like water welling up and gushing forth from the depths of the heart. The water which rises from a spring fills the well. Similarly, the water which gushes from the heart and is, so to speak, activated ceaselessly by the Holy Spirit fills our whole inner being with divine refreshment and spiritual life. But it makes the outer self fiery.

7. An intellect that has been cleansed of what is extrinsic to it, and that

through the practice of the virtues has brought the senses wholly under its control, is as steadfast as the heaven's axle. Looking into the depths of the heart, as though gazing upon its central point, and restraining the rational faculty, the intellect uses the mind's shafts of lucidity as harpoons with which to impale and draw up divine ideas and images from the heart, while at the same time holding in check all the senses of the body.

8. Should one who is uninitiated or still in need of milk (cf. 1 Cor. 3:2) hear about these things, let him not try to lay hold of them, for it is forbidden to do so prematurely. According to the Fathers, to seek these things before the time is ripe, and to strive to enter the harbour of dispassion without due preparation, brings about nothing but mental derangement. One who is illiterate cannot read a book.

9. That which is quickened within us by the Holy Spirit as a result of the soul's warfare brings about peace in our heart, as we cry aloud 'Abba, Father' (Gal. 4:6). It is itself free from all shape or form, yet it transfigures us with the glory of divine light and through its innate capacity refashions us in the incandescence of the Holy Spirit. It changes and transforms us, in a way that He alone knows, through divine power.

10. An intellect cleansed by watchfulness is easily darkened again unless through constant mindfulness of Jesus it detaches itself from all that is extrinsic to it. If through the guarding of the intellect you combine ascetic practice with contemplation, you have no further need to worry about random noises or other sounds articulate or inarticulate. For the soul wounded by divine love for Christ cleaves to Him as its beloved.

11. Those living 'in the world' may be able to check their carnal passions and agitation, and to quieten them in accordance with the text, 'Be still and know that I am God' (Ps. 46:10). But they cannot erase or obliterate them completely. In solitary life, however, these things can be rooted out decisively.

12. Gushing water sometimes flows swiftly, sometimes gently and slowly. In the former case the speed of its flow prevents it from clouding over easily. And if for a while it does cloud over, the fact that it runs swiftly soon clears it again. But if the flow diminishes and is reduced to a trickle, the water not only clouds over but almost stops moving altogether. Then it needs to be cleansed again, so to speak, and to be set in motion once more.

13. The devil attacks beginners and those striving to live a moral life in one way, and he attacks those engaged in ascetic practice in another way, and

those engaged in contemplation in yet another way. Beginners and those engaged in ascetic practice he assails through random noises and sounds articulate and inarticulate. He assails those engaged in contemplation by making them see images of light or of fire that seem to colour the air, attempting by such diabolic ploys to lead astray the athlete of Christ.

14. If you wish to learn how to pray, keep in mind, my beloved, that attentiveness and prayer come to fruition in us when we acquire ceaseless compunction, contrition of heart, and love for our neighbour. From this it will be clear that thoughts of desire, back-biting, hatred for our neighbour, and so on, are all contrary to prayer. So do not be deceived.

ON THE GARDEN OF EDEN AS AN IMAGE OF MAN

15. Just as things we see are true images of things invisible, so the beauteous garden that God in His wisdom planted eastward in Eden (cf. Gen. 2:8) is an image of man's inner world. The earth is his heart, while the shrubs, which his intellect, created in the image of God, seeks to plant, are the many and varied forms of divine vision, intellection and imagination, each with its own spiritual scent, nutriment, joy and delectability. The words 'in Eden' indicate the state of the heart when it is nourished in accordance with nature and relishes and delights in things divine. And as the earthly paradise lies 'eastward', where the visible sun rises, so the noetic paradise in man receives the illumination of spiritual knowledge from the noetic sun. For, according to the Fathers, the heart that lacks the light of knowledge is totally incapable of experiencing divine visions, intellections and images, or of being filled with divine thoughts whether of a simpler or of a more perfect kind; and so it cannot constitute a marvellous supraterrestrial paradise.

No garden without water can nourish thriving plants and the fruits which they should produce. That is why there is a spring which rises at the heart of the garden of Eden, and this, as Scripture records (cf. Gen. 2:6), is divided into four streams which water the face of the earth. Similarly there is in man a spring of living water which is the life-creating activity of the Holy Spirit. The Lord referred to this latter spring when He said, 'The water I will give him will become in him a spring of living water' (cf. John 4:14). This living water wells up miraculously in the heart as if flowing from some Eden; and it divides into sound judgment, self-restraint, justice and fortitude, these being the four streams on which all Godlike virtue depends. Hence this spring is said to water the whole face of the earth or, if you wish, of the heart; that is to

say, it nourishes the working of the heart, so that the heart grows strong and comes to maturity and bears the choice fruits of divine virtue.

It is astonishing and delightful to reflect on what is signified by the spring of living water which, as we have stated, represents the supranatural activity and working of the life-creating Spirit at the core of the heart. The spring is not of the same nature as the plants of the earth, since they are different when compared with it. The water suffices for all the countless plants, irrigating, nourishing and supporting them generously, although it is one and they are many, and indeed they differ so much among themselves that some are of a constitution opposite to others. For some are of a dry constitution and others of a wet, some are of a hot constitution and others of a cold. This spring flows out to all these differing plants, producing a single united flow of water which is then divided into four streams; and so it provides every plant with exactly what it requires.

The divine and supranatural illumination and ever-renewed activity and operation of the life-creating Spirit are not things that pertain to our nature, whether we call such things virtues or knowledge and speculation, nor are they native to our own hearts. They are gifts bestowed on the faithful through grace, arising like a spring ceaselessly and inexplicably within the heart and dividing, as we have said, into four virtues, which they assist in every way; and so in turn these four assist all the other virtues as well, although there is but a single fountain-head of grace. Thus, in so far as they are spirit they assist and strengthen our sound judgment. In so far as they are knowledge they strengthen the quality of justice within us. And since their operation is chastening and empowering, it is clear that, even if they act only indirectly, they effectively assist and reinforce our self-restraint and our fortitude.

That the Holy Spirit also assists in the growth of love and wisdom is powerfully attested by St Paul and Isaiah. St Paul explicitly states that ‘the love of God is poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is bestowed upon us’ (Rom. 5:5). And Isaiah clearly numbers the spirit of wisdom among the seven energies of the Holy Spirit (cf. Isa. 11:2). But the Spirit not only goes hand in hand with love; He is also manifest in the spirit of rigour which is in a way diametrically opposed to love, inasmuch as love, as Scripture says, veils a multitude of sins (cf. 1 Pet. 4:8). For rigour not only reproves but may even kill. The great prophet and friend of God, Elijah, bears witness to this, for he put many of the priests of Baal to the sword (cf. 1 Kgs. 18:40); and before this Phinehas also testifies to it, for he killed the Midianite woman

and the Israelite, thrusting them both through with a javelin (cf. Num. 25:8), while earlier still Moses himself, the holy legislator of the Old Covenant, frequently in his rigour handed people over to death, even people of his own race.

Among those engaged in ascetic practice the state of spiritual knowledge takes precedence, while those leading the contemplative life aspire to the state of unknowing which transcends all intellection. But neither state can be realized as it should be without the spirit of truth and without the spirit of knowledge. In addition the joy of the heart and the sorrow which is its direct opposite clearly both come from the workings of the Spirit. For Scripture states that the fruit of the Spirit is joy (cf. Gal. 5:22), and at the same time it states that God gives to some the spirit of compunction (cf. Isa. 29:10.LXX). To put it briefly, according to the Fathers the holy and life-creating Spirit cooperates so closely with all that relates to virtue, and also with states that appear to be totally opposed to each other, as I have said, that Scripture calls Him both ‘fire’ and ‘water’, which are complete opposites (cf. Acts 2:3; John 7:38–39). For the Spirit assists all things that benefit and ennoble the soul and nourishes the energy which gives them life and strengthens them. Hence Scripture refers to this energy of the Holy Spirit in both singular and plural terms: the Saviour calls it not only ‘a spring’ but also ‘rivers’. Thus it is divided into four streams and is channelled towards all the virtues. And the soul which participates in that which supranaturally quickens it, which impels it to act as it should with regard to all it does, and which in due course brings it to perfection, undergoes a total renewal.

The rock struck by the rod of Moses the lawgiver and from which water miraculously poured forth (cf. Exod. 17:6) I take to be the heart hardened and rendered stony by its insensitivity. When at the right moment God strikes it not with a rod but with words, and fills it with compunction, the power of the Holy Spirit gushes forth from it miraculously and abundantly like life-creating streams, nourishing all things in the best possible way and, one might say, quickening them in an appropriate manner; for though by nature it constitutes a single flow, an endless succession of things participate in it. It is astonishing how that rock, although carried in but a single cart, gushed with an abundance of water that could have filled many thousands of carts.[2] Where did it get all that water from? What source contained it? But what is even more astonishing is how the heart, a tiny organ in the small human body, continually gushes forth with such an endless stream of life, sufficient

to quicken countless bodies. How does the heart possess this immeasurable power? The Spirit, indeed, as He who is the Truth itself has said, ‘blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound but cannot tell whence it comes and where it goes’ (John 3:8); yet it blows always.

We have received, then, this great honour from God, that like Him we can nurture within ourselves a divine paradise, not one perceptible to the bodily senses but – and this is far superior – a noetic paradise, as we have shown. This paradise confers great blessings upon us, surpassing the understanding of all who have not yet experienced its holiness. Let us therefore, as a first step towards inner stillness, commit ourselves devoutly and totally to Christ our God, who is one of the Holy Trinity, as we keep the commandments with an upright faith. If we persevere in this, so that our contemplation gathers together the teachings and holy images of which we have spoken, along with other doctrines concerning God, and as it were plants them with God’s help in the heart, then through our heartfelt prayer we will persuade the Holy Spirit to abide in us and to fill us with divine and transcendent images or, if you wish, with rivers. For, as Scripture has said, ‘Out of the heart of him who believes in Me will flow rivers of living water.’ As the disciple who lay on Jesus’ breast explains, ‘He said this about the Spirit, which those who believed in Him were to receive’ (cf. John 7:38–39). May glory be ascribed throughout all ages to Him who is the giver of gifts that surpass our comprehension.

ON THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT

16. Consider the gifts of the God, who does not revoke what He gives, and call to mind the grace bestowed by Him who surpasses all things, and rejoice at the divine miracle which is their consequence. Reflect on what He created in the first-formed Adam and on what as a result is pre-eminent within us. He breathed into Adam the breath of life, the grace of the life-creating Spirit, and thus Adam became a complete man, a living soul (cf. Gen. 2:7). Indeed, he did not just become a soul, for the Spirit of God is not a human soul, but he became a soul living according to the Spirit or in a spiritual state. For the holy life-creating Spirit of God becomes truly soul to the human soul that lives in the way in which an intelligent and godlike soul should live. If the Spirit of God does not coexist with the soul, or unhappily withdraws from it,

the godlike life that befits the intelligent soul is lost and animality or bestiality disastrously reigns in its place. For unless we are in God's Spirit and in Christ we can do nothing of what we ought to do, as the Saviour Himself said (cf. John 15:5). It was on this account that Adam became a complete man, that is an entire human being, not simply with a soul but with a living soul, because God had breathed into him His own breath, which constitutes the life of intelligent souls.

So long as it continued to be present in him, this breath which God had breathed into Adam conferred on him a godlike dignity and no small glory; participating in it, he saw things in a visionary and prophetic way and was a co-creator with God, through grace a second god. In His supreme wisdom the Creator of the universe was filled with delight because of the luminous visions and prophecies that man attained. But when, alas, he stumbled, and through his lapse fell into the terrible evil of disobedience, the life-creating and light-bestowing Holy Spirit withdrew from him: he no longer understood how to preserve such a noble dignity, and in very truth he abased himself to the level of witless beasts and became like them (cf. Ps. 49:12.LXX). In his ignorance and perversity he strayed far from the divine goal. He was swallowed up in horrific darkness, because he had become deprived of the divine and supranatural breath which God had breathed into him.

When the time of God's mercies came, however, God sent His Logos to heal us from the corruption which afflicted us. And the Logos brings with Him the Spirit that is one with Him by nature, who illuminates and fills with radiance the divinity of the Logos or, one might prefer to say, His power. For, as the prophet says, as if confessing to God on behalf of the whole human race, 'Thou hast sent out Thy light and Thy truth; they have guided me and brought me to Thy holy mountain, to the unitary and most sublime knowledge of Thee, and to the tabernacles and visions of Thy glory' (cf. Ps. 43:3.LXX). When the intellect is led to these things by God, and ascends and, as it were, pitches its tabernacle there, it transcends all visible realities and to a certain extent approaches the most high God.

Thus when the true Logos of our God came, as we have said, and as the holy Logos of God brought with Him the connatural Holy Spirit of God, all who through faith received the Logos of God simultaneously received the Holy Spirit of God; for the Holy Spirit unwaveringly and unceasingly accompanies the Logos. And they did not receive the Spirit as Adam did originally face to face from God the Father, nor did they receive Him in the

same way as the disciples of Christ who subsequently received Him when Christ breathed upon them (cf. John 20:22); but they received Him invisibly in a sudden manner, like a ‘mighty rushing wind’ (Acts 2:2), when the Spirit breathed upon them with His grace in a manifest way. Those who participate in the Spirit perceive Him through inner vision as He ceaselessly wells up within their heart like a spring, illuminating them and enabling their intellect to see the miracle of their regeneration and of the divine glory, in so far as this is possible.

As a result, furthermore, of its supranatural participation in the Spirit through grace, the intellect is wholly absorbed in the mystical contemplation of supernal realities. Indeed, by advancing through the continual support and increase of grace, and through the illumination of the Spirit, the intellect attains to visions and to prophetic knowledge, and thus rises up to the rank of God. It sees how, in a manner beyond understanding, there comes to pass the substantive union of the divine nature with the essential nature of man. It sees also how the Spirit has been poured out on all things. Adam did not see all this in such a way, because he did not become a sharer in the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4) or a truly adopted son of God.

ON DIVINE ENERGY IN MAN AND ON PEACE

17. Let us examine as best we can the mediating energy of the Holy Spirit and the effect that this has upon us. Let us consider also our own innate energy and what pertains to it, and how it is scarcely possible for us to attain a state of peace by means of this energy alone. For such a state is the true fruit of the Spirit’s energy, as also are genuine love and joy (cf. Gal. 5:22). Moreover, the one who participates in the Spirit’s energy is long-suffering and merciful; not only is he full of goodness but he also bestows this goodness copiously on others. All the energy innate within us is connected with the impulses of our soul, and these impulses are clearly part of the soul’s incensive aspect; and no such activity is set in motion in us without the exercise of our own will.

The will in a person engaged in ascetic practice is dependent on desire; likewise in a person who has reached the contemplative stage of the spiritual life it is assuredly dependent on his spiritual aspiration. For this reason no energy that has its origin in our own being can be set in motion uninfluenced

at least to some extent by the appetitive and incensive aspects of our soul. On the other hand, the supranatural energy of the Holy Spirit in the heart, which does not have its origin in any way in our own being but is inscrutably revealed to those who have found mercy, clearly operates independently of our will, and is, so to speak, kindled like a fire. Hence the energy of the Spirit, whether you call it illumination or revelation, requires nothing that pertains specifically to us, except that when we participate in it we gaze silently into our heart and exult with a supranatural joy. Since, then, to be set in motion this divine energy does not require the slightest act of will on our part or depend on any specifically human impulse, on this account it is clear that the appetitive and incensive aspects of our soul are not engaged or implicated in it. In short, the passible aspect of the soul is by-passed and inoperative when the inspiration of the life-creating Spirit is supranaturally active in the heart; the intellect, however, is alive at this time and full of delight.

Having thus acquired a state of peace and serenity and an appropriate dispassion of soul, the intellect, wondrously attached to God, illumined and uplifted by the Spirit in whom through God's grace it participates, contemplates the Divinity; and it perceives that it has attained a knowledge of the inexpressible and supremely radiant beauty of the divine splendour. Filled with love from God in His supreme beauty, it rejoices that through God's indescribable mercy it knows the great, infinite, unlimited and incomprehensible Father of the Lord, and is from now on His heir and inheritor. On this account it experiences a marvellous sense of peace, since it seems that through grace it does not in any way fall short of the supreme beauty that is beyond all understanding. And since the soul's incensive power, as we have said, has been rendered inoperative through the self-generated energy of the Paraclete, the soul's state becomes characterized by forbearance, warm affection, and the greatest possible loving kindness, for these are the fruit of the Holy Spirit, in whom those who have found God's mercy participate. But the spirit of deceit and falsehood, although it appears to be active in the soul independently of the will and instigation of the person who becomes subject to it, neither allays the soul's passionate impulses – rather, it stirs them up – nor does it produce love for God, or joy or peace. For falsehood is disordered and unruly and altogether alien to the peace and serenity inspired by God.

18. I marvel, Lord, at the joyful light of wondrous peace, a light that

confers the highest degree of tranquillity, that is the object of our love, that is transcendent, beauteous and radiant, the intellect's sole and total life. I marvel, holy and almighty Lord, and wonder how the one to whom Thou in Thine infinite goodness hast reached out with Thine indescribable touch can continue to live at all for himself and not for Thee, the supraessential, vital life and source of all goodness and beauty. I call to mind the woman who touched Thee – and not Thee Thyself, my Saviour, but merely Thy garment or, rather, not Thy garment but its fringe alone, and that secretly – and I reflect how, simply because of this, she was at once delivered from her life-long sickness and miraculously regained her health (cf. Matt. 9:20–22). What then, my King, will he on whom Thou in Thy goodness hast laid Thine hand with Thy divine, inexpressible touch – and this openly, in order wondrously to manifest Thy mercy through him – what, Saviour, will he experience and what life will he live and for whom will he live it? We know that Thou didst touch the hand of Peter's mother-in-law, and her fever left her straight away, and she was restored to perfect health, and at once got up and waited on those present, full of wonder and eagerness (cf. Mark 1:30–31). But first, she experienced that touch only once and, second, it was external, for it was her hand that was touched. If, then, she so clearly and swiftly regained her health, what happens to those whom Thou dost touch not once only but constantly, night and day, in an ineffable manner, and not just externally but in the innermost sanctuary of their heart, O Thou lover of our souls? Thou dost manifestly strengthen them in their activities, encouraging them to do what should be done and bestowing on them numberless blessings full of beauty. How, then, O most high God, can such people continue to live for themselves and not entirely for Thee? Indeed, even if they live for Thee alone, how can they not regard themselves as no longer wretched? How can they not bow down in humility when they see how inadequate is their meagre response in return for the great and extraordinary grace that Thou has given them?

Glory to Thee, who art in truth glorious, who glorifies the humble and in glorifying them makest them even more humble, as they recognize how deeply indebted they are for all the boundless and indescribable gifts that Thou bestowest on them. Indeed, since because of their humility Thou grantest them grace, Thou art Thyself rooted in a wondrous manner in their hearts, for they have truly been glorified. Thou sayest clearly, O Wisdom of God, that 'I took root in a people that had been glorified' (Ecclus. 24:12) in a way that is inconceivable. Thus 'I was exalted like a cedar in Lebanon'

(Ecclus. 24:13) – in the heart, that is to say, which has risen above all that is worldly and debased; and when I came to a divine eminence or mountain – the mountain of divine intellections – 'like the terebinth I spread out my branches' (Ecclus. 24:16), thus making it clear that, in those in whom through the grace of the Holy Spirit I have rooted Myself, 'My branches are full of glory and grace' (Ecclus. 24:16). O Lord who art the truth itself, Thou hast spoken what is utterly true. For this reason the pure soul that has chosen to become Thy bride longs in all sobriety to sit under Thy shadow; and, having done so, it affirms that Thy fruit is sweet, not simply to look at but also to taste. Not everyone, however, acquires the sense of God's sweetness, and many fail to do so altogether. For when Wisdom says, 'Like cassia and aspalathus I gave forth the aroma of spices, and like choice myrrh I spread a pleasant fragrance' (Ecclus. 24:15), she does not do this for everyone. St Paul confirms this when he says that he himself is to some the life-giving savour of life, while to others he is the death-inducing savour of death (cf. 2 Cor. 2:16).

In the same way, this divine sweetness, as well as the glory of God manifest together with it, are experienced not by everyone but only by those whose spiritual senses are active – by those, that is to say, who practise stillness, who through divine favour have clearly come to participate in the life-creating and illuminative Spirit and who, in short, are as pure in heart as possible. For the soul of a person whose life is full of turmoil and impurity, a life manifestly without any participation in the Spirit, naturally cannot savour the glory of God, nor indeed His fragrance and sweetness. That is impossible, altogether impossible. Therefore flight from the world is necessary, followed by solitude, stillness and living in enclosure, together with the practice of the virtues, watchfulness, attentive prayer and everything else that pertains to a life of repentance. In this way we can make room for the unsurpassable goodness of God's mercy, so that this merciful goodness, impelled by the longing that is within it, can lovingly incline towards us and can come to dwell in the soul that seeks it with such ardour and anguish. So this wondrous mercy that is God Himself – how great is His grace! – becomes of one spirit with the soul (cf. 1 Cor. 6:17), and is rooted in the depths of the heart. From there it mysteriously shines out and it rises aloft like some vast tree, putting forth noetic branches and bearing spiritual fruit: love, joy, peace, forbearance, goodness and warm affection (cf. Gal. 5:22), and innumerable other excellent and noble qualities that nourish those who partake of them.

Judge from this, then, what glory, what fragrance and sweetness are engendered in the soul by the taste of the pure fruits of the life-creating and illuminative Spirit. In this way those who through a living knowledge of the virtues have attained purity of heart are truly blessed, for in the life to come they will see God more perfectly and more clearly, whereas now, as Scripture says (cf. Eph. 1:14), they experience only a foretaste of Him. For according to Scripture they not only see Him now and will see Him hereafter, but they will also experience that which transcends nature, according to the degree to which even now they partially experience and enjoy this in Christ.

ON THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE AND THE ESSENTIAL NEEDS OF THE CONTEMPLATIVE; ON CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER; AND HOW THE FATHERS REGARD CONTEMPLATION AS EQUIVALENT TO PRAYER

19. The contemplative life coexists with sacred prayer and is its unremitting consort. These two things, contemplation and prayer, are the God-given and deifying offspring of the soul's noetic faculty. Thus they are truly the inseparable activities of a soul that is pregnant with God and that is being deified by Him. Indeed, contemplation and prayer are so closely united that according to the Fathers the intellect's activity and its contemplative power are one and the same thing.

St Isaac says, 'In its subtle form the intellect's activity is devoted to meditation on divine realities, to the continuous practice of prayer, and to other such things. This is accomplished in the appetitive faculty of the soul and is called contemplation.' Observe the identity, and not just the simple union of the two, that is here attributed to prayer and contemplation. Hence St Isaac adds that this contemplation 'cleanses the activity of love in the soul. This activity is an innate longing that refines the soul's noetic faculty.'[3] Again observe that there is a single activity originating in the contemplative faculty of the soul, I mean the activity of prayer and contemplation. For this reason St Maximos comments, 'The intellect cannot be purified without communion with God and contemplation of Him.'[4] And again, 'Solitude,

contemplation and prayer diminish sensual desire and even cause it to disappear. The soul's faculty of intelligence operates as it should when through prayer it is drawn to God.'[5] And he adds, 'Give wings to the intelligence through reading, contemplation and prayer.'[6]

Thus in every respect contemplation is necessarily attached to prayer and is its consort. Both are a natural and appropriate activity of the noetic faculty or, rather, of the intelligence, and they are inseparable. The intellect energizes this activity in a healthy way – with contemplation and prayer each supporting one another – when the intelligence rests upon a firm foundation and practises a life of stillness, accompanied by spiritual insight and knowledge. That is why the Fathers call the intellect that prays without contemplative power a wingless bird, inasmuch as it is not able to raise itself to God by means of its own inherent disposition, nor can it totally separate itself from earthly things and pursue things heavenly with all the strength of its soul.

According to St Maximos, then, contemplation purifies the intellect, while a steadfast state of prayer presents it naked to God. It is clear, therefore, that the intellect which is not devoted to the contemplation of God, so far as this may rightly be attained, will not undergo the purification which such contemplation confers. Without purity of intellect, says St Maximos, there is no revelation of the mysteries. Thus without purity of intellect there can be no complete attainment of heavenly contemplation – of contemplation, that is to say, which is independent of the senses and which is brought to pass through the spiritual power of the higher world and its countless wonders. The contemplative, therefore, prays in a sublime manner, since his mind is pure as a result of his contemplative insight and knowledge. Through this purity he sees God in a non-visual way, in so far as this is possible, and in praying he is blessed indeed (cf. Matt. 5:8).

ON THE TEXT, 'GOD IS SPIRIT, AND THEY THAT WORSHIP HIM MUST WORSHIP HIM IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH' (JOHN 4:24)

20. 'God is Spirit,' Christ says, 'and they that worship Him must worship

Him in spirit and in truth' (John 4:24). He says 'they that worship' in the plural, and not 'he that worships' in the singular. And this is fully appropriate, since He wishes everyone to be saved and to attain knowledge of the truth (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4). For God has prepared various abodes (cf. John 14:2) in which those who are set free may enjoy eternal life. He is the Angel of Great Counsel (cf. Isa. 9:6.LXX), the Saviour, and in His superabundant compassion He opens wide His arms to the wise, to the unwise, to those subtle in speech, and to those dull of mind. To all and to each He proffers a single salvation brought to pass in many different ways according to the inner state and choice of each person – according, too, to their strength and likewise according to the type of teaching received by whoever is drawn towards God and has resolved to worship Him in the manner of which we have spoken. For being at a loss for a teacher a person may fail to attain the fullness of God's purpose, even though he is good by nature. Others, again, although possessing a teacher experienced in divine and spiritual matters, are hindered by a want of natural aptitude from ascending to perfection. But whatever his circumstances everyone can worship God in spirit and in truth if he so wishes, each person according to his character or strength, or according to the gift which he has received from the God of all.

Thus a simple person, provided he lives according to the commandments and with faith, and humbly follows those who have attained a state of holiness, truly worships God in spirit and in truth. For the faith which speaks clearly about God and about things divine and invisible cannot be other than the voice of the Spirit. 'The words I speak to you', says the Lord, 'are spirit and life' (John 6:63). I do not believe that anyone is so dull of mind that he would wish to separate himself even to the least degree from the wonderful and deifying commandments of the Truth Himself. Thus he who with faith follows God in truth and in spirit, and who is instructed by God in what pertains to the faith, is practising both the active and the contemplative form of the spiritual life.

The person who likewise devotes himself to the spiritual knowledge of created beings and of Holy Scripture, and who through the contemplation of these two things is drawn towards God – rising from that which can be seen and expressed in human speech, from the flesh (as it were), to that which is noetic, in other words to the Spirit, and who from there ascends to that which is beyond all understanding and beyond all truth, that is to say, to the transcendent God – such a person, too, most clearly worships God in spirit

and in truth. And those who sing psalms and who pray, who perceive the meaning of the words that are being sung and the significance of the prayer, and who so far as is possible have made all this part of their inner life, certainly they too worship God in truth and spirit. For the sacred words of the psalms and of prayer are clearly spirit and truth. Moreover, he who is enfolded through active participation in the grace of the Holy Spirit, and who through the light of spiritual knowledge contemplates God in a unitary way and without visible images, he also worships God in truth and in spirit; yet he does so in a higher way. Finally, he who, in so far as this is possible, mirrors within himself the light of the glory and of the incarnate dispensation of Christ, and who is consequently filled, through Christ from the Father, with the outpouring of the Spirit that energizes and grants consolation to the faithful, truly he likewise worships God in truth and in spirit, in Christ Jesus.

ON PRAYER

21. He who teaches man knowledge is God, as Scripture says (cf. Ps. 94:10). But how does He teach? By granting, through the ever-flowing inspiration of the holy grace of the Spirit, prayer to him who prays (cf. 1 Sam. 2:9. LXX). Since such sacred prayer is truly a great gift of divine grace, it acts as a teacher to him who has acquired it, as a mirror, so to speak, reflecting the soul's face, in which the intellect clearly perceives its own shortcomings, its distractions and enslavements, its torpor and its fraudulence. Yet through prayer the intellect also experiences the air of purity, the splendour of contemplation, the Spirit of a divine and divinizing exaltation, the flame of the fire that is kindled by love for God, the simplicity of the intellect when set free from all forms, the total silence that results from this, and a sense of amazement full of joy. In short, through prayer the intellect unerringly perceives and apprehends its inclinations and tendencies, and is expressly initiated into the originating causes of the principles that motivate the soul. Some of these originating causes it heals, while to others it devotes itself as much as it can, according to the degree to which they merit loving care or healing.

Thus it is the task of the cognitive aspect of the monk's life not only to know through ascetic practice the right use of intellect and speech, of reason and sense perception, but also to determine how to give what is needful to the

incensive and appetitive powers. In short, the monk has to learn accurately how to combine in the right way the measured and ordered harmony of the soul's faculties with the mind's inalienable knowledge, and to play a noetic melody, sweeter than any other, that unites ascetic practice and contemplation.

In this way the deeply desired peace of God, together with the grace-filled joy and the holy love that accompany it, come to dwell in the one initiated into true prayer, who thus enjoys the fruits of the Holy Spirit. So the person who has resolved to do everything in his power to pray unceasingly, as St Paul enjoins (1 Thess. 5:17), and who exerts himself to the utmost to achieve this, will be numbered among Christ's disciples; for he has followed their counsel concerning sacred prayer and with Christ's help has become a child of grace.

ON WHAT IS NEEDFUL FOR PRAYER AND ON THE HIGH VALUE THAT WE SHOULD ASCRIBE TO IT

22. If spiritual prayer did no more than teach us what we must do to acquire virtue, if it merely showed us the way, would it still not be of the greatest value? Yet since it not only teaches us and shows us the way, but also gives us the inner strength to attain everything good, does it not surpass every offering that we can make to it, and all the praise that we can heap upon it? When, due to our weakness and lack of the necessary strength, we fail to put its teaching and injunctions into practice, we will find that only prayer is capable of arousing spiritual power in the soul, so great is its effectiveness for those practising the ascetic life. And this is to be expected. For prayer that may be described as truly inspired and imbued with life, and that ceaselessly wells up in the heart, clearly comes to pass through the communion and activity of the life-creating Spirit; and among the most necessary things to which it gives rise are the following three: instruction as to what is required by those engaged in the spiritual life; support and encouragement in ascetic practice; and above all the power that assists us in the difficult tasks that we have to perform.

Thus our Lord, the bestower of the Spirit, says, 'You will receive power

when the Holy Spirit comes upon you' (Acts 1:8). This power He names explicitly 'helper' (or Paraclete) and 'teacher', saying, 'But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things, and will make you mindful of everything I have said to you' (John 14:26). For the Spirit discloses Himself to each person for his own good above all through prayer: to one is given the spirit of wisdom, to another the spirit of knowledge, to a third the spirit of healing, and so on, as St Paul has affirmed (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7–9). And as St Paul also states, all these gifts are energized by the one and self-same Spirit, and are apportioned to each person individually, as the Spirit wishes (cf. 1 Cor. 12:11).

That a person who in whatever way participates in the gift of the Spirit will as a consequence be granted these three necessary things, namely, supranatural power, transcendent teaching, and divine support, is evident from the Lord's holy words to which we have referred. Moreover, when He says, 'Without Me you can do nothing' (John 15:5), He shows without any ambiguity that whatever needs to be done necessarily requires divine power. Again, when He says, 'Call no one on earth a teacher, for you have but one teacher and guide, Christ Himself' (cf. Matt. 23:8–10), He clearly tells us that we need divine instruction with regard to everything we have to do in order to conform to God's will. And when He affirms, 'I will entreat the Father, and He will send you another Helper, the Spirit of truth, to abide with you for ever' (cf. John 14:16–17), this is to remind us that we need divine support and that such support is inseparable from grace.

It has been shown, then, that gifts of grace are apportioned in various forms; for wisdom is one form, knowledge is another, and prophecy is not identical with either, while the gifts of healing differ yet again. In short, the gifts of the Spirit, as St Paul has enumerated them, are all distinct from one another. Yet every grace bestowed by the life-creating Spirit is characterized by the three qualities we have mentioned. For how can the created intellect, united as it is with the body, share in noetic realities and in virtue unless it possesses the divine power that makes it possible for it to participate in them? Even the angels cannot share in these things without such power. And how will it be capable of participating in that which transcends this world without being initiated by the Spirit? Clearly, it would become dizzy if it were to attain such a peak of divine blessings and such a highly tuned pitch of virtue without the support of Him who is good. To what, then, should we liken prayer that is inspired by the grace of the Spirit, that supplies every spiritual

gift bestowed on the soul, and that is accompanied by the power, teaching and support of the Holy Spirit? What praises would such prayer not transcend? And how greatly should it be held in honour by those who have acquired it through grace, and how diligently should it be sought by those who still lack it, since it binds the intellect to God by sacred bonds in Christ Jesus, who is truly the Son of God!

ON PRAYER

23. When the intellect, through reflection on the things that surround God, and helped by the inspiration of the life-creating Spirit, has acquired through grace a clear vision of God, let it examine itself and its own weaknesses and see how far it fails to fulfil its proper role as a result of negligence, forgetfulness of its responsibilities, and a consequent ignorance of what it should be doing. Once you have justly and sincerely performed this task of self-reproach and have humbled yourself, you should then approach God through prayer with a lowly mind but with confidence and hope in the unimaginable love with which in His ineffable goodness He enfolds us. It is through this great love, as St Paul teaches us, that we are enabled to 'draw near to the throne of grace' (Heb. 4:16). For God acts towards us, not according to the way in which we act, but according to His own infinite mercy. Therefore, in the time of prayer let us look not at ourselves but at our supremely loving God and Father and at His forbearance and great compassion, so that without impediment our hearts may be filled with what truly saves us, our love for God.

ON THE TEXT, 'GOD SAID UNTO ABRAM, "LEAVE YOUR COUNTRY"', AND ON CONTEMPLATION

24. God said to Abram – whose name signifies 'the one who crosses over, who becomes a migrant' – 'Leave your country, and your kindred, and your father's house, and come into a land that I will show you, a land flowing with honey and milk' (cf. Gen. 12:1; Exod. 3:8). And now with a deeper meaning

God says to the intellect that is ‘crossing over’ – in other words, that is passing over from sensory things to noetic realities – ‘Leave the world of the senses and of sensory things and of all that is visible, and come into a land that I will shew you.’ This may be likened to the Lord’s saying, ‘Sell whatever you have, and give it to the poor, and take up the cross’ – which is tantamount to saying, ‘Crucify yourself with regard to the senses and to all sensory and worldly things’ – ‘and come, follow Me’ (cf. Mark 10:21); ‘follow Me as I ascend to the Father, accompanied by the guiding power of the Holy Spirit.’ For where Scripture says ‘God said to Abram,’ it means that the Father speaks through the Logos, the Son. And He continues, ‘Leave, and come into a land that I will shew you.’

Normally, one indicates something with the finger, and the Spirit of God is called the finger of God, as when it is said, ‘But if I with the finger of God cast out devils’ (Luke 11:20), while in other places it says, ‘with the Spirit of God’ (Matt. 12:28). Similarly the Egyptian sages, when referring to the energy of the Spirit, said, ‘This is the finger of God’ (Exod. 8:19). Further, ‘Into a land that I will show you’ is the same as, ‘Into a land to which I will lead you through the Logos and My Spirit’; while, ‘Into a land flowing with honey and milk’ means, ‘Into an understanding and knowledge of God Himself as He truly is’. The intellect cannot attain such a state of comprehension unless enlightened and illuminated by the radiance of the life-creating Spirit that is transmitted gently and peacefully through the Son. For whenever the intellect, transcending the realm of evil, grows accustomed to the vision of noetic realities, God in His compassion prevails upon it to cross over, like another Abraham, from the world of the senses and of sensory things to a world of intelligible realities and even beyond, where in a unitary manner it beholds and contemplates the Godhead in three Persons, this being accomplished through the three-fold power and energy of the divine Unicity.

For in the deepest sense God the Father is Himself the promised land which – as the Holy Spirit has promised us – the gentle and the upright in heart will inherit (cf. Matt. 5:5), as they strive in hope to attain it. The honey and milk that flow in that land, which is the Father, are the dawn luminaries, the twin rays, the Son and the Spirit, that are the life and delight and purification of the whole world. For the Son, who was begotten from the Father and who is inseparable from Him, may be called ‘honey’, since He has become incarnate in human nature as in a honeycomb; and through this enhumanization He has sweetened and gladdened everything human in a

miraculous way with – how should one express it? – extraordinary teachings and graces and countless other blessings and bounties. The ‘milk’ is the Holy Spirit, who is simple and uncompounded. He is not the offspring but the ‘going forth’ or procession from the Father. He is white as light, and He feeds with divine nourishment the intelligent beings who are still immature, thus initiating them, as the Lord said, into the kingdom of heaven (cf. 1 Cor. 3:1–2).

Thus the ‘land flowing with honey and milk’ is rightly considered to be the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit; and it is to this land that the intellect which ‘crosses over’ is conducted through the guidance, power and energy of the Godhead in three Persons. For as, according to St Paul, no one can call Jesus the Lord except through the grace of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12:3), so no one can concentrate the intellectual power of his soul upon the uncompounded glory and majesty of the Triadic Unity, and contemplate this glory, except through the power, energy and grace of the Trinity itself. Such contemplation can only come to pass through detachment from the things perceived through the senses, and also from the intellectual realities revealed through Scripture. To an appropriate degree we must distance ourselves from both alike. For thus ‘in Thy light we will see light’ (Ps. 36:9) – that is to say, in Thy single radiance we will see Thee Thyself, God the illuminator of our hearts and our intellect.

Moreover, when we contemplate God we acknowledge and affirm, ‘Thine own from Thine own’;[7] no human being, that is to say, has anything to boast about in its own right (cf. 1 Cor. 1:29). It was on this account that he who was originally named Abram – which signifies ‘the one who crosses over’ – when he left his country on hearing the voice of the Lord and abandoned everything, as he had been commanded, and migrated to the land flowing with honey and milk, was renamed Abraham, which means ‘father of many nations’ (cf. Gen. 17:5–7). This can be applied to the intellect that is said to ‘cross over’, because it has passed, by virtue of the power and energy of the Godhead in three Persons, from the realm of sensory things and the senses, and from the whole world, to the realm illumined by the unified radiance of the divine Trinity. In this radiance it contemplates and beholds many and great noetic realities, inexpressible and arcane, and so it becomes in this way a ‘father of many nations’. It becomes a begetter and producer of all these realities, which are like so many nations. Wonderful things are revealed to it and begotten by it, and in these things it rejoices and delights as a father does

in his children. Happy as a king, it is full of the peace that is to be found in Christ.

ON HUMILITY AND CONTEMPLATION

25. Wonderful are Thy works, O Lord, and my soul is wholly carried outside itself as it reflects on them. That which exalts the intellect in this way also draws it powerfully towards humility. That which lifts the soul far on high also humbles it most deeply. For humility forms the starting point of contemplation, and at the same time contemplation is the perfect expression of humility. Even if we understand all the wisdom of this world, we cannot acquire the contemplation that exalts us on high unless we possess humility. I say the contemplation 'that exalts us on high' because the Greeks possessed another kind of contemplation that did not so exalt them. Indeed, without this contemplation that exalts us we cannot acquire humility, not even if we bend our neck into the shape of a ring (cf. Isa. 58:5.LXX).

Unutterable is the wisdom of Him who has created us so wisely! Who, without experiencing it, could know that the heights of exaltation are attained through humility, or that it is by attaining these heights that the greatest degree of humility is acquired? One might even say with reference to the deiform intellect, 'He who has descended is the same as he who has ascended' (Eph. 4:10), and one could say with equal truth that he who has ascended is the same as he who has descended. For when the intellect with full cognitive insight and with humility attains through grace the heights of contemplation, delighting and rejoicing in what is beyond thought as though in its own element, then in its humility it feels lower than all things. David the Psalmist says, 'Lord, my heart has not been exalted, my eyes have not been raised aloft, nor have I embarked on anything great and wondrous and beyond my own strength, except when I have been humble in mind' (Ps. 131:1–2.LXX). Yet in addition to this the intellect not inaptly could equally say the opposite: Lord, I have not humbled myself, nor have I reproached myself and called myself dust and ashes, except when my heart has been exalted, when my eyes have been raised aloft, and I have embarked on things great and wondrous and beyond my own strength. O wonderful King and Creator, Thou hast filled my heart with ecstasy as I contemplate the work of Thy wisdom, the intellect that through Thy providence has itself been created

wise.

ON THE SAME THEME

26. An intellect that with the help of grace has returned to God at first finds itself in a state of self-condemnation. That is why someone whose intellect is in this state is full of inward grief, and in his distress he laments and weeps, crushing – so far as this is right – his own heart, daily cleansing it from whatever in it is impassioned, and humbling himself without the least self-pity. When with the help of Christ he has by means of stillness achieved a fitting state of purification, and begins to apprehend intelligible realities in an ascetic way, raising himself towards God and His glory and directing his gaze intently on these things, he passes from the first into the second state of self-condemnation, the noetic state, deep, inexhaustible, endless and unbroken.

In this way he truly acquires a more sure and clear humility in this life, so much so that even if it were possible for everybody to call him blessed in the most emphatic way, he would still consider himself inferior to everyone, and would for that very reason consider himself to be the least of men. In the awareness of his own soul and in very truth he even sees himself as inferior to what does not exist in any way whatsoever; for what does not exist does not possess the power to sin, whereas he sees himself as sinning constantly. Yet though he is in this way in a state of humility he is usually full of joy, not in the least on his own account – for how can someone who is always accusing himself of sinning rejoice about himself? – but on account of God, the God of mercy who is closer to him than his own breath. To put it more clearly, he rejoices because God activates within him the streams of heavenly light and the ever-flowing rivers of the marvels of the Holy Spirit that gush forth from within his heart, illuminating his intellect and all but saying to him, ‘I am with you’ (Jer. 1:8).

Thus God, whose friend he now is, reveals His mysteries to him and fills him with joy. Then the words of David come to his mind and he repeats them, saying, ‘He has not dealt with us according to our iniquities nor repaid us according to our sins’ (Ps. 103:10). And he says with Paul, ‘We have been saved by His grace’ (cf. Eph. 2:5). This he says even though he has practised so far as he could all the divine commandments, has diligently detested every unjust way (cf. Ps. 119:128), and has done everything possible not to neglect

anything that leads to salvation.

If you realize that you have not undergone and experienced these things, this means that you have not yet attained the more true state of contemplation; you have not yet begun to weep ceaseless tears, or perceived the ‘unity of the faith’ (Eph. 4:13) and ‘the knowledge of the truth’ (1 Tim. 2:4), or the divine glory of created beings, or even what lies beyond human affairs. In short, you have not attained the knowledge of the divine and human essences of things.

ON CONTEMPLATION

27. Creation, by virtue of its noetic principles, and Scripture, by virtue of its spiritual principles, testify to God’s glory, to His kingdom, wisdom and power and, in a single word, to His majesty. But how much can they testify, and in what way? Their witness is very limited, like a drop of the ocean. It was certainly not through self-contemplation and by activating, as it were, the fullness of the power, or wisdom, or glory and majesty, that God made all that He has made, even if these things appear great and glorious to us and filled with wisdom and power. On the contrary, He made them, not because He was in need of anything, but in the overflowing abundance of His love. In accordance with His divine knowledge He proceeded to create, in a most harmonious and well-balanced manner, whatever was needed for man’s habitation and for his daily life, and whatever He saw would be appropriate for man’s use and enjoyment. When He formed the one Adam, He had the many in mind. And now we can see that in His unfailing patience He has provided whatever would be required by the humans who were to dwell in the world. The earth preserves in due balance all that exists here below, while sky, sun, air and sea correspond in proper proportion to the earth. Thus each keeps with regard to the other the mutual relationship given to them by God, who knows all things prior to their coming into existence, and who brings them into existence in accordance with a symmetrical and harmonious order and power.

If in creating existing beings the Creator had not kept in view what was needful for them, but had simply exercised His own power and wisdom, His glory and majesty, instead of one we would have seen a countless number of worlds. Indeed, they would not be worlds like the one we now see, but

strange, supranatural worlds beyond our comprehension, the glory and brilliance of whose beauty and wise variety our soul would scarcely have been able to endure; it would have abandoned the body in its astonishment. God, however, wished to create a single work, man, as king of the realm of earth and a second god presiding over all that God creates, and so He brought forth this world to serve man's needs most conveniently and promptly. To be sure, one of the prophets says, 'He who made heaven and earth as nothing and established it upon nothing' (cf. Isa. 40:23.LXX; Job 26:7); and another, 'He who stretches out the highest heavens like a curtain' (cf. Ps. 104:2). But He only has to look on the earth and it shakes with fear (cf. Ps. 104:3), such is the fullness of His power.

Thus God brought all visible things into being by His word alone. But He reserved to the eternal world the greater and more glorious realities, those that our soul can perceive only when it is refashioned through death in the refinery of the tomb, and when man becomes a new creature enjoying new experiences and new delights and visions. That which we can see now is but a shadow, something like a prolonged dream. If we want to verify this, let us look, if we are capable of it, upon the noetic world of the angels, and there assuredly we will see a beauty, glory, wisdom and power which we cannot even describe, let alone fully comprehend. And that world, with all its wonder and variety, was formed by God through a single thought within the divine intellect. If such things are formed through a single thought, what would have happened if God's entire will, wisdom and power had been brought into play? But how can we conceive of the infinite as issuing out of itself into a new state of being? There is no limit to the infinite, and where there is no limit there is no movement into a different state; there is only an outward flow of energy from the power that emanates from God's essence, if we may so describe things in language that is no more than partially true.

For this reason, if we compare whatever is divine in creation and in Scripture with the power of God, it appears as something shadowy, somewhat like a drop of water as compared with the unfathomable and boundless ocean. Yet I devoutly pray that we may become fully conscious and aware of this spiritual drop. And when, through the beauty, glory and delight that we experience as a result of our contemplation of it, our intellect expands to the infinite, and when to the extent we can we have hymned Him who infinitely transcends the infinite, let us imitate the angels and let us become unified, infinite and limitless intelligences, one with ourselves and with God in a state

of union that transcends this world, rejoicing through the energy and grace of the Holy Spirit with a joy that is indescribable and heartfelt. Amen.

ON THE ASCETIC AND ON THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

28. If we are engaged in the outward practice of the virtues, we cannot but devote ourselves to psalmody, for we are striving to acquire the gentleness and wakefulness that befit the ascetic life. The contemplative, on the other hand, is either unable to sing psalms or else does not wish to do so. He is unable to do so because, filled wholly and silently with divine grace and spiritual delight, he rejoices with a heart that is undisturbed and imbued with stillness. He does not wish to do so because his attention is one-pointed, and in deep tranquillity he engages the noetic power of his soul in immutable and peace-filled acts of intellectual perception.

Hence the contemplative has to pursue the vision of things divine in silence. If from time to time he is seen to read something, that is quite natural, for the intellect is mutable and our nature is composite and fluctuates. But we should be aware that the reading which occupies us after a period of grace-induced contemplation is of less value than the contemplation itself, both on its own account or as a form of intellectual meditation; for never while reading can the intellect maintain a state of undivided concentration. In the state of noetic freedom mystically attained through silence, on the other hand, the intellect's vision is for the most part unified, and this is something very different from being in a state of divided attention. Even where sensory things are concerned, is it not far better to see things than merely to hear about them? For the eyes, as everyone knows, are more to be trusted than the ears. As it is with sensory things, so it is also with things noetic: to perceive some noetic reality through contemplation is far superior to hearing about it, as one does through reading.

All this applies to the case of the Samaritan woman: after speaking with the true Logos, she proclaimed His divinity to her fellow townsmen. But when the Logos in the extreme abundance of His goodness came into the town and spoke with the people there, they said they no longer needed the woman's testimony as evidence for His divinity (cf. John 4:42). Similarly,

the mind through what it says in verbal form can testify as it were from outside to the soul and to the soul's powers concerning the divinity of the Logos; but when the soul with its powers achieves through grace a direct vision of that divinity, it no longer needs such external testimony. For everyone who hears needs to perceive what he has heard.

Thus he who sees does not need someone else to tell him what he sees; for he possesses eyes and can see for himself. This is evident from the example of Thomas: when he had only heard he did not believe, but said, 'Unless I see, I will not believe'. But once he had seen he immediately of his own accord acknowledged as truth that which before seeing he had disbelieved, for he cried out, 'My Lord and my God' (cf. John 20:25–28). The faith that hearing had failed to produce in him he at once acquired through seeing. From this we must realize that contemplation is as different from the outward practice of the virtues as the intellect is from the senses.

ON THE SAME THEME

29. Both the child and the grown man drink milk, but the first drinks it because it nourishes him, while the second drinks it because he likes it. Those engaged in the outward practice of the virtues read and sing psalms, and the contemplative appears to do the same. But the first do it in order to strengthen and stabilize their soul, while the contemplative does it because of the delight it gives, and even to suspend for a little the fiery and impulsive aspiration of his heart towards God, which leads him to shed tears. For although the spirit within him over-reaches itself in its longing to be rapt by divine light, to be changed from glory to glory (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18), and to wax and burgeon, yet his solid flesh and earthy heart are frail. Thus those engaged in the outward practice of the virtues devote themselves to the study of divine revelation in order to acquire spiritual knowledge and the guidance and understanding that derive from it. But the things about which the contemplative receives knowledge in silence, and in which he is instructed wordlessly and which he perceives with his spiritual eyes, cannot be given verbal expression. For the ear of stillness, says Scripture, will hear marvellous things (cf. Job 4:12.LXX). It says 'marvellous', but what these marvellous things are it cannot say, and on this account it does not attempt to express the inexpressibility of what transcends verbal expression. Hence I would wish to

call blessed those whom the divine Logos has blessed because they have believed before they have seen (cf. John 20:29), I mean those who are engaged in the outward practice of the virtues. But I consider contemplatives to be much more than blessed. For if those engaged in the outward practice of the virtues, although they have not seen, are blessed simply on account of their faith, what can one possibly think about the contemplative? For he not only possesses a faith which far surpasses that of ascetic practice, but he also beholds prodigious, marvellous things, experiencing spiritual exaltation in his heart (cf. Ps. 84:5.LXX) and daily growing more visionary.

30. To each of the two aspects of the twofold human structure the Creator and Maker of the universe has allotted the corresponding source of well-being or, as I might express it, of life. To the visible body of man He has allotted the whole visible creation, while to the noetic aspect, that is to say, to the soul, he has allotted the intelligible realities present in the sensible world. For as the noetic is united with the sensible aspect of man, so throughout the visible creation noetic beauty inheres in each individual object; there is nothing in the visible world, however insignificant it may appear, that lacks a noetic dimension. And this is entirely natural: since on man's account the Almighty created all things through His divine Logos, nothing inappropriate could be created, as it would have been if the noetic did not inhere in the visible aspect of creation; for then the body would have flourished with the support of visible things, but the Christ-like soul would have remained empty and the body would have been superior to the soul, which is absurd.

From where but from the noetic dimension of things could the soul initially nourish its own life? Directly from God? But that would be contrary to the disposition of things established by Him who has created them through the Logos. For if we possessed the capacity that the angels have of communing by their own accord directly with God, then non-composite beings, such as the angels, would be inferior to those, like us, who are compounded with a material body. Or ought we to ascend from the contemplation of non-composite intelligible realities to the enjoyment of the direct vision of God? But this would mean that we are on an equal footing with the angels, and it would be contrary to nature for minds admixed with matter to raise themselves towards God in the same way as non-material beings are able to do. For to such beings life and the capacity to raise themselves to God are intrinsic, so that starting from their own inner ground they can come to experience the unified rays of the divine light. As for

ourselves, who are by nature subordinate to the angels and second in rank to them, we are led by gradual stages towards God and His beauty in a way that is correspondingly lower than and, so to speak, secondary to that of the angels. We do not begin with the contemplation of non-composite beings or of purely intelligible realities, as do the angels, who start from their own inner ground in order to attain a direct vision of God. On the contrary, we begin with the intelligible contemplation of composite beings and, having graduated to non-composite created beings, we pass on to the intelligible contemplation of uncreated realities as these subsist in the order of nature. In this way we are inducted into an inseparable union with ourselves and with God.

Thus, so that it may be possible for us to enjoy noetic experience and life, and to be raised up towards God, all sensible things are imbued and coexist with the intelligible realities that may be contemplated in their visible counterparts. The person given over to purely external forms of piety either cannot or does not wish to see these realities. He cannot see them if he does not know any other person or any scriptural text capable of revealing them to him. He does not wish to see them if, in spite of knowing some other person or a scriptural text that can reveal them to him, out of presumption and perversity he refuses to entrust himself to this other person and gives credence only to his own judgment, remaining impervious to any instruction concerning these matters, and regarding a purely literal reading of Scripture as sufficient guidance. At the same time he uses creation in a superficial way, as something to serve his bodily needs, and he regards this as true piety and is content with it, and does not seek for anything more.

The contemplative, however, discerning in visible creation that which is invisible, and finding that it accords with the spirit of Scripture, joyfully passes on to the next stage, the contemplation of non-composite beings; and perceiving their beauty and splendour, helped by grace, he goes beyond them and enters into the realm of God’s uncreated noetic realities. Once he has enjoyed the contemplation of their infinite nature, in so far as this is possible, he ineffably approaches the effulgence of divine beauty in a manner that is unified and supranatural. And when, awestruck and amazed, he has truly experienced that inexpressible supernal beauty and its dazzling glory in such a unified and unitary form, he does not know what he might become, so full is he of joy and wonder. Thus the stream of divine felicity unceasingly flows in upon him, and for the benefit of his brethren still engaged in the more

outward forms of the ascetic life he ungrudgingly elucidates in his words and writings the path that leads to the truth.

ON PARTICIPATION IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

31. Surely you know what it is that is poured out into the hearts of the faithful and what is the sign of that outpouring? It is the Holy Spirit who comes from the Father through the Son and who fills the world. The Spirit in His entirety is everywhere, and in His entirety He is poured out into each of the faithful. He apportions Himself to all things without suffering any division, and all things partake of Him while He still remains beyond all participation. The sign that we participate in the Spirit and that He pours Himself into us is a longing, full of humility, to attain inner poverty, together with ceaseless, unforced tears, an absolute unfeigned love for God and our neighbour, inward joy and a sense of jubilation in God, patience in performing our duties, generosity towards everyone and, in short, a kindly disposition, an intellect that is unified, contemplative and filled with light, a state of ever-active, fervent prayer and, above all, detachment from transient things through mindfulness of what is eternal. ‘How wonderful are Thy works, O Lord’ (Ps. 104:24.LXX). Truly, ‘glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God’ (Ps. 87:3); and by ‘city’ here is meant the faithful heart.

32. You will never cease to be amazed, to rejoice and to be full of peace once you have learnt about and have understood the great counsel of our God and the inconceivable loving kindness of the Father’s supranatural love conveyed to us by Jesus. In His surpassing and incomprehensible holiness, goodness and love for the human race, He became the ‘Angel of Great Counsel’ (Isa. 9:6.LXX); and through that counsel He gathers together all the inward essences of visible things, the *logoi*, into the one all-embracing Logos that God has promised to bestow upon us (cf. Isa. 10:23.LXX).

33. If we know the final end which God in His greatness has appointed for us, and the mutual bond that is established between us and God as a consequence of this final end, we will perceive what God has in mind for us, and how our human condition is perfected, and by how far we fall short of what rightfully we should be. Thus our efforts will be accompanied by a devout sorrow and a true humility.

ON CONTEMPLATION

34. He who with noetic vision diligently studies all that lies within the scope of God's love will assuredly find arising in his own soul those three things of which sacred Scripture and other books speak so earnestly, encouraging us to acquire them by all possible means. These three things are faith, hope and love (cf. 1 Cor. 13:13). These are the final aim or, better, the foundation of all the ascetic and contemplative virtues. This is truly the sacred triad within us by which we are united with the Holy Trinity, laying hold of the Trinity as if we were angels.

ON CONTEMPLATION

35. The healthy intellect contemplates the three triadic orders of mysteries that pertain to God: the personal, the natural and that which lies beyond nature. The first triad manifests itself to the intellect particularly through the sacred writings. The natural triad is contemplated when we perceive the inner essences of created beings. The triad that lies beyond nature is apprehended through noetic truth. Thus when the intellect penetrates into the first triadic order or, rather, to put it more accurately, when it gazes intently upon this order, it encounters the Unapproachable, though not in its non-composite state. When it penetrates into the second triad, it finds the joy inherent in wisdom and it is rapt in wonder. When it penetrates into the third triad, then it truly enters into the darkness in which God dwells. At this point the intellect has become utterly free of any admixture, and it is infinite and unlimited, in a state that is without shape or form. Finally, when with these three triads it contemplates or, rather, looks upon yet another order, a kind of tenth order in which, as the heralds of truth say, all the fullness of the Godhead has come to dwell bodily (cf. Col. 2:9), then it truly sees, through the perfect and supreme grace of contemplation, 'the peace that transcends every intellect' (Phil. 4:7).

ON CONTEMPLATION

36. Further, if we continue to subdivide in this way, the intellect, through the

gift of Christ that overflows with peace, perceives in a mystery three states of spiritual grace: that which transcends this world, that which embraces this world, and that which lies within the intellect itself. In this triadic monad, or in this decad, as it may be called – that is to say, in the supreme state of contemplation – the goads of divine love through the blessing of grace penetrate the soul, and the intellect is initiated into the mysteries of this love and is illuminated by them and is filled with joy and light. And in turn the intellect, inspired by the Spirit, directs towards God the soul's power of loving, and arouses within the soul, so far as it can, an intense longing for God. Thus the intellect begins truly to love Him, and it is exalted by this love, and experiences it ever more strongly, and in its devotion and discernment it does all it can to fulfil the commandments. And in every way that is permissible it strives, helped by grace, to increase its fervour so as to be completely perfected by the divine love within it. Then in a marvellous way God and the intellect become one in the Spirit. For God spiritually indwells the intellect that receives Him, as the intellect in its turn lays hold upon God. Thus the intellect clearly perceives the truth of Paul's words, 'He who cleaves to the Lord is one spirit with Him' (1 Cor. 6:17). Then God becomes the intellect's illumination, light and love; and the intellect rejoices in God and is filled with amazement, delighting in the single radiance of the threefold light. Rapt in wonder, it is at peace and at rest in Christ.

ON CONTEMPLATION

37. The contemplative intellect enunciates – or, if you wish, comprehends or descries – five 'words' or principles with regard to the incarnate Jesus: 'words' of glory, love, grace, peace and repose. The 'word' of glory is perceived in Christ's creation of things visible and intelligible, for 'all things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made' (John 1:3), whether this is applied to the aeons or to aeviternal realities – that is to say, to the whole celestial creation – or, yet more widely, to whatever is temporal. And, more than that, in this 'word' of glory we proclaim that the Logos is of the same nature as God the Father and the Holy Spirit and is of equal dignity with them, since He is 'the image of the invisible God' (Col. 1:15), 'the radiance of His glory' (Heb. 1:3), and by virtue of His own nature He possesses 'all things that the Father possesses'

(John 16:15), seeing that He is in the Father and the Father is in Him (cf. John 14:10).

The ‘word’ of love is perceived in the fact that the Logos took flesh from us and dwelt among us (cf. John 1:14). The ‘word’ of grace is perceived in the gift and outpouring of the life-creating Spirit upon us, for ‘of His fullness have we all received, and grace upon grace’ (John 1:16). The ‘word’ of peace is perceived in the good news of the peace that He has conferred on those who were near and on those who were far off (cf. Eph. 2:17), He Himself bringing this peace about (cf. Eph. 2:15) and restoring the harmony between what is in heaven and what is on earth (cf. Col. 1:20). In consequence of this the Father ‘has raised us up in Christ and has seated us with Him in the celestial world’ (Eph. 2:6). The ‘word’ of repose is perceived in the fact that through the Logos we have truly become heirs of God, than whom nothing is mightier, and to whose surpassing infinity nothing is equal.

Guided then by these five ‘words’, the intellect in truth and in spirit contemplates in the one Trinity three conjoined ‘words’ that achieve their wonderful consummation in a single mystical dance. In this way through love, self-control, vigils, reading and prayer, together with a humble, submissive disposition and a righteousness that so far as possible has been carried into effect, the intellect advances in a fitting manner towards the contemplative vision of God and of divine wisdom, and lives in unity with God without in any way relinquishing the attentiveness or the awe that it should exhibit. Thus inexpressibly the intellect enjoys the many resplendent gifts of grace conferred by the Spirit, together with holy love, heartfelt joy, supranatural peace, and the other blessings that accompany them. It becomes truly a temple of God and His newly established heir; in short, it becomes through grace god by adoption.

ON THE TEXT BEGINNING, ‘GOD SAID TO ABRAHAM, “IN MULTIPLYING I WILL MULTIPLY YOUR SEED”’ (GEN. 22:17)

38. When, then, I gaze on the Lord, the God-Man, with my soul’s eye at peace in the life-creating, enlightening power of the Spirit, and when I clearly call to mind these five ‘words’ about Him of which I have spoken, I see the

wondrous fulfilment of that which long ago was clearly promised to Abraham by the incarnate Logos when He said, ‘In multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand of the sea shore’ (Gen. 22:17). St Paul, in citing the phrase, ‘In your seed will all the nations be blessed’ (Gen. 22:18), takes the words ‘in your seed’ to refer to Jesus (cf. Gal. 3:16). Thus it is perfectly reasonable to identify with the Lord Jesus the seed of Abraham multiplied in this way, since He alone, in that He embodies both the inner unity and the outward activity of the Divinity, is full to overflowing; He is infinite in His magnitude, unfathomable in His plurality, and, as the God who confers gifts of grace, He is as truly manifold as the stars of heaven and as the sand on the sea shore; and He is of the race of Abraham and is undeniably descended from him.

It does not make sense to say that God affirmed these things with reference to Ishmael, for he was not the child of a free woman (cf. Gen.16:1–15), and in addition God said that Abraham’s line would pass through his son Isaac (cf. Gen. 21:12; Heb. 11:18). Nor are they said with reference to Israel, for his descendants did not constitute the multitude of which God speaks, nor indeed does the whole population of the world. The words about this multitude refer only to Christ the Lord, for He is from the seed of Abraham and is one with God the Logos, constituting a single person, both human and divine. His peace alone is boundless (cf. Isa. 9:7), His judgments are fathomless (cf. Ps. 36:6), His ways unsearchable (cf. Rom. 11:33), His power and wisdom and all His divine qualities infinitely beyond infinity. In the person of Christ nations that were as yet nonexistent have received unhoped-for blessings, and in Him the great multitude that was spoken of has been realized and made manifest.

Besides, it was not fitting, nor was it in any way necessary to God, that He should favour the patriarch by promising him that a whole host of people would issue from his seed. For to rejoice in such things betokens pagan unbelief and vulgarity. On the contrary, what typifies a person who, like Abraham, aspires to the highest goals, and who is as beloved by God as that patriarch was, is his desire for knowledge of God and for the contemplative experience of Him, and his heartfelt joy in attaining both, in so far as such attainment is possible. As a consequence of this such a person is blessed with a flood of divine intellections, visions and illuminations, and in this way he is multiplied in a godlike fashion. Thus Moses in an admirable manner prayed that he might consciously behold God’s self-revelation (cf. Exod. 33:13–23);

and when he had seen God – in so far as he was counted worthy of this – he was so greatly ‘multiplied’ and such an abundance of divine knowledge came upon him that it is impossible to describe this in words. To Solomon also God gave such abundance of wisdom and such a great knowledge of created beings that this could be likened to the sand on the sea shore (cf. 1 Kgs. 3:12, 3:28); and in this way he, too, was more ‘multiplied’ than anyone then living.

Anyone who reflects on the matter will have no difficulty in understanding how it is that God ‘multiplies’ a man or the seed of a man dedicated to Him. For God in no wise rejoices simply because of an increase in the population of the world; He rejoices at the increase within the soul of wisdom and spiritual knowledge, and of the numberless other divine virtues. Having all these things in abundance, the Lord Jesus brought the seed of Abraham to fulfilment, for in Him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (cf. Col. 2:9), and this is something which infinitely transcends anything to do with the size of the population. For from this fullness come every being and every increase, and together with this the treasures of wisdom and knowledge which are hidden in Christ (cf. Col. 2:3). This is the pre-eminent and truly divine gift that God promised to Abraham, His pre-eminent friend.

Observe how this divine and infinite increase in Jesus Christ is connected with the five ‘words’ about which I have spoken. First, then, the splendour of the divine nature is revealed through the glory that surrounds Christ, since He is truly God. According to the Fathers this splendour is infinite in its grandeur and inexhaustible in its abundance. After this there are also the teachings of the Fathers concerning the relationship of the Son to the Father, His consubstantiality with the Father, His union with the Holy Spirit, and the outpouring of His gifts which do not grow any less although countless numbers of people, and even the whole world, participate in them. Among these teachings, too, are those which concern the dispensation of the Incarnation, and all the ineffable and numberless blessings that have followed from it. To put it briefly, if in so far as we can we consider all these things – those which proceed from His glory, those which are from love, from grace, from peace and from our repose – we will see that Jesus Christ, who is the seed of Abraham, has in a hidden manner been multiplied in a way that surpasses the multitude of the stars of the heavens and the number of grains of sand on the sea shore. This will lead us to glorify in fitting terms that promise which is matchless, wondrous and full of mystery, worthy of God

alone, sole source of grace – the promise that was made by God to the faithful friend whom He had chosen above all others, thus bringing to pass the true happiness of the whole human race and especially of the faithful. Glory to Him who has been pleased to increase Himself in this way. Amen.

ON THE TEXT, ‘PRAISE THE LORD, O MY SOUL’ (PS. 146:1)

39. Praise the Lord, O my soul, for the heaven of heavens, wherein He dwells whose essence is light. Praise Him in the highest, among all His angels and His powers (cf. Ps. 148:1–4). His power and His wisdom are greatly to be praised; and blessed is His holy name. Praise the Lord for the waters that are above the firmament of heaven and for the light that is above these waters. Praise Him for the firmament of heaven itself with its order and the marvel of its rotation. Praise Him for the aether that irradiates all things; for the glory and beauty of the sun and the moon and the stars, and for their variety, their disposition and movement and for their immaterial fiery state, awesome in the extreme. Praise Him for the light of day and the way in which it continually shifts, so that through God’s wise provision all things have a just share in it.

Praise the Lord, O my soul, for the wonderful concord and stability which prevails among the four great, incompatible elements of the universe – water, fire, air and earth – when they are blended together. Praise Him for the multitude and diversity of the birds, and for the providential way in which their life and habits are protected. Praise Him for the sea and the majesty of its power, curbed by the crumbling bulwark of the beach, and for all the things that swim in it, infinite in number and with their myriad differences in appearance, bulk, qualities, modes of life, behaviour, habits, capacities and activities. Praise the Lord again in peace and wonderment for the beautiful harvest that we can gather so swiftly from the sea in order to meet our needs.

Praise the Lord in joy for the earth and for the endless multiplicity of living things that move upon it; for the trees that grow out of it, those that bear fruit and those that do not, their unimaginable variation extending even to trees of the same species; for gourd-bearing, grain-bearing and pulse-bearing plants, and for those used for their scent, or for warmth, or coolness,

or moisture, or dryness, in their incalculable dissimilarity; and for the multifarious waters, for rain and snow and hail, for thunder and lightning.

For these and other such things praise and bless the Lord, O my soul, on account of His inconceivable power, His ineffable wisdom and His inexplicable glory. Praise Him more especially since it is for your sake that all visible things have been brought into existence by such a Creator because of the unspeakable love which He has for you. It is His will that you should live among these splendours and glories in a way that befits your nature and intelligence, and should contemplate the glory, wisdom and power of your Maker, who loves you so much and who even gave His only-begotten Son for our sake (cf. John 3:16), He who was made man in a singular and wondrous manner that is beyond our understanding.

ON CONTEMPLATION

40. This is what we must say to Him. What hast thou pondered in the supreme power of Thy might, O Lord beyond all being? What hast Thou willed, if I may so express it, O King beyond all wisdom? What hast Thou desired in Thine unfathomable benignity, O God beyond all goodness? What hast Thou done for us in Thine infinite love and in Thine inexpressible and loving providence on our behalf, O almighty and most glorious Lord? Glory to Thine infinite loving kindness which Thou hast manifested limitlessly for us in accordance with Thy providential wisdom and boundless power, O Thou who art entirely hidden in all things.

Let me say with the blessed David, ‘How great are Thy works, O Lord, how exceedingly deep Thy thoughts!’ (Ps. 92:5). For with the help of the Holy Spirit in truth I perceive noetically that the house of the Lord is filled with glory (cf. Isa. 6:1.LXX). And because I have this noetic vision, I truly see also in the house of the Lord’s glory my own self, filled to overflowing with glory and grace, in unutterable repose, in inexpressible eternal peace. And not surprisingly I am rapt in wonder, struck and wounded with arrows of divine love, and I burn with erotic fervour, full of spiritual joy, of supranatural delight and exultation.

My heart is filled with a sacred light, a gift from God transmitted by the unquenchable torch of the Holy Spirit, if I may so express it. And thus I am given the vision of the inner essences or *logoi* of existent things, and I see

that they are all united in the one mystical Logos, and that everything in Scripture finds its fulfilment in that Logos. And many mysteries are revealed to me which refer anagogically to that one mystery, and which through that one mystery may be perceived by those who gaze in truth and in spirit. The Logos of which I speak is the great counsel of God, which David had in mind when he said in the Psalms, 'The counsel of the Lord abides through all eternity, the thought of His heart from generation to generation' (Ps. 33:11); for no one can annul the Lord's counsel (cf. Isa. 14:27). This counsel is seen or transmitted not through learning or erudition but through living spiritual grace which truly illuminates the intellect and prepares it for the vision of things beyond this world.

'Who knows the power of Thine anger, O Lord?'says the Holy Scripture. 'And from fear of Thee, who can measure Thy wrath?' (Ps. 90:11). But the spiritual wisdom within me says, 'Who knows the power of Thy love? And who from Thine actions can measure Thine ardent longing?' Wonderful are the operations of Thy love, O Lord, my soul knows them intimately. The knowledge of Thy love fills me with wonder. Who, as they gaze upon it, can wholly encompass it? Reaching from infinity to infinity, not only does it surpass all things in quality, but also in its unutterable diversity it extends hither and yonder with unbounded wisdom and befitting power.

O ineffable Lord, Thou are a monad as regards nature, power and energy, a triad as regards hypostases and personal qualities. Blessed be He who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings (cf. Eph. 1:3) in the person of our Christ Jesus, raising us up together with Him and making us sit together with Him in the heavenly places (cf. Eph. 2:6). He has raised us above every sovereignty, authority, power and dominion, above every name that is named whether in this age or in that which is to be (cf. Eph. 1:2). He has made us joint inheritors with Him (cf. Rom. 8:17) and in everything heirs of the Triune God. For Thou hast wondrously given us authority over everything in heaven and on earth, once more in the person of Christ Jesus, through whose power and grace we mortals have been set free. O the supreme miracle of divine love and yearning, through which we participate in the gift of God in Trinity and of the divine Logos! Glorified indeed art Thou, O Lord, who in a way beyond comprehension givest Thine innate glory to us. Truly Thou art ineffable and what Thou doest is incomprehensible to us, and Thine ardent longing for us is utterly inexpressible.

41. Blessed is the one whose intellectual perception has been revived

through exalted stillness, so that it has, so to speak, returned to itself, and lives under the inspiration and influence of the Spirit. Such perception is the grace-given fruit of a healthy mind, and it restores the powers of the soul, simultaneously elevating the intellect and painlessly transforming the heart, while the mind wings its way towards the divine realm. That our perception should return to itself without cognitive stillness and grace-given purity of intellect is truly more impossible than for us to swim through the air. When our perception returns to itself, mindfulness of God and contemplation of God are effective and fruitful; without this, instead of mindfulness of God there is a forgetfulness of God, and instead of contemplation of God and knowledge of Him there is ignorance and blindness concerning God.

One may say that whoever through God's grace has recovered this divine perception has found God. He needs no words since he stands in the presence of God, ready to serve Him. He gladly chooses silence or, rather, even against his will he remains silent. A divine spirit dwells within him, love, peace and spiritual joy flow forth from him, and he lives a life different from the usual common kind of life. He delights in God, and his eyes, being rendered spiritual, behold the spiritual light. Fire kindles within his heart. Simplicity and stability, infinity and boundlessness, an absence of all beginning, and likewise eternity – all these things consort wonderfully together in him. Ceaseless tears flow from his eyes, and nothing less than a spring of living spiritual water wells up from his heart. He is wholly conjoined in unity with things spiritual, and he is illuminated by the radiance of the One. He savours supranatural joy, and is inspired and rejoices, full of wonder as he is drawn out of himself and embraced by God. He who has experienced this will know what it means and will truly praise God – the God who is beyond all being, who is supreme, without form, without attribute, without extension, without quantity, uncompounded, without shape, infinite, boundless, inconceivable, impalpable, invisible, inexpressible, indescribable, unoriginate, eternal, uncreated, incorruptible, incomprehensible, unsearchable, transcending all essence, all power, all goodness and all beauty. To Him be glory and praise through all the ages.

ON DIVINE ILLUMINATION

42. Thou who art wisdom, O Lord, hast said to those who lack a good

understanding, ‘Come, eat My bread, and drink the wine that I have mingled for you’ (cf. Prov. 9:5). And so, Lord, trusting in Thine ineffable compassion I come, devoid of understanding though I be, and truly sinful in all that I do. I beseech Thee, therefore, I beseech Thee, merciful God, grant me the gift of Thy Spirit that is spiritual food and drink, Thy Spirit that beyond all dispute is also light; for Thy companions say that those clothed in the Spirit are clothed in light. And when the light shines within me ineffably and supernaturally, I shall truly know that Thou art with me as my garment, as my holy and blessed life. Those who are clothed in light, O Christ, as once more Thy companions declare, are clothed in Thee, the radiance of the glory of the Father, the true and deathless life. And such people, according to Thy saints, are clothed in the Father as well, and so they clearly become the dwelling-places, the abodes and temples of the threefold light of the Godhead which surpasses all praise. They have been removed from all things visible, and are no longer preoccupied with things intelligible, for they repose spiritually in Thee, the Godhead who transcends divinity.

HOW DIVINE LOVE IS BORN IN THE SOUL

43. It is through obedience to the commandments and the divine teachings and through the reawakening of the life-creating Spirit in the heart that divine love is kindled in the soul. Such love is a kind of living being from which pure, eternal prayer is always gushing forth. It is movement and energy, unified yet comprehensive, an ecstasy and a vision, a state of holy delight brought about by illumination. It is an undeviating path leading to perfect, supranatural union with God. As the Fathers proclaim, it is the sure source of experiential spiritual enlightenment – of, that is to say, the gift of deification, the foretaste of the inheritance promised to the saints, the pledge of the glory of Christ, the heavenly garment of celestial joy, the sacred seal of adoption and, in short, the splendour shown forth by those who have conformed themselves to Christ and who share in His ineffable state of deification, so much so that – most wonderful of all – they may be said to be and indeed they are His brothers, heirs of God and co-heirs with Him.

For this reason truly blessed is the one who, by devoting himself wholeheartedly to the things of which we have spoken, has acquired an ineffable love for God, cleaving to Him through holy prayer and a life of

stillness. He will be truly united to God, transformed and deified in a way that exceeds our comprehension, rejoicing in what he suffers for Christ's sake, and striving with all his soul to fulfil His commandments. To Him be the glory through all ages. Amen.

MORE ON DIVINE LOVE

44. God by nature infinitely transcends all contemplation, even that of the cherubim. Yet the love which comes from His infinite goodness can certainly be contemplated. For it is clear that created and visible things come forth from Him as a manifestation of this love, since these visible things are brought into existence through intelligible beings. It is for this reason that divine love is first disclosed in its outpouring upon intelligible beings – upon angels and souls – since they are closer to God and more akin to Him. For intelligible beings share to a greater extent in the qualities of the Divinity, and it is through them that God also creates sensory things, thus manifesting His love in a manner that accords with His overflowing generosity or, better, with His spiritual grandeur. That is why it is undeniably possible to perceive, in one way or another, the love of Him who in Himself is utterly invisible – to perceive, that is to say, spiritual and supranatural love in and through things visible, for these things are as it were its sanctuary.

Between God the Lover and the person beloved by God many things in many ways manifestly and clearly proclaim God's love, especially when the intellect is rooted in the illumined heart and, itself light-enkindled, is enabled to perceive things spiritually; for then through grace the soul receives in the heart a foretaste of spiritual life in the form of a consciously experienced spiritual energy. So the soul begins to perceive, through this divine and supranatural illumination, the wedding-gifts, as it were, of its Lover in a way that is free from illusion and utterly conclusive. Henceforward these gifts remind the soul of the One who is its Lover, and it longs to think upon them continuously in so far as it can.

In this way the soul visualizes the face of the Beloved and is filled with happiness and boundless wonder. It becomes as it were paralysed by divine love, relinquishing all awareness or perception of everything else, and it is at a loss, not knowing what will become of it because the vision it contemplates is so overwhelming. And in experiencing things in this manner, it exults and

rejoices and is enraptured. Then from this state it rises in a certain way to the love of God and is blessedly consumed by an erotic fervour, being filled with the mysteries of God, and having its heart enkindled by the energy of the all-holy and life-creating Spirit.

Thus in a miraculous manner a sacred and beatific erotic cycle is brought into being by this divine love which has its origin in the contemplation of visible things. It is a cycle that clearly reveals how God's love for us in its turn transforms us into lovers of God. In this way God is made our beloved, so that what begins with God in due course ends in God. Indeed it is then that, through the tender yearning and felicity instilled by God's love, we recover our likeness to the divine image in which we are created. We combine goodness with wisdom, our practice of the virtues with contemplation, being both beloved by God and lovers of God. So we experience the mysteries of divine and life-creating union and ecstasy – we experience, in a word, through the grace of Christ our Lord, the blessed Passion of the most glorious light of knowledge.

ON THE FEAR EXPERIENCED IN THE STATE OF LOVE

45. Even though you have chosen the love of God and the spiritual repose of mystical longing, and have consciously drunk from this divine chalice, rejoicing and exulting unutterably as you contemplate the depths of the supranatural mysteries and are full of unspoken delight and profound peace, none the less you should still fear God. Cleaving to Him and humbling yourself in every way you should pray to Him, hearkening to the most divine David, who openly cries out to God: 'Thou art my joy; deliver me from them that encircle me' (Ps. 32:7.LXX). With a natural nobility or, rather, under the inspiration of the Spirit, he teaches us: 'Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice in Him with trembling' (Ps 2:11). And you should look also to St Paul, the 'chosen instrument' (Acts 9:15) who was transported to the third heaven, entered into the sacred paradise, and heard arcane utterances which no human being may repeat (cf. 2 Cor. 12:2–4), and who yet after such experiences was afraid lest having preached to others he himself might fall away (cf. 1 Cor. 9:27).

If the divine and universal teacher David says, ‘You who love the Lord, hate evil’ (Ps. 97:10), this clearly implies, ‘You who love the Lord, go in fear.’ For David perceived that, after love for God has been achieved, evil attempts to fight against it, and as it were to insinuate itself into the soul; and for this reason he very rightly and directly exhorts those who love the Lord and who have attained this spiritual state to take care that they still hate evil. If you are instructed to hate evil, that means you must still go in fear of it; for if it is not to be feared, the Prophet would not so urgently have exhorted those who love Christ to hate it.

Although the state of one who delights and rejoices in God, and who contemplates supranatural mysteries, is indeed exalted and godlike and truly full of grace, yet our soul is naturally mutable and differs but a little from earthly matter and from the body which is formed from this earthly matter. Thus our soul should for a while experience fear as it struggles against its constant tendency to submit to its material cravings. For the soul has been wonderfully coupled with matter, and as it were willy-nilly goes along with it and is affected by it, and on occasion its nature is so greatly deflected by matter that one might even say that it has lost control. There is an implacable antagonism between the two, and in many different ways the soul is subjected to forceful impulses that draw it to destruction. Thus both painful effort and prayer are essential in the face of the fear that arises within us. The soul that aspires to God has great need of fear and trembling. I leave to the more discerning of my readers, as they reflect on these things, illumined by the grace of the Holy Spirit and deeply influenced by divine love, to consider and appreciate how necessary are attentiveness and prayer.

Had Adam possessed an appropriate measure of fear while blessed with such an abundance of godlike and prophetic gifts, he would not have been vanquished so ignobly. The same, too, may be said of Samson, whose birth had been divinely promised (cf. Judg. 13:3), and of the God-inspired David, and of many others, among them the admirable Solomon. If such people as these had need not only of prayer but also of fear, painful effort and attentiveness, what should we think of those not yet imbued with the supranatural gift of the energy of the Spirit, and still unravished by the ecstasy of divine love and by the Bacchic frenzy (as it were) that brings us to the vision of God’s encircling beauty? How great is their need of fear and trembling, of proper attentiveness, and of ceaseless and humble-minded prayer in the name of Christ Jesus!

ON THE THREEFOLD FORM OF LOVE

46. Experience tells us that the fundamental principle of love is threefold. By analogy its primary qualities are threefold and so also are its essential powers. First there is sensuous love, that is the love of the senses, which is directed towards sensory things. It is an impassioned appetite for some desired object, and may often be seen in the love that animals have. There is secondly another kind of love, an intelligent desire of the soul for whatever we consider to be good, and the purpose of this love is to attain the good. The third love is the noetic love bestowed by the life-creating Spirit. This is a supranatural attraction that spontaneously impels the heart towards what is beautiful – an attraction enkindled and activated by the contemplation of the supreme Beauty, that is, by the contemplation of God. Now it is not simply through the exercise of the soul's will that God is seen as beautiful and as infinitely surpassing all beauty, but He is so by nature; therefore, correspondingly, divine longing for Him is not enkindled as a result of our willing that this should happen. On the contrary, this love is an ever-active natural energy within the heart, set in motion by the life-creating Spirit. Far from it being brought into action as a result of any willing on our part, it is this love that itself brings our will into action.

This is the reason why the third kind of love is and is rightly called divine consolation. Such love is both the energy of God at work in the soul through the inspiration and indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and at the same time it is the participation of the animating soul in God. It alone constitutes the miraculous divine–human union and reciprocity; for through the noetic desire for the beautiful it lovingly draws the whole intellect and all the powers of the soul with all its strength towards union with divine Beauty. Thus neither of the first two types of love – the appetite for some desired sensory object and the aspiration for some form of goodness – can be termed divine consolation. Only the love of spiritual beauty attained through contemplation, and the desire energized through the activity of the Holy Spirit consciously experienced in the heart, may be called divine consolation.

The Holy Spirit who brings about this consolation is called the Comforter. It is this third kind of love that constitutes love in the true sense of the word, whereas the other two types of love are images of this third love. More exactly, it is the second kind of love – the intelligent desire of the soul that

seeks the good for the sake of the good – that is truly an image of the love which is divine and spiritual, while the love pertaining to the senses is the image of the love felt by the soul.

In consequence we have but a very slight knowledge of the sweetness and consolation of the third type of love, and are even entirely ignorant of it until the life-creating power of the Holy Spirit becomes ceaselessly and consciously active in our heart. For thought cannot activate the seat of the soul's powers – that is to say, the heart – from within; it can only act upon it from without. The same applies to an even greater extent to sensory love. Thus with these first two types of love one can love something only superficially, figuratively and obscurely.

Yet when the power and energy of the holy and life-creating Spirit, filling from within and from its most profound depths the whole house of the soul, through their enchantment impel all the soul's powers, as we said, towards the inward contemplation of supreme beauty, then they possess the soul to the highest degree and exalt it through true love and through supranatural attraction to the realm of divine beauty. Only a person inspired and filled with divine energy in the way we have described knows beyond doubt in the secret depths of his soul what love is in its true essence and what it is to enjoy such love. He knows that no one, however much he loves, properly loves anything whatsoever, not even God Himself, before participating in the life-creating Spirit. Without such participation he does not understand what love is in reality, nor does he know the unutterable bliss that emanates from it through the grace of Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom is due all glory, honour and worship. Amen.

ON THE THREE MODES THROUGH WHICH THE INTELLECT ASCENDS TO THE CONTEMPLATION OF GOD

47. The body's activity has need of something of an order other than its own – namely, the eyes – as well as of something of a nature different from its own – namely, light. In the same way the intellect's activity has need of eyes of an order other than its own, as well as light of a nature different from its own. For this reason not all the intellect's activities are beneficial, but only

those quickened by the eyes and the light of grace.

The eyes of the intellect within me are the means whereby, through faith, the heart is opened; and the light is God Himself, active in the heart through the Holy Spirit. Just as the sensory light does not guide a blind man aright unless he is led by someone who does see, so the noetic light, which is God, does not quicken the intellect of a person whose heart is not yet opened, except indirectly through someone in whom such light is active. Yet just as our sensory eyes cannot function without light, so neither can the heart, even though opened, function without God; or, rather, it is not even possible for the heart to be opened unless God is active within it and manifests Himself in it.

ON PARTICIPATING IN VISION

48. After its noetic union with the heart through grace the intellect sees without distortion by means of spiritual light and reaches out towards the goal of its desire, which is God. It passes entirely outside the realm of sense perception, becoming without colour, without quality, and free from the mental images provoked by sensory objects. Our intellect is a divine vessel, filled with the unapproachable splendour of the divine beauty so far as the intellect is able to contain it. In a wonderful way it expands in accordance with the measure of the divine Spirit that flows into it; the greater the influx of the Spirit, the larger the vessel becomes, while the smaller the influx, the smaller it becomes. Moreover, the greater the influx, the more it gains in strength, while it grows weaker as the influx grows less. In addition, if the Spirit flows plentifully into it, the vessel draws in upon itself and retains what it receives without spilling it. Yet if it is filled but sparingly, it at once grows weak and feeble and cannot even retain what it has received. Also, the greater the influx the lighter it becomes, while it grows more heavy and cumbersome when it does not even contain what it is capable of containing. And not only this, but it also holds a great amount more easily than a small amount. This is contrary to what happens in the case of physical vessels which, apart from other things, hold small amounts more easily than large amounts.

It seems to me that this is why John the Son of Thunder says at the very outset of his Gospel: ‘In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God’ (John 1:1). It is as if with the immensity

of the Logos he expands the intellect that hears him, and as if by shedding light in such a way upon this vast theme he endows the intellect with a great capacity to take it in, stabilizing and integrating it with the weight of his words, and enabling it to attain a vision of God and to embrace His supreme wisdom. And when Jesus, speaking of St Paul, says to Ananias, 'He is my chosen vessel' (Acts 9:15), this is to be understood to refer to the organ of spiritual vision within us, that by which St Paul was 'rapt to the third heaven' and heard, as he himself says, 'arcane utterances which no human being may repeat' (2 Cor. 12:4).

ON CONTEMPLATION

50.[8] Our intellect is as it were a place that receives the light of divine revelation; but the particular character of this place, about which I am going to speak, is astonishing and is altogether different from that of a physical place. The more a physical place is extended, the greater is its receptive capacity. With the intellect the contrary is the case: the more it contracts and draws in upon itself, the greater is its capacity to receive things. And when it has cut off and suppressed all its modes of activity – reasoning, cognition and whatever else – then it sees God, who is greater than anything. It sees Him to such an extent as the grace of the all-holy Spirit enables it so to do, and to the degree that an embodied and created reality can see that which transcends matter and creation. It does not see empty fantasies, nor does it see as in a dream fabrications of its own thought. It sees by the light of the heart that is energized by the unutterable power of the Holy Spirit and transformed in a supranatural manner.

When through grace the intellect has been brought into this state, it becomes still and sleeps while the heart remains awake (cf. Song of Songs 5:2). One could as soon fail to be aware that one is a human being as not to recognize that this is the consequence of an energy that is divine and spiritual. For at that time one experiences a constant spiritual activity in the heart, an activity that is ardent and overflowing with life, and usually accompanied by a gentle flow of tears. This makes the heart at peace not only with itself but also with all other people. It engenders purity, happiness, silent cries of supplication, the opening of the heart, gladness and unutterable delight. He who hears of this state and is privileged to attain it shuns in very

truth, and not with dissimulation, every form of bodily pleasure, all delectation, riches, or glory derived from the fleeting things of the outer world.

A person who has received all these blessings possesses them in a divine and spiritual manner within his heart and intellect. He possesses them not merely as speculative ideas but as certainties. He does not rejoice in them through the natural light of his own mind; for this natural light, subject as it is to the distraction of the senses, dulls the light that is divine, spiritual and truly delightful. Thus he makes use of this natural light as sparingly as he can, and then only to the degree to which he has to assuage his external material needs. He bears all things, endures in all things (cf. 1 Cor. 13:7), and in all things he is protected by his inner joyous state of divine love and contemplation. And apart from sin there is nothing that afflicts or grieves him.

For the sake of this place – by which I mean the intellect filled with divine love – the great David laboured hard; and he tells us how greatly he desired it and laboured for it, saying that he did ‘not give sleep to his eyes, or slumber to his eyelids, or rest to the temples of his head, until he found a place for the Lord’ (Ps. 132:4–5.LXX). And the wise Solomon gives us the following advice: ‘Even if the spirit of the devil enters into your heart, do not abandon your place’ (cf. Eccles. 10:4). And the Saviour commanded His disciples: ‘Arise, let us go hence’ (John 14:31). And when He celebrated the symbolic Pascha in the upper room (cf. Mark 14:15), He was referring in a hidden way to this place. I think that is why He blesses the poor in spirit (cf. Matt. 5:3), poverty in spirit signifying the withdrawal of the intellect from all things, its nakedness as it were, and its drawing in upon itself. For then the intellect not only sees the kingdom of God, but also directly experiences it, having acquired a state of peace and a deathless joy.

ON ASCETIC PRACTICE AND ON CONTEMPLATION

51. When the one who seeks contemplation observes silence and fixes his gaze upon Jesus, he receives as reward the delight that is to be found in the ‘good portion’ (cf. Luke 10:42) of true contemplation. The one who is

engaged in ascetic practice is ignorant of this delight, not having tasted it and being concerned and preoccupied with many things (cf. Luke 10:41) – with psalmody, reading and heavy physical labour. Sometimes such a person even finds fault with those who occupy their noetic faculty with intelligible realities and things not apparent to the senses, and he accuses them of being slothful and lazy in fulfilling the prescribed rule of ascetic practice, even though to devote oneself to these intelligible realities brings ineffable delight, and to repose in them brings unutterable joy. He does not realize, so it seems, that when face to face with the true Logos of God, who in His great love for mankind has no need of anything, we are content to be at rest in the repose that comes from the contemplation of God, who is all-sufficient and does not need any resting-place such as we might offer Him.

That is why He praised and commended Mary who, seated at His feet, feasted on the contemplation of His words and awakened her inner being so as to understand what He was saying. He did not praise Martha in the same way, although she was concerned and preoccupied with many things (cf. Luke 10:41), as the Gospel recounts. In acting like this, the Lord was not simply teaching those two women what is the better path, but He was also instructing all those who came after them not to accuse of idleness those who choose the path of contemplation and devote themselves to it; and not only this, but we should also praise them and strive to imitate them in so far as we can.

HOW CONTEMPLATIVES CONTEMPLATE

52. As in a mirror and indistinctly (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12) contemplatives contemplate, in things and events now present, that which will come to pass in the Age that is to come. When a mirror reflects something, the reflection of that thing possesses no real substance, yet neither is it altogether nothing, for everyone who loves the truth will admit that what he sees in the mirror is a faithful image of the object reflected. Similarly things and events that have no subsistence or reality apart from what they reflect may yet constitute genuine images of true realities; and these images have the power to guide us reliably to the truth itself.

Thus when you hear St Paul saying, ‘We walk by faith, not by sight’ (2 Cor. 5:7), do not suppose that he is speaking about the faith derived simply

from what someone else had said to him. For if that were the case, how could he assert, ‘Now I know to some degree, but then I will know even as I am known’ (1 Cor. 13:12); and, ‘When that which is perfect comes, then that which is imperfect will be brought to an end’ (1 Cor. 13:10)? Do you see how this knowledge of things that are present stimulates us to contemplate that which pertains to the Age to come, although the things of the Age to come differ as much from that which we now possess as the perfect and the unique differs from that which is imperfect?

Moreover, as well as saying that he walks according to faith and not according to sight, St Paul says in another place: ‘Thus I press forward, not as one who has no fixed goal; and thus I fight, not as one who threshes air’ (1 Cor. 9:26). Here he displays a sure and true knowledge of the Age to come. Nor when he says these things is he being inconsistent with himself; this only seems to be the case because the word ‘faith’ has a twofold meaning, just as the Greek word for ‘sight’ (*eidos*) has likewise a twofold meaning, since it can also mean ‘form’ or ‘appearance’.

For there is a faith that requires logical demonstration and is based merely on what someone else has said; and there is a faith which in no way requires such demonstration, but which the believer finds fully convincing because of what he has himself seen. Such faith is known as actual or personalized faith. You will understand this more clearly with the help of an example. Suppose I say to you that I have seen a weaver who weaves into his material intricate designs of winged animals, forms of lions and griffins, horses, chariots, battles and other things. If you have not seen this for yourself, you have to accept it on the basis of what I am telling you. But should you happen to see not the weaver but the cloth, then with full assurance and without being told by anyone else you would at once recognize that this is the work of human hands, since it could not have come into being in some automatic way, nor was it woven by a animal. Then a faith very different from the first is engendered in your soul; your faith is based upon sight.

Suppose for example that you have seen a man, with lightish-brown or dark hair, perhaps tall in stature, regular in all his features, in his eyes, in the complexion of his cheeks, in his nose and lips and other things, which constitute his personal form. In this case the form that you see is actual and personalized. But should someone ask you about the form of that weaver whom you have not seen, from the sight of the material you would certainly recognize that it was made by a man, but you would only have a general and

not a personalized notion of that man's appearance. You would certainly admit that his personal appearance was unknown to you, since you had never set eyes on him. Yet you would not deny that the weaver of this intricate work was a man possessing a human form. The form in this case is a non-personalized form which we visualize in general terms even though we have not actually seen it; yet we accept it without hesitation as if we had indeed seen it.

Thus – to return to what we were saying earlier – there is faith based merely on what we have heard from someone else, and there is faith based on direct conviction, faith which is actual and personalized. Similarly, there is form seen in a specific object, and this may be described as actual and personalized; and there is form which is not seen in any specific object, but is contemplated merely in a general manner, without taking into account the many differences that exist within this general form.

All contemplatives, then, possess actual and personalized faith, although the form they see is generic, not personalized. For if God were not noetic form, how could He be called beauty? Thus just as God's noetic beauty is not specific to a particular object, so we must conceive His noetic form to be prior to all things, superlative, most glorious, overwhelming the soul with astonishment, filling and irradiating the intellect with spiritual light, inundating it with every kind of splendour, and leading it to the apprehension of God. When Manoah perceived such a form he exclaimed, 'We are lost, woman, for we have seen God' (cf. Judg. 13:22). In fact everyone who has seen that form acknowledges that it is a manifestation of God's power. The great Moses also saw God in this way; for we are told that God communed with Moses in visible form and not through enigmatic discourse (Num. 12:18). If God lacked all godlike form He would then be totally invisible; and since God's beauty corresponds to His form, that too would be beyond perception.

If it is wrong to attribute godlike form to God, then it would also be wrong to attribute beauty to Him, and still more a countenance in which form and beauty might be found. Yet one of the prophets says: 'We saw Him and He had no form or beauty, but His form was lacking' (Isa. 53:2–3.LXX). This was said with reference to the divinity of the Logos and to the fact that He was hung on the cross as a criminal (cf. Luke 23:22), bearing no mark of His divine nature, while with respect to His human nature there was no beauty in Him because of His death, while the form He had was that of a corpse. David

on the other hand hymns Him as ‘fair in beauty’ (Ps. 45:2). This, however, is clearly not said with regard to His human form, since he adds: ‘Grace has been poured forth on Thy lips’ (Ps. 45:2), which clearly refers to the divinity, which is full of beauty. In many passages David refers to God’s face. In one place he says: ‘Thou hast turned away Thy face, and I was troubled’ (Ps. 30:7); in another he prays: ‘Turn not Thy face from me’ (Ps. 27:9); and elsewhere: ‘Turn Thy face away from my sins’ (Ps. 51:9).

Since, then, it is legitimate to attribute face and beauty to God in a manner that befits Him – that is to say, without specific form and not particularized – it is also legitimate to say that He possesses form corresponding to His face and His beauty. That is what St Paul had in mind when he said: ‘Thus I press forward, not as one who threshes the air’ (1 Cor. 9:26). For although we cannot see God or participate in Him as He is in Himself, yet in another sense He is indeed to be seen and grasped, though He is uncircumscribed. That is why David instructs us always to seek the face of the Lord (cf. Ps. 27:8); for when we have attained a vision of His divinity, we will experience an inexpressible measure of grace and of divine joy and bliss. This is what David says to God with respect to himself: ‘I shall be satisfied when Thy glory is made manifest to me’ (Ps. 17:15.LXX). For abundant and infinite is the glory of the radiance of the divine face that illumines those who contemplate God in truth and in spirit; and the joy and delight of those who experience this is inexhaustible. Because of its excess it is as it were unbearable, while to those who have not seen it or tasted it, it cannot be described and is inconceivable. For if one cannot explain the sweetness of honey to those who have not tasted it, in what way can one describe things that transcend the intellect to those who have not seen them and who have not experienced the divine joy and bliss which comes from them?

Yet I have said enough about these matters. St Paul, possessing as he did an actual and personalized faith in God and also a pre-eminent, supremely beautiful but non-particularized vision of God, told us to walk according to faith (cf. 2 Cor. 5:7) – he means of course a personalized faith – and not according to sight – not, that is, according to a form seen in a specific object – for this does not bring about uncreated deification. St Maximos says: ‘I call uncreated deification the actual and personalized illumination of the Divinity in a specific form; this illumination is uncreated, but is inconceivably manifest in those who are counted worthy of it.’[9] But divine beauty, too, is manifest by means of form. With respect to this beauty St Basil the Great

says, ‘What is more to be loved than divine beauty?’[10] And again, ‘True beauty, beauty that is greatly to be loved, and that can be perceived only by the intellect that is purified, surrounds the divine and blessed nature.’[11]

That is why St Paul says of himself that though he is unskilled in speaking, he is not unskilled where knowledge is concerned (cf. 2 Cor. 11:6). For he was great in the knowledge through which he had in part come to know God – in a godlike noetic form – the God who transcends conceptualization. Moses, too, the seer of God, possessed this partial knowledge and perceived the divine form that is not to be seen in any specific object, and also the divine beauty; for he said: ‘If I have found grace in Thy sight, show Thyself to me so that I may see Thee with conscious awareness’ (cf. Exod. 33:13). For since he had already experienced the revelation of God and the glory of divine beauty, though not manifested in a specific object, he now asks to be allowed to experience this in a more perfect form. God, however, did not grant this request, for He cannot be seen by any noetic or even angelic soul, since He transcends the bounds of all knowledge. Yet Moses the seer of God did indeed see God in the divine darkness (cf. Exod. 20:21), though not in a personalized way, but as noetic form and beauty without a specific visible content. This is the way in which God is seen, as Moses would doubtless say, and also Elijah, and in general the whole company of prophets who have been granted the vision of God.

If we walk according to ‘an actual and personalized faith’, a faith given substance through contemplation of divine realities, confirmed by the radiant glory of the beauty of God’s face, and attested by the vision of His light that surpasses all splendour, then we are not walking simply according to a faith based on what others have told us. But although we are indeed walking according to ‘an actual and personalized faith’, we do not as yet walk by ‘sight’, that is, according to a form seen in a specific object (cf. 2 Cor. 5:7). In the Age to come there is no need of faith; it is only in this world that we require personalized faith. In the Age to come the most beautiful form of the divine glory will be seen more clearly, but in this world it is more shadowy. As St Gregory the Theologian explains, when from various apperceptions our imagination composes an image of the truth, this image is but a shadowy reflection of the truth.[12] In the Age to come the vision will be face to face, and that which is partial will be replaced by the manifestation of that which is perfect (cf. 1 Cor. 13:10, 12).

In this present world, says St Augustine, the partial vision of God ravishes the deiform soul with the love of His glory. [13] Thus the soul is unified, and in this united state it perceives the hidden transcendent unity of God. In the presence of this form, and of this beauty and this countenance, every intellect is cleansed, beautified and illumined in a way that is spiritual and supranatural. As a result of this the intellect unfolds and elevates its contemplative power and surrenders it to a state of enraptured wonder, while the soul is mystically filled with light, with divine delight and joy. In short, it is in this way that those who aspire to perceive and apprehend the Divinity are glorified and deified, becoming friends of God, devotees and visionaries while still bound to their mortal bodies. It is in this way, too, that through noetic perception they behold, contemplate and experience the blessings and in part the actual conditions of the Age to come, which 'the eye has not seen, nor the ear heard, and which man's heart cannot imagine' (1 Cor. 2:9).

ON THE TEXT: 'JERUSALEM IS BEING BUILT AS A CITY WHICH ITS INHABITANTS SHARE IN CONCORD. FOR THERE THE TRIBES HAVE GONE UP, THE TRIBES OF THE LORD, AS A WITNESS TO ISRAEL' (PS. 122:3–4.LXX)

53. Jerusalem means 'place of peace'. It is the figure of the place of God, that is to say, of the soul that has found the peace which is in Christ. But not every soul can possess such peace and claim as its own the name of peace. This is the privilege only of the soul that is being built as a city and that has within it the 'precious cornerstone' which God has placed in Zion, as He promised (cf. Isa. 28:16.LXX). Zion is the high watch-tower of Jerusalem, and signifies the contemplative intellect of a peaceful soul. For if you search for the high-soaring, truth-descrying intellect, you will find it only in a heart that has received Christ's peace and that has been wholly transmuted into a condition that overflows with peace.

The soul, then, that possesses divine peace has within it the precious cornerstone, together with the words of Holy Scripture which, like costly stones inscribed with holy letters, it can hurl at the beasts that attempt to

ascend God's mountain (cf. Exod. 19:12–13). It likewise possesses bitumen – the humility vivified by the Holy Spirit which with divine fire melts the stony hardness of the heart and softens it into a contrite and humble spirit (cf. Ps. 51:17). It possesses the rainwater which the Saviour supplies from the rivers of our heart. As seasoned timber for jointing it possesses the principles of true action, and as nails and an awl it has fear and diligence in keeping the divine commandments. It possesses as architect the divine Logos and His assistants – those, that is, who under His guidance build up the soul's powers. As building implements it has fasting, keeping vigils, psalmody, reading and whatever else leads to the consolidation of virtue. As plumbline it has the sacred laws of God in the Scriptures. It has also the noetic and radiant light and the sun that is reflected in the life of the soul. In short, the soul possesses in a divine and spiritual manner all that is visibly needed for the building of the city that is the noetic Jerusalem. So the soul is being built as a city that may serve as the dwelling-place of God almighty, the life-creating and unoriginate Trinity. 'I and My Father', says Christ, 'will come' – come in a spiritual way – 'and will make his soul Our dwelling-place' (cf. John 14:23). That is as if He said: 'We will make him a city, a truly wonderful city stretching out to infinity.'

This is why it is said that Jerusalem 'is being built', not that it 'has been built'. For since He who dwells in it is limitless, the city must also stretch out to infinity. This no doubt is why it also says 'is being built *as* a city', and not that it actually is 'a city that is being built'. For if it was being built through the combination of many different elements, so as to be completed as a single work possessing height, length and breadth to serve as the dwelling of the eternal Sovereign, then naturally it would be called a city. But as this building cannot ever be completed, since it is to be the dwelling-place of Him who is infinite, rightly is it not called in Scripture a city that has been built but it is described as a city that is being built. A clear sign that the soul is Jerusalem and that it is being built as a city is this: all that has a share in the soul – that is to say, all its powers – acknowledge the same governing principle and are not divided or led astray or distracted, but as a single unity they enjoy undisturbed the peace that is in Christ.

Then, as if to complete what he is saying, the psalmist mentions another characteristic of the building of the community of the city. For 'there the tribes have gone up', he writes, 'the tribes of the Lord, as a witness to Israel' (Ps. 122:3–4.LXX). Those who were earlier described as participating in the

soul are now called ‘tribes’. For the powers of the soul are not foreign to it; and instead of being simply the tribes of the soul they now become tribes of the Lord. These ‘powers’ or ‘tribes’ have gone up, so we are told, in a manner that is divine and supranatural, into the tower of the peaceful soul, as was decreed for Israel. By Israel is meant the intellect that sees God. So all the powers of the soul collaborate in a single divine task, the attaining of the knowledge of God. For all those noetic tribes labour to one end, to build the peaceful and holy city of almighty God. For there truly the soul’s powers have gone up, to animate and inspire the intellect that sees God.

When the soul is in a state of disintegration, discord and self-division, and its tribes or powers are not united, it is impossible for such an ascent to take place, and so the soul cannot be built; for no place of peace is to be found there, nor is any Jerusalem being built there; one cannot see where the noetic world is to be located. On the other hand, when all the soul’s powers are united in a single purpose, it is impossible that they should not ascend boldly in spirit to the Lord, supporting and keeping safe the visionary intellect. Thus when the soul in a peaceful and tranquil state is being built spiritually as a city, and when all its powers participate in a single purpose, then these noetic powers do indeed ascend to the Lord with a united and single-pointed endeavour, consciously supporting the visionary intellect. Then you may sing the words of the Psalm: ‘Jerusalem is being built as a city which its inhabitants share in concord. For there the tribes have gone up, the tribes of the Lord, as a witness to Israel in Christ Jesus our Lord’ (cf. Ps. 122:3–4.LXX).

ON THE SAME THEME

54. Perhaps it would not be too much out of place to add the following to what has already been said. If you wish to know whether the divine light which comes from peace has begun to overshadow your soul, or if you wish to find out whether your soul is truly a Jerusalem that is being built as a city, observe whether its inhabitants are in concord – whether, that is to say, all the impulses and powers of the soul have been joined in love within themselves and with each other in a single unity, so that they build not as divided entities but all together. Observe whether the tribes of the Lord are actually ascending into Jerusalem which is being built as a city – the tribes that represent the

soul's more generic divine powers which together make this spiritual ascent. If you see these things happening within you, do not cease from building. Remember the tower of Babel, how it was built and how the languages became divided (cf. Gen. 11:1–9), and know that not every building is good, even though it seems such to outsiders.

Broadly speaking, those who have eyes perceive two types of building and two manners of ascent. One of these two aspires to goodness and is built to be the dwelling-place of God. The sign of this is that its inhabitants live in concord and that the tribes, the tribes of the Lord, ascend there, proclaiming to the soul things mighty and wondrous and full of peace, love and holiness; and so they build the city. The other is built for evil purposes and in order to destroy the soul; and an infallible sign of this is the fragmentation and terrible confusion of the noetic languages, and it ends up as the dwelling-place of the passions, just as the tower of Babel became the dwelling-place of noisome insects.

Learn, then, the difference between the two types of buildings, and you will not make a mistake when you seek to choose the better of the two. Unless the depths of your heart are frequently filled with peace, harmony of thought and noetic light; unless ineffable delight springing from the contemplation of God floods your heart; unless a restorative power and a palpable spiritual energy wells ceaselessly from the innermost chamber of your heart so that it often seems to take possession of the region that lies above the heart, filling you with bliss, noetic radiance and deep mystical vision; unless your soul spiritually savours unutterable mysteries; unless inexpressible joy and inconceivable wonder are present within you as a single unified experience; unless Christ's holiness fills your being – if all these things are not present within you, you must understand that your soul is not Jerusalem, that it is not being built as a city, that its inhabitants, its thoughts, do not share it in concord, that the tribes, the soul's universal powers, have not become the tribes of Jesus, and do not ascend there, satisfying the soul with marvellous wonder and initiating the intellect into things which no eye has seen, which no ear has heard, and which have never entered the heart of one who does not participate in the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 2:9). And be on your guard lest, though you build, yet what you build is the noetic tower of Babel; and the consequence of this is, as I have already said, disaster, the division and confusion of noetic languages, and utter destruction.

I would have liked also to explain the reason why the soul of some people

is Jerusalem, which is being built as a city, and what is the reason for the building and destruction of the tower of Babel, and why the inhabitants of the first dwell together in concord within it while in the tower of Babel languages are split up in every kind of way. But I am passing over these points lest by being long-winded I forfeit my readers' attention.

ON THE TEXT: 'THESE WERE THE NOBLE MEN OF THE EAST' (CF. JOB 1:3)

55. The noble men of the east are perhaps those who have been ennobled by the rising, together with the illumination and radiance, of the noetic sun of righteousness (cf. Mal. 4:2), and who have been uplifted through contemplation and through fixing their mental gaze on God. They are those who owe their birth to God and not to a woman's blood or to a man's desire or to any impulse of the flesh (cf. John 1:13). Their heart and their intellect love to dwell in heavenly divine palaces, for they have been granted communion with God and have been initiated by Him into the divine and ineffable mysteries of the kingdom. They have become the body of Christ, the Son of God, and individually members of it (cf. 1 Cor. 12:27), and they constitute one body with Him and are co-heirs and co-partners (cf. Eph. 3:6), since He is their inheritance and their Father is the most high.

In a way that defies description they partake of the divine nature (cf. 2 Pet. 1:4). They have been sealed by the holy, life-creating Spirit (cf. Eph. 1:13); in Him they commune together, and in Him they live and perceive. They are dressed in the pure white raiment that is bestowed by the Spirit (cf. Rev. 4:4), in garments shot with gold and encrusted with pearls and precious stones. Wearing diadems and crowns, diamonds and rubies and every kind of rare jewel, they eat and drink at the royal table. That food cannot satiate, nor can that nectar cloy. For everything is spirit and they themselves consume these things spiritually. Those royal halls are full of countless supremely wondrous things: fire which refreshes and reanimates, kindling the heart's love; living water that sings aloud, gushing with eternal life; fragrant air, and life-giving Spirit, and light thrice-brilliant, unalloyed, beyond being, that shines with a single radiance.

These people, then, through contemplating and enjoying such splendour,

have distanced themselves from things below and have united themselves with things above. They have turned their attention away from things visible and are wholly absorbed in intelligible realities. They have gone beyond all that is transient and have pitched their tent among things that do not change. They lie as though dead in this world and yet they walk in heaven. The body binds them and drags them down; but the Spirit summons them and their bonds are loosed, destroyed by fire. And once their bonds are loosed they mount swiftly and wondrously to heaven. They have become unified persons by concentrating their whole attention upon God, and they have withdrawn from all things through their one-pointed contemplation of God, being led ever higher by the Spirit 'from glory to glory' (2 Cor. 3:18), from riches to greater riches, and to the enjoyment of unutterable blessings. They have said to themselves: 'What munificence of glory and delight!' And seeing in this munificence ever-greater riches they are rapt in wonder, realizing how deprived and impoverished they once were. They are struck dumb or, rather, they are aghast with ecstasy and their hearts are filled with joy. They are followers and companions of the King of the celestial powers and co-worshippers with the angels, amazed at such an abundance of grace and overjoyed at the unutterable inheritance and compassion bestowed upon them. These, in my opinion, are the 'noble men of the east' (cf. Job 1:3; Rev. 16:12), through Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be glory and power through all the ages. Amen.

When the intellect sees divine truth as a single whole in Christ, then it is 'a time to keep silence' (Eccles. 3:7); for it is a time for the drinking of divine nectar, for benevolence and spiritual realities. For then the intellect clearly perceives in the hand of the Lord a cup full of unmixed wine; it sees how this cup is tilted from one side to the other, and how its dregs have not yet been poured out (cf. Ps. 75:8.LXX). For the cup of divine goodness that is poured out for us – the depths, so to speak, of the riches and the fullness of grace – is never exhausted for anyone in this present life, even though, so far as this is possible, he has ascended towards God and attained deification.

Fullness and perfection are laid up for all to enjoy in the Age to come. 'That which we will become is not yet revealed', says the beloved disciple (1 John 3:2). And according to St Paul, now we know in part (cf. 1 Cor. 13:9); but in the future, when that which is perfect will come to pass, the truth that is now seen as it were only in a mirror will be replaced by its full revelation. Then all, whether righteous or sinners, will drink from the divine, mystic cup,

and will experience the mystery which is now veiled and hidden. The righteous, when they drink, will receive a yet more perfect exultation as a reward for their hope in God and their virtuous actions. Of them it is said: ‘They shall be made drunk with the plenteousness of Thy house, and Thou shalt give them to drink from the torrent of Thy joy’ (Ps. 36:8.LXX). The Lord also says that He will make them sit at table in the kingdom of the Father and will minister to them (cf. Luke 12:37); and He has promised to drink the new cup with them in His kingdom (cf. Matt. 26:29) and to rejoice with them. The sinners, on the other hand, will drink the gall of bitterness and eternal remorse. And they will drink enough to know what supremely sweet nectar they are missing through their lamentable thoughtlessness. It is this nectar that divine David exhorts us to taste even in this present life, saying: ‘Taste and see that the Lord is good’ (cf. Ps. 34:8).

The wicked, however, are not persuaded by these words. But those who are persuaded by them and who obey them look upon the cup and see how it is being tilted from side to side (cf. Ps. 75:8.LXX); gladly and thankfully they drink from both sides, and their soul’s senses are filled with sweetness. With good reason they offer up songs of thanksgiving to God, crying out: ‘Thy cup which makes us drunk, how excellent it is!’ (cf. Ps. 23:5.LXX); and ‘Thine inconceivable mercy, now already lying, as it were, in the bottom of the cup like the wine-lees, will follow us all the days of our true life’ (cf. Ps. 23:6), that is to say, all the days of our abiding and deathless life in the Age to come. We will dwell for ever in these divine blessings of the Age to come that have been conferred upon us. Tasting from both sides of the life-creating and renewing cup which is in the hand of the Lord, and drinking from this cup daily, the righteous not unnaturally come to perceive from what is manifest that which is hidden, and from what is poured forth they come to realize that which lies still in the depths of the cup. So they understand that what they taste in part is a pledge of what they will savour fully in the Age to come.

Since it is clear that in the Age to come the righteous will enjoy richly and more completely what they already enjoy in part while still attached to their gross unregenerate selfhood and to the murkiness of the world, David quite reasonably does not say explicitly that all, whether righteous or sinners, will drink from the cup; but having stated that which might appear doubtful – namely, that sinners will drink from the cup – he has omitted to mention that which is obvious, namely, that the righteous will also drink from it. For if

sinners are to drink, it is superfluous to say the same with regard to the righteous, since they even now drink from the proffered cup in such abundance that they rejoice and call out: ‘Thou, O Lord, hast made me glad through what Thou hast done, and I will rejoice in the works of Thy hands’ (cf. Ps. 92:4). In saying ‘the works of Thy hands’, David has in view how God holds and offers the cup full of unmixed wine and compassionately tilts it from one side to the other, while preserving what is in the depths of the cup for the Age to come. But even now the righteous cry out to God in their inebriation: ‘Thy cup which makes us drunk, how excellent it is’ (cf. Ps. 23:5.LXX) through the grace of Christ Jesus our Lord!

I will hymn Thee who madest me and I will praise Thee, O Most High, since in Thy grace Thou pourest out Thy mercies upon me. O most bountiful King, the lover of my soul, Thy sacred finger touches me in the depths of my heart, as Thou well knowest, Who alone performest marvellous wonders (cf. Ps. 72:18). And when Thou hast awakened me Thou hast fittingly prepared me through Thy most holy Spirit to see the letters of Thy holy hand written in the book of life, and Thou hast enabled me with personal noetic consciousness to behold the more than astonishing beauty of Thy hand and how everything is full of gladness and mystical joy through the grace of Christ Jesus our Lord.

There is a peace, more apparent than real, when the body enjoys comfort, though this causes much trouble for the soul, even if for a time it produces a deceitful kind of tranquillity. And there is another kind of peace which comes about when the senses are placed under constraint, and when one withdraws from all things and is in a state of stillness. But even this, although incomparably better than the first, does not last long; for when the soul is disturbed by distractive thoughts, the body and the entire person will be affected as well and will be unsettled. There is a third kind of peace which is higher than both of these, a peace of both the senses and the soul. This happens when the soul’s powers and our inner world are brought into a state of stillness through an appropriate mode of life and through diligent effort. When this happens one can pray with greater piety, mourn with greater sweetness, and devote oneself with pleasure to the words of God. But this is still not the most perfect form of peace. If you play the flute or the lyre, you cannot go on playing for ever; your hands will tire or some weakness or other kind of indisposition will prevent you from continuing to play. Similarly the soul, that regulates the essential harmonies of its own powers, does not

remain always in the same state but willy-nilly relaxes its attention when something happens to it or because of its fickleness or listlessness; for the soul is a created reality united in a strange way to a dense, crude body.

Yet when the soul through grace experiences the presence of the uncreated Creator of the universe and communes in the unchanging life-creating Spirit, it is marvellously transformed and it is quickened with a different kind of life. Regenerated through the life-creating Spirit, it enjoys henceforward a life that is supranatural and truly unchangeable. And just as it lives by virtue of this life-creating power, so too it sees that what creates life within it is light; and it rejoices because it beholds supranatural things in a supranatural way. Then it is at peace with the peace that surpasses all understanding (Phil. 4:7). For it is vivified, illumined and endowed with vision in a manner beyond our understanding by the life-creating and incomprehensible Spirit, and it is filled with joy because of this mystical vision.

It suffers no instability, no tribulation, nor is it caught up in the snares and plots of the enemy. Yet ever in movement it beholds God and all that pertains to God, not in any way by virtue of its own will, but by the power and impulsion and – so we may even say – by the will of the divine and inexhaustible Spirit active and palpably present in the heart, not in a way that one might picture to oneself but as the Spirit Himself alone understands; for the Spirit fathoms and knows the depths of God (cf. 1 Cor. 2:10), and initiates into these depths all those who with conscious awareness of soul participate in Him.

Thus as long as we carefully preserve alight within us the grace of the Spirit by leading a life of stillness, taking care that the light is not quenched, we will be full of holiness and of the ineffable and supranatural peace of the Trinitarian God. Then with humility, love and prayer we will truly enjoy without further struggle the peace of body, spirit and soul, of which I have spoken. For the peace which comes through effort is not yet perfect peace, but is only the harbinger of perfect peace. For perfect peace, as we have described it above, is attained without the least bodily labour, being experienced in the repose of the perfect Sabbath and in the tranquillity bestowed by Christ.

Since you know, my friend, that whereas once you did not exist you now do exist, and have zealously learnt about your Maker and Creator, and have looked closely into the reason for your having been brought into existence; then, if you think rightly, you will give yourself with intense longing and

with your whole being to the beloved Jesus your God, your Creator and Maker. You will devote yourself to ascetic practice and to the contemplation of His countenance. For if you live in this way through both practice and contemplation, you will be given many gifts by God and you will yourself become god, being made spiritual and wholly like Him. You the creature will become like the Creator, through the power of Jesus Christ delighting eternally with your Lord and Father in the repose of the love of God and in the tranquillity of God, transported from all things visible throughout all the ages. Amen.

56. When I looked I perceived with noetic vision whence I came in so marvellous a fashion and whither I am going; and I brought a third thing to my mind: the ineffable Father, who raises me up and bears me on my way and brings me to my goal. Of His love I am by no means ignorant, but I gaze as in a mirror upon the mystery of the goal that He has set before me. This leads me to rejoice unutterably with the vision of these three things. But such delight is often followed by a corresponding sorrow. This happens when I become inescapably aware of how greatly my way of life is unworthy of my true vocation. Yet when I see how through the created world Thou disclosest to me so clearly Thy transcendent glory, and when I perceive the unutterable love for me which Thou revealest through the Incarnation of Thine only-begotten Son, and when I recognize Thine inexpressible and supranatural union with me, which Thou bestowest on me through inexplicable, ever-unbroken spiritual participation, I marvel exceedingly at Thy glory and I am astonished at Thy strange mercy towards me.

In this way Thou dost transport me beyond all visible things, and Thou stillest in me all mental images, and, O Holy Trinity who art supreme in essence, Thou dost refresh me and delight me in Thyself in a manner that none can describe. When God in His great wisdom willed to make man as another angel, an angel upon earth, a heavenly being, godlike, fashioned in His own image and likeness, He accordingly placed in him a noetic soul capable of receiving divine knowledge and cognitive insight. That is why He says: ‘I said, “You are gods, and all of you by grace children of the Most High”’ (cf. Ps. 82:6). We are as it were second angels, silently contemplating God and with intense longing reaching up to Him in spiritual light. It is impossible for earth-born man to attain the angelic state unless he manifestly becomes spirit like the angels; for through faith the believer can indeed become spirit by means of the power of the almighty and infinitely bountiful

God, being transfigured as it were into a divine and mystical form. The Saviour reveals this when He says that what is born of the Spirit is spirit (cf. John 3:6). That human beings endowed with soul are also born spiritually is affirmed by St John when he says: ‘To those who have faith in His name He gave power to become children of God. Such people are born not of man’s blood, nor as a result of fleshly desire, but from God’ (cf. John 1:12–13). They are born, that is to say, in conformity to their inner self, the self created by God in His own image. Such a birth does not come to pass by virtue of the physical order of things: according to the teaching that we have received, it is an act of grace experienced by those who are born spiritually.

For this reason the intellect that participates in the Holy Spirit truly becomes His throne. Iron placed in the fire itself becomes fire, not because its nature is transformed into that of fire but because, for so long as it participates in fire, fire is imparted to it: it becomes indeed a throne for fire, so that one could say that fire comes to repose in the iron. Similarly, through birth in the Spirit, or rather through union with the Spirit and participation in Him, the intellect becomes both spirit and a throne for the Spirit; for God manifestly makes it His own possession, and takes up His seat in it, and reposes on it as if on a throne.

This is the wonderful beginning of the soul’s progress. We are not raised merely to the rank of an angel belonging to one of the more humble of the heavenly orders, but we are raised to the rank of the Most High God Himself. From there we descend first to the rank of the Thrones, then to that of the Cherubim, and then to that of the Seraphim; and so we proceed until we fully acquire the property of an angel of the more humble order, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit announcing to those around us the sublime mysteries of God.

According to those wise in things divine, participation must precede transmission. Hence it is evident that we must first manifestly participate in the Spirit, so that our intellect becomes His Throne, before we can transmit spiritual teaching to those around us. Then we must through the grace of the Spirit become one of the Cherubim – which means that we must be full to overflowing with spiritual wisdom – before we can impart this wisdom to others. We must become like one of the Seraphim in our knowledge of wisdom, and by drinking from the cup of wisdom we must have attained a burning and inspiriting love for God – for that is what the word Seraphim signifies – before we can inflame others with divine love and so in turn

inspire them. And thus we must proceed until we come to the rank of the angels and teach those most close to us; for this is the task of the angels. Consequently, without first becoming gods in the Spirit and thrones of God, Cherubim and Seraphim, and the remaining more humble spiritual ranks, we could not become trustworthy angels, nor would we be able to worship God aright or truly to teach what has to be taught through the grace of the Holy Spirit. Thus the true progress of the soul begins with participation in the Most High God, and then, in the way that we have described, through the power of Jesus Christ our Lord it proceeds through different stages.

I will give thanks to Thee, ineffable Lord and Master, Holy Trinity, not, indeed, as is befitting to Thee, but according to my own capacity. For Thou, O God ineffable, together with all Thy powers art infinitely above and beyond every verbal affirmation that attempts to express Thee and every intellect that seeks to conceive Thee. Through Thy munificent will Thou has created me out of non-being, with Thy hand forming me as a unique creation according to Thine own image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26). Yet I in my vanity, in spite of being created with such great honour and glory, have grown grievously ungrateful for Thy commandments, even though they are holy and full of peace, true joy and divine power. And, most wonderful of all, before bringing me into existence – so that I might attain the vision and knowledge of Thee, and experience unbearable bliss through sharing in Thy divine grace – Thou has brought into existence, for my sake and for the sake of my life, a world of such magnificent beauty and glory, of such power and creative wisdom, and so richly and variously filled with the things without which I would not be able to exist for even a single hour. On the bodily level these are the things that provide for my physical well-being, the things which I enjoy and which nourish me. On the level of my soul, through these things I contemplate in wonder the all-embracing wisdom and power of Thy providence and the ocean of Thy love.

All this, ineffable Lord, Thou hast done for me. But I in my folly have until now wasted my life, rejecting Thy commandments that are truly delightful and beloved by all who are wise. Alas! The insensitivity, the callousness of my soul! Do you not see, impure that you are, how simply to keep himself physically alive, and only temporarily at that, the poor man becomes the slave of the rich man and readily obeys his master’s orders, however burdensome some of them might be; and this he does in spite of the fact that he clearly carries them out not for his own sake but for the sake of

the one who orders him about. How do you, then, so mindlessly and despicably disobey the commandments of Him who is in such a way your Creator, Benefactor and Nurturer, even though these commandments were laid down for your sake and for your immortal glory? Alas for your shamelessness and for the eternal bane you inflict on yourself!

When I was turning back to Thee, O Lord supreme in love, my inexpressible joy, I spoke to my soul, poor and truly sinful that it is – and yet it is Thy creation, fervent lover of souls that Thou art – and I said to it: 'Soul, you are rich in spiritual blessings; eat, drink and be merry' (cf. Luke 12:19). But then, when the devil rose up against me, I was afflicted and sorely humbled (cf. Ps. 38:8.LXX). Yet how great is Thy bounty, most bountiful Lord! For when in my delusion I strayed from the straight and holy path, Thou has forestalled me wondrously and with unsurpassable gifts Thou hast brought me back. And truly I ate and drank, and in consequence I rejoiced spiritually on account of Thy mercy. But again and many times I was beguiled and driven into exile, whether through the dread wiles of the devil or because of my own negligence I do not know – perhaps as the result of both, or perhaps as a result of some deeper judgment on Thy part whereby I was made to experience the various and successive trials of being forsaken and abandoned and chastised.

Again, many times I was stuck in the mire where there is no firm ground on which to stand (cf. Ps. 69:2.LXX), and I was reduced to misery and bent with pain as the thorn pierced me (cf. Ps. 32:4.LXX) – I mean the deadly sting of sin and, more generally, the many forms of malice with which the devil craftily beguiled my soul as a result of my terrible negligence and my extreme folly. Yet throughout all this Thou hast never in any way ignored what was happening to me, but spiritually Thou hast spoken to me in the secret recesses of my heart, O Thou who art supreme in love, saying to my abject soul: 'I am thy salvation (cf. Ps. 35:3); do not fear, but be at peace once more and do not be deluded.' Thus hast Thou comforted me, Jesus, in Thy forbearance, and manifestly Thou hast become for me a shield of salvation. O Thou who art the right hand of the Father, Thou hast seized me powerfully, and Thy chastisement has restored me again, as many times before, through the great joy of Thine ineffable mystical blessings.

Come, then, Logos of God, into my heart like a sure seal, so that I may contemplate Thine indescribably supranatural beauty. Come into my arms, so that I may fulfil Thy holy and life-generating commandments. Come, Jesus

Christ, heavenly King, come so that I may live within Thee spiritually. Approach me so that I may sense Thee keenly as I return to Thee with all my soul. Thou art the transcendent joy of those in whom Thou dwellest ineffably. Flash forth Thy lightning, O infinite Wisdom, so that my noetic soul may be united first with itself and then with Thee, and so that those who without cause are my enemies (cf. Ps. 3:7.LXX), who persecute me without provocation and ill-treat me unsparingly, will be scattered and destroyed. Keep me, O Lord, I beseech Thee, for ever as the apple of Thine eye (cf. Ps. 17:8), so that being in Thy presence for all eternity I may contemplate Thee, most glorious and ineffable Master.

57. What am I, uncreated Lord, but dust and ashes (cf. Gen. 18:27), and what are my days and who am I but a passing shadow (cf. Ps. 144:4) and a brief dream? In Thy sight, O Thou who hast no beginning, a thousand years are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night (cf. Ps. 90:4). And what is my understanding compared with Thine, who with understanding madest the heavens (cf. Ps. 136:5.LXX) and in wisdom the earth and everything in it; and all this Thou hast done simultaneously and instantaneously. Who am I, then, as I stand before Thee to be judged, O lover of my soul? I entreat, I beseech Thee, Master, judge me not. Parents do not impose penalties on their new-born infants for what they do, or sentence them to heavy labour; but simply, with loving compassion and concern, they tend them in a gentle manner, nourishing them and cherishing them as well as they can. For this reason, Holy One, who art truly our eternal and supremely loving Father – for Thou hast created the whole of our universe out of non-being – be not vexed with my faults and transgressions, I beseech Thee; nor, compassionate as Thou art, demand that I perform works commensurate with Thy grace. No, bountiful Lord, do not act in this way. But, as one would with small children, yet even more so and to a limitless degree, pardon my offences and increase the pure gift of Thyself within me, for weak in understanding as I am I have great need of such help. Yes, Thou who art beyond praise, who hast made me and formed me and re-formed me, assuredly for a most excellent purpose: I pray Thee that, having done so much for me, and having adorned me as Thy true image with miraculous beauty, do Thou glorify me with measureless purity; for Thou hast come not to condemn the world but to save it (cf. John 3:17). Amen.

58. As Thou seest, Lord – for Thou knowest the heart’s secrets – I condemn myself. I do not need any other judge, O Thou who art most wise.

Only when there is some uncertainty, O Goodness supreme, is a trial needed before judgment is given. But when the defendant has condemned himself in advance, and truly recognizes and confesses himself to be not simply a sinner but one who sins every day and every hour, then, compassionate Lord, spare him a trial. O inexhaustible source of mercy and of every gift of grace, I ask for mercy and I seek Thy grace. I appeal to Thee, who for my sake hast chosen to become man and who in Thine overflowing goodness dost not deal with us according to our iniquities, and in Thine excelling tenderness dost not reward us according to our sins (cf. Ps. 103:10); rather art Thou conquered by Thine innate love and as far as the east is from the west Thou hast removed our iniquities from us (cf. Ps. 103:12).

I beseech Thee, then, most patient Lord Jesus Christ, merciful Master, and I ask Thee, unworthy though I be, to overlook all my iniquity and all my sin, and in Thy power and Thy wisdom fully to seal my heart with the truly holy gift of Thy most holy Spirit. Then with wisdom and with spiritual discernment and through the power of Thy grace, may I as far as possible do what is acceptable to Thee, so that the spiritual streams of Thine all-pure wisdom may again flow from my heart imbued with the understanding of truth and with divine light. In this way may I dwell henceforth in Thy presence, participating in all Thy gifts, illuminated through Thine unimaginable mercy and inexpressible grace from now and for all eternity by Thy supremely glorious light. Amen.

59. No one can have such a clear perception of the machinations – or of what could be called the provocation – which come from the devil, as does the one who has for a time escaped from the clutches of the demons and from their assaults. And no one does escape them and is freed from them unless, as I have already said, he receives the help of the Holy Spirit personally active and ever flowing in his heart. Such help is received by those in whom faith is united with humility and who display an active love for God and men. In such people this humility and active love are combined with a way of life dedicated to stillness and accompanied by vigils and by reading, sometimes about ascetic practice and sometimes about contemplation, and subsequently, when linked with prayer, about the vision of God. Active love is of course manifest in one’s fulfilling God’s sacred commandments as best one can. From all this, then, come not only a most pure and penetrating understanding of God, but in addition an accurate knowledge and most sure discrimination concerning the wily tricks devised by the demons in their attacks on the soul.

At this point the struggle and combat with the demons grow more intense, for they become inordinately jealous and fall with frenzy and the utmost malice on the soul devoted to God, trying to injure it in every kind of way. And if the true Saviour in His compassion did not protect His people and if Christ did not fight for the faithful, truly no one at all would be saved, even though he was a saint.

60. I am most keenly aware, and I confess it to Thee, Lord, that through negligence, ingratitude and mindless behaviour I, an intelligent being, have wretchedly sunk even lower than instinct-driven animals; for such animals follow their own nature and live according to it, while I have not experienced even for one hour the pure and true activity of my nature without defiling it with the foul passions and the allurement and turmoil of transient things. Thus witless I do not even know what my real nature is like. In this way my proclivities truly outstrip in wickedness even those of the demons, and I am in fact more wicked than they are. For were I as they are immune to disease and death and with no worries about keeping alive, then, wretch that I am, I would undoubtedly prove to be monstrous in vice and unrestrained in yielding to wicked impulses. But, as it is, not only am I not immortal but am subject to frequent and long illnesses; yet nevertheless I transgress, delighting in sins and giving way to them. And what is worse, I do not incline towards one of the vices and avoid the rest, as each of the demons does. For there is one demon of avarice, another of self-esteem, another of self-indulgence and another the agent of some other passion; for each one fosters and promotes a particular passion in those who fall under his sway. But I alone am the lover and perpetrator of all the passions.

In fact, I am so mastered by the passions that even without being stimulated by the demons or being provoked from without, I veer by my own free choice towards the passions or rather, I fall into them in a pitiable way. Indeed, in the case of the vices that I have not committed, this has not been because I deliberately avoided them or consciously rejected them, but because I lacked the opportunity to commit them. How much more justly, then, am I to be judged as more wicked than the demons! They are immortal, free from disease, and with no problems about keeping alive, yet each of them inclines towards only a single form of sin. Yet I, whose days are not only brief but, as I have said, are already given over to illness, weakness and wickedness, throw myself headlong into every kind of sin, and am only too eager to commit it. In this way I am truly much worse than the demons.

Yet, Lord, Lord, Thou whose mercy is unsurpassable and whose nature it is to save – for in Thy generosity Thou grantest even to the demons the possibility of repenting should they wish to – strengthen me with wisdom and with everything needed so that I may repent as I should for the sins I have committed and may propitiate Thy most holy Person; for Thou, Lord, art the most excellent and blessed life, the everlasting, celestial repose of the righteous, the pure love that does not reckon up our sins; Thou art unutterable compassion and clemency. Confer on my soul Thy great and wonderful mercy as I cry to Thee, 'Have mercy, Thou who art eager to forgive.' Thou has granted us clear and convincing evidence that Thou wouldest not exclude from Thy mercy even the demons when they turn to Thee and beseech Thee, saying 'Have mercy', appealing to Thine infinite goodness; nor wouldest Thou by any means turn Thy back on them, for Thou art the fount of all gifts of grace. For if Thou hast mercy on me who am more evil than the demons and worse than the instinct-driven animals, then in truth there is no sinner, whether man or demon, who if he falls before Thee and cries 'Have mercy', will not at once experience Thine infinite goodness and Thy mercy that is rich beyond words, utterly amazing, and that surpasses all hope. Have mercy on me then, Jesus, who art our natural Father and the fount of mercy.

61. I have reflected, Lord, on many things that come into my intellect. But in truth there is nothing that I fully understand with any certainty once and for all, and in general among everything that exists there is not a single thing the knowledge of which does not in some way or other elude me. Precisely for this reason I show myself to be quite clearly deficient in all forms of knowledge, whether particular or universal. This sky and this earth I do of course see. But what they are, or where they are rooted and how they are kept in being, are matters about which I am completely ignorant, just as I am about a host of other things relating to them and to their nature. Should anyone ask me to point out to him what air, water and fire are I can easily do so. But should he ask what is the nature of each, and how it is that one runs downwards, the other rises upwards, while air flows in all directions, I could not even mumble an explanation. Rather I pass such things by, knowing I have nothing to say. Even a single hair, which is a most paltry thing, is altogether beyond our comprehension: we do not know where hairs come from and how they come, or what time sequence or rhythm they follow. And what is the point of knowing about hairs in any case?

For this reason I beseech Thee, Lord, deliver me from the presumption

which leads me to judge and condemn my neighbour or anyone else. And then protect me with Thy powerful arm, because I am slow of understanding and very obtuse. Who has assessed the dimensions of the heavens, the mass of the earth and its weight, and the swift and tireless path of the sun, so wonderfully intricate and precise? Who can understand the power that orders these things with such wisdom? And how can we know these things when we do not even know about a gnat? And from where can we learn about them? I am a complete moron, and incapable of understanding the power of Thy wisdom. Yet, confident only in Thy grace, it is my task to speak about divinization, and about the miraculous union with God brought to pass by God Himself in His surpassing understanding.

62. Only a person who through grace has received the gift of spiritual perception and insight can guide by means of specific signs and with the utmost clarity and assurance those who have not acquired such perception but are still under the sway of their merely psychic self. For such a person, according to St Paul, can call everything into account, while he himself cannot be called to account by anyone (cf. 1 Cor. 2:15). But whatever the state in which others who lack such grace may be, not only are they unable to perceive when someone else is deprived of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but often in their folly they pronounce blessed those who rather deserve our pity, since they have not been given the grace of spiritual perception but are under the sway of the spirit of this world and are what Scripture calls psychic or unspiritual (cf. 1 Cor. 2:14). For those who have received the gift of spiritual perception and have attained likeness to God do not judge things rashly or superficially, in the way that most people do. On the contrary, they judge according to the immutable and eternal truth which is within them, for they have undoubtedly been initiated into it by the life-creating and illuminating Spirit. On those in whom He manifestly dwells the Spirit confers a supranatural life different from that which is familiar to us, and He grants likewise light and knowledge other than that which informs the eyes of the many.

Such a person was the Patriarch Jacob, who though journeying from place to place yet remained rooted in this one place, the place of the Spirit, seeing in vision and speaking concerning his sons many things worthy of wonder (cf. Gen. 49:1–27). Such a person, too, was Isaiah, the most eloquent of the prophets, who, seeing Jesus being led as a lamb to the slaughter (cf. Isa. 53:7), was neither overwhelmed by His suffering nor dismayed by His

humiliation and what went with it, but with a spiritual eye mystically and truly he perceived the glory concealed in these things. Although he saw Jesus' form and beauty eclipsed (cf. Isa. 53:2), as well as the other things relating to His passion, yet in spite of this he affirmed His divinity. All the holy prophets in general were people of this kind, grasping intelligible things noetically through the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

As for those wedded to the spirit of this world or, rather, to put it more accurately, who are under the sway of this spirit, their character can most readily be assessed if one calls to mind the scribes and pharisees of the Gospels. They were obsessed with trying to appear externally to be good and were passionately given over to outward observance, aspiring with all their soul to be called teachers of Israel because of their solemn mien and walk, whereas in reality it was nothing but external show and the simulation of a virtuous life through pious talk (cf. Matt. 23:3–7). It was on account of this that in their terrible blindness, and because of the jealousy spawned in them by the spirit of this world, they savagely condemned to death Christ Jesus, the most true Son of the God of all things, who is the divine and genuine life. For if, as Scripture says (cf. Jas. 4:5), when the Holy Spirit speaks to us He is not prompted by jealousy, it is obvious that by contrast the spirit of this world is prompted by jealousy and its counsel is unjust and dark.

For this reason they will beat their breasts (cf. Rev. 1:7) at the time of the universal judgment of God, and will regard themselves as pitifully wretched – and such indeed they are – while they gaze on Him whom they pierced (cf. John 19:37). In their bewilderment they will say, 'Is not this the man whom we held in derision, and whose life we thought madness? How then has he been numbered among the sons of God?' (cf. Wisdom 5:4–5). For since, deluded by the spirit of this world, they had fallen victim to the darkness of self-conceit and had stumbled badly, they naturally failed to grasp the real truth and to base their lives upon it, in the way that is done by those who are under the undeviating guidance of the light-giving Holy Spirit. It is with reference to these spiritual people that St Paul says, 'Do you not know that angels are to be under our jurisdiction? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life' (1 Cor. 6:3). Thus a person inspired by the Spirit can call everything into account (cf. 1 Cor. 2:15), whereas the Spirit Himself cannot be received or perceived by the world, as the Lord says (cf. John 14:17).

In the case, then, of those not clothed in the supracelestial Holy Spirit with

true consciousness of soul, and within whom the Holy Spirit is not actively present in an indescribable and mysterious way, communicating what is inexpressible, it is clear that such people are under the sway of the spirit of this world. ‘But you are not in an unregenerate state,’ says St Paul, ‘but in a spiritual state, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells within you. But if you do not possess the Spirit of Christ, you do not belong to Him’ (Rom. 8:9). Do you see, then, that those who have the Spirit within them are not unregenerate? And that those within whom, alas, lamentably the Spirit does not dwell not only lack spiritual discrimination but also cannot belong to Christ?

Elsewhere St Paul distinguishes more sharply between the spirit of this world and the Spirit of God; for he says, ‘But we have received not the spirit of this world but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given to us by God’ (1 Cor. 2:12). Do you perceive how only those who have received the Spirit of God can understand divine things and the truth? As the Lord Himself said, ‘When He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth’ (John 16:13). Do you see that the truth in its fullness does indeed spring up within the intellect, so that a person can then distinguish things clearly and infallibly? This is why the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of counsel, the Spirit of knowledge, understanding and wisdom (cf. Isa. 11:2), the ruling Spirit (cf. Ps. 51:12. LXX), the undeviating Spirit (cf. Ps. 51:10), the Spirit of truth (cf. John 14:17). And He is also called by Isaiah ‘the Spirit of judgment’ (Isa. 4:4), because through Him the soul is brought undeviatingly into a spiritual state, and because with Him as its active agent it distinguishes spiritual things rightly, since it participates in Him; for without the Spirit all things are full of darkness and destitute of the truth.

The person destitute of the Spirit of truth and so of the qualities that He bestows, and who tries to assess things, will end up by inventing a tissue of falsehoods. For, says Scripture, you cannot know anything about anybody else except by means of the Spirit that dwells within you (cf. 1 Cor. 2:11); ‘for the Spirit fathoms everything’ (1 Cor. 2:10). Were it possible to find the truth without Him, the Holy Spirit would not be called the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of judgment or any of the other things He is called. If someone claims that he is able to assess things without the Spirit of truth, he will merely be an advocate of falsehood, for he will be conjecturing about what has no reality. In short, he will cut himself off from the truth – which is also the Spirit of judgment – and by his own choice he will be exiled from God and the glory of God, and he will be justly sundered from Him; for he assesses things in a

way that violates the truth and he argues over-hastily, ignorantly and crassly betraying what is right like a second Judas. That truly thrice-wretched man was condemned for this very reason, in that he ignobly and unwarrantably betrayed Justice and Truth, our Lord Jesus Christ, who was sent to us from the Father as righteousness (cf. 1 Cor. 1:30) and who called Himself ‘truth’ (John 14:6).

Wretched, blind pharisee, although destitute of the Spirit that illumines the soul’s noetic eyes, you yet dare to go about wrongfully judging a person’s inner being from his outward appearance. You are like those pharisees of old who though they witnessed – for in fact they did so witness – miraculous raisings of the dead and countless other divine wonders wrought by Jesus as true God through a simple command, and who on this account should have honoured and praised Him and have trusted in Him, yet were indignant and angered because in His wisdom and compassion He broke the Sabbath (cf. Mark 2:23–28; Luke 13:10–16), and because His disciples as companions of the Bridegroom did not fast (cf. Matt. 9:15) and ate without washing their hands (cf. Mark 7:2).

Most foolish, most senseless and benighted pharisee, do you have the effrontery to call to account the Source of wisdom and of inexpressible wonders and miracles, overlooking actions of such power and taking note only of minor things done for reasons unknown to you? How uncouth, ungrateful and insensate you are! And if quite absurdly you take offence at what one might call trifles, how is it you did not marvel as you naturally should at the great things He did, and how is it you have not humbly approached their Author, glorifying and praising Him as you ought? And why do you not ask Him in a humble and straightforward way to explain to you the reason why He departed from existing practice and did not observe the rules about the observance of the Sabbath? But it seems that conceit and the guile that follows from it are of all things the most terrible and dangerous. The more you think you know, the worse they are; and the more you are ignorant of your own ignorance, the more mindless they make you.

Again, blind pharisee, you do not look to see whether the inside of the cup is clean, but think you must examine and clean only the outside of the cup and the plate (cf. Matt. 23:25–26). Do you not hear what Christ, the true wisdom, says about judgment: ‘Do not judge according to outward appearance, but judge with right judgment’ (John 7:24)? Do you not understand that you cannot judge justly or make right decisions if you rely

only on the outward appearance of things? For ‘outward appearance’ means that which is merely the external, superficial aspect of things. How then, senseless as you are, without either fearing the commandment of the Father or, it seems, understanding that the true person is not to be identified with what he appears to be, are you not ashamed? Why do you not hide your head in embarrassment? Since you live deprived of true life, destitute of light, wisdom, truth and the knowledge that goes with it, as well as of the other countless blessings that pour forth from the Holy Spirit and are conferred by Him, you are not only incapable of correctly assessing outside realities, but you cannot even see into what a pit of evil you yourself have fallen.

If you would follow my advice, cast the beam out of your own eye (cf. Matt. 7:5) – I mean, cast the pretence and self-conceit out of your intellect. And then, when you yourself can see, you will as a consequence legitimately be able to draw out the speck from your brother’s eye, the sin, that is to say, which stealthily entered into him without him being aware of it. So long as your inward eye does not perceive noetic light, the beam blocking it and making it blind is patently there. Thus before you have examined yourself in every way and have put evil as far from you as possible, do not be deceived by the mockery of the demons and in your folly bring suffering upon yourself by trying to do things which are solely within the competence of those enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Such an undertaking is dangerous – in fact, exceedingly dangerous; and so is the assault of the demons.

Those who should speak, and who as a consequence should judge, are, as David says, those whom the Lord has redeemed from the hand of the enemy (cf. Ps. 107:2) – that is to say, from evil noetic powers. They are the ones whom He has gathered ‘from the lands’ (Ps. 107:3) – from, that is, passion-charged, alien and tortuous habits; the ones, that is to say, whom He has brought into unity with themselves and with His glory. It is people who have in this way been gathered, united and filled with spiritual light, and who are thus redeemed and saved, who should speak and judge. But you who are not filled with spiritual light should protect yourself with silence, and should not be afraid rather to learn, and to confess your ignorance, paying attention to every counsel – counsel of salvation, of course, not of destruction. How do Christ’s words, ‘I do not pass judgement upon anyone’ (John 8:15), not put you to shame? And you – what do you say? ‘I judge everyone.’ What ignorance – or rather, what depths of stupidity! Scripture says that the Father has given all power of judging to the Son (cf. John 5:22). The Son, then, has

received the power of judging from the Father. But who has given it to you? Does the Holy Trinity truly and actively dwell in you, as God has promised (cf. 2 Cor. 6:16)? Do you behold yourself as dwelling in the divine Logos and the divine Logos in you? Are you in God? Do streams of water flow from the Holy Spirit and perceptibly well up in your heart with unapproachable light? And do you experience all the other things that God clearly makes manifest in His saints? Or do you lack the greater part of them?

Stop your tongue, then, from saying evil things and your lips from speaking in a wily manner (cf. Ps. 34:13). Carefully seek out others, questioning them and learning from them. Do not set yourself up as a teacher; let others call you to account, but on your side do not in any way judge them. It is extreme folly for a blind man to pretend to read a book, and yet greater folly for you to think that without the living Spirit you can know the inner being of another person, when in fact you do not even know your own being with any accuracy. Such ideas are ploys and provocations of the wily and envious demon, the enemy of goodness; and they clearly rebound upon us when in our self-conceit we act evilly and when, contrary to what we should do, we presume to set ourselves up as judges; for in so doing we stumble because of our ignorance and unhappily fall far short of the truth. And instead of learning, we gain nothing, and we become guilty of causing not only ourselves but others to stumble, and of doing them harm, in this way incurring God's terrible judgment.

For we have failed to recognize what is clearly the ploy of the devil, and we have not obeyed St Paul's injunction not to judge anything prematurely (cf. 1 Cor. 4:5) – before, that is to say, the Lord comes to dwell within us and enlightens us with the grace of the Spirit, and in this way reveals deep mysteries to us. For when He has initiated us into the knowledge and revelation of divine visions and things mystical, and in a sure and unerring manner has rendered us truly spiritual and divinely inspired – or, rather, has made us gods (Ps. 82:6; John 10:34–35) – He will restore us to our original glory and will renew in us the grace of discernment, so that we will clearly realize how evil it is to judge when we are destitute of the gift of Christ. Only then will we be able to assess things with surety and rectitude.

63. From the start God greatly assisted Israel and provided for it richly and wondrously, and He gave it pride of place among His inheritors (cf. Deut. 32:9). Yet the extraordinarily rich help and solicitude He bestows on those who put their faith in Christ surpass His concern for the people of Israel as

much as the soul surpasses the body, or as the body surpasses its shadow, and they outshine it as much as the sun outshines the stars. For, properly understood, His concern for Israel was truly a shadowy thing compared with what He does for us. For the Israelites were subjected to Pharaoh, their cruel and merciless overlord, together with his oppressive taskmasters (cf. Exod. 1:8–11). Now Pharaoh and his taskmasters are images of Satan and his henchmen, who do not inflict upon us harsh bodily ills but unremittingly and assiduously afflict the soul itself. In the case of the Israelites, Moses acted as the leader of God's people (cf. Exod. 3:10). We, however, on an incomparably higher level have as our leader the true Son of God, the actual divine Logos, who is greatly, infinitely superior to the old Law.

In the case of the Israelites, there is the rod (cf. Exod. 7:9, 20, etc.); with us there is the Cross. When the wooden staff was miraculously transformed into a serpent, it swallowed the other serpents (cf. Exod. 7:12). Likewise the Cross, which had been an instrument of evil, was transformed into an instrument of such goodness that it destroys the demons. In the case of the Israelites, they robbed Egypt of gold and silver and luxurious garments (cf. Exod. 12:35–36). We, too, do the same in a hidden way within the intellect, transposing sensory beauty from bondage to sin to its source in God. With them a fiery pillar of cloud led Israel directly to the sea (cf. Exod. 13:21). In our case, when the intellect through faith and contemplation has been granted the gift of ceaseless tears, we attain the vision of God and are filled with a burning love for Him. At such a time all hostile assaults come to a stop and die away. The intellect crosses over into a new state, just as then, after the Jews had crossed the sea, the Egyptians and Pharaoh were miraculously destroyed in the waters (cf. Exod. 14:28). In short, should you examine and meditate on all the things that happened to the Jews, you will see that they constitute the shadow and prefiguring of what those who are true Christians now experience.

Thus, should you wish to understand more precisely and clearly the difference between us and the Jews, you may reflect on the teaching of the old Law and that of the new Christian Law, and you will not fail to perceive how they differ. The first treats of things created – in fact, of visible things. To be sure, these were brought into existence by God, for, as Scripture states, 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth' (Gen. 1:1), and so on. Christian teaching, on the other hand, concerns what lies beyond all created things, both sensory and intelligible. Or, rather, it concerns what lies

beyond even uncreated noetic realities, as is evident from the text: ‘In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God’ (John 1:1). The teaching of the Jews declares, ‘God said, Let us make man in accordance with our image and likeness’ (Gen. 1:26); but that of the Christians says, ‘And the Logos became flesh and dwelt among us’ (John 1:14). Jewish teaching says, ‘Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the livestock and over the whole earth’ (Gen. 1:26), while in Christian teaching it is said, ‘We have all been given a share in the fullness of His being’ (John 1:16). Again, Jewish teaching says, ‘And God said, Let there be light’ (Gen. 1:3), while in Christian teaching it is said, ‘God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness”, has shone in our hearts’ (2 Cor. 4:6).

Hence if you study carefully the texts we have cited from the two teachings in question you will be able to understand most clearly how incomparably the teachings the Christians received from God excel those that the Jews received; and you will justly call the latter the shadow and prefiguring of the supranatural truth granted to the Christians, the truth concerning Christ. Accordingly, you will praise and glorify the divine grace and providence that from shadows and prefigurings gradually raise us in Christ Jesus our Lord to the transcendent mercifulness of the divine world.

HOW GOD IN HIS LOVE FOR MANKIND CAN BE APPREHENDED BY EVERY ORGAN OF NOETIC PERCEPTION

64. Most holy personal Logos of God, both wisdom and power, how, Lord, shall I praise Thine essence and Thy glory, seeing that they are unapproachable? How shall I praise Thy generous love, seeing that it is infinite, while I, being human, possess but a limited mind? Yet will I praise Thee, and glorify that which is accessible to me. And perhaps thus I will come to perceive something of Thy glory and love, and my soul will cleave to Thee with all its strength. And learning of Thee in this way I shall come to stand in awe of Thee, and as a result I will be rapt away in Thee from all things, as happened to the prophet who declared, ‘Lord, I have heard Thy voice and was afraid; I have contemplated Thy works and am rapt in wonder’

(Hab. 3:2.LXX).

Most high, most incomprehensible Logos, Thou didst knock on the door, that is, on the ear, of the bride in the Song of Songs, and her heart was stirred because of Thee. Rapt in wonder, she craved to see Thee, crying out: ‘Show me Thy face, let me hear Thy voice; for Thy face is beautiful and Thy voice sweet’ (cf. Song of Songs 2:14). For truly she longed to make her own what was said by Job, ‘First I heard Thee only with my ear; but now my eyes have seen Thee’ (Job 42:5.LXX). I have seen Thee, that is to say, not only as Logos and wisdom, but also as the true light that gives light to everyone who comes into the world (cf. John 1:9) – the light that illumines us from the instant it first appears. For, since Thou art the noetic sun of righteousness, Thou givest light so that a person may perceive in a blessed way and because of his virtue the divine and supranatural qualities of the one and only God, and through his intense longing may attain the ineffable divine realities that surpass the world.

For this reason St John clearly affirms, ‘We beheld His glory, the glory that He has from the Father as His only Son, full of grace and truth’ (John 1:14). As true God Thou art also truly light, as St John again attests; and that is why those who have received ineffable gifts from the fullness of Thy being, unutterable Lord, in forthright terms declare that Thou, the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness’, hast indeed shone in our hearts (cf. 2 Cor. 4:6). Thou dost shine in an inexpressible way, and with such luminosity that we are able to perceive supranatural and celestial things, things of heavenly grace and truth, and wondrously to delight in them.

Because of Thy compassion we are aware of Thee not only through the senses of hearing and sight but also through the sense of touch. It is as the beloved disciple says, ‘We proclaim to you that which we have heard, which we have seen, which we have looked upon and have touched with our hands concerning the Logos of life’ (cf. 1 John 1:1). And since Thou hast become a garment for the faithful, conferring solace once and for all on Thy people, it is clear, Lord of love, that Thou comest into noetic divinizing contact with them as well. Those fortunate enough to have been baptized into Thee and into Thy faith have even more fortunately clothed themselves in Thee, as is said, munificent Lord, by the most sacred preacher of the truth, St Paul (cf. Gal. 3:27). Thus, too, Isaiah, that powerful prophetic trumpet, was filled in his soul with joy in God the Father and Lord because God had clothed him splendidly in Thee, Lord, with a garment of salvation, and in a manner

beyond understanding had enfolded him in Thee with a robe of righteousness (cf. Isa. 61:10). For when under divine inspiration someone sees himself enfolded by Thee, the unsetting supranatural light, how greatly will he not rejoice and be full of gladness, especially when he realizes that this is his salvation, since Thou Thyself art indeed salvation!

Thus truly in Thy boundless love Thou dost permit Thyself to be savoured through their noetic nostrils by those whose faith is sound, and in this way, too, Thou bestowest solace wondrously on Thy people who praise and glorify Thee, saying, 'Thy name is perfume poured forth' (Song of Songs 1:3). To those around them they declare, 'My Beloved is as a beautiful apple to the sight, and fragrant to the sense of smell, and sweet to the taste, and His spikenard gives out its sweet fragrance' (cf. Song of Songs 1:12). This is why it is said by St Paul, who was clothed in Thee, 'We are the sweet savour of Christ' (2 Cor. 2:15).

Thou dost also become food and sustenance for the faithful, the true meat and drink of the soul (cf. John 6:55), wondrously vivifying and nourishing it, so that he who partakes of Thee increases as he should and is mysteriously full of joy. This is what the holy prophet David experienced when he tasted Thee in moments of divine inspiration and said to others, 'Taste and see that the Lord is good' (Ps. 34:8). And if Thou art seen as an apple, and as very nourishing food, the needy – the poor in spirit and the humble – will eat Thee and will be satisfied; and those who seek constantly to find Thee and to eat Thee will praise Thee, O Lord (cf. Ps. 22:26), because of the surpassing sweetness that they experience when they taste Thee. For from the excess of Thy life-giving power holy food and drink is always flowing forth, and the hearts of those who eat Thee will live eternally (cf. Ps. 22:26). Since Thou art eternal and incorruptible, Thou makest incorrupt those who eat Thee, and with the stupendous vigour of Thy nature Thou bringest them to eternity. Thus in Thine infinite love, so graciously and supremely benevolent, Thou callest and entreatest those imbued with intelligence, saying, 'Come, eat My bread and drink the wine that I have prepared for you' (Prov. 9:5), thus speaking of Thyself as holy bread; for elsewhere Thou hast said, 'I am the bread of life' (John 6:35), and, 'They have forsaken Me, the fountain of life' (cf. Jer. 2:13). And in truth Thou offerest Thy most sacred body and blood as their food and drink (cf. Matt. 26:26–28; John 6:53–56).

Thus, O Lord the lover of our souls, through the organ of noetic perception Thou nourishest Thy people, filling them with overwhelming

gladness and becoming for them light and life and every kind of joy and supranatural blessing. Mayest Thou be blessed, Jesus, celestial, spiritual manna nourishing countless thousands. Glory to Thine ineffable love for us, and to Thine unutterable compassion and Thy patience. Amen.

THAT THE SPIRIT OF GOD DWELLS IN THE FAITHFUL

65. It is truly astonishing how the life-creating Spirit flows forth from God the Father into our noetic consciousness or soul and into our earthly hearts, when our hearts have accepted with sound faith the saving dispensation of the incarnate Logos. For it is an astonishing thing, as we have said, that the divine power and energy should be freely poured forth from the uncreated superessential Godhead into the heart; while for this power and energy to be united with the heart and to be continually active within it is something that transcends nature and fills us with amazement.

66. It is truly astonishing how the Father has created all things, sensible and intelligible, through the divine Logos and in the Holy Spirit, and so the Trinity Itself as a whole dwells in human understanding and is active in it, abiding there in a manifest way. It is altogether astonishing that an angel is sent to each devout member of the faithful by the three-personed Godhead. But that the infinitely powerful and life-creating Trinity Itself should be pleased to strengthen us and to be active within us in a divine and spiritual manner – that indeed exceeds all astonishment.

67. It is truly astonishing that the heart constant in faith can carry within it the sacred glory of the Most High God of the universe. That God should make provision for the intellect to be enlightened externally through the sacred Scriptures is a most profitable, compassionate and wonderful blessing. But for God in true reality to give His light to the faithful not externally but within their very hearts, and not temporarily but permanently, clearly exceeds wonderment just as it exceeds all comprehension.

68. It is truly astonishing that He whom the Seraphim and all the celestial powers bear aloft with joy and wonder is cradled in the heart of the faithful. Yes indeed: that is utterly astonishing. But not simply to cradle Him, but to be united with Him, and mingled with Him – that surely surpasses all

astonishment.

69. It is truly astonishing, and not in a restricted way, that through grace the soul becomes the throne, the crib and the chariot of the infinitely wise and infinitely powerful God, who has heaven itself as His throne. But that He should love the soul so much that it becomes one spirit with Him (cf. 1 Cor. 6:17), and is enabled to commune in things supracelestial and to be entrusted with such great mysteries – who could ever be filled sufficiently with astonishment at that?

70. It is truly wonderful and astonishing how God, who has no resting-place (cf. Isa. 66:1), should come to rest in a divine manner within the human heart. If a king – an earthly king with a limited kingdom – embraces someone in a friendly way, or takes someone, even a nobleman, by the hand, he bestows on him honour and glory above that which he already possesses, and so fills him with joy and gladness. But suppose that it should happen that not an earthly king but God, unoriginate and uncreated, the Maker and Lord of all things, before whom with due awe stand ten thousand times ten thousand angels and to whom minister thousands of thousands (cf. Dan. 7:10), touches one of the faithful not just in such a simple way but perceptibly within the heart; suppose that He should actually come to dwell within him, not temporarily but eternally, so that He is joined with him and glorifies him supremely and divinizes him in a marvellous way and grants him countless indescribable blessings and fills him with grace: how much unutterable glory, honour, gladness and joy, wondrous and inconceivable, will He ever be bestowing on him! Holy Trinity, have mercy.

71. It is wonderful how God, who has created all things and thereafter keeps them in existence, is at the same time manifestly and continually contained, though without being circumscribed, within a faithful heart. If a mortal king whose reign is of short duration should come and knock at someone’s house, and should go in and eat and drink with him at his table, becoming his table-companion, that very naturally would bestow glory and honour on the person who received the king, and would fill him with joy and delight and be a great consolation for him. But when the eternal King and Lord of all and Maker of all things sensible and intelligible comes not to a house but silently to the heart of a person of faith, not to share in the enjoyment of the good things that exist within his heart but to communicate to him heavenly strength and transcendent consolation and supranatural and unbroken glory, what do you suppose the one who has received Him will

think? How much will he rejoice! And what joy and delight will he have! And how totally happy will he be! It will, surely, be a great and wonderful experience for him. It is truly an inconceivable wonder that He who fills all things and is beyond all things should make the human heart His dwelling and eternal temple.

72. God, who said ‘Let light shine out of darkness’ (2 Cor. 4:6), shines joyously in the hearts of the faithful. God’s love is poured out into their hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to them (cf. Rom. 5:5). God sends the Spirit of His Son into their hearts, as It cries out, ‘Abba, Father’ (cf. Gal. 4:6). Thus, joined to the Lord in a truly amazing union, the faithful constitute one Spirit with God (cf. 1 Cor. 6:17). What, then, can even approximate to the experience of the grace of all these things?

73. The faithful become heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ (cf. Rom. 8:17), partaking like second Christs in the divine nature (cf. 2 Pet. 1:4) – something which no mind can grasp – and thus in turn they become manifestly sons of God and gods by adoption and grace. And they behold and experience – or, rather, they enjoy – in a more-than-human way things celestial, things that the eye has not seen nor the ear heard nor the human heart imagined (cf. 1 Cor. 2:9). Glory to the incomprehensible love of God the Father, of the Trinity, who has truly loved us in unutterable and supreme goodness.

THAT EVERY BELIEVER HAS BEEN IMMEASURABLY HONOURED BY GOD

74. ‘That which is born of the Spirit is spirit’ (John 3:6), as Christ affirms. What unsurpassable grace! What an ineffable gift! God creates man with many wonderful graces. Yet that which He has created is initially by nature no more than a creature. But in immeasurable munificence the all-merciful Lord, the supraessential Trinity, creator of all, has endowed the creature fully with the grace of the uncreated Spirit, and in a way beyond comprehension has unified man with Himself, divinizing him and making him a son and transforming him into Spirit. For ‘I have said you are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High’ (Ps. 82:6; John 10:34). And it is written concerning God, ‘He has established an ordinance, and it will not pass away’

(Ps. 148:6), and ‘All that the Lord has willed He has performed’ (Ps. 135:6), and ‘The counsel of the Lord abides unto eternity, the thoughts of His heart from generation to generation’ (Ps. 33:11), since He is of an immutable and changeless nature.

In this way His personal Logos, as herald of His wondrously great and supranatural will, has transmitted to us His promise, His ordinance, His purpose and will. He breathes the Spirit into the disciples (cf. John 20:22), and having thus spiritually brought about their rebirth He mystically fills them with the Spirit and thus makes them sons of God. For ‘those guided by the Spirit of God are sons of God’ (Rom. 8:14). And if they are sons of God it is clear that they are gods, for what has been born is necessarily of the same nature as that which begets it. Hence the Saviour also teaches the disciples to call God their Father (cf. Matt. 6:9), since they participate in the Spirit. Thus the Holy Trinity makes the faithful into gods and spirits, a gift completely surpassing every gift, however wonderful, that previously the human mind could have conceived. Amen.

ON THE TEXT, ‘HE SPREADS OUT HIS WINGS, HE GATHERS THEM TOGETHER, AND HE BEARS THEM ON HIS BACK’ (DEUT. 32:11.LXX)

75. Understand noetically what I shall now tell you. I know very well that you will be astonished and filled with spiritual joy and divine bliss. The Holy Spirit, speaking through David, says, ‘Thou that sittest on the Cherubim, manifest Thyself’ (Ps. 80:1.LXX); and again, ‘He looks upon the depths, seated on the Cherubim’ (cf. Ps. 99:1); and elsewhere He says, ‘He mounted upon the Cherubim’ (cf. Ps. 18:10.LXX). Why, then, does He also mount upon the faithful, despite the immeasurably great gap between them and the Cherubim? For God not only sits upon us, like a bird on her chicks, keeping us alive, cherishing us, guarding us and filling us with her wondrous joy. But, so astonishing is divine love, He even sets us upon Himself, and out of the abundance of His infinite love makes of Himself a novel and inconceivable kind of chariot for us, protecting us securely and bearing us up in an ineffable way to the unutterable, transcendent realities of celestial life.

Thus He prepares us for the enjoyment of supraessential nourishment, of

indescribable peace and solace, of divine and spiritual joy and exultation, and of the bliss that goes with them. For, inspired by the Spirit, the most holy Moses says, ‘God spreads out His wings, He gathers them together, and He bears them on His back’ (Deut. 32:11.LXX). What unutterable love! That He should do no more than spread out his wings and gather together the faithful, and thus in all reality become their chariot, is truly an honour which excels that of the Cherubim and fills us with inexpressible joy. But that He should also take them up and place them on His back, sheltering them there, as holy David affirms, is something that not even our cherubic intellect can perceive and praise fittingly. For as Thy majesty is inconceivable, so also is Thy mercy (cf. Ecclus. 2:18). Holy Trinity, glory be to Thee.

76. The monastic habit together with the promises and the monastic way of life that go with it demand a monastic type of mind. This is something which only God can activate and bring to fruition through the assiduous yet not over-demanding observance of the monastic rule. He activates this monastic mind by bestowing life-creating grace; and He brings it to fruition when He is contemplated in the unity and simplicity of His almighty kingdom and glory. For He alone is the most High; He is not to be compared with anything else, and by virtue of His incomparable pre-eminence He is unlike all other beings. He alone is the ultimate source of power, and it is by participating in Him that all things receive power; He alone is truly wise, and it is from Him that comes, as a gift, the wisdom of all who are wise; He alone truly and eternally exists, and so He is in every way the creator and begetter of all that possesses being. Hence it is very rightly and fittingly said, ‘All things come from Him, all live because of Him, and in Him all things find their fulfilment. To Him be glory for ever’ (Rom. 11:36).

If such is the situation, then in a word all things good and beautiful have their existence wholly from God, and are sustained and kept in being by Him, and look to Him and find in Him their fulfilment. Those who use these things as they should are united and bound fast to God. For He is the Father of goodness, love, intelligence, wisdom, knowledge, contemplation, spiritual practice and divinization, of divine bliss and the holy joy that goes with it, of supracelestial peace, of the awe that begets reverence, of strength and counsel, of the devout life and cognitive insight, and of everything that pertains to the nature of intelligent beings and engenders in them bliss and glory, giving them joy and making them like God and divinizing them.

If, as we have said, everything good and beautiful comes from God alone,

then anyone who loves what is good and beautiful, and who yet separates and sunders himself from God, the source and root of all such things, truly labours in vain; and he will not experience anything at all of that which is by nature good and beautiful, since he has shamefully turned away from Him who begets and sustains such things, and who brings them to fruition. Even that which he thinks he experiences as beautiful and good will not truly be such, but it will simply be delusion and a terrible mockery. What, then, is essential is to cleave to God with all our strength and assiduously to study His law alone and to devote ourselves fully to it. Only in this way will we attain supreme glory, unadulterated bliss and infinite, steadfast riches. Only in this way will we possess all those things which pertain to the beautiful and good and of which we have spoken. In a wondrous manner we will possess even God Himself, and He will dwell and be active within us. And we shall enjoy things truly celestial, such as we never saw or heard with our external senses. In this way we shall live in a unified and monastic manner in Christ Jesus our Lord.

77. When the heart imbued with the Spirit grows humble and is established in stillness and activated by grace, the intellect, happily wedded to God's truth, beholds a multitude of divine visions. It is initiated into untellable celestial mysteries, and comes to regard itself as a novice and stranger in the midst of that which truly is. Through the grace of the Spirit it clearly savours and wholly enjoys things that are altogether beyond its understanding and thought. In brief, it frequently perceives wondrous images of God, and undergoes divine ecstasy and rapture. It is exalted to a state of deification – an experience more blessed than any other – in visionary silence, being smitten by supranatural love, through the impulsion and power of the life-creating and illuminating Spirit in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

78. A person who, guided by divine providence, devotes himself to God alone, and as it were takes up his abode in God, and who in the light of the Spirit perceives Him actively present within himself – such a person has clearly realized the divine injunction of our Lord Jesus, 'Abide in Me, and I in you' (John 15:4). Thus he has been united miraculously with God, and so has wondrously and most happily mortified himself in union with Christ, and in this way has truly put into practice all the Saviour's commandments. For the Saviour said, 'He who abides in Me and I in Him, he it is that bears much fruit' (John 15:5), that is, many virtues. Whoever, then, devoutly wishes to grow in virtue should exert himself through contemplation, prayer and divine

meditation to abide in God and to cleave to Him with all his strength. In this way when God sees the sacred struggle in which the soul of such a person is engaged, He will miraculously lower the heavens and reveal Himself contrary to all expectation as actively present within the soul itself. He will enable the one in whom He dwells to enjoy every kind of good and beautiful thing and to prove well-pleasing to God by fulfilling His holy commandments. For it is He who said, 'Without Me you can do nothing' (John 15:5), even though you may think that you are indeed doing something.

79. If neither a treasure nor wisdom should be hidden but out of love should be used for the common good, it is surely evident that neither noetic labour for the sake of God, nor contemplation, nor exaltation to the divine realm, should be stored in the mind and not written down: on the contrary, they should be set down in writing and out of love recorded for the common good. Man is an intelligent living being, by nature endowed with intellect and cognitive insight. Thus when someone reflects on God and considers the fruits that arise from faith in Him, he acquires the divine intellect that goes with such faith, and as a consequence he enters boldly and with full understanding into the sphere of the sacred commandments. At this point he has great need of God's assistance and succour or, to put it more fittingly, of His support, and so he prays intensely and with tears, appealing to God to lighten the burden of His commandments.

Then, when God is pleased to have compassion on the one who prays as a father has compassion on his son (cf. Ps. 103:13), He miraculously pours out His Spirit into such a person's heart, and in this way wondrously evokes in him fervent and loving aspirations towards Himself. And in an inexpressible manner God enters into close communion with him as a father does with his son. On the one who participates in Him, He pours out the life-creating energy of the Spirit, as a foretaste of what is to come; and He fills him with immeasurable solace and bestows His love upon him. He humbles him, and at the same time He exalts him with glory and honour by uniting Himself with him, and He spurs him on with such fierce fires of love that everything which a person sees in the divine realm seems truly to be his own – as if the whole panoply of the Father's attributes, His riches, glory, strength, beauty, wisdom, power and all His splendour, and everything good and beautiful, all glory and praise, had become by nature the delight, boast and joy of His child. Thus when through these actual contemplative experiences the soul comes to participate in the Spirit – and that, according to St Basil, is to

contemplate God the Trinity – then indeed it sees God as its fervent lover and as its own true Father, and correspondingly, in the way we have explained, it sees God's attributes as its own, and finds fulfilment only in contemplating God, overflowing with joy and happiness in Christ Jesus our Lord.

ON THE TRUE NATURE OF BLISS

80. Nobody, I suppose, with a clear knowledge of things is unaware that bliss is not something to be condemned in its true nature and basic character. When experienced in action to the utmost, it fills the heart with joy and delight. It is far removed from carnal pleasure, for this is but illusory bliss and not bliss in the true sense of the word. So let whoever is stirred with desire seek to attain the bliss that is pure and indelible, noetic and spiritual, and he will not go wrong; or, rather, first his intelligence and then his whole soul will swiftly be transported away from things earthly to things heavenly. For this is the genuine and essential bliss of the heart, never regretted, consonant with the deathless noetic soul, abiding eternally, luminous, ever-flowing, beyond reproach, or, rather, desirable and blessed, the companion of the saints from all the ages, untroubled, peaceful, tender, intimate, radiant, beauteous, holy, translucent, full of solace and joy both when it is active and afterwards. If you have experienced this bliss noetically and spiritually, from your personal experience you will be able to confirm what we have written. If you have not yet experienced it, at least hold fast in faith to what I have said.

ON THE PLEASURE OF THE FLESH

81. It would be wrong to apply the word bliss to the pleasure which is not noetic and spiritual but pertains to the flesh. For once it is attained, such pleasure of the flesh is followed by bitter regret, and so it is clear that it cannot rightly be called bliss. It is counterfeit, alien to the deiform soul, mindless, base, full of sloth, murky, turbulent, oppressive, transient, and it quickly withers. When the body grows old, this pleasure of the flesh, unwillingly and full of shame, withdraws from us. It is reprehensible, degraded, intractable, servile, despicable, foul, boorish, ugly, depressive and thoughtless. After it has overcome us, it produces within us a dark dejection.

If you have experienced this you will certainly know that what I have written is true. If by the hand of God you have been protected from such experience, trust in the truth of my words, and know that you will surely harvest the glorious fruit of life.

82. I possess within me ever-shining spiritual light and celestial life, divine nourishment and delight, wondrous longing and desire for union with the three-personed deity, and inexpressible loving aspirations for Christ Jesus, the Lord of the universe. But alas for my wretchedness and folly! Alas for my vicious stupidity! Although my intellect has thus by grace become more than celestial, yet at times it is deceived and veers towards things delusive, material and foul, and it is filled, alas, with putridity. Who will not wonder and lament at my state, and in pity beseech God on my behalf to give me in His ineffable compassion greater divine strength through the life-creating and light-bestowing Spirit, that I may more easily drive away the cunning and diabolic enemy that makes war against my holy and wonderful life? All the most holy angels and the souls of the just, do you pray and beseech God for me, who am so base and obdurate in mind.

83. My God, my God, nothing is greater than Thee, since Thou art uncircumscribed. Thou art everything, since Thou art the creator of everything, and in Thy supraessential being Thou dost countless times infinitely transcend everything, Lord, my Lord, who art the unutterable divine union and indescribable concord of redeemed Christians, glory to Thee. Since I see Thee shining, Lord, in my heart night and day, how am I not constantly rapt outside myself in wonder at the plenitude of grace! But instead I am negligent and insensate in the face of so great a gift, almighty God. Alas, how great a sinner I am.

If you were aware of who it is that has bound me, and with what He has bound me and for what purpose, you would at once be seized with astonishment and would praise the supraessential God, thanking Him to the highest degree for the glorious things which in His loving kindness He brings about.

If you knew how far I fall short of the true mystery of Christ, you would instantly be overcome by astonishment and would rebuke me for sluggishness, inertia and negligence, not to say for straightforward obduracy and manifest folly.

At that time Jesus spoke and said, ‘I thank Thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and

understanding, and hast revealed them to those who are childlike. Yes, Father, for such was Thy gracious will' (Matt. 11:25–26). Pray for us and beseech that in the painful course of this life we may not be overcome by anything contrary to wisdom and unworthy of God and of ourselves; and forgive me.

---

1 St Ignatios of Antioch, *To the Romans* vii, 2. Kallistos has omitted the final words of this sentence: '… a water that is active and that speaks to me, saying within me, "Come to the Father."'

2 This is a puzzling passage. It is nowhere said in the Old Testament that the rock which flowed with water was carried in a cart, although certainly the Ark was so carried (cf. Num. 7:3–8; 2 Sam. 6:3–7).

3 *Ascetical Homilies*, ed. Pirard, p. 230; E.T., Wensinck, p. 10; E.T., Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 13.

4 Cf. *On Love* II, 6; E.T., *Philokalia*, vol. II, pp. 65–6. This and the two following passages attributed to Maximos are not exact quotations.

5 Cf. *On Love* II, 47; IV, 15; E.T., *Philokalia*, vol. II, pp. 73, 102. See also *On Love* III, 20; IV, 68; E.T., *Philokalia*, vol. II, pp. 85–6; 93–4.

6 Cf. *On Love* IV, 80, 86; E.T., *Philokalia*, vol. II, pp. 110–11.

7 Here Kallistos alludes to the words said by the celebrant at the Divine Liturgy immediately before the *epiclesis*: 'Offering Thee Thine own from Thine own, in all things and for all things …'. All that we offer to God has its original source in Him and is His free gift.

8 In the Greek text of *The Philokalia*, presumably by an editorial oversight, there is no section bearing the number 49.

9 *Questions, To Thalassios* 61, scholion 14; ed. Carl Laga and Carlos Steel, *Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca* 22 (Turnhout, 1990), p. 111.

10 *The Longer Rules* 2: tr. Lowther Clarke, p. 154.

11 Cf. *Homily on Psalm* 44, § 4.

12 *Oration* 38, 7 (*P.G.* xxxvi, 317C); ed. Moreschini and Gallay, p. 116; = *Oration* 45, 3 (*P.G.* xxxvi, 625C).

13 Cf. Augustine, *On the Trinity* II, xvii, 28; Greek trans. by Maximos

Planoudis, ed. Manolis Papathomopoulos, Isabella Tsavari and Giampaolo Rigotti (Athens, 1995), p. 183.

KALLISTOS ANGELIKOUDIS

Introductory Note

It has been rightly said that Kallistos Angelikoudis is ‘one of the most brilliant, and yet most enigmatic, of the late Byzantine writers’.[1] There exists, in the first place, considerable confusion concerning his name. In the Greek *Philokalia* of St Makarios and St Nikodimos, his name is given in one place as ‘Tilikoudis’,[2] evidently a mistake for Angelikoudis, and elsewhere as ‘Kataphygiotis’.[3] The names ‘Tilikoudis’ and ‘Kataphygiotis’ almost certainly refer to the same person, although St Nikodimos distinguishes between them. Little is known about the life of Kallistos Angelikoudis. Probably he was born around 1325 and died around 1395. He lived as a monk at a *kathisma* or hermitage in Macedonia, north of Serres and close to Melenikon (the present-day Melnik in Bulgaria), and so he is sometimes called ‘Melenikiotis’. Here he was joined by other monks, and in 1371 his *kathisma* was elevated to the status of a stavropegic[4] monastery by the Ecumenical Patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos. The monastery, so it appears, was dedicated to the Mother of God, under her title ‘Refuge (*Kataphygion*) of Christians’; hence the designation ‘Kataphygiotis’, sometimes applied to Kallistos. In 1371 Kallistos was only a simple monk, not ordained to the priesthood, and there is no evidence that he ever actually became a priest; the fact that he was *higoumenos* of a monastery and that the monks came to him for the ‘disclosure of thoughts’ does not necessarily signify that he was in holy orders.[5]

The writings of Kallistos Angelikoudis, like the *Exact Method* of the Xanthopouloi, evidently belong to the period subsequent to the hesychast controversy of the mid-fourteenth century, in which Angelikoudis seems to have taken no direct part. At the same time, like the Xanthopouloi, he stands firmly in the hesychast-Palamite spiritual tradition. In addition to his ‘neptic’ or ascetic treatises, he also wrote an extensive work against Thomas

Aquinas,[6] whom he criticized in particular for his failure to employ the distinction, emphasized by Palamas, between the essence and the energies of God.

The spiritual writings of Kallistos Angelikoudis – which remain for the most part unpublished, for the three pieces included in *The Philokalia* represent only a small part of his total output – have as their master-theme the otherness yet nearness of the Divine. On the one hand Kallistos emphasizes in the strongest possible terms the transcendence and unknowability of God: He is 'beyond being', 'beyond understanding', 'unutterable beauty', 'more-than-beautiful beauty'. On the other hand, with an emphasis that is equally definite, Kallistos teaches that, through God's mercy, we humans can attain unity with God, who comes to dwell within our very heart. He speaks in explicit terms about *theosis* or deification: our intellect (*nous*) is not changed in its created essence, but by virtue of our participation in God's uncreated energies, in and through the Holy Spirit we become 'gods' by grace and adoption, 'second Christs' and co-creators. We are made 'infinite' and 'eternal'. Our human reaction, when in this way we are brought face to face with the living God, is rapture and amazement, delight, great joy and 'frenzied love'. Waiting on God in 'visionary silence' and 'immense wonder', we enter a state of divine drunkenness. All our conceptual thinking is suspended. Rising above 'the dimensions of time and space', we behold God 'sightlessly', 'through simple and concentrated apprehension'.

---

1 Oleg Rodionov, 'The *Chapters* of Kallistos Angelikoudis. The Relationship of the Separate Series and their Main Theological Themes', in Antonio Rigo (ed.), *Byzantine Theology and its Philosophical Background*, Studies in Byzantine History and Civilization 4 (Turnhout, 2011), p. 141. On the identity and life of Kallistos Angelikoudis, see Antonio Rigo, 'Callisto Angelicude Catafigiota Meleniceota e l'esicasmo bizantino del XIV secolo. Una nota prosopografica', in Adalberto Mainardi (ed.), *Nil Sorskij e l'esicasmo* (Bose, 1995), pp. 251–68; also Syméon Koutsas, *Callistos Angelicoudès. Quatre traités hésychastes inédits* (Athens, 1998), pp. 19–29.

2 *Philokalia ton ieron niptikon*, vol. IV (Athens, 1961), p. 368.

3 *Philokalia ton ieron niptikon*, vol. V (Athens, 1963), p. 4.

4 A stavropegic monastery is exempt from the jurisdiction of the local diocesan bishop, and comes directly under the authority of the Ecumenical Patriarch.

5 Koutsas, *op. cit*., p. 27, maintains that he became a priest, but his argument here is inconclusive.

6 *Kallistou Angelikoudi kata Thoma Akinatou*, ed. S. G. Papadopoulos (Athens, 1970).

On the Hesychastic Way of Life

It is not possible to live the life of repentance without following the way of stillness. Nor is it possible to attain any degree of purity without withdrawing from a life of worldly self-interest. Nor will we be granted the grace of contemplating God and of communing with Him so long as we spend our time meeting other people. For this reason, if we have made it our purpose to change our misguided manner of life and to purify ourselves from the passions, and in this way to enjoy the contemplation of God and communion with Him – for this is the aim and goal of all who live in accordance with God, and it is the foretaste, as it were, of our eternal inheritance and of God Himself – we should pursue stillness with all our strength, and should strive to withdraw from the world, and with the full dedication of our soul to shun the company of other people.

The beginning of the way of stillness is for us, in a spirit of inner grief, to reproach and condemn ourselves, so as to become more pure. To this must be added vigils, standing still in one place, self-control and physical labour. These, when accompanied by a humble state of mind and compunction of heart, result in an abundant flow of tears. In this way we can devote ourselves to purification and attain it by means of ascetic practice. The goal here is the quiescence of our thoughts, accompanied, as we have said, by the shedding of tears.

Then the intellect, in accordance with its true character, begins to contemplate the nature of created things, to perceive God's artistry, and to apprehend divine thoughts, beholding in this way God's power, wisdom, glory, loving kindness and all His other attributes, as it penetrates into the spiritual meaning of Scripture. Thus it comes to taste supranatural blessings, to enjoy celestial beauty and to become a vessel of divine love. Ravished by intense longing, it is full of joy and delight; for it has attained the goal to which the cultivation of the virtues leads – that is to say, the love of the Creator of all things – without experiencing any delusion or being filled with mistrust.

Assuredly, because it is susceptible to change, the intellect is liable to fall away and to experience sinful and unseemly impulses provoked by a variety of causes. When this happens, it has to recover itself and to keep despair at bay, given wings by the hope that it places in divine compassion and immersing itself in tears and prayer and all the other good things of which I

have spoken. In so far as this is permitted, it enjoys the divine paradise of love, no longer seeing either form or materiality or figuration or (in a word) anything else, experiencing only tears, the quiescence of its thoughts and the love of God. For it is in this way that the intellect steers clear of delusion and the soul is rewarded with salvation, as it continues humble and watchful, and prays in the name of Christ Jesus our Lord.

When you are seated in your cell, let your intellect be filled with humble yet joyous confidence in God. Its humility the intellect will derive from the sense of its immaturity and insignificance, while its confidence in God will stem from God's unsurpassable love and from His forbearance. For the soul honours God when, in spite of being aware of its sinful state, it none the less trusts in God's compassion and acknowledges its dependence upon Him. That is why St Paul exhorts us to 'draw near with confidence to the throne of grace' (Heb. 4:16). For such confidence, when we pray, is truly an eye or a wing or a wondrous attachment, not when it springs from a sense of our own goodness – let us put any such thought out of our mind – but when it is winged with divine hope through our awareness of God's unutterable compassion, love and forbearance. Pray, then, with confidence but in a humble frame of mind, nourished, as we said, by ardent hope in God and by the grace of Christ Jesus our Lord.

You should diligently adopt practices that quieten the body and free the intellect from disturbance. That is to say, you should eat with moderation, drink little, sleep only for short periods, stand in stillness for so long as you can, make prostrations with humility, also for so long as you can, dress simply with poor clothing, speak briefly and only when necessary, sleep on the ground, and do all the other things which to some degree bring the body under control.

At the same time you should cultivate practices that awaken the intellect and help it cleave to God. That is to say, you should read, again with moderation, the sacred Scriptures and the writings of the saints who expound the meaning of the Scriptures; you should recite psalms, paying attention to the meaning; you should meditate on the wondrous things of which Scripture speaks, and which are to be seen in the world of nature, and you should pray aloud until the holy grace of the Spirit causes your prayer to rise up from your heart in a manifest fashion. For then you are enabled to observe a different sort of festival and a different manner of celebration, not expressed orally but actualized in the heart through the power of the Holy Spirit.

You should pursue these things in the following way. Make prostrations as many times as you can and then sit down to pray. Should you grow listless while praying, take up reading, as we have said, and then return to prayer. Should you again grow listless, rise and sing psalms for a while, and once more return to prayer. Should you yet again become listless, meditate for a short while in the way we have just indicated and then once more devote yourself to prayer. Also do a little handiwork as a defence against listlessness – this, as you know, holy one, is what the Fathers advise. In all your devotions, from one dawn till the next, always give precedence to prayer. The other things we have mentioned are simply means for preventing yourself from being overcome by listlessness in prayer. For once mercy infuses the soul and the grace of the Spirit makes prayer well up from the heart as if from a spring, then the intellect should devote itself to prayer and contemplation alone; it should relinquish everything else, so that prayer and contemplation alone are its delight in the paradise of divine love.

Prayer gives us power to perform every good work. It gives birth to tears of repentance. It is of the utmost help in establishing peace in our thoughts, impelling us to think only of God, who is supreme peace itself. It produces love for God. Prayer alone purifies the soul's intelligence, since it brings before our inner vision God who is the source of all purification, even for the angels. It keeps the appetitive aspect of the soul pure in God's sight, for by cleaving to Him and communing with Him, who is by nature infinite, who is supranatural goodness and beauty, it focuses all its desire on Him. It calms the incensive aspect so deeply that it prostrates itself and entreats God and invokes Him, and in this way humbles the soul; for we cannot entreat and invoke God and at the same time lack humility or be full of wrath. Thus, in short, pure prayer cleanses and restores to health all the soul's powers and energies, moral and noetic. This is especially the case when it is accompanied by the contemplation of God and the divine longing that this contemplation inspires, as we practise the life of stillness in the way we have described. Turning inward, let your mind fix its attention and its vision on the place of the heart, from which tears flow. As you pray, let your mind descend into your heart while you breathe in gently through your nostrils, and let it remain there as long as possible. For this is most beneficial, inducing a profuse and ceaseless flow of tears, putting a stop to the intellect's enslavement, establishing noetic peace, stimulating prayer, and with the help of God and through the grace of the life-quickening Spirit assisting the attainment of

prayer of the heart in Christ Jesus our Lord.

You who practise contemplation and delight in mystical visions, be aware that just as we have in prayer the dyad of God and man, so there are in consequence what you might call, whether you speak in general or specifically, two forms of inward grief, and consequently two kinds of tears. Each differs profoundly from the other, although both are beautiful and God-given, and both bring about a sense of God's benediction and of the divine inheritance that comes with it. The first kind of grief and tears has its origin in holy awe and in heartfelt mourning, the second in divine love and in God Himself. The first is not productive of great joy; but the second produces a superabundance of joy. The first pertains to beginners, the second to those who through grace are reaching perfection.

The labours in which you should engage when practising the way of stillness are five. First, there is prayer, that is, constant remembrance of Jesus, whose name is introduced into the heart through the respiration, unaccompanied by any thought. This is attained by means of all-embracing self-control – control, that is to say, in your eating, in your sleeping, and over your senses in general – as you remain within your cell in a state of humility. Second, there is psalmody, though this should only be a little at a time. Third, there is reading of the divine Gospels, of the Holy Fathers, and of texts on prayer, especially those of St Symeon the New Theologian, St Hesychios and St Nikiphoros.[1] Fourth, there is meditation on the judgment of God, or on your death, or on something similar. Fifth, there is a little handiwork. You should then return to prayer, even though you have to force yourself, until the intellect has learnt how to free itself from distraction through its remembrance of the Lord and through the travail of constantly descending into the heart. Such are the labours of beginners in the monastic life who seek to practise the life of stillness. Such persons should leave their cell only rarely. And they should avoid seeing people or talking with them except when there is great need; and even then they should do so seldom and with care and vigilance, because such things distract not only beginners but also those who have already made some progress.

When this prayer is practised attentively – free, that is to say, from all thoughts – the words 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God' elevate the intellect in an utterly non-material and silent manner to the Lord who is thus called to mind; while with the words 'have mercy on me' the intellect returns to itself, unable to refrain from praying for itself. But when as a result of experience it

has progressed to a state of love, it advances towards the Lord with the first part of the Prayer alone, for it no longer feels the need for the second part. This is why the Fathers do not appear always to transmit the Prayer in its entirety. St John Chrysostom, for example, gives the whole Prayer, [2] while St Paul gives only the words 'Lord Jesus', and then adds, 'in the Holy Spirit' (1 Cor. 12:3). He refers here to the way whereby the heart receives energy from the Holy Spirit, through which it is enabled to pray. He has in mind the situation of those who are making progress but who have not yet reached the stage of perfection, that is to say, of illumination. St John Klimakos says, 'With the name of Jesus flog your enemies … Let the remembrance of Jesus be united to your every breath';[3] and he appears to restrict the Prayer to the invocation of the name 'Jesus' alone.

Beginners, then, may pray with their intellect, using sometimes the whole Prayer and sometimes a part of it, as we have said. But you should not constantly change the wording, or your intellect will become fragmented. Through persisting in this method of pure prayer – even though it cannot be entirely pure because it is impeded by various predispositions and distractive thoughts – the spiritual contestant acquires the habit of spontaneous prayer; for the intellect remains in the heart and does not require to be forcibly introduced there with each intake of the breath, only to jump out again immediately: it stays in the heart of its own accord and prays there. This is what is rightly called prayer of the heart. It is preceded by a certain warmth in the heart which banishes the obstacles that previously prevented prayer from being entirely pure; and this allows the intellect to remain in the heart and to pray there without hindrance. Such warmth and prayer quicken in the heart love for the Lord Jesus, whose name is being invoked; and it is this love, and the desire for Jesus who is thus continually brought to mind, that engenders a sweet yet profuse flow of tears.

To be accounted worthy of these things and of all the blessing that arise from them – now is not the time to describe them – we should strive, as we have said, never to lose the fear of God and to keep remembrance of Jesus alive within our heart and not simply in an external manner. In this way we can easily avoid not only evil actions but also passion-charged thoughts, and can come to possess even in this life sure testimony of the love that God has for us. Only we should not ask that He should actually appear to us, lest we should be visited by him who is really darkness and only pretends to be light. And should our intellect perceive light without asking to perceive it, it should

neither accept it nor reject it; we should consult someone who can instruct us about these matters and should learn the truth from him. If we can find someone who can instruct us not simply from what he has learnt from divine Scripture but according to what he has learnt from personal experience of divine illumination, let us give thanks to God; if we cannot find such a person it is better not to accept the vision but humbly to seek refuge in God, regarding ourselves as unworthy of such a divine visitation, since this is what the example of the Fathers teaches us to do. It is true that in some of their writings they speak of the signs which distinguish real from illusory illumination. Nevertheless, it is better for you to learn about all these things by word of mouth, when the right moment comes; but now is not the right moment.

At the present moment, then, together with all these other things and, indeed, prior to them, you should learn this. Just as a person who wishes to learn archery does not draw the bow without aiming at a target, so a person who wishes to cultivate the life of stillness should make it his aim to acquire a constant gentleness of heart. He should never cause disturbance or himself be disturbed about anything unless it concerns a matter of true piety. This is something he can easily achieve if he avoids involving himself in all discussions and for the most part refrains from saying anything. Yet if he should sometimes become involved, he should at once repent and reproach himself and should thereafter take care. In this way, calmly and with a clear conscience, and through giving priority to the invocation of Jesus in the way we have spoken about, he may by advancing come to experience the abiding presence of divine grace in his soul.

This is not all. For such grace will deliver his soul completely from the demons and passions which formerly troubled it and will fill it with an unspeakable joy. And even if they do trouble it again they do so in vain, since the soul does not incline towards them, nor does it desire the sensual pleasure they proffer. For all the desire of such a person is directed towards the Lord who has given him His grace. He may be tested by God withdrawing His grace from him, but he will not be abandoned. Such a withdrawal of grace is to prevent his intellect from growing arrogant because of the blessings bestowed on it, for when tested in this way it acquires ever-greater humility, through which alone it not only conquers its proud adversaries but is counted worthy to receive yet greater gifts. May we too be counted worthy to receive such gifts from Christ who humbled Himself for us (cf. Phil. 2:8) and who

richly bestows His grace on those that are humble, now and always to the ages of ages. Amen.

---

1 See Symeon the New Theologian (attributed to), *The Three Methods of Prayer*, E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 4, pp. 67–75; Hesychios the Priest, *On Watchfulness and Holiness*, E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, pp. 162–98; Nikiphoros the Monk, *On Watchfulness and the Guarding of the Heart*, E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 4, pp. 194–206.

2 *Letter to Monks*, ed. Nikopoulos, p. 482. On the work, see above, p. 47, n. 1.

3 *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 21 (*P.G.* lxxxviii, 945C); E.T., Luibheid and Russell, p. 200; Step 27 (1112c); E.T., p. 270.

On Divine Union and the Contemplative Life

1. Through the highest mode of activity inherent in its being, every living thing is by nature capable of participating in a state of repose and bliss which fills it with joy, so that it seeks such a state with all its strength. Since, then, we humans are endowed by nature with intellect and the ability to perceive life spiritually, we can experience this great bliss and share in this repose when we apprehend what is highest, best and most beautiful in ourselves (you may describe this as you wish). This truly happens when our intellect is filled with God and when we reflect upon His virtues; for God is indeed the highest reality, noetic beyond our understanding, utterly loving in a way that we cannot conceive, preparing for those who seek Him rewards and unimaginable blessings and bounties, and granting them these things for all eternity.

2. In every birth that which is born accords with that which begets it, for, as the Lord said, 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit' (John 3:6). If, then, a person born of the Spirit is spirit, it is clear that he will also be god, just as the Spirit that begets him is God; for the Spirit, who through grace begets the one that participates in Him, is also true God. If then such a person is god, it is clear that by nature he will also be a contemplative; for God is called God because He has a contemplative vision of things. [1] Thus, in the case of a person who does not contemplate, either he has not been born of the Spirit and so does not participate in the Spirit; or he has been born of the Spirit, but through ignorance seals off his power of vision, crudely repelling the divine noetic rays that emanate from the noetic Sun of right-eousness (cf. Mal. 4:2). And though he participates in the divine visionary power, unhappily he fails to experience it in an active way, even though he aspires to holiness.

3. All beings naturally receive their mode of operation and their essential quality from Him who has created each of them in accordance with its own *logos* or inner essence. This therefore applies also to the intellect. The intellect's mode of operation is by nature ever-moving, and that which is ever-moving is non-limited and unrestricted. Thus, if the intellect operates in a way that is limited or restricted, it is operating in a way that is contrary to its dignity and its true nature. And this will happen to it if it devotes its activities to things that are limited and restricted. For it is not possible for the intellect to operate in a way that is non-limited and unrestricted while it

devotes itself to that which is limited and restricted. Thus, for the intellect to function as it should in a way that is ever-moving, it has to devote itself to that which is non-limited and unrestricted, and when it does this it will operate in accordance with its own *logos* and its own nature. But there is nothing non-limited and truly unrestricted except God, who by nature and essentially is One. Thus the intellect should aspire and devote itself to that which is essentially One – to God – and should make Him the focus of its activity. For it is this which accords essentially with its own nature.

4. Things envisioned as proximate to God are non-limited and unrestricted. Yet even so the intellect cannot experience complete joy in contemplating these things, for it seeks to attain Him who is their source. For each thing by nature finds joy in its own counterpart. The intellect by nature is one, albeit many with respect to its intellections. Thus when the intellect aspires towards God, and as it were concentrates its activity on Him – and God is one by nature, although His energies are multiple – it cannot fully rejoice until by the grace of the Holy Spirit it transcends in some way the realm of multiplicity and attains that which is by nature limitless and unified. For only when in God can the intellect rejoice fully. Every being rejoices most in that which is natural to it; and that which is natural to the intellect is to move and aspire towards God, to become god and to rejoice entirely in Him, who alone is simply and infinitely One.

5. The natural activity of every created thing, including the intellect, is directed towards acquiring and consolidating a state of immobility and peace; and such a state of immobility and peace constitutes the fulfilment and at the same time the repose of the created being in question. But the intellect, although it is created, cannot acquire a state of immobility and peace so long as its activity is focused on created things. For since created things have a beginning they are correspondingly destined to have an end; hence the activity, ever-moving by nature, of the intellect that is focused on such things will inevitably be left hanging as it were in mid-air, and will be forced to seek something else on which it can get a purchase. Under such conditions the last thing the intellect will be able to do is to attain a state of peace or to realize its intrinsic nature or to operate in a way that is ever-moving; for it will be enclosed among things that are restricted and limited, and this means that it will be in a state quite other than its proper state; for in its proper state its activity is ever-moving.

Thus the intellect cannot attain a state of peace or immobility while its

activity is focused on things created. Where, then, can the intellect be true to its own essential nature – that is to say, remaining stable while in a state of ever-moving activity – and thus find tranquillity and restfulness, and be fully conscious of its own repose, if its activity is not focused on that which is uncreated and uncircumscribed? And this is God, who is essentially and transcendently One. Through its activity, then, the intellect must attain to this unity that is without restriction; for there it will find its own natural peace in a state of noetic repose. And that means a state of immobility attained through the Spirit, a state of strange repose that is the infinite goal of all things; and in this state the activity of the intellect that has attained complete unity comes to an end, for such an intellect has become non-limited, unrestricted, uncircumscribed, free from figuration and form, and utterly simple. For such is the character of the One of which we have been speaking; and by the One we mean God.

6. If, as David affirms, God ‘makes His angels spirits’ (Ps. 104:4), and if He makes spirit those born of the Spirit, as the Lord said (cf. John 3:6), then a person who through actual participation in the Spirit is born of the Spirit becomes an angel. But the task of the angels is incessantly to contemplate the countenance of our Father who is in heaven (cf. Matt. 18:10), as again the Lord said. Assuredly, then, he who truly participates in the Holy Spirit will, when thus exalted, contemplate the countenance of God. This is why David counsels us to seek the Lord and be strengthened: ‘Seek His face at all times’ (Ps. 105:4). Thus it is not fitting or proper for a person who participates in the holy, life-quickening, illuminative and love-kindling Spirit, and who experiences the ineffable birth brought about by the Spirit, and who is exalted to the rank of an angel, to shut off his noetic perception of God out of misplaced reverence. It is wrong for him to stop seeking to raise himself towards God and things divine; for if he were to do this, he would be acting in a manner contrary to our Saviour’s command that we are to abide in Him, just as He abides in us (cf. John 15:4), and in a manner likewise contrary to David’s exhortation, ‘Draw near to Him and be enlightened’ (Ps. 34:5.LXX). And, truly, if we intend to do the things that we should do, then in the light of God the Father – I mean in the Holy Spirit – we shall see the light that encircles God, that is to say the divine truth, unless somehow we ignorantly choose not to turn towards the rays of divine light.

7. There are three ways in which the intellect ascends to the contemplation of God: under its own impetus, or else impelled by something other than

itself, or thirdly through a mixture of both. The ascent under its own impetus is effected by the intellect's own nature alone, by means of its own will and with the help of its own imaginative power. This permits the intellect to contemplate only those things that pertain to God, His attributes, which to some extent the ancient Greeks also perceived. The ascent impelled by something other than the intellect is supranatural and is effected by the will and illumination of God alone. Then the intellect is entirely possessed by the divine, is ravished by divine revelations, tastes the secret mysteries of God, and sees the issue of things to come. The ascent through a mixture of these first two ways to some extent combines both of them. In so far as it is effected by the intellect's own will and with the help of its imagination it accords with the first way; but it also involves the second way, in so far as the intellect is brought to unity with itself through God's illuminative power, and inexpressibly beholds God in a manner that extends beyond its own noetic self-unification. For the intellect has now attained a sphere that transcends God's attributes or the qualities that can be ascribed to Him. It sees neither the principles of goodness, nor of divinization, nor of wisdom or strengthening power, nor of providence or of anything else that pertains to God; for it is filled entirely with noetic light and with joy quickened by divine fire mingled with love.

8. When the intellect uses its own imaginative power in order to contemplate unseen realities, it is led by faith. When it is illumined by grace, it is made steadfast by hope. When it is ravished by divine light, it becomes a treasury of love – of love, that is to say, for human beings and much more so for God. In this way the threefold order and disposition of the soul, constituted by faith and hope and love, becomes perfect and deified, firmly established and undeviating. And when it has attained in this way full freedom of movement within its citadel, as one might say, it is securely established within the fortress of love. Then St Paul's words are proved true, that 'love sustains all things, endures all things', by virtue of faith and hope; and 'love never fails' (1 Cor. 13:7–8), thanks to its ardent union and ineffable bond with God.

9. To be one is not the privilege of every created being. That, due to some characteristic of its particular nature, one thing differs from another thing we can readily recognize. But in so far as created things have a beginning and are limited, and naturally come to an end, they do not differ fundamentally from one another, nor does any one of them constitute what can properly be called

a unique unity. The only true unity is that which is uncreated; for only this is simple, without beginning or end, unlimited, and in consequence infinite; and such unity belongs only to God. If the intellect perceives Him through participating in the Spirit and in the grace of His life-quickening power, it advances day to day to a corresponding degree and becomes united and simple, sharing in the activity of God. It is well aware that without the One, and without aspiring with the help of the Spirit towards the One, it cannot rise to a higher state.

For the intellect has been splintered, having succumbed to the world of fragmentation and to the passions. As a result it is in need of celestial power – of the supranatural unity to which it strives to aspire – so that, plucked from the world of disintegration, it may transcend the passions and its fragmented state, and may attain a state that is godlike. It is for this reason that the Lord prays to the Father that we the faithful through the grace of the Spirit may be one in the Father and in the Son Himself – one in the way that they are one (cf. John 17:22), and not one in the heretical sense maintained by Sabellius.[2] In this way we may be perfected both through the grace of the unifying Spirit and through integrated contemplation in God who is One. This for us is clearly a genuine advance to a higher state; it is our goal and our true and only repose.

On account of this the envious horde of the demons who hate mankind, sowing delusion in the intellect, have disastrously shattered its unity by persuading it to worship many gods, and have prevented it from cleaving in its imagination to the transcendent One. In this way they have made the intellect operate in a way contrary to its own nature, so that it has dispersed itself in the worship and reverence of a multitude of things, dedicating its desire not to truth and virtue but to all kinds of passions and falsehood. That is why the Holy Spirit exhorts us through the prophet, saying ‘Come unto Him’, that is to say to the One, ‘and be enlightened’ (Ps. 34:5.LXX). And elsewhere He says: ‘I am the Lord; I am the first, and I am what is after that; and there is no other God than Me’ (Isa. 41:4, 44:6). And again, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord’ (Deut. 6:44). For the three persons of the one Divinity do not divide the one dominion, but the persons are indeed three, though they are not on that account any the less one in essence, power, will and activity, and in the other essential qualities. Accordingly, it is God’s will that we should worship and reverence His unity, and that in so far as we can we should concentrate on this and should not occupy ourselves with a

multitude of different things; for in this manner we will restore the intellect to its natural state. It is in this way that we discover the truth and there is born within us divine love; and in consequence our deification is also brought to birth.

10. If falsehood is multifarious while the truth is one, then when the intellect is exalted through the grace of the Spirit towards the transcendent One – that which stands far above all things and from which all multiplicity proceeds – it is exalted towards the truth itself. The intellect, however, cannot be freed from the passions unless the truth sets it free (cf. John 8:32). Thus the intellect is delivered from the passions if it inclines and aspires one-pointedly towards the transcendent One. To the highest possible degree such freedom from the passions assists the intellect to acquire a godlike state of dispassion and of spiritual sonship, which it can never acquire when it is in a state of servitude. For the servant, as our Lord said, does not know what his master does (cf. John 15:15). And if ignorance is characteristic of the servant, clearly he who is free from servitude knows the secrets of the Father, and has succeeded in elevating himself to the noble and admirable rank of sonship.

For just as ignorance is obviously opposed to knowledge, so too the status of the servant is obviously opposite to that of the son. And if he who is ignorant is a servant, he who possesses knowledge is, on the contrary, not in servitude, but he is free or, one may say, he is a son; for the Spirit of truth, fully liberating those in whom He comes to dwell, makes them sons of God. As our Lord said: ‘Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God’ (Rom. 8:14). If, then, to participate in truth is to concentrate our vision on the transcendent One, and if truth confers freedom on the intellect, and if freedom is a sure sign of divine sonship, and if there is nothing better than this gift of sonship or that more befits an intelligent nature, it follows that it is eminently reasonable and entirely necessary for the intellect to do all it can to aspire to God and to concentrate its spiritual vision on Him who is transcendent unity.

11. The Holy Spirit says: ‘The Lord your God is one Lord’ (Deut. 6:4). Accordingly, it should be our concern to elevate our intellect with the help of the divine Spirit to the transcendent One. It is inadmissible to proclaim the One and at the same time to do nothing about directing the intellect’s aspiration towards Him. For the Holy Spirit wants us to perceive the truth of what He says; and He would have us direct our intellect towards that which we perceive to be true. For if the intellect does not turn towards the noetic

world, then that which the intellect should apprehend is lost, and our proclamation of the One, and therefore likewise our faith in this proclamation, will of necessity be negated. If this is wrong, then it is also wrong not to elevate our intellect and direct it towards the One.

12. Things produced by a cause, and especially intelligent beings, by nature aspire consciously to grasp that cause through returning to it. All things derive from God as their cause, and it is from Him that the intellect also is derived. Since God is the supreme and uncompounded One, it is natural for the intellect to aspire towards and to concentrate its vision upon the supreme and uncompounded One, in this way returning to its cause.

13. If all things come from God, and exist through God, and have God as their goal (cf. Rom. 11:36), and if the intellect is one of these things, then the intellect comes from God and exists through God. This is all the more true in the case of the intellect because of the intellect's similitude to God. Thus the intellect should aspire to God with especial fervour. The phrase 'to have God as our goal' means that we should long to return to our origin and to concentrate our vision on the reality of the transcendent One. It is, then, on the One that the intellect should concentrate its vision.

14. The many derive from the One, not the One from the many. But creation is manifold, so clearly it derives from the One; and that One is above creation, as its creator and fashioner. He who contemplates creation aright will necessarily find his contemplation brought to fulfilment in the transcendent One. Created effects retain many echoes or vestiges of their Cause, through which we can gain a knowledge of Him who, by art, wisdom, power and goodness, providentially disposes everything as He wishes. That is why Isaiah, inspired by the Spirit, said: 'Lift up your eyes and behold who it is that has revealed all these things' (cf. Isa. 40:26). By 'all these things' Isaiah means the manifold created effects; while he says 'who' in order to elevate the intellect towards the Source of these things, who is by nature simply One.

15. Creation constitutes a single whole, but it is composite and manifold and, since it is created, it has a beginning. But He who creates is One, yet not One only in the sense that by harmonizing many different elements He produces a union of everything subordinate to a single purpose, but also One as the uncreated cause, existing prior to the foundation of the world. When the intellect in its turn ascends towards the One, of necessity it will encounter that which is the original regulating principle of the visible order, of the birth

of living things and of their harmony and union with the One. Otherwise it would go on ascending endlessly, which is absurd. For everything that belongs to the world of change and becoming at one time did not exist. From a state of non-existence it began to exist; and as soon as it began to exist it was in a state of flux. So we must ask what it was that set it in motion and brought it into existence. This will be something unmoving, since it is that which sets all things in motion. Otherwise, how could it be that which sets in motion all things, unless it is itself without beginning and is not subject to any other principle? If it is unmoving, it will also be immutable; and if it is immutable, it will assuredly also be simple, for what is composite is subject to change, while we have shown that this unmoving principle is immutable.

For composition is the origin of discord, and discord is the origin of dissolution, which is the upshot of flux. Accordingly, there is nothing composite in the unfluctuating source of things, for otherwise there would be discord in it. And there is no discord in it, otherwise there would be dissolution. And there is no dissolution, for if there were there would be change and flux in that which is immutable and unmoving. For it is this that sets all things in motion, but is not itself set in motion; it brings things into existence but itself has neither come into existence nor is it in the process of coming into existence. If, then, it is immutable and unmoving, it must of necessity be non-composite and so entirely simple, absolutely and transcendently One. The intellect, exalting itself towards the One, stands entirely apart from all other things, since it concentrates its vision on that which is pre-eminently good, and aspires to that which is above all things or, rather, to that from which everything comes forth, and towards which by nature all things are attracted. When this happens in the way it should, the intellect is freed from passions as well. For how could he who so exerts himself that he goes beyond even things that are pre-eminently good, endure to remain enslaved to the shamefulness of the passions? That is why the Holy Law says that ‘you shall worship only Him’ (cf. Deut. 6:13), that is, the One. Thus we must exalt ourselves towards the supreme One if we wish to fulfil the Law of God and to free ourselves from the passions.

16. ‘So the Lord alone led them, and there was no strange god with them’ (Deut. 32:12). Do you not see the power of the one and only God, how ‘there was no strange god with them’, since it was the Lord Himself who led them? But the Lord leads those who follow, not those who turn back. We follow the person towards whom we are turned. Thus if we do not want a strange god –

a demon or a passion – to accompany us, we must follow the one and only God through turning ourselves noetically towards Him, so that it may justly be said of us too that the Lord alone is leading us, and no strange god is with us.

17. Although the many derive from the One, each one of them does so in a different manner, because the way in which the various beings proceed from the primal unity is full of variation. For some of them have a beginning in time and are created, while others are uncreated and do not have a beginning in time. The supraessential One is certainly the source of all of them; but for those in the first category He is their source because He creates them, while for those in the second category He is their source because they emanate directly from His own nature. It is for this reason that we must not relate or attach ourselves to both categories in the same way. When we relate to things that have a beginning in time and that are created, we should do so not for their own sake but for the sake of something else, just as we make use of a mirror not for its own sake but for the sake of the form or image that is reflected in it. The only way in which we can relate to creation in a way that fosters our spiritual growth is by becoming aware of the supreme One that it reveals. But to realities that have no beginning in time and that emanate directly from the nature of the One, we relate not for the sake of something other than these realities themselves but for their own sake and for the sake of Him from whom they emanate; for to these things we should truly relate for their own sake, and in these things the supreme One is present in a way that is immediate and direct – or, rather, they reveal the highest and supreme One in a way that is immediate and, as we said, direct.

Thus we must not only relate to these things, but also cleave to them, and through them we should strive to mould ourselves into becoming faithful representations of the primal and unique Source of goodness and beauty, so that with the cooperation and assistance of grace we may become the image and similitude of God’s glory. Hence if we rightly gaze upon the things that are the created effects of the transcendent One, our intellect will be elevated through contemplation until it becomes the mirror of the One, and we will unite our intellect utterly and simply with the unitary inner life of the One. Likewise, when the intellect operates in a way that is congruous with those things that emanate directly from the nature of the One, and is moulded in accordance with them, it unites itself with that which is truly One.

In this way by means of all things, whether they are created or emanate

directly from the nature of the One, the intellect is drawn towards their pre-eminent source, either by virtue of its own nature, or through spiritual practice, or through the exercise of its contemplative faculty. And whatever the intellect makes use of, whether it be one thing or many things, and whether these things are created or emanate directly from the One, such use will be counted sinful, even if it has the appearance of being for the good, unless it is for the sake of the One, or in order that through holy participation in the enlightening Spirit and with Its help the intellect may concentrate itself and its vision on the primal One in a way that is simple, unified and integrated.

For all things that derive from the One lead to the One when they are used as they should be used. As the Great Dionysios affirms: 'Every illumination proceeds from the Father and comes down to us in generous abundance. Then as a unifying power it raises us up and fills us and brings us back to the unity and the deifying simplicity of the all-embracing Father; for all things come from God and have God as their goal' (cf. Rom. 11:36).[3] If, then, the use that we make of a thing does not lead to this goal, it is being used in a way that is contrary to its nature and it has become perverted.

18. There is a form of spiritual practice that precedes contemplation, and there is a form of spiritual practice that is subsequent to attaining the contemplative state. The first form involves the body. It bridles the body's impulses and enables it little by little to function in an orderly way. This permits the intellect to act freely within its own inherent world, which is the noetic realm, and there to occupy itself aright with what is proper and appropriate to it. The second form of spiritual practice starts with the intellect and its spiritual perception of things, and it culminates in that which lies beyond the intellect, which is God. When the intellect approaches God it attains a unified state, for God is One. Thus the intellect is united with itself and becomes indivisible.

For the One when contemplated is productive of unity and of godlike simplicity, and so it would be a contradiction for the intellect to contemplate the One and not itself to be one and simple. But when the intellect gives its attention to what is split asunder and composite it must itself become fragmented and disintegrated. Only that which is utterly simple in itself do I call one and simple. Since that which constitutes the intellect is subject to variegation so far as its energy or activity is concerned, while in its essence it is free from composition, it follows that when it contemplates the One its

energy will also be unified. Yet if it contemplates the One, but is itself divided into at least two, then what will that part of it be doing which is separated from the part that sees the One? Either it sees something else, or it sees nothing.

If it sees nothing, that is either because it has no desire to see anything, or because it has lost the power to do so, or because it has become diverted into some activity other than that of seeing. If, on the other hand, we suppose that it sees something else, then it is clear that the intellect does not see the One simply, but on the contrary it sees two things; and if it sees two things, it cannot be a unity, for, as we have seen, it is split between the things to which it gives its attention. It is, however, nonsense to say that the other part of the intellect sees nothing because it has no desire to see anything, for the spiritual intellect cannot be inactive even for the briefest moment. Nor is it possible for one part of the intellect to lose its power and another part to be keenly alert, for in that case the intellect would not be simple but composite, consisting of non-homogeneous parts. The same would be the case if the function of one part of the intellect was to see, while another part had some other function, for this too would be to attribute a composite nature to the intellect, something which is entirely inadmissible, since by definition the intellect is non-composite.

Thus if the united and non-composite intellect concentrates its vision on the non-composite One, then its energy or activity is likewise one; and if it is one in a non-composite way, then it sees the non-composite One. Hence all spiritual practice or contemplation must of necessity be directed towards the One that transcends the intellect. If it is not so directed it will accomplish nothing, and the intellect's spiritual practice or contemplation will be in vain. Being split asunder, and not directing the soul's perception towards integration and union with the One that transcends it, the intellect will become the agent of the passions. But union with the One has the capacity to refine and purify the intellect's contemplative power, when this power exalts itself and concentrates on its vision of the One, dedicating itself to Him from whom and through whom and in whom are all things, and on account of whom it comes into being, and exists, and continues to subsist.

19. The most desirable of all things is the soul's supraintellective union with God. Union with the divine presupposes similitude to the divine, and to attain similitude to the divine we have to bring our intellect into a state of activity – in other words, we have to be able to contemplate. For

contemplation is a divine activity, and it was from the Greek word for ‘to contemplate’ (*theorein*) that God (*Theos*) derived His name. Contemplation in fact leads directly to consciousness of God, for everywhere and in all things God implants rays of His glory that are perceptible to the contemplative intellect; and the contemplative intellect has God as its object, God being the transcendent One. The nature of the intellect, where its activity or energy is concerned, is to become of one kind with that which it perceives. This is affirmed by the divine words of St Gregory, ‘to perceive and to experience the glory of God’.[4] What the intellect perceives it also experiences or, rather, it becomes that which it perceives.

For, as St Peter of Damaskos says, the intellect is coloured by that which it contemplates.[5] And just as when it looks at things that are fragmented and disintegrated, it becomes itself disintegrated and fragmented, correspondingly when it concentrates its vision on the transcendent and non-composite One, it becomes united, as I said earlier. When it actually enters into the One, it perceives that which is without beginning, infinite, free from form and simple, for that is the nature of the One; and so its activity and energy becomes itself without beginning, infinite, free from form and simple. Once it has experienced this transformation the intellect is assimilated to the divine, in so far as this is possible, and returns to that most desirable of all things, divine, supraintellective and inexpressible union, which is the most godlike status it can attain. Hence the intellect with the help of the Spirit must strive in every way to exalt itself and to concentrate its vision on the transcendent One.

20. When the intellect is fragmented into many parts or even into two parts, it is clear that it does not perceive the non-composite One. On this account it is limited, restricted and blurred, like all things that are not absolutely self-integrated. When it comes into intangible contact with the truly One, perceiving it noetically through the grace of the Spirit and not with physical eyes, then it becomes without beginning, infinite, unlimited, free from figuration or form. It is rendered mute and learns the art of enraptured silence; and it is filled with delight, and experiences that which is unutterable. Do not think that I am asserting that the intellect becomes without beginning, infinite and unlimited with respect to its essence. It becomes so with respect to its energy; for that which is transformed in the intellect is not its essence but its mode of operation.

For if the intellect were transformed in its essence through having

apprehended and experienced deification – through, that is to say, being deified as a result of contemplating God – then the intellect itself would in its essence be God. But this does not happen. Nothing, not even an angel, can be God in essence except the sole, supreme and unique God Himself. If, then, it is wrong to say that the intellect is deified with respect to its essence, we can still say that it experiences deification with respect to its power of vision. Thus by nature it is not the intellect's essence that can be transformed but its energy or mode of operation. Besides, if, as we said, it is the nature of the intellect to change according to that which it contemplates, and if that which it contemplates is not God's essence but His mode of operation, then it will itself change not in its essence but in its mode of operation.

21. All things are irradiated forth, so to say, from the transcendent One, but they are not separated from that which begets them. Just as they come into being within the One, so they continue to be embraced by Him and brought to perfection within Him. And among all things that exist there is nothing whatsoever that is not an emanation and as it were a sweet-smelling fragrance of the truly One that brought it into existence. Everything that exists proclaims out loud, as it were, not the transcendent One itself – for this is established above every form of contemplation or noetic perception – but some irradiation of the transcendent One. And since the One is blazed abroad by all things, and all things are attracted towards the One, and since the One reveals itself through all things to the intellect, the intellect cannot but be led, bound hand and foot, and be drawn to the transcendent One.

For on the one hand the intellect is constrained by the persuasive testimony of all things; and on the other the creative One, about which we have already spoken, desires in the abundance of His loving kindness to be perceived by the intellect, so that the intellect may find life in Him. As the ineffable One Himself says, 'I am life' (John 1:25); and, 'This is life eternal, for them to know Thee the only true God' (John 17:3); and elsewhere, 'Seek after God and your soul will live' (Ps. 69:32.LXX). For only by searching will we attain vision, and only through vision will we attain life. And in this way, too, is the intellect gladdened and enlightened and filled with joy. For, as David said, 'All who are filled with joy have their dwelling-place in Thee' (cf. Ps. 87:7.LXX); and 'In Thy light shall we see light' (Ps. 36:9). Why otherwise did God make the intellect capable of contemplating, and why did He sow in all things seeds of His own self, through which, as through windows, He reveals Himself in His noetic glory to the intellect, and through

the enchantment of His effulgence draws it to Himself?

22. God, who is the One, Triadic and full of love, created whatever He has made with deliberate purpose. But that which God deliberately purposes is the highest good, for goodness is His nature. Thus He made the intellect capable of contemplating Him and His attributes, knowing that through such contemplation the intellect would be gathered together into unity. Hence it is God's desire that the intellect should contemplate Him; and this therefore is that which is supremely good. God is the absolute and non-composite One; and, as we have shown, for the intellect to concentrate its vision on God, and so to be integrated into a single whole, is supremely good.

23. If universal divine love is one and unified, as the theologians teach, then the person beloved by God must also be one; for if the beloved were ever split into two, there would either be two loves, or the one love would be divided into two and so could by no means be called one and unified. Thus if universal divine love is said to be one and unified, it is clear that the beloved is also one. Yet the beloved exists prior to the love that he or she receives, and until contact is established between the one who loves and the beloved there is no way in which love between them could arise. Eros or longing for God is an intense form of the love which both the natural and the written law of God require us to express. Nature persuasively constrains the intellect, lover of beauty that it is, to lay hold of what is most sublime of all, and that is God; while Scripture says: 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your soul, and with all your heart, and with all your mind' (cf. Deut. 6:5); and: 'The Lord your God is one Lord' (cf. Deut. 6:4). That which we are to love, then, is the One, the Triadic Monad; and He has to be present to the intellect before the intellect can love Him. Thus the intellect must strive to exalt itself towards the transcendent One, so that by finding and contemplating the One its love for the One may shine forth more fully, and we may fulfil both the law of nature and God's commandment by loving, as we said, the Lord our God.

24. Once the intellect has ascended to the One that transcends the mind's grasp, it cannot but be filled with love for it. For there it encounters the indescribable and inconceivable beauty emanating from the One, as from the supreme root of all things. From the flood of divine irradiations that pours into it, the intellect is like a net on the point of bursting because of the great weight of the fish caught within it (cf. Luke 5:6), and it is rapt in wonder at the vision of this incomprehensible beauty. It is drunk, as from wine, and it is

beside itself, like someone out of his mind; for it is overcome by an amazement that surpasses thought, and it is incapable of enduring the vision of this transcendent and extraordinary beauty. It is held fast in the bonds of love, and is consumed as if by thirst.

For the One that the intellect contemplates surpasses all thought; yet it is proclaimed by all things as their causative source, and as their origin, goal and point of cohesion. In the superabundance of its power to produce what is beautiful and good, the One creates the beauty and goodness of all beautiful and good things, while it itself is established infinitely above all beauty and goodness, for it is the incomparably transcendent One. It alone is by nature the object of our love beyond all other such objects, for it alone is the absolute beauty and goodness beyond all other beauty and goodness; and it alone by the law of nature and of hierarchical disposition is truly to be loved as the source of all things. For this reason, and because of its overwhelming beauty and goodness, it surpasses everything that we love and long for. And it is truly the transcendent One, for it alone is true being and the source of being in everything else.

Thus, with the help of the Spirit, and with good fortune, as they say, on our side, let us apply ourselves to discovering and attaining knowledge of the unique One, from whom all things derive their origin and in whom all things find their fulfilment. For then assuredly the gate of divine love will, by the grace of Christ, open to us of its own accord, and we will enter into the rest that is appointed by our Lord (cf. Heb. 4:3), with gladness and a great sense of jubilation. We will experience the delight conferred by the One, and taste divine joy, having ourselves become one, no longer splintered and fragmented into many parts. In this way the Saviour's petition to his Father will be fulfilled, 'May they be one, even as We are one' (John 17:22). Then we shall strictly observe the commandment, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your soul, and your neighbour as yourself' (Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18); and in so far as it is possible we will attain the perfection of our human nature. For love is the fulfilment of the law (cf. Rom. 13:10), and on love depend not only all the law and the prophets (cf. Matt. 22:40), but also all those who with Christ's help have reached the perfection that accords with God.

25. In the case of everything that has it in its nature to be united with the Spirit, it is a defect to exist in a state of division. Thus if there is some disunity in the way the intellect deploys its energy, it finds itself excluded

from the state of grace that is proper to it. This happens to it when it gives its attention to various disparate things; for when it gives its attention in this way to many different things it cannot remain in an undivided state. If someone were to maintain that this is possible, he would not find it easy to explain in what way the intellect that is in a state of stillness differs from the intellect that is in a state of confusion. He would be committed to maintaining that the intellect of those who are inspired by God is in the same state as the intellect that is assailed by the turbulence of the passions; and this would be absurd. For if through its mode of operation the intellect becomes like the things it perceives, then it is inevitable that if it sees composite objects, it will itself be fragmented; and lapsing thus from its non-composite state it cannot avoid being in a state of disunity. That which is in a state of division is least of all things free from sin, and so the state of division is by definition regarded as a sinful state by those who are able to understand such matters.

If, then, when it concentrates its vision on the sublime and transcendent One, the noetic power of the intellect must of necessity taste of integral and supranatural beauty with its organ of spiritual perception, it must also through grace transcend the state of division. If, then, we are to free ourselves from the state of division and disintegration, we must cleave to the transcendent One, and with all our soul concentrate our vision on it alone. Yet the intellect cannot attain a state of unity – even if it concentrates its vision on one single thing – if that thing is created. For what is created cannot truly be called simple, for it is limited, composite and circumscribed, and so it cannot rightly be termed single and non-composite. Thus the energy of the intellect that concentrates its attention on such a created object will not be undivided and one-pointed; for its attention will be limited and circumscribed and composite, like that to which its attention is directed. Hence it will fall short of the divine grace that makes it simple and without beginning, unlimited and uncircumscribed, and it will stand outside the One that is unknown and inconceivable. This means that it will be deprived of its glory, which is its integrally activated enjoyment of its primal and unoriginate nature that is uncircumscribed, simple and formless; and it will fail to experience the vision of the supranatural, unutterable beauty.

It is for this reason that the intellect must concentrate its vision on that which is unoriginate, simple, infinite, and truly One, and must exalt itself towards this. It must strive to be enlightened from that source, and to be united with the One in whom all things are reconciled, and through this union

to be united with itself. In this way the intellect will be embraced by the love of the Supreme Divinity, because – in so far as this is in its power – it will itself have become infinite and entirely simple and will be free from every limitation of figuration and form. In its turn the intellect itself will be enabled to love the divine, the more-than-beautiful supranatural beauty, for, as we have said, it will have attained likeness to that beauty. Since it is natural for things that are alike to manifest a reciprocal love, it is obvious that the intellect will be loved by God, and will itself love Him in return; for two things that are alike share a mutual likeness; and since likeness involves reciprocity, love between two things that are alike will always be reciprocal. Between God and the soul there can be no greater experience than this.

26. The intellect rises above its ordinary created nature when it is altogether united with that which is above intellect, and when in this way it becomes free from shape or figuration, wholly transmuted by God into a formless state, unoriginate and infinite, thus, so to speak, transcending its own unity. If it still operates according to its ordinary power of perception, even if it devotes itself to realities that are divine and noetic, it may be said to function still by virtue of its created nature and within the limits of that nature. Perception that is supranatural, however, vastly surpasses that which accords with our purely natural power of perception. We must, then, in accordance with the injunction that we should pursue the higher gifts of the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12:31), strive and seek with longing to attain a supranatural mode of perception, which is far superior to the natural and created mode. Yet it is clear that when the intellect attains what is supranatural, it is in God; for God, the primordial and non-composite One, transcends everything that is natural and created. Hence the intellect must exalt itself to the primordial and non-composite One, and strive to concentrate its vision upon Him and to be raised up to Him. In this way, through passing beyond its natural and created mode of operation by ascending to the supranatural One, it will attain a state more perfect than that in which it finds itself when restricted to its ordinary created nature.

27. All beings by nature find joy and repose in their own natural qualities, all of which pre-exist in the primordial Source which is their integral cause. Thus the intellect will as a matter of course attain true well-being, no little joy and great repose, when it passes beyond and relinquishes its attachment to all created things, and dedicates itself to the unique primal Source, turning back into itself and dwelling in the unique Source. From this Source proceed all

things, along with their qualities, and in it are to be found the origin of all things, their intermediate state and their consummation. In it all things subsist and are kept in existence, and through it all that is being perfected is led to its proper fulfilment. Through it all that prospers enjoys prosperity, and the intellect itself is enabled to be what it is.

In a certain manner, then, the intellect returns to itself when it returns to the sovereign Source of all things that is its true archetype. And since everything by nature loves itself – and this is especially true of the intellect, inasmuch as it is the supremely beautiful image of the inexplicable beauty of the One that transcends thought – the intellect greatly yearns to return to itself and to concentrate its vision upon its Source; for, as we said, when it does that, what it sees is itself and what it sees it loves exceedingly. In addition, inherent in everything is a natural love for that from which it comes, just as similarly parents feel love for those they beget. Thus, when something returns to the One that is the Source of all things, a great inexpressible bliss is born, since in returning to that from which it comes it returns, as we said, also to itself. For there, in the Source, all things pre-exist since that is their cause; hence, too, the intellect, which is a unity formed from all things, inheres in the One who is beyond thought, since He is its archetypal Source.

28. Just as every being proceeds from the Being who is beyond being, and every natural reality proceeds from that which is supranatural, and everything temporal and composite from that which is non-temporal and non-composite, and things created from that which is uncreated, so every form originates from that which is formless, and the multitude of visible things originates from the transcendent One. Whoever, then, fails to devote himself to the formless One and does not concentrate his vision on it, depending upon it as he does, but who turns his attention to some visible and created form, gives priority to that which is incomparably inferior, and virtually makes himself an idolater. For that to which a person devotes himself, and upon which he concentrates his vision, is the object of his desire; and it is by what he desires that he is mastered, and to that by which he is mastered he is also enslaved. Hence in this way he truly worships the creature more than the Creator (cf. Rom. 1:25).

For each person’s intellect is enslaved by and worships and loves that to which he gives his attention and his devotion. If, then, to concentrate our attention and devotion on something other than the non-composite and formless One causes us to fall in such a grievous manner, our diligence and

search for knowledge should be directed to attaining a vision of the formless and non-composite One by making our intellect return to itself; for in the One are to be found all the treasures of spiritual knowledge (cf. Col. 2:3). And when we attain such a vision, all speculation and all conceptual thought is intermitted and brought to a halt, and we enter the silence which transcends the mind, the realm of inexpressible joyousness and immense wonder.

29. All things long for being, and the source of the being of all things lies in the One that transcends being. Thus all things, and especially all noetic things, if they function as they should, will, in their longing to possess being, long for the One that transcends being. Thus the intellect that is not attracted by the One that is above being, and does not long for Him, functions in a way that is perverted and aberrant, and betrays its true nature, which is fulfilled in the knowledge of the One that transcends being and in the most divine, supraintellectual and integral union with Him and love for Him.

30. Causal principles possess a far greater beauty than the things they cause. The universal cause of all things is the supraessential One. If, then, the intellect devotes itself to any of the things that are subsequent to the supraessential One, deeming these other things to be beautiful, or in some way worthy of the intellect's devotion, then clearly it has missed its goal. Although it may be drawn towards something that is beautiful, yet out of laziness or through ignorance it is attracted, not towards the primal, principial and supraessential One, through participation in which all that possesses beauty is beautiful, but merely towards things that thanks to the One have a certain share in beauty.

The intellect that seeks to fulfil its own nature will, then, direct its mental vision towards the supraessential One, recognizing clearly that thus it will more fully attain what it desires, since through such noetic vision it will return to its Cause; and it will recognize, too, that its own beauty, or the beauty of any other thing, cannot be communicated to it by anything other than the supraessential One. And if it thinks that there are certain things which have the power to communicate to it some of their own beauty, yet by nature this beauty will not remain for ever in the intellect that so desires to possess it. Only the Holy Spirit can communicate to the intellect qualities that will remain with it permanently; for the Spirit, as Lord endowed with sovereign power and as one of the Persons of the Triadic Unity, acts as and where He wills. The intellect must accordingly return to the supraessential One, who is not only the fount of every blessing but also the unfailing

bestower of spiritual gifts.

31. All beings by nature desire the Good; but the Good is in reality one, even though there are many things that we call good. In the world of multiplicity you will find nothing that is wholly good and, as it were, utterly perfect, even though you may find something that is called good because it participates in the Good; but the good in which it participates it derives not from itself but from the transcendent One. For only that transcendent One is wholly and transcendently good, and the source of all goodness, bestowing His own qualities on other things and by nature drawing to Himself every being, every form of existence, every state of mind, every power, disposition, activity and specific quality, and every form of beauty and goodness. In short, all created beings, and all that pertains to created beings, are manifested and created by the transcendent One. For this reason the intellect that focuses its attention on anything other than the transcendent and non-composite One operates in a misguided manner; for though it may be focusing its attention on something that is good, it is not focusing its attention on the substantial and absolute Good, that which through the outpouring of His prolific beneficence renders good and uplifts whatever is in need of being rendered good and uplifted.

32. The intellect whose energy is dispersed among a multitude of things is in its folly fragmented and splintered; hence it does not know the Good that is truly one, and neither does it seek this Good or devote itself to it. It is about people in this state that the Spirit spoke through David, declaring, ‘There are many who say, “Who will show us the things that are good?”’ (cf. Ps. 4:6). And he is right not to say ‘the Good’, for such people are anxious and troubled by many things, whereas there is need of only one thing, according to God’s holy word (cf. Luke 10:42). To participate in that One is good; but either out of ignorance they pass over it, or else they neglect it and so suffer harm; and they never think of seeking that which most of all deserves to be sought. But those who are led by David as their teacher, and who have judged it right to follow in his steps, exclaim, ‘Lord, the light of Thy countenance has been stamped upon us’ (Ps. 4:6), that is, the knowledge of Thine undivided glory has been imprinted upon us, so that we reflect it as in a mirror. Thus the common herd disports itself among the material good things of this world; but those who live spiritually are illumined and supranaturally enlightened by the knowledge of the unique and absolute Good.

33. Just as the flow of a jet of water is greater when it pours out in one

stream than when it is divided and separated into many, so the vision of the intellect, and its impulsion and velocity, will be greater if its attention is not dispersed or fragmented, but is one-pointed and undivided; and this happens quite naturally when the intellect aspires towards the transcendent and non-composite One, concentrating its vision upon the One and contemplating Him alone. For truly the transcendent and entirely non-composite One has the capacity to draw things together; and when the intellect is counted worthy to perceive the One, it cannot but be moulded into the semblance of that One, as if it were its icon. It becomes integrated, non-composite, without colour, form or quality, impalpable, unbounded, infinite, free from figuration. In short, it cannot but become transcendently one, glorified in the rays of divine and transcendent love, initiated into mystical knowledge, crowned with a silence and an unknowing that surpass speech and knowing, and delighting in spiritual exultation and heavenly joy. The intellect is changed and becomes more godlike, and is invested with a divine form, assimilating itself, that is to say, to that which is non-composite, free from figuration and form, to that which is One, and which is everything else that we have already specified. But if this does not happen and if the intellect does not experience this divine transmutation, it has not yet attained contact with and vision of the transcendent One. For God is unifying Unity and Intellect beyond all intellection; and when the intellect, in addition to what we have said, itself becomes one in a way that is inconceivable, it acquires a supranatural vision of God, something it can attain only through merging with God’s self-vision.

34. The tripersonality of the supraessential Divinity supranaturally constitutes a single entity. For God is a unity of three persons. Hence the soul cannot attain iconically the likeness of God unless it too, being tripartite, becomes supranaturally one with itself. But I do not call the soul tripartite with reference to its intelligent, incensive and appetitive aspects, for it is not primarily in this respect that the soul is tripartite. For the intelligent aspect of the soul does not have any great affinity with incensiveness and appetite. Incensiveness and appetite derive from the non-intelligent aspect of our human nature, and are appended on account of our present animal life, while in themselves they are non-intelligent and tenebrous, whereas the soul is endowed with intelligence and its substance is full of noetic light. We should primarily predicate of the soul those things without which it cannot activate its potentialities; but it is able to activate them without bringing into play either incensiveness or appetite, and in fact it is then that it most truly

activates these potentialities.

Hence incensiveness and appetite are not really parts of the soul but, as I said, they are faculties of animal and earthly existence appended to it. The intelligent soul, its vision spiritually embracing celestial and noetic realities, exalting itself above itself and, so to say, soaring heavenwards, jettisons appetite and incensiveness as so much pointless garbage; for it has no use for such things when it has become non-composite, free from form and figuration, without colour and shape, and when it possesses all the other features that characterize an intellect that is liberated and utterly simple.

The soul, then, is indeed tripartite, but in a manner befitting its own simplicity: it is intellect, and at the same time it makes use of intelligence and spirit, which are most distinctively its own, and which do not in any way compromise its simplicity. Similarly the threefold character of the unifying Divinity, of which the soul is a close image, does not compromise in any way the divine unity and simplicity; the Divinity is precisely One, non-composite and supraessential, yet no less definitely it is a Trinity. Thus when that which constitutes the soul – namely the intellect (for the soul is the intellect, and the intellect in its integrality is the soul), together with intelligence and spirit – become supranaturally one, the soul then provides us with the best likeness of the tripersoned single Divinity. But this can be attained only through our concentrating our vision on the supranatural Three-in-One and through contemplating Him; for it is He who makes the soul what it is, and who restores it to its original state when it lapses. And this cannot happen to the soul unless it concentrates its vision on and contemplates the One. But if this does not happen, and if the soul does not regain its likeness to the One, we will be defective.

All this applies to the contemplative aspect and the true nature of the soul, which are what we should chiefly value in ourselves, and without which we cannot attain the state of dispassion. For if we are to be counted among those who have attained the state of dispassion, we must participate actively in what is good; and similarly if we are to attain a godlike state, we must contemplate the truth, we must worship the God who rules over all things, and we must desire to be made gods by adoption, re-established in the true likeness of our Archetype. In order to be in this way re-established in the likeness of our Archetype, the transcendent One, we must ourselves become one; and this we bring about by concentrating our vision on the transcendent One, by contemplating Him, by rising up and directing ourselves spiritually

towards Him, and by fixing our attention steadfastly upon Him.

We must, then, make every effort to attain the vision of the inconceivable and transcendent One; to cleave assiduously to Him with our whole being, with our whole heart and soul; and to nourish in ourselves the love of the transcendent, utterly simple and unique One, so that this love may become the holy wings of our noetic ascent towards Him. In this way, in a formless, integrated state, as if airborne, we will be with the Lord (cf. 1 Thess. 4:17) who is truly One, praising the Trinity triadically with intellect, intelligence and spirit; and in His presence, as is fitting, we will remain full of joy and rapt in wonder, and through being united with ourselves we will be united integrally with the One, in a way that transcends all union.

35. In the realm of the senses, the number one is the starting point of any quantity that can be numbered; and in a similar manner the transcendent Monad is the origin of all plurality, both visible and intelligible, and of every being. Thus just as all number has its starting point in the number one, so every being flows forth from the transcendent One as from its natural and creative source. Yet the status of this arithmetical unit, since it is perceptible to the senses, depends on the purpose it serves; as it is the origin of all that is subject to number, our enumerating faculty places it first. But in the case of the transcendent One that surpasses the intellect, the contrary may be observed: although He constitutes the unit that pre-exists all things, the intellect places Him after everything. For no intellect is in a position first to establish the One as the originating source, and then to proceed from the One to the many. On the contrary, the intellect starts from the many and concludes with the One. In the first case the number one is essential if our enumerating faculty is to go on to number any plurality of things, for without this initial number one it cannot count or proceed as it wants to. In the second case the many are essential to the intellect, for it needs the many in order to be led up through them to the transcendent One and, as it were, to be enfolded in Him. For in no other way can the intellect ascend as it desires to the vision of the transcendent One.

Thus the intellect, using a method and process suited to itself, starts from the many, and ends by attaining the transcendent and supreme One. Since the number one that can be perceived by the senses is easy to grasp and define, our enumerating faculty naturally places it first, for this accords with the natural character of this faculty. But in the case of the Monad to which the intellect aspires, and which is transcendent, supranatural, and beyond the

intellect's grasp, because of His natural status He is too exalted to serve the intellect as a starting point. Rather, since He is supranatural, the intellect discovers Him in a supranatural way, not at the beginning but at the end, after it has, as it were, passed through the many and used them as a bridge to cross over to the One. For since to perceive intellectually is the natural function of the intellect, and since the transcendent One in Himself cannot be perceived intellectually and escapes the intellect's grasp, the intellect – even against its own will – tends to gravitate towards the many. For first, the intellect is unable to suspend its intellective activity while, second, it lacks the capacity to grasp the supreme and transcendent One.

Looking therefore towards the many, in all those many things the intellect perceives a spiritual quality present in that thing, not so much by virtue of its intrinsic nature, but rather by virtue of the way in which it manifests a single reality. Then, culling or gleaning from each visible thing the spiritual quality it manifests, and perceiving that these qualities harmonize with each other and are not mutually incompatible, but are all as it were the flower and growth from one root, the intellect proceeds in due sequence from the many to the supreme One, from which all plurality derives; and to the degree which its own nature allows it integrally to perceive from the things that pertain to the natural order that which transcends nature, it is led in a natural way from the natural order into the supranatural realm, beholding as in a mirror the lofty and transcendent One. Then the intellect, contemplating in an indescribable manner the gushing outflow and generative source of all good and beautiful things, and delighting in the transcendent One, does not willingly return to the many, even though these many things may be beautiful and enjoy some participation in the Good.

For the intellect, being by nature and *par excellence* a lover of the beautiful, does not of its own accord remove itself from that which transcends all, unless some circumstance compels it so to do. But since the character of each being is different, and since the noetic manifestation of each being varies, the intellect ascends by means of the many towards the transcendent and supranatural One in many different ways. I think I should provide a short guide for traversing the path that leads by way of the many towards the transcendent supraessential One. With the help of such a guide the intellect, ascending as it were from stage to stage, can make its journey in complete safety, and can become aware if anything is wrong about the path that it is following, and whether it is where it ought to be, and whether it may to some

extent take pleasure in its progress. In this way the intellect will also understand what makes it go astray and deflects it from the beauty it seeks and from its ascent, preventing it from partaking in the divine banquet, and how it can return to the place at which it went astray. In this way the intellect will learn also about the fog of the passions and the resplendence of the pure heart, and will have a clear vision of what constitutes knowledge of the truth. It will participate in the wonders of heaven, and experience the divine; it will be fully aware of its spiritual progress, and even of any backsliding; it will acquire knowledge of many wonderful things, and will understand the purpose of stillness and of withdrawal into a life of prayer.

This, then, is the counsel that we wish to share with you. All beings may be divided into created beings that can be perceived by the senses, created beings that can be apprehended by the intellect, uncreated beings that can be apprehended by the intellect, and the uncreated supraessential One that transcends the intellect. If the eye of the soul, that is to say the intellect, turning its attention towards these things and closely gazing upon them, seeks through ascetic effort to cultivate the life of stillness, it is raised from the level of the practice of prescribed monastic discipline to the realm in which it contemplates that which is truly One. At this higher level it enjoys the experience of celestial realities, it is surrounded by the rays of truth, it rejoices and enriches itself infinitely in things eternal, and it is wondrously full of sweetness and delight. With the assistance of grace and with the passing of time, and through firmly participating in spiritual light, the intellect may even be rapt from the earth. Entering into possession of that which transcends the intellect and attaining the vision of that which incomparably surpasses all beauty, it is no longer conscious of any material thing.

This holy ladder is divided into five steps and in this way ascends by degrees towards its supreme goal. The steps are not separated from each other by a spatial distance but rather their difference, and that which separates them from one another, are of a qualitative order, and relate to what is specific to each stage. I mean by this that they correspond in some way to the structure of the universe. For created things that can be perceived by the senses and created things that can be apprehended by the intellect are in both cases existent beings, but the latter far surpass the former, just as the inherent virtue of the intellect is far greater than that of the senses. Again, uncreated things that can be apprehended by the intellect far surpass created things that can be

apprehended by the intellect, but each of these orders belongs to the realm of being. Yet even uncreated beings that can be apprehended by the intellect are in their turn inferior to the uncreated One that transcends the intellect.

Hence it is clear that the intellect attains the highest form of vision and contemplation when, after passing beyond the stage of ascetic practice and finding itself in a state of supreme unknowing which surpasses all sensible and intelligible realities, it is established in the One that transcends everything. On the other hand its vision and contemplation are functioning on a humbler level when they are restricted to the realm of sensory created phenomena, and at an even humbler level when restricted to the stage of ascetic practice. Thus since the intellect by nature loves what is good, it should aspire by all the means in its power to attain what is best, not simply in order to enjoy this but also so that it may experience, in so far as it can, the transformation that changes it into something beyond itself; for, as we have said, the intellect is transformed according to what it contemplates and delights in. This capacity for transformation that is intrinsic to the intellect's nature will never cease to be operative so long as there is a 'today' (cf. Heb. 3:13) or, as it is said, 'until the shadows flee away' (Song of Songs 2:17), that is to say, until we pass beyond this present life that shows us the truth only in a shadowy form, indistinctly and as in a mirror (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12).

Thus when we lapse from our contemplation and vision of the uncreated One that transcends the intellect, we must find a way to draw as close as we can to uncreated things that can be apprehended by the intellect, so that our return to the uncreated One that transcends the intellect may be accomplished as quickly as possible. And when mist falls more densely upon us, obscuring our intellection and making us listless in engaging our intellect in contemplation, with a humble heart we must actively turn to the prescribed prayers. And when the darkness has been dispelled by the power of prayer and by tears, we must make again the sensible and created realm the basis of our endeavours. Let us bear in mind that spiritual light is already dwelling personally in our heart and is spiritually active there. Moreover, the intellect consciously possesses the strength that comes from the practice of the virtues; for it is from such practice that the intellect mounts, as if to some mountain-ridge or lookout-place, in order to contemplate the things that are not only unseen by the many, but also unsought and inconceivable, and without which nobody will see either himself or, *a fortiori*, God. It will not be taking us too far out of our way if we now briefly say something about this practice of the

virtues.

36. The soul possesses three inner aspects that call for the practice of the virtues: the intelligent, the appetitive, and the incensive; and three exterior aspects: the appetite for esteem and glory, for pleasure, and for material riches. Examining deeply the way in which Christ lived as a man, the soul with the grace of our Lord Jesus heals these two triads by means of its four principal virtues, that is to say, by moral understanding, justice, self-restraint and courage. By doing this it permits its intellect to soar unhindered heavenwards, to behold the divine realm, and to contemplate God.

For when the Lord Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to wrestle with the devil (cf. Matt. 4:1–11), He healed the appetitive aspect of the soul by fasting, the intelligent aspect by vigilance and tranquil prayer, and the incensive aspect by rebutting the devil. In addition He healed the appetite for pleasure by not asking, even though He was hungry, that stones should be turned to bread, as the devil had suggested to Him; He healed the appetite for esteem and glory by not throwing Himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple, so that He might be lauded by the crowd for having suffered no harm through His fall; and He healed the appetite for material riches by not being persuaded to worship the devil in return for the promise that He would have the wealth of all the kingdoms of the earth; but with a spirited reply, characterized by moral understanding, justice, self-restraint and courage, He rebuffed Satan, and in doing so showed us how to overcome his every attack.

One can learn the same lessons if one looks at the cross of the Saviour. For does not the Saviour pray at that moment when He withdraws from His disciples (cf. Matt. 26:36)? This is the healing of the intelligent aspect of the soul. Does He not watch and remain awake and suffer thirst on the cross (cf. John 19:28)? This is the medicine for the appetitive aspect. Does He not refuse to answer back, to argue or to cry out (cf. Matt. 26:63; 27:12–14), even when falsely accused? And does He not pray for those who maltreat Him (cf. Luke 23:43)? This is to set the incensive aspect in order – to refute the devil by rebuttal, but in the case of fellow humans who maltreat Him to respond to them with silence and forbearance, and to pray for them, because they too are being despitefully attacked by Satan. Is He not spat upon and slapped, does He not suffer sarcasm and mockery (cf. Mark 14:65)? This is the cure for our love of esteem and glory. Does He not drink vinegar and eat gall, is He not crucified and pierced with a spear (cf. Matt. 27:34, 48; John 19:29, 30, 34)? This is the remedy for our love of pleasure. Is He not hung naked, in public

view, homeless upon the cross, disregarded by all, like a pauper, destitute? This is what destroys our lust for material riches.

Twice, then, the Saviour has shown us the cure for passions both internal and external: when He first manifested Himself to the world in the body, and when He was about to take His leave of the world. Accordingly, if a person observes Him, His teaching and His cross, and models himself upon the Saviour as much as he can, with moral understanding and justice, with self-restraint and courage, such a person will put an end to the activity of the passions that incite us to evil, and of all the other things that assail us through these passions. He will be truly engaged in ascetic practice, ready in every way to contemplate and to draw near to God, and to concentrate his spiritual vision upon Him.

Thus the intellect, having started from the many created things that can be perceived by the senses and observing how beautifully they are wrought, and having then contemplated created things that can be apprehended by the intellect, and subsequently having progressed to uncreated things that can be apprehended by the intellect, will already have climbed up four steps of the ladder. After these there follows the stage of divine and intellect-transcending ineffability and silence, of ecstatic wonder and, in short, the concentrated vision and contemplation of the transcendent One and incomprehensible union with Him. At this final stage we reach the consummation of stillness, the highest and most perfect object of desire, in so far as it may be attained in our present life. We reach, that is to say, the ultimate truth, the harvest of faith, the translucent irradiation of hoped-for glory, the foundation stone of love, the plumbline of the intellect, the coming-to-rest and inconceivable cessation of the intellect's constant activity, and the intellect's state of integration. In this way we attain a foretaste of the active presence of the Kingdom of God. We attain the source of unimaginable joy, the storehouse of peace, the extinction of material preoccupations, and a forsaking of this fallen world. We experience craving for the life to come, escape from the life of the passions, union with dispassion, a transport of joy within our soul and the integration of all its impulses and powers, repose and watchfulness, and, in short, divine knowledge and the purification of the passions.

We must, then, take careful note of how the intellect, if ensnared by its laziness or by some external circumstance, may be restored to the blessed state of contemplation that is truly its own, getting rid of the passion that bars the way and deflects it from its goal. And we must be aware how far our

intellect is from attaining its highest desire, and why this is so. We must be aware whether the contemplative power of our intellect is directed to the realm of sensory created things, or to that of noetic created things, or to that of noetic uncreated realities. We must be aware likewise whether, because of vain distractive thoughts or of any material need, our intellect is sundered from its goal, which is the only true Being, the transcendent One that is above all else. It is in this way that the intellect must remove the obstacles that separate it from its goal, so that it may mount up again, as this ladder of ascent requires, to contemplate one-pointedly the transcendent One and to concentrate its vision on Him alone.

For when the intellect finds itself outside the transcendent, uncreated and supraintellectual One, it is fragmented and separated from the supreme Good, even if it is functioning efficiently. This supreme Good is the supraintellectual, transcendent, uncreated and non-composite One that is truly the intellect's highest goal. When the intellect functions in a healthy way, it ascends thither by the stages of which we have spoken, and experiences supraintellectual union with God. Let us, then, aspire to the Infinite with all our power, let us search out that which surpasses the intellect, let us contemplate the formless One and methodically grasp the Incomprehensible. In this way we may attain the undivided possession of the One, the supreme God, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and of the life-quickening Spirit, by whose enlightenment we are granted the grace of contemplation and become gods by adoption through being deified by God's free bounty.

37. The intellect, having ascended to the realm of divine unknowing, is naturally reduced to silence; it is made one with that which is non-composite, and consequently is illumined in a unitary way by the incomprehensible One through participation in the Holy Spirit. For what could it have to say, having risen above its own intellectuality, and being established beyond all conceptualization, stripped bare, and transcending all intellection? For if it still had something to say, this would mean that it was still exercising its power of intellection, since what one says derives from something of which one has formed a concept. And if it were forming concepts of things, how could it have attained the realm of divine unknowing? For that which nothing else perceives, but which the intellect does perceive, is not utterly unknown. If this were not the case many things would be called unknown, because very many things – indeed, one could say all things – that the intellect perceives, it perceives without anything else knowing that it perceives them. In this way

the things that are unknown would be virtually infinite, which is absurd. Rather, that which is utterly unknown is the One, and the intellect ascends to it last of all, since it is that from which all else proceeds, whether visible or intelligible.

In fact, once it has ascended to the realm that is above all that is sensible, conceivable or intelligible, the intellect is established in a state in which there is no intellecting or perceiving or forming of concepts. But while it is still capable of forming concepts, and so of speaking about things, it has not yet ascended so far, or entered the realm of divine unknowing; for it is still conceiving intellectually. The unknown is inconceivable, and therefore beyond that which can be expressed. Thus once the intellect attains the realm of unknowing, and is made one with that which is non-composite, it is reduced to silence, not through any act of its own will, but as something that happens naturally when it is irradiated in a unitary manner by the inconceivable One.

38. If in a natural way the inner principles of created things cause the intellect to advance and flourish, once it does begin to flourish they elevate it to the realm to which thought has no access, to a realm, that is to say, made perfect by silence. If there were always to be thoughts in the intellect, and if the soul were always to have need of them, I cannot see what spiritual progress there could be that would surpass the realm of thought. And if there is no surpassing the realm of thought, then this is to say that thought is of use not only on the level of action, but just as much in contemplation as well. But in fact, when the intellect rises from thoughts that are the conceptual figuration of created things to the non-composite, thought-transcending, formless and absolutely and utterly One, all thought becomes superfluous or, to speak more accurately, it becomes an impediment. Thoughts in general represent a shifting from one conception to another. But how can the non-composite, absolute, uncircumscribed, figuration-free, thought-transcending One have any need of thoughts? In order to shift where? And how can He be circumscribed? For thought is in some way a circumscription, while the One cannot be circumscribed, for He is undetermined and free from figuration. If, then, thought does not accord with the intellect-transcending, unknown One because He cannot be determined and is free from figuration, then what does accord with Him is silence. Therefore those who make progress must advance from speech and thought to silence if they are to attain a state of contemplation that is non-composite and free from form and figuration.

39. If thought pertains to things that can be known, while the Unknown One cannot be known, then the Unknown One must transcend thought. And if the unknownness of the Unknown One surpasses knowledge, and if that which surpasses knowledge has no need at all of knowledge, then still less will the One have any need of thought. Accordingly, the intellect that ascends to the unknown and simple One will naturally cultivate silence. And if it is not naturally and spontaneously silent, then it has not yet attained the unknown and transcendently simple One.

40. Just as those who cultivate stillness know by experience, when they leave their cell, what a difference there is between staying in their cell and being outside it, so too those who cultivate silence and approach the glory of God through contemplation, and then revert to speech, know what a difference there is between being in a state in which silence embraces them quite naturally, and not through any deliberate act of will on their part, and being in a state when they incline towards speech. And when such silence does embrace them, they wish they had never had to open their mouths and could remain always in the state they are now in. For they are like angels on earth; and through the undeviating concentration of the intellect's vision they are joined to the truth in a unitary manner, simply, in a way that transcends form, sight and figuration, and they retain only a sense of astonishment and wonder, without intellecting anything or, rather, by sightlessly apprehending the eternal and divine irradiations. When their intellect, being liable to change, descends from these heights, they revert to the realm of thought and speech, and of multiple, variegated shifts of mind. And so that they may make their own way back to the state of silence, which is far superior to speech, they embrace stillness, protecting their senses from over-attachment to sensory things and doing all they can to escape not just speech but conceptual thought itself. In this way they are able to join with David in saying: 'I was dumb and was humbled, and I held my peace, even with respect to what is good' (Ps. 39:2.LXX). For even to speak of the good is inferior to thought-transcending silence.

41. The Divine is not completely disclosed, nor is it completely undisclosed. *That* it exists is disclosed, and very clearly so; but *what* it is remains undisclosed. There is a great difference between knowing that God exists and knowing what He is; for that He exists is revealed through His energy or activity, while what He is relates to His essence, which is unknowable even to the angels, since God infinitely transcends all being and

all intellect and intellection. When the intellect gives its attention to the things which proclaim that God is, then it has much to say, and it can philosophize about this in an excellent way. It can indeed be called both philosopher and theologian. But when it has ascended above the realm of the things which proclaim that God is, and is embraced by the divine unknowability – when it seeks to imagine what God is, and becomes by grace free from its dependence on form, touch and sight – then everything that can be said in words about God becomes inoperative, and the intellect, at-oned with itself, becomes quiescent, for it has entered into the realm of the unknowable. And then it becomes wholly one with that which is beyond all things, which is above the reach of thought, conception or changing mental processes, and which can be approached only in a spirit of simplicity, of incomprehensibleness and ineffability, and of rapturous wonder. It beholds, in an inexplicable way, that which is free from figuration, infinite and limitless. It sees the vision of the Invisible and the form of the Formless; for it has itself become in all truth unconditioned and free from form. In short, as a result of its experience of the realities that it has perceived unseeingly and beheld sightlessly, the intellect is transfigured with fresh colours by divine and supranatural beauty and it glorifies God who has made it what it is.

42. God is called One not simply because He is non-composite and because He is beyond all that is composite, but because among all the things that are called beings and that derive their existence from Him, He alone possesses existence in a substantive way. For that which does not possess substantive and non-composite being cannot be substantively and non-compositely One. Furthermore, since God is everywhere without being circumscribed by anything, He alone is unlike everything else and clearly transcends all things. He is eternal, without either beginning or end, and while remaining Himself undefiled He illumines all beings with the divine light of His providence, even if all things do not receive that light in the same measure. And, moreover, since God makes Himself known to all beings while remaining uncircumscribed by any of them, in order that He may somehow be contemplated in an integrated way that transcends intellectual union, He requires that the intellect which contemplates Him should itself be integrated, free from form and figuration, without colour, beyond the grasp of all other beings, utterly free, limitlessly undetermined, and surpassing time, place, nature and all that pertains to the natural world.

43. Since the spiritual union between God and the intellect is brought to

pass on a level beyond intellection, it is said that at that time the intellect transcends its own nature and without any restriction concentrates its power of spiritual perception on the One that is supranatural and hidden. Of course, that which the intellect experiences, it experiences according to its own nature, yet with this nature purified by grace; for intellection is to the intellect as seeing is to the eye. He who looks into darkness sees nothing, except that he sees the darkness as a thing; and he sees that he sees nothing. If he had covered his eyes, he might have thought that there was light and various objects around him. But now, though he is looking, he sees clearly that he sees nothing.

It lies beyond the nature of the eye for its optical power to penetrate the darkness and perceive what is hidden; but the eye can still see that it does not see. The same is true in the case of the intellect: having ascended to the divine hiddenness and advanced beyond the state of intellection, it perceives nothing; for how could it perceive anything? Yet it perceives that it does not perceive, and that what it does not perceive is the One, hidden somehow in divine darkness. From this One emanates every being whatsoever, whether visible or intelligible, whether included in the created order or eternally uncreated. And if the intellect did not exercise its power of perception, it would not perceive that it was itself extended beyond itself. But now that it does exercise this power, it perceives most clearly that it does not perceive, since it transcends perception, and that what it does not perceive cannot be perceived. To penetrate into and to contemplate the divine, single hiddenness that transcends the intellect exceeds the intellect's nature. But to concentrate its vision on the divine darkness of that hiddenness and to form an image of the ineffable One that in His inexpressible mystery transcends all things, and to perceive that within the divine darkness it perceives nothing – all this is certainly possible for the pure intellect that contemplates through the grace of the Holy Spirit.

For the intellect's spiritual vision is not sealed, shut off and inoperative when it perceives that it perceives nothing except the divine and non-composite One in His hiddenness; for if the intellect's vision were in this way shut off, that would simply be an indication of its own ignorance. But when it contemplates with greater clarity, it rises up to a level that transcends the intellect; and then, as it exercises its power of contemplation in the hiddenness of the utterly simple One, it perceives its own failure to perceive – although at the same time it does clearly perceive *that* the source of all

things is One and hidden, even if it does not perceive *what* the One is.

We have said that the intellect transcends its own nature, inasmuch as it exercises its power of perception within the utterly simple hiddenness of God; and yet to perceive in this way accords with its nature when it has attained a state of purity. Indeed, we can say that it is natural for the intellect to transcend its nature when it apprehends sightlessly – that is, without intellection – the divine, simple and single hiddenness that surpasses the intellect; for at this point it has no spiritual apprehension other than that of the One that transcends all things. And when through its own noetic activity it comes to this point, it then attains a state of rest and repose – not rest from contemplation, for that would be absurd, but rest and repose from the constant shift from one conception or one object of contemplation to another. For when it has reached this point, the intellect falls into the light-filled abyss of that which is infinite and uncircumscribed, and it comes face to face with the incomprehensibility of the divine, invisible hiddenness. It is eclipsed, so to say, and rests immobile, and experiences nothing but wondrous rapture and spiritual delight. And though it ceases from movement, it is at the same time energized by spiritual illumination, as it gazes, united and integrated, unwaveringly upon the transcendent hiddenness. It is reduced to bewilderment, yet rendered ever more beautiful, by the unapproachable interiority of transcendent illumination.

If, however, the intellect has at this point desisted from contemplation, how could it experience such wonder and joy? But when the intellect reaches this point, it is said to come to a halt in the sense that it continues unwavering in its contemplation of the One, and is drawn towards the radiance of the One, and rejoices in it and is made luminous by it, and does not shift its ground. In no way does it cease to enjoy its power of vision, for such cessation is something that it must avoid, since it would be reprehensible and would lead only to a state of murky ignorance. This rest and repose of the intellect of which we have spoken is brought about by the unapproachable irradiation of light; and true contemplation is that which seeks not to shift from one object to another, but to rest in a state of repose. For that supranatural, mystically unknown, supraessential One is infinite and inaccessible to every intellect; and He does not allow the intellect that contemplates Him to contemplate anywhere else, once it has come to enjoy a befitting purity, and has been uplifted to the Divine. The intellect lapses from this divine contemplation and from the beauty that transcends all beauty and

from the infinite only when it is deflected by the contrary attraction of some object or conjunction, or by the natural fragmentation of attention to which it is liable.

44. It is the intellect's nature to perceive intellectually, and such perception involves fluctuation and transition from one object to another. Yet because the intellect, when established in God, transcends intellection and fluctuation, it may justly be said that when it perceives God unconditionally then it transcends its own nature. For it is clear that every conceptual image is the image of some object; but where there is no object to be contemplated, no conceptual image can be engendered or devised. Thus God, since in no way can He be seen as an object, becomes visible to the intellect by means of the attributes and qualities through which He manifests Himself. These possess a deposit of power, for they emanate from a source of power.

Thus since the intellect is habituated, where all other things are concerned, to contemplate their powers together with the forces that empower them, it seeks to do the same with respect to God. And since this is impossible, for it transcends the natural capacity of any created intellect, it contemplates the realities that pertain to God; and as for God Himself, it beholds Him sightlessly, as we have said, through simple and concentrated apprehension. And when it is tranquil, and is granted divine grace, and when the holy and venerable Spirit quickens it, the intellect is snatched away from the unceasing stream of intellection into a state that is free from form, without qualities and simple, and through the supranatural power of the Spirit it swiftly enters into the heart. Established in the vision of God and not perceiving anything intellectually, it rises above intellection. Thus, from intellecting the realities that pertain to God, the intellect attains divine vision and, as we remarked, through regaining its simplicity it is said to transcend its own nature, for it rises above the realm of intellection.

45. Whatever is said to be unknown must manifest some aspect of itself, for otherwise we would have no idea of it at all. In that case it would come into the category of things which have no reality, since that which does not give any recognizable sign of its reality can be regarded in the same way as that which has no reality. In the case of God, however, along with His hiddenness there coexist certain tokens through which He does indeed manifest Himself, so that by seeking out these tokens the intellect can become aware of the divine hiddenness, and thus by way of those aspects of God that are within its grasp it can ascend towards that which escapes its

grasp. When it does this the intellect realizes with surety that there is precisely something that does escape its own natural grasp, something that, being supranatural, transcends all intellectual and even angelic comprehension – something that is the cause, origin and fulfilment of all nature and essence and being; that is itself supranatural and supraessential, established infinitely above all being; that is unborn, without beginning, infinite, and not in any way circumscribed by nature, place or time.

This something is the hidden One that transcends the intellect. And the divine apprehensibility that in natural sequence flows out from the One is very powerful, and draws us back towards Him and as it were reverses our direction, leading us through spiritual guidance and correction, and through intense effort, to the primal, hidden and supranatural One. He unites us to Himself in such a way that we perceive that He is, and that He is One, and that it is utterly inconceivable that we should know what this hidden One is in His essence. For how can thought explore that which transcends the intellect and is beyond the reach of the human mind?

Yet this spiritual reality that lies outside the scope of thought can be contemplated by the intellect in a manner beyond speech and words, silently, in a unitary fashion, in a way that transcends thought, for it is hidden; and the intellect rejoices in it as its provident source, and is full of wonder at its supreme luminosity and bountifulness, at its supreme wisdom and strength; and it delights in the sense of divine exultation that the One imparts, for all the things by means of which it perceives the supraessential, hidden One are boundless and infinite, and they perfectly accord with its spiritual nature. What does not accord with it is for the intellect, when in this state, to make use of thoughts and to explore this reality by shifting from one conception to another. He then who does not cultivate silence, but makes use of thoughts and words, falls far short of the highest state accessible to the intellect. For this highest state, as would be admitted even by those who show no concern for the truth, is attained when the intellect functions at the highest level at which it can function. This highest level is attained when the intellect concentrates its vision on that which is supremely exalted, something which, as we said, is accomplished without the use of sight, and still more without the use of words.

46. When the intellect sightlessly apprehends the most divine, unified, utterly sovereign and supreme hiddenness, there descends thence upon the intellect a perception, itself sightless, integrated and unique, that is full of

transcendentally beautiful, exalted and ineffable splendour. This sightless perception plunges the intellect into an abyss of silent wonder and amazement, after it has filled the heart with spiritual energy and peaceful joy. This sightless perception illumines the intellect with spiritual light, irradiating it and imbuing it to a corresponding degree with divine love and dazzling exaltation. All this has its source in God, from whom come all good gifts (cf. Jas. 1:17), when the intellect is in a state of purity. What one might call the raw material of this joyful state is provided by certain divine revelations in Scripture and by created beings when they are viewed with intelligence and integrity, in stillness and prayer. For the most hidden, inward and thought-transcending oneness of the Divinity can be perceived, not in any chance fashion, but in the integrated radiance that emanates from the One and entirely permeates the intellect's vision and contemplation. He who does not experience this ascends only in an external way, by means of thinking and human knowledge, to a purely abstract conception of the supranatural, hidden and non-composite One; he does not ascend by virtue of the spiritual energy awakened in his heart, or through being illumined with spiritual light.

47. The intellect's most splendid, integrated and simple contemplation of God, through which it apprehends the unique divine hiddenness and the radiance that issues from it, and receives the divine effulgence of eternal and infinite light, requires that not the mouth alone, but the intellect also, should fall silent. For it is quite possible for the mouth to be silent while, within, the intellect is classifying things and moving from one thought to another, from one concept to another, and is in a state of multiplicity because of the inner conversation going on inside it. This is very different from the state of the intellect that has ascended to the utterly non-differentiated hiddenness of the divine One that is free from conceptual images. For the intellect's power of contemplation is one thing, while it is quite another to classify things and to form concepts of them, as we do when carrying on an inward conversation.

It is on account of this that when the intellect gives its attention to created and composite things or to that which is otherwise diversified, it first observes them and then forms concepts of them, thus itself becoming diversified, since often from one object it may conjure up several concepts. But when it ascends towards the unified, single and innermost divine hiddenness and brings into play its organ of contemplative vision and is illumined by the simplicity of the divine light, it is not at all in a state in which it can form conceptual images; for the non-composite One cannot be

grasped through mental transition from one concept to another, or by any tendency of the intellect to diversify. The divine hiddenness cannot be conceptualized or expressed in words. For this reason the one who has ascended spiritually to the most glorious, divine and unified hiddenness will naturally cultivate silence, as regards both his voice and his intellect.

48. When the intellect's attention is directed fully towards God, and the aspiration of its contemplative faculty is overwhelmed by the translucent rays of divine beauty, and when it ascends, free from figuration, to the simplicity and infinity of the hidden and formless One, attaining unity with itself through this ascent and, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, concentrating its vision on the One, then with great lucidity it enters into a childlike state so far as its understanding is concerned; and it savours the kingdom of the ineffable and transcendent God. For as the Lord Himself said: 'Unless you turn and become as children, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven' (Matt. 18:3). Then the intellect is set free and is not conditioned by anything, for it transcends the limits of all human knowledge, of all conceptualization, and of all that is composite or diversified, and it is drawn towards the ineffable and the unknown that lies beyond the intellect. In this way it is naturally reduced to silence, for it has transcended not just thought but also all intellectual activity. Attaining that which is hidden and free from form, spiritually it enjoys a supranatural state that is filled with grace and sweetness.

49. In a unitary manner, contemplatives contemplate God the One in a way that is formless and utterly transcendent, that is marked by uncompounded loveliness and total simplicity, crowned with infinite blessings and resplendent with radiant beauty. This radiance bathes the whole intellect with light, conferring on it ineffable and inexpressible bliss, active within it as an inexhaustible and ever-abundant fountainhead of all that is good and beautiful. The eyeless intellect participates in a plentiful treasury of glory, measureless and unending. It overflows with undiluted joy and delight and exultation that ceaselessly and mystically pour forth from the divine and supranatural unity that secretly subsists within the hiddenness that none may approach.

How vast and unfathomable is that uncircumscribed sea of unutterable bounty, inexplicable love and inconceivable providence that flows from the One with boundless power and ineffable wisdom! It is something inconceivable to the angels and even to the Seraphim themselves, for it

transcends every intellect. Indeed, all this is true also of those things which even in the present life we apprehend as it were with inexpressible thought, and which in the life to come are reconstituted and in a certain way reborn and made perfect; they confound the intellect of the Cherubim who can only form an indistinct conception of them. How great is God's goodness and counsel, His love and generosity! How great is His power and wisdom and divine providence! Truly blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered (cf. Ps. 32:1); and blessed is the one to whom Thou givest guidance, Lord, and instructest with Thy law and Thy Spirit (cf. Ps. 94:12).

50. Things that cannot be contemplated by those who are concerned only with things of this world and who, as the Lord said, are incapable of receiving the Holy Spirit (cf. John 14:17), are yet revealed to others in spirit and in truth. They are revealed, that is to say, to those who choose to withdraw from the world and the world's concerns, and whose heart's vision by divine grace is illumined by the spiritual light shining from the noetic Sun as it rises in the east (cf. Luke 1:78). Such people have received God's help so that their hearts ascend and they are illumined by the light of divine vision. As is fitting, they perceive with great clarity a very large number of divine and noetic realities, worthy of spiritual contemplation. Furthermore, those who have led a holy life undergo a total restoration of their true nature. This is something that cannot be perceived in a sensory way, and that also transcends intellection.

Thus such people are changed utterly, totally translated to a state that transcends the intellect and to a life and joyousness that are beyond all conception. As gods by adoption in the presence of the true God, they delight and rejoice in the supranatural blessings bestowed on them by the highest and only true God. Encircling Him, they celebrate with the utmost holiness the divine and more than intelligible feast; and together they observe the joyous, heart-delighting festival in company with all the noetic orders of the angels. Immense and inconceivable is the river of pure exultation supreme in beauty. For if visible beauty that reaches the intellect through the organs of sense, a beauty that is limited and transitory, that is not non-composite or uncreated, can yet produce in the soul such grateful delight, it is not difficult for those who possess understanding and who are capable of comparing one thing with another to grasp and appreciate what happens when we attain the realm of spiritual realities. For these realities that transcend the intellect, that are not

limited or transitory, flow from God, the source of all that is beautiful and good. Uncreated and eternal, they bring delight and gladness and divine life in a manner that befits the Age to come.

51. When the intellect has bid farewell to and has left behind the dimensions of time and space, along with the limited characteristics of natural forms, then stripped naked it participates in a simplicity that is integrated and in a life that is uncreated and beyond all form. Unveiled and without any obstacle, it ascends supranaturally into a realm that transcends conception and speech, that is eternal and uncircumscribed, limitless and undetermined. It is impelled by the spiritual inspiration and divine power active in the heart and by the divine irradiation which, together with the intellect's vision, extends (so it seems) to the infinite. Then the peace of God rises up in the soul, and the ineffable joy and the indescribable rejoicing of the Holy Spirit are poured into it; and the wondrous rapture that passes beyond the forms of human knowledge leads it to affirm in quiet hymnody, not just that the God of Gods *will* appear in Sion (cf. Ps. 84:7), but that He is *even now* seen in the Sion of the intellect that rises aloft and beholds celestial realities. 'O Lord, the God of hosts, blessed is the man that puts his hope in Thee' (Ps. 84:12.LXX).

52. When the intellect is illumined by supernal wonders which it cannot comprehend or express, and sees itself in the presence of God and of things divine, then – if we may put it in this way – it tastes the true fruits of spiritual knowledge, and is deified, and rejoices, and enters ever more fully into divine love. It does not speak at all, nor does it investigate whether what it experiences is within it or outside it, nor does it form concepts; it simply sees, in a noetic and unified manner, for it is enlightened spiritually by the light of truth, and transforms what it sees into a source of unchanging delight.

53. When the whole being of the intellect, looking into the heart, beholds the irradiation of the Spirit ceaselessly flowing out from the heart, then indeed it is time to keep silence (cf. Eccles. 3:7).

54. When the whole of our noetic being beholds God or, rather, when the whole of the intellect enters within God or – to put it another way – when God enters into the whole of the intellect, then precisely, and even more so, is it time to keep silence.

55. When the intellect, through participating in the Holy Spirit, finds itself standing in contemplation before God, and enjoys in so far as it can the glory and radiance that come from God's face, then it should certainly keep silence,

gazing in stillness and quietness. And if any mist of darkness should arise between the intellect and God, then the intellect should at once stab this darkness with a shaft of incandescent fire, momentary yet full of divine power. It should in this way swiftly dispel the darkness and mist with light and heat. Then, when the intellect is illumined and warmed by this light and heat, it can once again enter into union with God, contemplating His beauty and truly delighting in Him. Growing in beauty, it experiences, to put it briefly, the fruits of noetic apprehension through receiving the life-quickening Spirit from God. In this way in God it is made simple and set free truly and spiritually from all things, including those that pertain to God Himself.

This is what rightly and befittingly happens to the contemplative. But he who gives himself only to ascetic practice will be far from finding himself in such a state, for he will not as yet have been united with himself, and through himself with God. It is not surprising, then, that the ascetic who has not yet attained the state of contemplation should gather within himself a store of divine admonitions and rebukes which he can discharge vocally one after the other; for it is only by means of such a continuous barrage, as it were, that he can terrify and put to flight him who is so hostile to us and who so vehemently fights against us. Yet if such a person persists in his ascetic practice the time will come when, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the flamelike irradiations of these many divine canticles and utterances to which he gives voice will be united into one great fire; and then he will easily deal his enemy, the devil, a decisive blow, burning and dissolving or, rather, obliterating the darkness that previously enveloped him, and illuminating and enkindling himself with that fire, and arousing his love for the divine to the highest degree. At the same time, he will silently offer up a heartfelt and enraptured hymn to God, as he calls to mind God’s extraordinary wonders and mysteries. Not without reason, then, will those who endure patiently for the Lord’s sake be called blessed; and, because of their meekness, they will with the passing of time inherit the spiritual earth that was promised them by Christ our Lord (cf. Matt. 5:5).

56. When the intellect, illumined by each of the Spirit’s irradiations, grows dizzy and bewildered, and when noetically it perceives itself reaching out towards the infinite and undetermined and in this way undergoing transformation, then it is time to keep silence (cf. Eccles. 3:7).

57. Again, when the intellect feels that the vividness of its visions is over-

taxing it and that it wants to meditate through use of discursive thinking, so that it may refresh itself to some extent by relaxing tension, then it is the time to speak (cf. Eccles. 3:7), albeit briefly, and only so far as this accords with the divine illumination.

58. When the intellect, fleeing through the midst of the waters so as to escape the noetic Pharaoh, journeys by night with the light of burning fire and by day under a covering of cloud (Exod. 13:21; 14:21–22), then it is the right time for silence and stillness and for the true beginning of the soul's purification. But when the mighty noetic Amalek rises up against the intellect, and with all the tribes that follow him blocks the way to the promised land, then the time is ripe for the intellect to speak (cf. Eccles. 3:7), upheld in God's presence by the two supports of spiritual practice and befitting contemplation, just as of old the two hands of Moses were supported by Aaron and Hur (cf. Exod. 17:12).

59. When from the depths of divine noetic vision spiritual power wells up and gushes forth in the heart, then naturally it is time to keep silence. For then with true noetic perception the intellect ineffably worships and venerates God in spirit and in truth (cf. John 4:24).

60. When as a result of the spiritual contemplation of God the soul's intelligence is entirely filled with divine rapture, its noetic aspect with vision, and the soul itself with exultation, then without doubt it is time to keep silence. For then, its spirit keenly aroused, the intellect gazes with full concentration upon the truth, and, rapt in wonder, it worships and venerates God who shines within it.

61. Those who venerate God aright, in spirit and in truth (cf. John 4:24), and who worship Him as they should, are no longer confined to a particular point in space as they venerate and worship Him, and equally they transcend the spoken word. For just as our power of noetic perception, once it has securely attained the vision of God, no longer aspires to venerate in a spatial dimension that which cannot be circumscribed and for which there is no resting-place (cf. Isa. 66:1), so too, preserving its sense of reverence for the truth, our noetic perception altogether refuses to venerate and worship that which is infinite and uncircumscribed – which is formless, utterly simple and, in short, that entirely transcends intellect – by means of a variety of words or through specific verbal expressions. This happens when through the grace and inspiration of the Holy Spirit the intellect is wholly illumined by knowledge of the divine truth. For at that time the intellect, completely freed

from all things, and even in some ways having gone beyond itself, cultivates not only a suspension of all speech, but also, and quite rightly, a suspension of all intellection. For the intellect, radiant with spiritual light, now devotes itself to and contemplates in joy and wonder realities that surpass all utterance and intellectual apprehension. United to that which is beyond itself, wholly unmoving and unchangeable, the intellect attains a state of sightless spiritual vision.

62. The intellect must keep a careful watch over itself, and must guide its spiritual state with circumspection, wisdom and justice. When it feels itself to be contemplating the simple and indefinable mysteries of theology, then it must persist in stillness and silence, filled with wonder, and conscious that its heart is being quickened and illumined by the Holy Spirit. For then is the time not only for all the senses to be quiescent in regard to sensible things, but no less for us to desist from all verbal explanations. Especially in the case of those imbued with spiritual knowledge – though this need hardly be said – it is the time for the cultivation of noetic stillness and the renunciation of all things visible. We must remain, that is to say, wholly quiescent as regards our senses, our speech and our thoughts. In this way the intellect may directly, and if necessary in complete solitude, fittingly and freely concentrate its integrated and unitary vision on the one and unique threefold God. So it will be enabled to contemplate the infinity that is above thought, the eternity and incomprehensibility of God, and, in short, all the other unchanging and unconditioned divine qualities. It will be united with them, transformed by contemplation and, in a state of delight and wonder, made by divine grace simple and wholly godlike.

The intellect would wish it were possible to enjoy that state continuously. But this it cannot do, since it is liable to change and lives encompassed by things that are changeable. It is attached to a body and affected by the circumstances that surround it. Yet whenever it lapses, using all its skill it should strive not to fall away altogether from its one-pointed contemplation of the One, and not to use many words. It should say but little, and what it says should be about divine illumination, so that it may not only return more quickly towards the intellect-transcending union with God, but may also sense this union more clearly and more lastingly. For the more concentrated and undissipated the intellect, the more swiftly will it be restored to divine union, and through its constant communion with the divine it will be united with splendours that are ever more fecund and translucent.

63. When the intellect experiences the integral divine revelation imparted to us through spiritual vision, it is transformed and illuminated by the Unknown that is beyond all human knowledge. It becomes indivisible, simple and unlimited, and it is wholly filled with light within the divine darkness. Because of its exceeding simplicity it contemplates a beauty that is indescribable, that is formless in that it transcends all form, that is unoriginate in that it surpasses all origin, that is itself uncircumscribed while it embraces all boundaries and everything that bounds something else, a beauty that fills all things, being itself full to overflowing and infinite. In short, when the intellect, withdrawing its attention from all things in order to contemplate the One, sees everything with an inexpressible power of spiritual perception that is higher than all conceptualization, then it is time to keep silence. Through divine initiation, secretly and in a manner that transcends the world, or, if I may put it this way, without sight or speech, we should enjoy in all simplicity the truth alone. But when the intellect is not in this state and its attention is divided, then it is time to speak – but to speak only of things that assist our ascent towards silence; for the silence which is beyond speech and which may rightly be called timely is far superior to all speech.

That is why Solomon, who so highly recommended silence, said that there is a time to keep silence and a time to speak (cf. Eccles. 3:7). What is best of all and on the highest level is to keep a timely silence. If this is not yet possible for us, and our intellect cannot apprehend as a single whole the things that are above speech, then timely speech should take its place, even though this is on a lower level. In order for speech to be closely related to silence, let speech, as well as silence, be cultivated in a timely manner, and let it draw us towards silence by continuously speaking about and conceptually invoking things divine. Let us do all that is in our power, as we look upon the creation, to behold also the Creator. That is what it means to speak in a timely fashion. But the following must also be said, by way of underlining this same point.

64. When the intellect has traversed all the things of this world and, rising above them, has gladly and quite naturally fallen silent, then is it time to enjoy the things that are above this world and inexpressible. It is the time of divine irradiation and of spiritual light, of the intellect’s union and contemplation, of its simplicity, of its freedom from all determination, of its infinity and of the luminous knowledge that it attains. It is the time, in a word, to apprehend and to participate in spiritual wisdom, through which the

intellect is made perfect in attentiveness and in silence, rapt in wonder and filled with inexpressible joy.

65. When the soul with its sense of truth feels itself intoxicated by the cup of grace as if by the most powerful wine, and is transported out of its mind, it is clear that it is then time to keep silence.

66. When our inner state impels us to cry, ‘Lord, why do those who afflict me increase in number? Many rise up against me’ (Ps. 3:1), then is it time to speak – but not to speak at random, but to speak against our enemies with moderation and in an appropriate way.

67. When the light of the Lord’s countenance is imprinted upon the soul, making it more beautiful and radiant so that it overflows with divine exultation, then it is time to keep silence.

68. When the intellect sees false witnesses rising up against it, asking about things that it does not know and troubling it, then the time has come to speak, and indeed to answer back.

69. God is the pinnacle or, one might say, the acme and culminating point of beauty and goodness among all that is and in all that can be perceived spiritually. But among all visible things, man is by nature greatly pre-eminent and incomparably the most superior – indeed by grace he is higher than the angels. Thus as the contemplative intellect approaches that which is beyond conceptual thought by way of the many beings that lie between God and men, but has not yet profusely experienced God’s illuminating grace, it is filled with astonishment. When, however, it has tasted of this grace through spiritual power operating in the heart, I would say that it swiftly ascends to God, the highest beauty and goodness, and it enters into Him through the gift of divine grace. It sees in an integrated way and is filled with wonder, dwelling in silence in the depths that transcend the intellect.

This state is truly the pledge, one might say, of the intellect’s first day of rest, prefigured in the day of rest that God took after He had made all created beings (cf. Gen. 2:2–3). But the intellect clearly enjoys another, a greater and much different Sabbath, of which a true paradigm is the Sabbath reserved for the people of God (cf. Heb. 4:9); and this Sabbath it enjoys when from God it returns to itself and perceives itself both as the icon of its Prototype and as embracing the totality of all that lies between God and human beings. Thus the intellect not only ascends in the proper way, with awe and astonishment, into the realm that is above intellect and thought; but it is also filled with joy and spiritual jubilation, exulting silently in the visionary irradiations and

miracles that it experiences both in itself and beyond itself; and through the grace of Christ Jesus it unites itself with the oneness of the divine and supranatural Godhead.

70. When the intellect, contemplating in spirit and in truth, deliberately removes from its field of vision all created things as though they did not exist, then ineffably and in a manner above every noetic operation and union it beholds that which truly is. In this way it infinitely transcends the vestiges of the Divine which in a certain way are to be seen in created beings. And then the intellect becomes unified and one, if I may so put it, as it remains ineffably silent; and it is filled with love and joy, not in the ordinary sense, but with the love and joy that is quickened by the Holy Spirit, and with a delight equal to that of the angels.

71. Thine essence, Lord, is in absolutely no way at all to be grasped by anything, whether of a rational or noetic nature, or by any created knowledge, even that of the Cherubim. For it utterly and immeasurably transcends all knowledge; and the same is true, Master, of all the infinite and undetermined qualities that pertain to Thee. For in unsurpassed solicitude for us Thou hast commanded Moses, the lawgiver of the Old Testament, to proclaim that Thou callest Thyself ‘He who is’ (cf. Exod. 3:14). But likewise, most true and only supreme Verity, Thou hast also said concerning some of Thine own people that though Thou wast seen by them yet Thou hast not revealed Thy name to them. For Thy name is incomparably above all names (cf. Phil. 2:9), not those on earth alone, but also those in the heavens.

All the things that are full of Thy light proclaim that Thou art essence, albeit independent of any material substratum; and they proclaim Thee thus so that Thou mayest be seen as transcending all being and all intellection, not having any material substratum whatsoever. Thus Thou art made known to us as beyond the reach of our intellect, as immeasurably unknown and higher than all things that can be known. Thou art seen to be entirely above time and without beginning. Thou art self-subsistent life, infinite, altogether eluding every conception of place, in all Thy fullness omnipresent and omnitranscendent, since Thou art wholly the sole Creator of all things; and, since Thou dost encompass all noetic beings, Thou art a region where none may tread. Thou exceedest the intellect’s swiftness and dost anticipate its thought, for Thou art above all things, the hand that holds all in a way that none can explain. Thou art not subject to the limitations of nature. For Thou art unlimited, not only as regards Thy nature, for Thou art supranaturally

beyond understanding, but also as regards Thy natural attributes; for Thou art wise beyond wisdom, powerful beyond all power, loving and kind-hearted beyond all conception of love and kindliness.

What can we call Thee? Is not that which is called light approachable? So Thou must be above light. What then? A judge? But dost Thou not know everything even before it has come into existence? This is not within the competence of a judge. So Thou must be far above the rank of a judge. And what sort of creator art Thou, who with but a single movement of Thy will dost instantaneously create the multitude and variety of non-material beings? Where things non-material are concerned, how immensely Thou art superior to them! With a single impulsion of Thy Spirit Thou createst beings that share the same nature, for they are all spiritual, and yet at the same time they are many, exceedingly many, so far as the differences in their dispositions and characters are concerned. This is something altogether miraculous and utterly beyond that grasp of any human mind. Are these the marks of a creator? Not at all. Hence Thou must excel the rank of a creator.

Thou art called a builder, and Thou art proclaimed a craftsman. But what builder builds even the smallest structure without a foundation and on a non-existent base? Yet Thou, Master, hast built the whole mighty earth with all its mountains and rocks and various materials, and hast founded it upon nothing, and yet altogether securely. Or what craftsman can produce so swiftly, out of material that in no way at all exists, such great works of art as Thou producest? How then can it be right to call what Thou hast made the work of a builder or craftsman? Truly it would not be right at all. Thus Thou art infinitely above the rank of builder or craftsman, since Thou art God.

What kind of love could one ever know or hear about or imagine, even remotely, that equals the love that Thy most wonderful generosity in such an extraordinary manner has been manifested towards us through Thine assumption of our nature at Thine Incarnation? Thy great love for mankind exceeds all our hopes. When those granted the grace of contemplation turn to contemplate this they enter directly into a vast and wonderful sea of love and providence. Keenly pierced by this love, they are rapt out of themselves, and do not know how to describe truly this divine dispensation in a way that is fitting. For everything that concerns Thine Incarnation, most beneficent Lord, greatly transcends intellect, thought, tidings and conception.

Thou art, and Thou art called, Father of all. But Thy fatherhood unutterably excels all other fatherhood in motive and power, in providence

and counsel, in long-suffering and forbearance. Thou are called king. But Thy kingship is not limited to the present, still less to the future, and least of all to the past. How, then, art Thou king? In a manner that is miraculous, absolute and simple. For Thy kingship is a kingship of all the ages together, equally of the present, past and future, and Thy sovereignty endures from generation to generation. Thus to an infinite degree Thou excellest all things simply and absolutely. To put it briefly, both Thou, incomprehensible Lord, and all that pertains to Thee are definitely exalted above everything.

The intellect that is able in some degree to imagine these things is drawn out of itself by the vision of Thee, so far as this can be attained. Passing wholly under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, it enters the mystical darkness, where it cannot entirely see Thee because of the infinitude and unapproachability of Thy glory. In this way inexpressibly Thou refreshest, with a repose not of this world, those who contemplate and love Thee in wonderment; and so they are not left entirely without a vision of Thee. Thus Thou renewest them with a repose divine and supranatural, O God, ineffable, inconceivable, uncircumscribed, incomprehensible and, in a word, all-transcending, both in Thine essence and in Thine energy. Amen.

72. When the intellect extricates itself from the hold of multifarious thoughts and of divisive and fragmented concepts, it rises above the sphere of mental distraction. It is inspired by and participates in the Holy Spirit that makes it one, as He breathes continuously and inexhaustibly within the heart. Frequenting constantly the regions of holiness, and swallowed up, as we might say, in visions of things divine, the intellect beholds, with a single noetic glance, in unity and inexpressible love, everything that pertains to God. Then it clearly attains godlike repose, enjoying deep, divine peace, and the holy and calm tranquillity of the heart, through the grace of Jesus Christ our Lord.

73. When the intellect converses with God and prays to Him, like a son speaking to a tenderly loving father, and when it sees the light of Jesus, it is ineffably gladdened and stricken with an overwhelming love. It feels the quickening energy of the Holy Spirit in its heart, experiencing this as a love that is unmistakably divine and supranatural; and it longs to take wing and to soar secretly and transcendently above every divine manifestation and perfection. Then truly the intellect ceases from all its works, established in the sphere that surpasses intellection, enjoying wondrous bliss and in full reality reposing in the peace of the life-quickening Spirit of Christ.

74. God rested from all the works that He had begun to create (cf. Gen. 2:3.LXX), but He did so only after He had completed His creative work by means of the Logos and the Holy Spirit. In the same way the godlike intellect also rests from all the labours on which it has embarked from the beginning, so as to bring to completion the noetic world of virtue. But this it does only after it has surveyed and as it were recreated within itself, through the grace of the Logos and the life-quickening Spirit, the whole world together with the noetic realities present within it, and has then reascended from these things once more through the grace of the Logos and the Spirit, into the realm that is called by some metaphysical, and has glimpsed the simple, absolute and mystical visions of divine knowledge. For then, resting from its labours, the intellect enjoys immense refreshment and peace in spiritual truth, and it is deified through the light of divine knowledge and through participation in the life-quickening Spirit, by the grace of Christ Jesus our Lord.

75. When God rested from His works, He did not rest from all of them but only from those that He had begun to create; for from the eternal and uncreated works that are intrinsic to His nature He did not rest. In the same way the intellect, imitating God, after it traverses and passes beyond the visible world through the grace of the divine Logos and the life-quickening Spirit, does not at all rest from the works that are intrinsic to its true nature, and that have neither beginning nor end, though it does desist from its outward works that do indeed begin and come to an end. From this it follows that while on the bodily level the person who rests becomes inactive, the opposite happens in the case of the intellect. For if the intellect, under the continuous life-quickening inspiration of the Holy Spirit, were not to continue ever-active in its spiritual contemplation of visible things, it would not even know that there is such a thing as that state of noetic repose which with ever-active movement encircles God alone in a unified manner, and which through inexpressible and ineffable repose in Christ deifies him who participates in it.

76. ‘Do not be overhasty’, said Solomon, ‘in saying anything before the face of the Lord, for God is above in heaven and you are below on earth’ (Eccles. 5:2). In this way Solomon states very explicitly when it is time to keep silence (cf. Eccles. 3:7). That is to say, he tells you directly that when you who dwell on earth come before the face of the Lord who is in heaven, and when you have been granted such grace that you who are on earth give your attention to things above (cf. Col. 3:2), observing them closely and

standing with your intellect before the face of the Lord, you should not then be too quick to say anything, for it is time to keep silence. When, that is to say, you are spiritually quickened by the truth in an integrated and godlike way – for that is what it means to stand before the face of the Lord – and when the intellect, through direct and unitary apprehension of God, perceives in an integrated manner the many things that pertain to God, do not be in a hurry to say anything as you stand before God; for otherwise out of ignorance through your own free choice you will quickly fall away and descend to a lower level. That is how we should explain Solomon's words.

Human nature was once whole and intact, and so it rightly kept itself from evil and remained close to God. In the person of our forefather Adam, it contemplated God and enjoyed with delight and wonder the glorious beauty of His countenance in a way that was non-material, noetic, heavenly and incorruptible. Grace was poured lavishly upon the soul of the first man, and his godlike intellect was filled with many spiritual visions. Dwelling in the visible paradise, he also enjoyed the spiritual paradise and what I may call the life of blessedness. Fully united with himself and God, remaining within himself and so consequently within God, his state was unified and godlike – naturally so, since he was created in the image of God.

Such, then, to put it briefly, were the blessings that God bestowed upon us. But to the enemy of our good fortune and glory, the accursed demon, consumed by jealousy, this was intolerable. How could it be otherwise? He, then, the prince of evil, destructive as he was, attacked us in many ways, deceiving us with plausible arguments and undermining our hope. Arousing within us the desire to be even more godlike than we were, he slandered the righteous commandment of God (cf. Gen. 3:4–5). As a result we have pitiably suffered the destructive consequences of this deceit and have been exiled from God and from the enjoyment of the Divine (cf. Gen. 3:23–24). In a wretched manner we have fallen away from the integrated, noetic and spiritual way of life. No longer do we enjoy the vision of God's face; no longer are we transfigured and glorified by the rays of divine beauty. In a way that should never have happened, we find ourselves shattered and splintered into many fragments. And we even rejoice wrongfully in our disintegration and self-alienation.

Instead of honouring the one three-personed Divinity, we split Him into may gods, who were not real gods at all, but deceiving, destructive and hostile demons. We lost the sovereign One, and the life and order that are

unified, and we were sundered into many different fragments. Our noetic strength and energy or, as it can more fitly be said, our spiritual endeavour, not unnaturally deserted us, and we plunged into the depths of extreme evil. In our foolishness we, who are images of God and worthy of the higher, celestial life, have chosen to give our attention to lower things. But, since our nature is not unchangeable or incapable of turning, it is possible for us – just as we woefully fell from that great glory into utter ignominy – so also to make our way back again, and to rise up and behold once more the most venerable countenance of God. Not that He is as close to us as He was once; but even from further off we are able to perceive Him and experience the radiance of His beauty.

For the most divine Moses, and all the prophets, and those who came before them such as Abraham and others like him, in so far as it was possible for them, perceived Him very clearly and fully enjoyed the radiance of His beauty, rapt in wonder before His unapproachable glory. Some of them cried out ‘Woe is me!’ (Isa. 6:5), some called themselves ‘dust and ashes’ (Gen. 18:27), and others were struck dumb by the overwhelming glory that they contemplated and reproached themselves for their ‘slowness of speech and tongue’ (Exod. 4:10). Others again experienced many different glorious and blessed revelations. So the divine prophet David, longing for the radiant beauty of the Lord’s countenance, cries out to God and implores Him: ‘When shall I come and appear before the face of God?’ (Ps. 42:2). And elsewhere, wishing to show in what state the soul will be when it beholds the Lord’s countenance, he says: ‘The upright shall dwell before Thy face’ (Ps. 140:13). So as to show the strength that the soul derives from contemplating wisely the countenance of the Lord, he says: ‘Thou hast turned away Thy face, and I was troubled’ (Ps. 30:7). If the soul is troubled when the Lord turns away His face, then when present before His face and when contemplating it, the soul will find spiritual peace. This peace is so great a gift that, among the gifts or fruits of the Holy Spirit, it comes immediately after divine love and joy.

David shows too that those who lead a holy and blessed life walk in the light of the Lord’s countenance. For he says: ‘They will walk, Lord, in the light of Thy countenance, and in Thy name they will rejoice all day long’ (Ps. 89:15–16). He refers here to the spiritual day, in which the noetic and ineffable Sun irradiates our inner being with its pure and life-quickening rays. In this way an awareness of the realities of the transcendent world dawns in our intellect, while the entire consciousness of the soul is raised above the

earth and translated into heaven. Whoever experiences this day is full of joy and praise, of bliss and delight and indescribable gladness of heart, radiant and enraptured in the splendour of the Lord's countenance. For this reason elsewhere David beseeches God: 'Turn not away Thy face from me, lest I be like those who go down into the pit' (Ps. 143:7). For when the Lord turns away His face, we are plunged into darkness, while when He turns it upon us we are filled with total noetic light and with spiritual joy.

David also says, referring to himself, 'Lord, the light of Thy countenance has stamped itself upon me'; and he adds, 'Thou hast given gladness to my heart' (cf. Ps. 4:6–7.LXX). Here the psalmist again testifies that the spiritual gift of divine grace has been bestowed upon him by the illumination of the Lord's countenance; and with respect to those who stand before the Lord's countenance and offer their entreaties before Him, he says that they are spiritually rich among God's people (cf. Ps. 45:12. LXX). For the saints and the people of God are many; yet not everyone can contemplate the countenance of God and live the angelic life while still dwelling in this world. Far from it. It is within the power only of those who are convinced that they should worship God with divine wisdom and knowledge, and should venerate Him in truth and in spirit (cf. John 4:24). These are rightly called rich among the people of God, for they have been initiated into the many mysteries of divine contemplation, and filled with great wisdom and spiritual knowledge – a knowledge which, according to St Paul, not everyone possesses (cf.1 Cor. 8:7), but only those who have attained the depth and richness of divine and spiritual wisdom and understanding.

Hence, as we noted, the great David says to God, 'The rich among the people will entreat Thy countenance' (Ps. 45:12.LXX). Knowing this better than anyone else – for he more than anyone was filled with divine wisdom (cf. 1 Kgs. 3:12) – Solomon, deeply perceptive as he was in his teaching, says, 'Do not be overhasty in saying anything before the countenance of the Lord, for God is in heaven, and you are on earth' (Eccles. 5:2). Thus when by God's gift you stand before the Lord's countenance – when, that is to say, your intellect's power of contemplation attains divine and integrated vision – then it is time to keep silence (Eccles. 3:7). Thus, do not be overhasty in saying anything untimely, simply out of habit; for now is not the time to speak. For you, too, while still on earth, have now become god, contemplating like the angels the countenance of God who is in heaven. For, as our Saviour said, the angels always behold the countenance of our Father

who is in heaven (cf. Matt. 18:10).

Hence when we find Solomon saying elsewhere, ‘The righteous always have light’ (cf. Prov. 13:9.LXX), we may rightly understand him to mean that they experience this through an effusion of light from the countenance of the Lord. By divine grace they always behold, as the angels do, the countenance of the Lord, from which light flows as from a spring. For a human being becomes and is another angel, not to say god, upon earth. Assuredly, as the icon of God, you will reaffirm in yourself this gift given by the grace of God, for what God is above, you will be below on earth, that is to say god. You will not be able to explain this wondrous thing in words, or by employing different concepts, or by exercising your own reasoning powers, making distinctions and analysing things mentally; but by apprehending things in an integrated manner, and contemplating them as God does sightlessly and without mental activity, with a vision that is non-composite and unitary, you will enjoy the translucent and unapproachable glory radiating from the Lord’s countenance.

This, then, for those who possess understanding, is the supreme and most greatly desired state which the intellect can attain before God. This state is the flower, as it were, of noetic purity, the longed-for unity of the faith (cf. Eph. 4:13) that is brought to pass through communion with Holy Spirit. It is the glorious fruit of the divine and deifying wisdom, the foundation of spiritual peace, the abode of unimaginable joy, the gateway to the love of God, the burgeoning of divine illumination, the fountainhead of the inexhaustible waters of the Spirit that flow forth from the heart. It is the true God that was typified by the manna given in the desert (cf. Exod. 16:13–15), bringing delight to the soul, promoting its growth and transforming it. It is the inauguration of divine and inexpressible mysteries and revelations, the outcome of the unique, primordial truth, the obliteration of all distractive thoughts, the end of all conceptualizing, the attentiveness that surpasses the intellect, the wellspring of wonderment, the intellect-transcending regeneration and transmutation of the intellect into that which is simple, entirely undetermined, infinite, uncurcumscribed, formless, without figuration, without qualities, undiversified, unquantified, impalpable and celestial. It is the restitution of the intellect to its godlike state. Thus, when you have attained this state and have, so to say, been deified by the grace of God and through His compassion, do not out of ignorance be overhasty in saying anything before the Lord’s countenance. For His is the unique,

unalloyed glory throughout all the ages.

77. A person's intellect that aspires to contemplate the noetic realm which lies above it will attain but a feeble, obscure and confused vision of this realm, unless, cooperating with divine grace, it strives towards this within that person's own heart. For unless this happens it will be deprived of the highest bliss, even though in ignorance – since it has never experienced this bliss – it may think that it does in fact enjoy it. It is as if someone were to eat bread made out of barley and to think that its taste is the most delectable that bread can offer, because he has never tasted bread made out of wheat, which is in reality far more enjoyable.

78. After its union with the heart, brought to pass through divine grace, in a sure and certain way the intellect sees by means of spiritual light, and it reaches out towards that for which it longs, which is God. Entirely transcending the realm of sense, having no colour or other qualities, the intellect is set free from all images of sensory things.

79. The intellect that is guided by grace to the realm of contemplation truly and unceasingly feeds upon spiritual manna. The material manna eaten by the Israelites was pleasant to the taste and gave powerful nourishment to their bodies. What its substance was they did not know, and that is why it was called manna, for the word signifies that which is unknown; it means, 'What is this?' When the Israelites, then, saw the manna and ate it, but did not know what it was, in perplexity they said to each other, 'What is this?' (cf. Exod. 16:15). Likewise the intellect of the person who contemplates is always in a state of astonishment, and he says to himself, 'What is this?' – what, that is to say, is this that when we contemplate it gladdens our intellect, and that when eaten spiritually nourishes our intellect, while in itself it transcends intellection? For it is divine and supranatural, wonderfully nourishing and suffusing the intellect, yet far superior to the intellect's normal state, being in essence not only incomprehensible but also infinite and unconditioned.

80. There are, we may say, three witnesses to the truth: creation, Scripture and the Holy Spirit. For when we view Scripture and creation with the aid of the Spirit, then we perceive both the single uncompounded truth, and the compounded truth that derives from it. And when, by means of these three witnesses of which we have spoken, a person attains to the two things that follow – the uncompounded truth and the compounded truth – and when he stands firm in them, he has by the grace of Christ found the infallible road. Through the uncompounded truth he reaches an infinite noetic height, depth

and breadth, and rapt in wonder and full of awe he praises God. Through the compounded truth, in addition to the wonder and awe of which we have spoken, he discovers peace of heart, love and joy. This is why full of amazement he praises God in the fullness of love. But a person needs a considerable length of time, and much effort and endurance, to free himself somehow from the hold of the senses, and to break the intellect's attachment to sensory things, so that he can attain the noetic realm, his soul illuminated by the contemplation of the truth.

Clearly, I am not saying that the truth itself has need of these things in order to disclose itself – has need, that is to say, of some length of time, or of effort and endurance, in order to be grasped; I mean that it is man who has need of them. For the truth is one and simple, even though it is perceived in a double way, as both uncompounded and compounded, and even though it calls out to us from every side, bearing testimony to itself for those who wish to behold it. But man is compound, entangled in the senses and subject to mutation and change. Because of this there are times when somehow he loses his self-identity, and without realizing it he becomes his own enemy, acting with all the cunning of self-conceit and sick because of his lack of faith. And on account of these three things – conceit, cunning and lack of faith – he pitiably lapses from the truth to which Scripture, creation and the Holy Spirit bear witness.

In order, then, for the intellect to throw off this terrible conceit and our other shortcomings, it has to humble itself and to believe with simplicity; and then through Scripture and through creation and through the power of the Spirit it will come to know immediately and clearly not only the truth that is altogether simple, but also the compound truth that derives from it. In addition the intellect will discover what it is that separates it from the contemplation and enjoyment of the truth. The truth in its primary form, then, is one and by nature uniquely simple; and after it comes, for us who are compound, the compound truth that arises from it. This is the ultimate and most elevated objective of our intellect, and towards this the whole way of life and all the ascetic struggles of those who are led by the Spirit aim and aspire. In this way their intellect, stripped naked, miraculously beholds and enjoys, in so far as it can, the glory of the primal and unique truth, and of the compound truth that proceeds from it.

This can only come about through humility, and through the simplicity of faith that arises from the testimony of Scripture and of creation descried in

the light of the Spirit. Thus when the intellect mirrors the truth within itself by virtue of its three powers, and by virtue of the three witnesses just mentioned, then, as if returning to itself, it becomes much more humble and simple and truly full of faith. And then it ascends at a swift pace to the contemplation of the truth and is yet more translucently illumined by its rays. Through this illumination the intellect then returns again to itself because of the splendour of the glory that it has contemplated, and attains an even greater degree of humility and simplicity; and it is rapt in wonder, overwhelmed by faith.

In this way the intellect completes, as it were, a divine circle. It rises up by means of humility, simplicity and faith, and so it beholds the truth; and then through the radiance of the truth it is led to a yet greater degree of humility, simplicity and faith. The intellect does not cease from advancing along this road so long as it still continues to be in the 'today' of this life (cf. Heb. 3:13). Thus it contemplates the truth in humility, simplicity and faith, by means of the testimony of Scripture and of creation descried in the light of the Spirit, and so it returns again to that point from which it started out. In this way it is deified through grace day by day, and it is illumined by the realities that transcend the intellect; and with the help of Christ our Lord it lives a life full of all grace, savouring the joy that is a foretaste of the eternal blessings of God's kingdom.

81. In its very nature the contemplative life is based upon and kept pure and untarnished by these three things: faith, manifest participation in the Holy Spirit and the knowledge of wisdom. For contemplation, if we are to define it, is knowledge of the spiritual immanent in sensory things. But sometimes it is also knowledge of purely spiritual realities independent of sense-perception; and this is something that happens in the case of those who are advancing spiritually. Also there is need for faith, for 'if you do not have faith', it is said, 'you will not understand' (Isa. 7:9). Thirdly, there is a need for the Spirit, 'for the Spirit fathoms everything, even the depths of God' (1 Cor. 2:10). That is why the divine Job said, 'It is the breath of the Almighty that teaches me' (Job. 33:4.LXX). The divine energy, both living and life-giving, enkindles the heart in a supranatural way, and inexpressibly it draws the intellect towards itself, gathering the intellect together and repelling all vain distractions. This divine energy confers upon the intellect the power to contemplate divine realities unhampered, peacefully and joyfully, through grace and with divine love, and to devote itself to these realities. It sees God

in an entirely new way and delights in Him with an ever-greater and irresistible love and with the exultation that accompanies this love.

The intellect also has need of wisdom, as I said, because wisdom, according to Scripture, ‘makes a man’s face to shine’ (Eccles. 8:1). It illumines him so that he may cross over without difficulty from the realm of sense to that of intellection, and ascend from sensory things to a spiritual and divine revelation. It illumines him, so that he may contemplate the highest mysteries, and attain an integrated vision of the supraessential God, for ‘blessed is he whom Thou dost instruct, O Lord, and whom Thou teachest through Thy law’ (Ps. 94:12). For truly wise is he who attains faith through instruction and is initiated into the hidden mysteries of God through the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Truly great is the wise man who through faith lives in union and supranatural communion with the Spirit. For indeed, as has been said, there are three things that are beyond comprehension: God, an angel and a man imbued with wisdom. For in a wondrous fashion such a man is another angel upon earth, a true visionary of the sensory and created world, a genuine initiate into the divine and uncreated energies of God – or, as one might prefer to say, into His gifts – somehow grasping in a concentrated act of apprehension a knowledge of the unseen God, in the same way as the angels.

Such in general terms is the man who through faith and with the help of the Holy Spirit is wise, and therefore blessed. To confirm what I am saying it would surely be enough to refer to what is said in the Gospel of St Luke about the Lord Jesus, to the effect that He was so free from worldly concerns that He was praised for the surpassing power of His wisdom and grace. For St Luke writes, ‘Jesus increased in wisdom, stature and grace’ (Luke 2:52); and again he states that Jesus ‘grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom’ (Luke 2:40).

Yet because I want to speak more clearly about these things, I will add what the holy Solomon said to God: ‘Who has ever yet explored celestial things? And who has ever acquired knowledge of Thy counsel, except the one to whom Thou hast given wisdom and sent Thy Holy Spirit from above? In this way, the paths of those who lived on the earth were set right, and people were taught the things that are pleasing unto Thee, and were saved through wisdom’ (Wisdom of Solomon 9:16–18). Do you see how great through the grace of the Spirit is the power of wisdom? And do you see how he who has not received either wisdom or the Holy Spirit from God, and who

is not guided by someone wise who participates in the Spirit, drives himself far from salvation? If such things have been written about the Saviour in whom dwelt the fullness of the Divinity (cf. Col. 1:19), and consequently about the whole human race together, it is not difficult to understand how necessary are the wisdom and grace of the Spirit, and how much mercy and power and inner growth God bestows on the person of spiritual wisdom who searches out celestial realities and who advances towards the knowledge of the counsel of the Most High.

Yet as we have said so much about the one who is a contemplative, we must now speak about contemplation itself and deal with it on its own, thus nourishing the intelligence of the attentive reader. For God exhorts all persons of intelligence to share their knowledge generously with those who are less intelligent, and at the same time to receive with reverence and, in so far as they can, divine illumination and knowledge of the noetic realm from those who are more intelligent than they are. Likewise He exhorts those who are on the same level to associate with one another fraternally and unostentatiously, and to speak together about intelligible realities and about God. In this way, not only will that which is right and sure add splendour to the Church of the living God, but so, too, will the blessed and most beautiful face of love, which is the distinguishing mark of Christ's disciples, shine continually within our hearts, poured into us by the Holy Spirit so that we may perfectly and simply love both God and man.

Thus we shall live an angelic and truly blessed life upon earth, in extreme happiness, for we shall be dependent upon the divine and deifying twofold love, on which 'hang all the law and the prophets' (Matt. 22:40); and there is nothing whatsoever that is more full of balm to the soul than this, especially when it proceeds directly from the contemplation and spiritual knowledge – that is to say, from the illuminating grace – of God and things divine.

According to the holy theologians, unless the intellect is deified, no one can be saved. Thus when a person has truly made ascent to God his purpose and the goal of his labour, when his aim is to be one with God and so to be deified – that is, saved – he must not only fulfil the Lord's commandments as well as he can, but must also progress beyond that to the contemplation of created beings and visible things. In this way neither his cultivation of the virtues will be blind because it is cut off from contemplation, nor will his contemplation be lifeless because it is unaccompanied by ascetic practice.

So, then, through the wisdom of the divine Logos and the intellect, and

through the sacred knowledge of Scripture – making a good start, as they say – a person may begin successfully and purposefully to concentrate his attention on the world of created and visible things, which is the revealed icon of the all-powerful and all-wise Creator. After this he may come to experience and enjoy the world of infinite power and surpassing excellence, in so far as he can apprehend it, and his intellect may be nourished secretly on hidden realities. And then with time, leading an undisturbed life in quietude, meditating only on things divine by means of Scripture and through the contemplation of the visible world, he may seek, in so far as he can and by means of a more unitary vision, to perceive creation spiritually in the light of Scripture, and to understand how natural forms symbolize the truth.

When this happens the intellect, with the benediction of the venerated Spirit and through His energy, is exalted to the vision and knowledge of holy truth – as St Dionysios the Great puts it, to the holy stage of contemplation or, in general terms, to the second stage, that of divine visions and intellections which are not veiled and dependent on symbols.[6] After that the intellect, as it were stripped bare, encounters the noetic realities themselves. In purity and with an intense aspiration for God it strives to behold within itself, as in a polished mirror, divine visions more brilliant than the sun's rays. And then, proceeding further, nourished by what it has been able to apprehend, it advances towards what we may call the third stage. At this point, by means of a visionary power that is yet more integrated and concentrated, it advances beyond these blessed revelations and divine emanations, and from the world of manifold diversification it passes to the realm of unutterable love for the unchangeable and hidden One. With all its spiritual consciousness it is transformed into fire and into heartfelt, unceasing and deifying love for God, just as he who contemplates is transformed by the Spirit that enlightens him with truth and through the power of recollection. And this, according once more to the great Dionysios, is integrated, divine participation in the One Himself, in so far as this is possible.[7]

The divinely inspired and godly intellect, then, ascends thrice-blessed by means of this integrated participation realized in three stages. Manifestly and openly it endures the overwhelming goadings of divine rapture and the frenzied love that this rapture brings about. It sees itself wounded by love, and as it were visibly set on fire by the experiences that it undergoes. Going out from itself, it is filled with the Divine. With radiant face it enters within the apophatic mysteries of theology. Seeing without sight, it feasts upon that

which is without beginning, infinite, incomprehensible, entirely inexpressible and utterly inconceivable. It pictures the essence of God to itself as an infinite and issueless ocean which, according to the same theologian,[8] exceeds all conception of time or of nature. And this, as again St Dionysios says, is the feast of the highest state of vision, which spiritually nourishes and deifies all who attain it, after they have set out from the contemplation and spiritual knowledge of created beings. This the hierophant states in the part of his writings that expounds the holy symbols of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.[9]

St Basil the Great likewise says that when someone, in the course of contemplation, passes beyond the beauty of visible things, and stands before God Himself, the vision of whom is granted only to hearts that are pure, then, advancing into the more exalted spheres of theology, he is initiated into the highest state of contemplation.[10] And again, with reference to the phrase of the God-inspired David, 'In the morning I will stand before Thee, and I will look upon Thee' (Ps. 5:3.LXX), St Basil says, 'When I shall stand before Thee, and through my intellect shall come near to contemplating Thee, then I shall receive visionary power through the enlightenment that comes from spiritual knowledge.'[11] We can also hear St Maximos speaking in like manner, showing us directly how great is the progress we make through contemplation and the knowledge of God by means of Scripture and creation. He states how it is from this that there usually comes the illumination of spiritual knowledge through which we are granted the blessed deification that results from our direct apprehension of God.[12] This is a thing which now more than ever is rare and difficult to attain for those who practise stillness, due to the lack of a teacher who can instruct us on the basis of his personal experience, bestowed on him during a time of grace. That supreme guide on the path of stillness, St Isaac the Syrian, points this out in his discourse on spiritual perception and contemplative power.[13]

St Maximos says: 'We call the teachings of the saints deifying lights, for they kindle within us the light of knowledge, and deify those who obey them.'[14] In this St Maximos is clearly in agreement with the most holy Dionysios, who says: 'This is the kind of enlightenment into which we have been initiated by the hidden tradition of our God-inspired teachers – a tradition that agrees with Scripture.'[15] And elsewhere he says: 'Divine knowledge fittingly exalts, according to their capacity, those who are drawn

towards it, and unites them in the unity of its own simplicity.'[16] And again: 'Every illumination comes down to us from the generosity of the Father, and then in turn it raises us up by its unifying power and restores us to the unity and deifying simplicity of the all-embracing Father; for "from Him and to Him are all things" [Rom. 11:36].'[17] Do you understand what happens to someone who with wise simplicity turns back to God, or rather directly apprehends him? Whether he ascends to the contemplation of God by means of created beings, or else by means of Scripture, through symbolism or in some other way that is divine, he is united to God and is deified, and, what is more, is actually called god.

For, as St Dionysios again says, 'Those noetic and intelligent beings who aspire with all their strength towards union with the divine hiddenness, and who approach as much as they can towards its divine splendour in a manner that exceeds comprehension – imitating God, if we may so express it, to the fullest extent possible – such noetic and intelligent beings certainly deserve to be called gods.'[18] The great Gregory, with all his theological wisdom, likewise affirms clearly that 'man is a living being sustained on earth by divine dispensation, and then translated elsewhere; and the end of the mystery is that he is deified by drawing near to God'.[19] And St Maximos says that the spiritual form of Holy Scripture 'by means of wisdom transfigures and deifies those imbued with spiritual knowledge; because of the transfiguration of the Logos within them "they reflect with unveiled face the glory of the Lord" [2 Cor. 3:18]'.[20]

As I said earlier, the contemplative life requires three things: faith, participation in the Holy Spirit, and the knowledge of wisdom through the grace of Christ Jesus our Lord.

82. The contemplative life, with the assistance of the life-quickening Spirit, secretly fills the contemplative with many wonderful noetic visions. Not immediately of course, nor all at the same moment, but over a period of time and after much discipline and meditation, progressively and by stages. Sometimes, in the case of someone who practises contemplation, living in stillness and withdrawing from everything except God, you may hear him saying, 'I am alone until I go on my way' (cf. Ps. 141:10. LXX). Again, after turning to the contemplation of created beings, he may say, 'Lord, how exalted are Thy works. In wisdom hast Thou made them all' (Ps. 104:24.LXX); and, 'The smell of Thy raiment is as the smell of a fertile field

which Thou, Lord, hast blessed' (cf. Gen. 27:27.LXX). At other times, as he raises his vision higher and is enabled to ascend spiritually, he is inspired to say to God, 'I follow after fragrance of Thy perfume' (cf. Song of Songs 1:4); and, 'I will extol Thee, my God and king; and I will bless Thy name for ever and ever' (Ps. 145:1); and, 'Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and of His greatness there is no end' (Ps. 145:3. LXX); and, 'Thy knowledge is too wonderful for me: it is mighty: I cannot attain it' (Ps. 130:6).

On other occasions, as the visionaries are exalted to supraessential vision, they may be heard praising God and saying, 'Thou, the Most High, abidest for ever; and Thy name is commemorated from generation to generation [cf. Ps. 102:12.LXX], for Thou art utterly exalted above all gods.' At other times they are moved to cry out openly, 'Among the gods there is none like unto Thee, O Lord, nor are there any works like unto Thy works' (Ps. 86:8). Again, those who enjoy contemplation behold the mountain of spiritual knowledge and the holy place of God, whither only they who have clean hands and a pure heart can ascend, and where only they can make their stand (cf. Ps. 24:3–4). They are enabled to see the paths that rise up to the heavens and the paths that lead down into the abyss, that is to say, the heights and the depths of the mysteries of the Spirit. Sometimes they stand wonderstruck before the vision of the Persons of the Trinity; at other times they are absorbed in contemplating with astonishment Jesus and His Incarnation and the stupendous mysteries connected with that. Yet then, after so many and such blessed visions, the Spirit does not allow them to cease from contemplation until it unaccountably leads them, illuminated as they are, into the very bosom of God – what wondrous grace! – in true quietude and indescribable repose. Supranaturally and spiritually they take their delight in – not to say, they are intoxicated by – the blessings of God, and they are filled with a yet more divine ecstasy. In that most supremely blessed bosom of God lies a great depth of divine mysteries, and abundant intimations of God's supraessentiality.

It was this bosom that Abraham received from on high as an inheritance, when God Himself became the heritage of Abraham; for He said, 'I am the God of Abraham' (Gen. 26:24). Since therefore God is *par excellence* the God of Abraham, it follows that the bosom of God is the bosom of Abraham (cf. Luke 16:22). It is, then, into the bosom of our God or, as one could equally well say, into the bosom of Abraham, that through the grace of the Holy Spirit the contemplative life raises and leads, in all simplicity, the

intellect that is imbued with wisdom. With overwhelming and loving delight, the contemplative life truly deifies such an intellect and blesses it with gladness of heart and inexpressible joy. So the intellect aspires as much as it can to gaze upwards through the grace of Christ Jesus our Lord.

83. Since both creation and Scripture are revealed by the Logos of God, then when they are viewed spiritually they will confirm and strengthen the intellect and all its powers in their vision and understanding of God, provided that our heart is first quickened and activated by the Spirit. Hence in his wisdom the holy David teaches us that the noetic beings – called by him 'the heavens' – were established by the Logos of God, and all host of them by His Spirit (cf. Ps. 33:6). Elsewhere he says that sometimes the noetic earth, that is to say our heart, appears full of God's mercy (cf. Ps. 33:5), that is to say, full of the power, energy and activity animated by the Holy Spirit, in a way that is easily perceptible and manifest.

Yet before the intellect has become conscious of this energy, power and activity in the heart, it will not yet have acquired the steadfastness that comes from reading creation and Scripture in a manner that is contemplative and spiritual, and from reconciling and uniting all that they contain in the light of the single Logos. Nor is that all: for there is also the very great fear that the intellect may be seduced by false ideas and images and so be lost. It is our aim to devote ourselves to the contemplation of God by means of Scripture and of creation, embracing in an integral and unitary way the manifold *logoi* of created beings and the mysteries unfolded in Scripture. We hope in this way to draw them together through the power of the single Logos and the single Spirit, thus perceiving in them a unified, simple and formless meaning that is undetermined, infinite and without beginning. But we must first endeavour to find the treasure within our own heart, and we must beseech our holy God to fill our earth with His mercy. Then with all our power we must freely raise up our intellect – by means of contemplation and with the help of the Logos and the Spirit – towards an understanding of God that, as we have already said, is integral, unified, simple, without form, eternal, infinite and undetermined.

84. By means of the sincere and one-pointed disposition of our soul we seek to traverse the road to virtue virtuously, with a humble mind, with patient endurance and with the hope that springs from faith. In this way, when once the life-quickening and inexhaustible power and energy of the Holy Spirit are present in our heart, illuminating the faculties of our soul,

then the Holy Spirit swiftly summons the active intellect to Himself, and inexpressibly unites Himself with it, so that intellect and grace can now be joined truly and indubitably into one spirit. When this has happened the intellect, through its own initiative and helped at the same time by the inspiration of grace, attains the state of contemplation. Its straying and wandering is miraculously brought to a halt by the energy and light of the life-quickening Holy Spirit; and it is flooded with revelations of the divine noetic mysteries. In complete silence and stillness, through its own intrinsic vision the intellect penetrates into that which is supranatural and ineffable. The more we practise contemplation, the more we are possessed by God. In humility and prayer, quickened by God through the Holy Spirit, we are raised on high through our knowledge of things divine garnered from our reading of the Holy Scriptures. Then we are not outside the state of mystical prayer, but we are fully engaged in such prayer and never desist from it.

Yet without the divine gift of which we have spoken, and without the Spirit manifestly and unceasingly breathing within the heart, then, alas, all that the intellect sees is but fantasy and illusion, and all its mystical prayer is but words vainly poured into the air, without arousing the visionary organ of the soul as it should; for they are no more than words that come to it from without through hearsay. It is precisely this that in a sinister way gives entry to terrible delusion concerning noetic realities and mystical prayer; for these visions and words are not being activated in the heart by the light-radiating Holy Spirit, the only source of integral and unchanging truth in the spiritual world and in mystical prayer.

For if the life-quickening and light-radiating power and energy of the Spirit is not manifestly and continually present in the heart, inspiring it and flowing into it, then there is no spiritual unity but, on the contrary, disintegration. Nor in that case can there be power and stability, but only weakness and vacillation; nor likewise light and the vision of the truth, but instead darkness and the random inventions of fantasy and, in general, absurdity and delusion.

According to the Fathers the intellect can choose between three levels or paths: the natural, the supranatural and the contranatural.[21] When the intellect perceives a spiritual quality in a material substratum, it perceives according to nature, although with the assistance of the supranatural energy of the Spirit. On this level, when the intellect perceives a personalized being that is independent of a material substratum, then what it perceives is a demon or an

angel. But if the intellect is peacefully at one with itself, and the torch of the Spirit is kindled ever more luminously within it, then it perceives supranaturally, and in that case it clearly perceives without delusion. But if when it perceives visible things it is fragmented and darkened, and if the life-quickening power of the Spirit is quenched within it, then it perceives in a way that is contrary to nature, and what it perceives is the result of delusion. Because of this we should not permit our intellect to aspire to the spiritual contemplation of non-material personalized forms, nor have faith in what we see, unless the heart is animated and activated, in the way that we have described, by the power of the Holy Spirit – if, that is, we want our intellect to be healthy and self-controlled.

85. Some people in a commendable way attempt to cure the inflammation of their passions with the celestial dew of grace. It is of such people that it is written: ‘Thy dew is a medicine for us’ (cf. Isa. 26:19.LXX). For others this dew brings about a greater apprehension of the divine, and it is transformed into manna (cf. Exod. 16:14–15); and as if it were some kind of wheat it is made into bread, being ground by the contrition of a humble heart, kneaded by the water of our tears, and baked by the fire of spiritual knowledge. And this happens in a very fitting and appropriate way; for the manna is turned into food like that of the angels, of which it is rightly said, ‘Men did eat angels’ food’ (Ps. 78:25). And there are yet others whose nature, as they advance higher, in some way becomes and is clearly seen to be manna. Of these the Gospels say, ‘That which is born of the Spirit is spirit’ (John 3:6). Those who belong to the first category are people who wisely engage in the life of stillness; in the second category are those who in addition cultivate silence together with knowledge of the divine; and in the third category are those who have achieved total simplicity and who are transfigured by the grace of Christ Jesus our Lord.

86. When the intellect by grace noetically escapes from Pharaoh and Egypt and from all the fearsome and terrible events that took place there – as well as from a worldly and materialist way of life that is battered by the passion-charged waves of bitterness and acrid malignity – then it enters into a spiritual desert, set free from the armies of the invisible Pharaoh. In other words, it has noetically suffered and escaped from the afflictions that were then in outward reality undergone by the Hebrews. And once it has done this the intellect, by means of the soul’s organ of consciousness, safely feeds on the noetic manna – the manna that was prefigured by that which the Israelites

ate physically (cf. Exod. 16:14–15). Initially, the intellect recollects and desires noetic meat, just as the Israelites desired physical meat from the Egyptian sacrifices (cf. Exod. 16:3). Such desire places the intellect in danger, and indeed it is sinful. The intellect experiences a revulsion from the divine, until it turns back through repentance and prayer, and so propitiates God in an appropriate way. And if in a state of stillness it feeds more continually on manna, then as time goes by, helped and strengthened by grace, it clearly perceives its own noetic flesh being somehow transformed, one might say, into the nature of manna itself.

In the case of the intellect that feeds in this way on manna, there are spiritual weights and balances (cf. Lev. 19:36), which it uses as a measure for the manna; and it does not gather more than is necessary for its daily nourishment. Otherwise the manna that is surplus to the appropriate amount needed by the intellect will be eaten up by worms and utterly destroyed (cf. Exod. 16:20); and, along with the manna, the intellect that does not keep to the correct measure will also be destroyed through not eating as it should. It is clear that the intellect which feeds on manna and does not eat anything else leads a life manifestly more beautiful than that of an intellect that eats whatever it chooses and as much as it wants. I am speaking, of course, in a spiritual sense.

So the intellect is itself somehow transformed by continually receiving this nourishment, and thus it assumes, as it were, the quality of the manna that it eats. This is confirmed by its lack of appetite for whatever else it used to desire, and by the fact that wherever it is it eats manna and becomes childlike, cleaving to the worship of God. It is not at all strange that the intellect should be transformed into the state of that which it eats continually and by which it has for long been satisfied. Thus the change of the intellect into the state of manna is not in the least incongruous; for by nature continual and unvaried nourishment usually changes that which it nourishes into its own likeness. Hence the intellect not only manifestly attains the state of an angel, but it also acquires divine sonship and is worthily translated from spiritual glory to spiritual glory (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18). Not only does it contemplate the One, but it is also itself made one with itself, living in this oneness and celestially delighting in it, and enjoying, one might say, unutterable mysteries reverently and devoutly with the help of the Holy Spirit.

And in truth the intellect is changed in accordance with the realities it

perceives and praises, to the point that it perceives itself to possess the nature of manna. This rank is higher and much more honourable than that of the intellect which realizes that it eats manna but knows that it has not yet transformed itself into the nature of manna. The first state the intellect may experience at the start, when it concentrates itself into itself in noetic union. The second state is a sure reflection of a more manifest union, of the revelation of the mysteries of spiritual knowledge, of complete deliverance from everything, and of a spiritual condition of the most utter simplicity.

87. The intellect is by nature simple, because the Divinity of which it is the image is also simple. And since the intellect is simple by nature, it loves by the same token to act in a simple manner, for everything truly loves to do that which is natural to it. Yet it dissipates itself, not by reason of its own nature, but because of the senses and of the material sensory things through which it is enabled to become aware of noetic realities. The intellect, however, may apply its own intelligence to distinguish and determine as accurately as possible between itself and the realm of the senses. This it may do in such a manner that the senses are not rendered more blind than they actually are, nor is the beauty of sensory things carelessly obscured or crudely exaggerated in a way that undermines the sovereignty of the intellect, but to each thing is prudently attributed that which is proper to it. Then the intellect at once becomes one with itself, and is restored to its natural simplicity. It turns its back on the realm of fragmentation, and once more begins in accordance with its nature to manifest its love for that which is one and simple, and which functions in an integrated and simple way. This it aspires to do because it loves doing it. And with this aspiration it rises above all things composite, until it finds that which is truly and fully one and simple, in other words, God. Covered by God’s wings or borne aloft on them, it is filled with delight, as is right for an intellect protected and inspired by God.

88. By reason of the passions a dense cloud has covered the soul’s organ of visionary insight, causing it to see things that do not truly exist. But when through intense prayer, by fulfilling God’s commandments and by aspiring to the contemplation of God, the intellect with the help of grace dissolves that dense cloud, it sees clearly and it knows that it beholds God. It requires no explanation of this, any more than someone who sees with his physical sight needs to be told he can see, except when the pupil of his eye is disturbed or obstructed. Just as material sensory things can be naturally perceived by the

senses, provided our senses are in a healthy state, so too can noetic realities be perceived by our noetic senses, once the cloud of the passions has been purged away from them. And just as material sensory things are perceived by means of the perceptive power of the senses, so too the vision of noetic realities is attained by means of the intellect's visionary power. After such vision has been attained, the intellect rises with the help of grace to the contemplation of God that is formless, without qualities, free from fantasy and simple. Such contemplation, taking hold of the intellect, releases it from all attachment to anything sensory and noetic, and plunges it, rapt in wonder, into the uncircumscribed, undetermined and indescribable depths of infinitude.

89. O all-sovereign Lord, the source of all that can be perceived either by the eyes or by the intellect, Thine origin is without beginning, for Thou art uncreated. Thy self-determination is undetermined, O infinite One; Thy nature surpasses all nature, uncircumscribed as Thou art; Thine essence, O Thou who art unbegotten, is supraessential; Thy form is formless, O invisible One; Thy quality is to be free from all quality, for Thou knowest no corruption; Thy figuration is without figuration, unsearchable as Thou art; Thy realm is boundless, for Thou art immeasurable; Thy comprehensibility is incomprehensible, for Thou art unfathomable; the knowledge of Thee is unknowable, the contemplation of Thee impossible to contemplate, for Thou art unapproachable and inscrutable; Thy word is ineffable, for Thou art inexpressible; Thine explanation is inexplicable, O Thou who remainest for ever unexplained; every conception of Thee is inconceivable, for Thou art unintelligible; and Thou art wholly affirmation beyond all negation, for Thou art more than God. Thou art all amazement, peace, courage, love, sweetness and delight, total reassurance, true freedom from all anxiety, joy, glory unique and personalized, kingship, wisdom and power. O God beyond all words and language, Thou art by nature a going-forth in ecstasy from all that is visible. Thou art respite from all that is grasped by the intellect, and wondrous repose for all who contemplate Thee through participation in the Holy Spirit.

90. 'The more the Divinity is regarded with wonder and reverence, the more He is longed for; and when He is longed for, He purifies us', as St Gregory the Theologian tells us. And he continues: 'And when He purifies us, He makes us like God; and when we are in that state, He communes with us as with His own kind.' But it is not God alone who does this, for all who

are purified in this way enter into communion in spirit and truth not only with God but with the other divine beings with whom they have become familiar kindred. Thus the Theologian continues: ‘He is God united with and known by those who have become god’.[22] Do you perceive the miracle of this union? For God, he says, is made one with gods. And since union is consummated between beings who are alike, it is clear that the states and forms of bliss resulting from this union must also be alike. This is why St Gregory says that God is known by gods.

Such is the way in which those who by grace have become godlike and are gods commune with divine beings and with God as though with their own kind. They know them just as in a corresponding way God contemplates, communes and becomes one with those who are godlike and who are gods. Hence the great Theologian adds not unjustifiably: ‘God is perhaps known to the pure and to those who are gods to the same degree as He Himself already knows them’, in a manner conformable to the way in which He who is God by nature knows and is known by those who are gods by adoption.[23] How great is this inter-relationship, rightly considered! Assuredly, most blessed are those who fittingly raise themselves to the vision and contemplation of God, with all the strength of their soul and with full spiritual knowledge. We should reflect how all who have attained God are in a state of uttermost wonder and of greatest astonishment before the incomprehensible Deity who is unoriginate, absolute, uncircumscribed, and wholly everlasting and infinite.

Because of this their soul cleaves to God with intense longing, and melting with bliss they experience an overwhelming desire as they behold the divine countenance and its exceeding beauty. Then after this they are purified, and they are deified and become godlike and they are united consciously to God. So God becomes known to them through the supranatural gift of deification that is conferred in such abundance upon those who are made godlike and united with Him. In a wondrous way He ravishes them with His transcendent beauty, overwhelming all their spiritual consciousness and all their aspiration, and He holds them enraptured around Him, singing ceaselessly and befittingly, as if they were angels. As is rightly said, ‘God stands in the congregation of gods, and in their midst He pronounces judgment upon the gods’ (Ps. 82:1.LXX); and also, ‘The God of gods, the Lord, has spoken, and summoned the earth’ – that is, those who are born from the earth – ‘from the rising of the sun until its setting in the west’ (Ps. 50:1).

Thus ‘the princes of the people are gathered together with the God of Abraham’ (Ps. 47:9.LXX); and so they stand in a circle around God, in the same way as the Seraphim encircle Him, and they receive divine illumination from transcendent mysteries, as they cleave indissolubly to God, who endlessly excels all things. If then the pure in heart are blessed, as the Lord said, because they shall see God (cf. Matt. 5:8), how can those graced with the gift of contemplation not be conspicuously blessed, since they are purified by the wonderment that comes from the knowledge of God, as they ascend progressively towards the rank of God? If, then, we wish to be blessed and to undergo deification and so to stand as the Cherubim rooted around God, we must with all diligence devote ourselves to spiritual knowledge and practice, with the help of Christ Jesus our Lord.

91. Above all I long to see Thee and to praise Thee, life-giver, the life of those who in some way behold Thee, Lord my God; yet though I long for this I do not know how to say anything worthy of Thee, and I am truly at a loss and greatly distressed. None the less my intellect experiences kinship with thee, O Master and all-wise Maker, and beholding Thee alone it enjoys peace and the repose that belongs to it by nature. The intellect, once it is liberated from its wanderings outside itself in the world of appearances, and is at rest with itself, naturally desires to perceive and with its inherent fleetness to comprehend the higher levels of reality, and to devote itself to those things that are most congruent with its own immateriality. Spontaneously and as it were by itself it returns to that which transcends all things and is higher than all immateriality. It is clear that the intellect, assisted as is natural by the faith instilled in it by the Holy Spirit, reaches out in this way towards Thee; or, rather, it is drawn upwards by the noetic beings that encircle Thee and are kindred to it. In this way the intellect longs with all eagerness of soul to behold Thee.

Then because of its nature the intellect experiences many wonderful and blessed things. Since, as I said, it possesses a noetic nature that makes it swifter-winged than other creatures, and since fittingly it is filled with longing for the noetic realm, it has need to perceive things spiritually, just as animals have need to eat. For, just as it is natural for animals endowed with senses to eat, it is equally natural for the intellect to perceive things in a noetic way. For through perceiving things noetically the intellect lives as it should, and grows, and is nourished and gladdened, in the same way as happens to animals through eating food. These things happen to it as a result

of the action in which it engages, that is to say, as a result of the intensity of its spiritual perception, and especially when indescribably, through the generosity of Thy Spirit, it finds its goal in Thee, and its aspiration is mingled with the enchantment of Thine unutterable glory. For what will a being filled with intense desire naturally experience when it encounters that which attracts it, especially when what attracts it – and this by virtue of Thine own forethought and intention – is something as powerfully desirable as Thyself?

For Thou, most wise King, sovereign and all-bountiful Lord, hast created the intellect as a being that perceives in a noetic manner; and thus Thou hast fashioned it in such a way that by nature it delights inordinately in all that pertains to Thee. Inexpressibly and rapt in wonder it is possessed by Thy divine love, and it is drawn to Thee with a mad frenzy that is somehow similar to Bacchic inspiration. In addition, since the intellect was created above all to be a lover of the beautiful, it is by nature fully endowed with love for beauty. Thus, as a gift of providence, it has the aspiration to perceive noetically that which is most perfect, and to desire things ever more exalted and lofty, and to rejoice ever more and more over that which happens to it.

How wonderfully dost Thou manifest Thyself to the intellect, how dost Thou embrace it with supreme wisdom, entranced as it is with the love of contemplating Thee, when with all its soul it has abandoned everything except Thee alone! For, most gracious Lord, not merely in diversified forms dost Thou manifest Thyself, nor only in a state of simplicity, not only as comprehensible or as incomprehensible, not only as terrible or as gentle, but now Thou art this and now that. Thus the activity and bent of the intellect does not have to be directed to anything outside Thyself in order to seek diversification or simplicity, or out of desire for what is terrible or gentle. And since Thou art comprehensively the One Good and the One Beautiful, and the utterly good and utterly beautiful creator and origin of all that is good and beautiful, it is quite impossible for the intellect to contemplate or dwell in anything else, or to find many and varied forms of delight, except in Thyself. For Thou dost hold all things in Thyself, for Thou art their source; and yet Thou abidest above and beyond all things, because Thou art their Creator, times without number, infinitely beautiful.

Hence while Thou art one in essence, O God, yet Thou canst be perceived in manifold ways with regard to Thine energies, on account of their profusion and magnitude. And what is most remarkable and surprising is this, that in whatever respect, and by whomever, Thou art in some way apprehended,

Thou again in some way remainest ever in the same state. In essence Thou art utterly uncircumscribed, and in Thine energies and Thy power, too, Thou art also uncircumscribed. For who has ever discovered a limit to Thy power? Who has fathomed Thy wisdom? Who has plumbed the sea of Thy bounty? And who has ever understood anything about Thee?

Yet in another sense Thou art certainly comprehensible. Thus, to start with, the intellect contemplates the noetic qualities immanent in visible material things; then it ascends to the unified and incomprehensible realities that pertain to Thee, Saviour. And since to grasp Thee evokes sweetness and delight, and since it loves what is beautiful, the intellect aspires with all diligence and strives to ascend still higher, so far as it can. But when it cannot proceed any further, it rightly concludes that what eludes it must undoubtedly lie high above it; hence it is seized by a great longing and is roused to a Bacchic frenzy for Thee. Its soul kindled with burning desire, it makes that which it comprehends the fuel of its divine love for that which is incomprehensible, and it turns its dismay into the food of celestial longing. It is not so much enchanted by those of Thy qualities that it can apprehend, most wise Lord, but rather it is filled with ardour for that which eludes it, for this very unattainability of divine knowledge impels it to even greater wonder and yearning. I could add that it impels the intellect to search out not what Thou art in Thine essence – since this for everyone in every way is more than impossible to discover – but what Thou art according to the divine powers and energies of Thine essence. Yet even here the noetic realities surrounding Thee, which we contemplate and about which we theologize, cannot be fully grasped; for these things, as I said, are infinite in their greatness, and beyond our capacity to explore because of their immense number.

For even if we can never exhaustively explore these things because they are infinite, yet he who approaches Thee through purification, and who concentrates his noetic gaze upon Thy beauty, can attain a vision of Thy qualities that is clear and lucid, and so can be deified to a corresponding degree. For this reason Thou kindlest with the wound of longing the intellect that waits upon Thee as it should, illuminating it ever more fully, and Thou leadest it to the most secret and mystical of supracelestial visions. Unity beyond praise, Trinity beyond veneration, fathomless depth of power and wisdom, how wonderfully from this starting point or line of departure dost Thou lead the intellect that has been rightly purified into Thy most divine darkness, translating it again and again from glory to glory (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18),

while it remains within this darkness that is supremely bright.

I know not, as Thou knowest, whether this is the darkness into which Moses was once led (cf. Exod. 20:21), or whether the darkness of Moses is an image of Thy darkness, or Thy darkness an image of that of Moses. But those who are initiated into this darkness by the illumination of the Spirit know with full clarity that it is a pre-eminently noetic darkness, and that within it, in the secret recesses of the soul, the mysteries of spiritual union and love are celebrated in a way that is divine, supranatural and indescribable.

92. Who, Lord and Trinity, being in that state, does not rejoice when he beholds Thee, the king, the ever-active prime mover and dispenser of beauty and bounty, and their rich source? And who can rejoice with true joy before he beholds Thine all-powerful sovereignty? Clearly, nobody can, in any way. Thus truly blessed are the pure in heart (cf. Matt. 5:8), for they behold Thee with the eyes of the soul, Thou who to a supreme degree art spiritual joy. And assuredly, even though they often have to wrestle with bodily afflictions and to endure demonic attacks, they yet experience spiritual joy and great gladness, and are filled with overwhelming love. For in the person who is irradiated by grace, the spiritual light issuing from the beauty of Thy countenance, Lord, infinitely transcends every kind of worldly distress.

It is for this reason, Lord, that Thou dost utterly excel all sweetness, all desire, holy longing and ineffable love. For this reason Thy love restores those who attain a spiritual vision of Thee, wounding them in an overwhelming and supranatural way. For this reason the souls of those who contemplate Thee, ineffable God, pursue Thee with great and unremitting ardour, attracted by the perfume of Thine unguents (cf. Song of Songs 1:3). So they endeavour to draw Thee into themselves in every possible way – entirely and miraculously overwhelmed and consumed as they are by their longing for Thee. It is for this reason that they keep Thee incessantly in mind, made captive by Thy supranatural beauty. Or, rather, first Thou continuously and spiritually takest hold of their hearts, both by night and by day, and sleep departs from their eyelids.[24] Even when they do sleep, their heart keeps awake (cf. Song of Songs 5:2) and ‘they sing for joy upon their beds’, as David says (Ps. 149:5). They perceive what is happening to them, and yet are overwhelmed by it, and do not understand what they are experiencing. They are perplexed, and are rapt in wonder at the inexpressible beauty of Thy countenance, at the majestic glory of Thy holiness, at the celestial visions and secret revelations that Thou makest manifest to them, at the countless gifts,

undisclosable and indescribable, beautiful and bounteous that, Father, Thou bestowest.[25] And Thou wilt make steadfast those who with uprightness dwell in Thy presence.

---

1 There is a play on words here in the Greek: *theorein* ('to contemplate') and *theos* ('God') are similar, although in fact they are etymologically distinct (cf. § 19).

2 Sabellius was a third-century Modalist theologian. Instead of affirming within the Godhead a triunity of three distinct persons, subsisting together from all eternity, he regarded Father, Son and Holy Spirit merely as three 'modes' or operations of the one Godhead.

3 Dionysios the Areopagite, *The Celestial Hierarchy* I, 1; ed. G. Heil and A. M. Ritter (*Patristische Texte und Studien* 36: Berlin/New York, 1991), p. 7; E.T., Rorem, p. 145.

4 *Oration* 38, 11 (*P.G.* xxxvi, 324A); ed. Moreschini and Gallay, p. 126; = *Oration* 45, 7 (*P.G.* xxxvi, 632B).

5 Cf. Peter of Damaskos, Book II, *Discourse* 9, E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. ii, p. 236.

6 Cf. Dionysios the Areopagite, *Letter* 9,1; ed. Heil and Ritter, p. 198; E.T., Rorem, p. 284.

7 Cf. Dionysios the Areopagite, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* I, 3; ed. Heil and Ritter, p. 66; E.T., Rorem, p. 198.

8 Cf. Dionysios the Areopagite, *The Celestial Hierarchy* IX, 3; ed. Heil and Ritter, p. 38; E.T., Rorem, p. 172.

9 Cf. Dionysios the Areopagite, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* I, 3; ed. Heil and Ritter, p. 66; E.T., Rorem, p. 198.

10 Cf. Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 47.

11 Basil (attributed to), *On the Prophet Isaiah* 5, § 162 (*P.G.* xxx, 385AB).

12 Source not identified.

13 It is not clear which of Isaac's *Ascetical Discourses* Kallistos has specifically in mind.

14 This is actually from John of Scythopolis, scholium on Dionysios the Areopagite, *The Divine Names* I, 4 (592B).

15 Dionysios the Areopagite, *The Divine Names* I, 4; ed. Suchla, pp. 113–14; E.T., Rorem, p. 52.

16 Dionysios the Areopagite, *The Celestial Hierarchy* I, 2; ed. Heil and Ritter, p. 8; E.T., Rorem, p. 146.

17 Ibid. I, 1; ed. Heil and Ritter, p. 7; E.T., Rorem, p. 145.

18 Ibid. XII, 3; ed.; ed. Heil and Ritter, p. 43; E.T., Rorem, p. 176.

19 Gregory of Nazianzos, *Oration* 38, 11 (*P.G.* xxxvi, 324A); ed. Moreschini and Gallay, p. 126; = *Oration* 45, 7 (*P.G.* xxxvi, 632B).

20 *Centuries on Theology* I, 97; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 2, p. 135.

21 On this threefold distinction, see Mark the Ascetic, *On Those who Think that They are Made Righteous by Works* 90; E.T., *The Philokalia*, vol. 1, p. 132.

22 Gregory of Nazianzos, *Oration* 38, 11 (*P.G.* xxxvi, 324A); ed. Moreschini and Gallay, p. 126; = *Oration* 45, 3 (*P.G.* xxxvi, 632B). Cf. Ps. 82:6; John 10:34.

23 Gregory of Nazianzos, *Oration* 38, 11 (*P.G.* xxxvi, 324A); ed. Moreschini and Gallay, p. 126; = *Oration* 45, 3 (*P.G.* xxxvi, 632B).

24 There is a lacuna here in the manuscript used by Makarios and Nikodimos.

25 At this point there is a further lacuna.

A SELECTION FROM THE HOLY FATHERS ON PRAYER AND ATTENTIVENESS[1]

The whole effort of the ascetic should be devoted to this: to preventing the higher part of the soul from being brought low through the uprising of sensual pleasures. For how can the soul gaze in freedom upon the noetic light that is akin to it, if it is dragged down by carnal pleasure? Thus above all we must cultivate self-control, the sure guardian of restraint and moderation, that does not allow the ruling intellect to harbour impure thoughts. Our inner being should therefore be kept closely under observation, so that the intellect remains undistracted, its attention concentrated on attaining the vision of God's glory. In this way we shall not be condemned among those to whom the Lord was referring when He said, 'Alas for you, for you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within they are full of dead men's bones and all manner of filth; for you too outwardly appear to others to be righteous, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness' (Matt. 23:27–28).

For this reason we have to battle intensely – and in accordance with God's law – in heart, thought and action, so that we do not receive God's grace in vain (cf. 2 Cor. 6:1). Just as wax is given form when moulded, so let us be moulded in our inner being by the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us fulfil in all our acts what St Paul refers to when he tells us to strip off our old fallen self and its practices and to clothe ourselves in our new self, the self that is being renewed in accordance with the image of God who created it, so that it attains true knowledge (cf. Col. 3:9–10). By the term 'our old fallen self' he denotes collectively all our various sins and defilements. Until our death we should mould our inner being, he says, in accordance with newness of life (cf. Rom. 6:4), so that we may be enabled truly to affirm, 'It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me' (Gal. 2:20).

There is need, then, of great watchfulness and vigilant care on our part, lest we practise the commandments in a spirit contrary to what we have just said, and so not only lose such a great reward but expose ourselves to terrible

threats. When the devil tries to ensnare us and with great violence injects his evil thoughts like flaming darts into the soul that is striving after stillness and tranquillity, and suddenly inflames it and awakens lingering intractable memories of things it once experienced, then to repulse such attacks we have to be even more strictly watchful and attentive, just as a wrestler counters the tactics of his opponents by more exact defence and dexterity of body. We should rely entirely on prayer and on the invocation of celestial aid in order to bring the battle to an end and to avert the enemy's missiles. This is what St Paul teaches us when he says, 'Above all take faith as your shield' (Eph. 6:16), and so on.

Thus when the soul's mental concentration and intentness slacken, and it indulges in random memories of this and that, then our thoughts, uncontrolled and unwitting, are caught up in these memories. As the soul goes on dallying with them it passes from one drawn-out delusion to another and often ends up by surrendering itself to ideas that are shameful and absurd. Such negligence and self-alienation on the part of the soul we have to rectify through regaining a more concentrated and rigorous state of mental attentiveness, so that our thoughts are occupied continually with the present moment and with all that is good and beautiful within it. For the body of the true philosopher is the monastery and secure cell of his soul, so that whether he happens to be in the market place, or at a festival, or on a mountain, or in a field, or in the midst of a crowd, he is always anchored in this bodily monastery, and his intellect is self-collected within him, and meditates on those things that befit it. The sluggard may be sitting at home while his thoughts wander far afield; someone else, on the other hand, may be in the market place and yet be as watchful as if he were in the desert, his attention turned only towards himself and towards God, and his senses impervious to the impressions of sensory objects which otherwise perturb the soul.

When, therefore, we approach to receive communion in the Body and Blood of Christ, in memory of Him who died for our sake and was raised up, we should not only cleanse ourselves from every defilement of flesh and spirit (cf. 2 Cor. 7:1), lest we eat and drink to our own condemnation (cf. 1 Cor. 11:29); but we should also clearly manifest in ourselves the outlook and spirit of Him who died for our sake and was raised up, not only by cleansing ourselves from all sin but also by dying to sin, to the world and to ourselves, and by living for God (cf. Rom. 6:11). Among wicked thoughts, some do not invade our soul if we securely barricade ourselves against them. Others are

born and grow up within us when we become sluggish, though if we catch them in time they can swiftly be stifled and buried. Others again, after being born and growing up within us, then lead us on to evil actions, corrupting all the health of our soul if we are gravely indolent. The most blessed state, consequently, is that in which we do not give access to evil thoughts at all. The next best state is that in which we swiftly repulse such thoughts when they invade us, and do not permit them to linger within us and to defile our place of pasture (cf. Ezek. 34:18). Yet if we are at the stage in which evil thoughts still attack us, our indolence through God's compassion may none the less be cured, since many remedies for wounds of this kind have been prepared by that Source of unutterable bounty.

Thus I beseech you, as long as you are in the body, do not cease to keep guard over your heart. For just as a farmer cannot be certain what he will harvest, since he does not know what will happen while his crops are still growing in the field before they have been gathered into his barns, so we should not cease to keep guard over our heart as long as we still draw breath. And just as we do not know what we shall experience before we have breathed our last breath, so a monk should not cease to keep guard over his heart so long as he still breathes, but he must constantly cry out to God and invoke His kingdom and His mercy. For since the devil knows that if we pray undistractedly to God we can accomplish great things, he does all he can, in ways reasonable or unreasonable, to distract our intellect. But as we are well aware of this, let us counterattack our enemy. When we stand to pray or when we kneel, let us not allow the slightest thought to enter our heart, whether white or black, whether from the right or from the left, whether expressed in words or unwritten. There should be nothing within us except entreaty to God and the sun-like illumination that comes into our intellect from heaven.

We have to make great efforts in prayer, and spend much time on it, before we can attain a state of mind that is wholly free from disturbance – an inner state that is a second heaven within the heart in which Christ dwells; as St Paul says, 'Do you not realize that Christ dwells within you?' (2 Cor. 13:5). If we wish to perceive the true state of the intellect, we must keep ourselves free from all concepts and images, and then the intellect will see itself similar in appearance to the sapphire colour of the sky.[2] The intellect cannot perceive God's indwelling presence unless it raises itself above all conceptual images of things. And it cannot raise itself up in this way unless it strips itself of the passions which bind it to sensory things through such

images. It will expel the passions by means of the virtues, and passion-free thoughts by means of spiritual contemplation; and contemplation itself will disappear when the divine light shines upon it.

---

1 In the Greek *Philokalia*, no indication is given concerning the compiler of this short selection of Patristic material. Possibly it is the work of Kallistos Angelikoudis. There is likewise no indication from which particular Fathers the texts in this selection have been taken. The selection emphasizes themes found in many other parts of *The Philokalia*, such as watchfulness and the guarding of the memory and the heart.

2 Cf. Evagrios the Solitary, *Texts on Discrimination* § 8; E.T., *Philokalia*, vol. 1, p. 49.

ST SYMEON ARCHBISHOP OF THESSALONIKI

Introductory Note

St Symeon, Archbishop of Thessaloniki (died 1429), was in all probability initially a monk at the *kellion* of the Xanthopouloi and a disciple of Kallistos and Ignatios.[1] In 1416/17 he became Archbishop of Thessaloniki, the most important city in the Byzantine Empire after Constantinople, and he held this position until his death. His episcopate came at a period of great instability. Thessaloniki was captured by the Turks in 1387, briefly recovered by the Byzantines, then retaken by the Turks in 1394. From 1402 to 1423 it was once more in Byzantine hands, but was surrendered to the Venetians in 1423, before being taken definitively by the Turks in 1430, a few months after Symeon's death. Staunchly Orthodox, an ardent adherent of hesychasm, Symeon sought to retain Thessaloniki in Byzantine hands, and he opposed the surrender of the city to either the Venetians or the Turks.

Symeon is the author of a *Dialogue against all the heresies*, but the bulk of his writings deals with liturgical themes. Included here in *The Philokalia* are two sections from his work *On Prayer*, §§ 296–7 (*P.G.* clv, 544D–549A), devoted to the Jesus Prayer. [2]

---

1 On Kallistos and Ignatios Xanthopoulos, see above, pp. 11–16.

2 The writings of Symeon are to be found in *P.G.* clv, 33–976, and in two volumes edited by David Balfour: *Politico-Historical Works of Symeon Archbishop of Thessalonica (1416/17 to 1429)*, *Wiener Byzantinistische Studien* 13 (Vienna, 1979); *Symeon of Thessalonika, Theological Works*, *Analecta Vlatadon* 34 (Thessaloniki, 1981). See also H. L. N. Simmons (ed.), *Symeon of Thessalonike, Treatise on Prayer* (Brookline, MA, 1984); George Dion. Dragas (ed.), *On Priesthood and the Holy Eucharist According to St. Symeon of*

Thessalonica, Patriarch Kallinikos of Constantinople, and St. Mark Eugenikos of Ephesus (Rollinsford, NH, 2004); Steven Hawkes-Teeples (ed.), *St. Symeon of Thessalonika, The Liturgical Commentaries, Studies and Texts* 168 (Toronto, 2011).

On the Holy and Deifying Prayer

This divine prayer, the invocation of our Saviour through the words ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me’, is a petition, a prayer, and a confession of faith. It bestows the Holy Spirit, confers divine gifts, purifies the heart, expels the demons, and brings Jesus Christ to dwell within us. It is a source of spiritual insight and divine thoughts, it delivers us from sins, heals soul and body, and fills us with divine illumination. It is a fount of divine mercy, and to the humble it grants revelation and initiation. It is our only salvation, for it contains the saving name of our God. This name – the name of Jesus Christ the Son of God – is the only name that is invoked upon us, for, as St Peter says, there is no other whereby we may be saved (cf. Acts 4:12).

It is a petition because in it we seek divine mercy. It is a prayer because we surrender ourselves to Christ through our invocation of Him. It is a confession of faith because when St Peter confessed this name he was called blessed (cf. Matt. 16:17). It bestows the Holy Spirit because no one can affirm that Jesus is Lord except through the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12:3). It confers divine gifts because it is on account of this confession that Christ tells St Peter that He will give him the keys of the kingdom of heaven (cf. Matt. 16:19). It purifies the heart because through this name we behold God and call upon Him, and this purifies us. It expels the demons because the name of Jesus Christ expelled and continues to expel all the demons. It brings Jesus Christ to dwell in us because when we are mindful of Him Christ is present in us, and through such mindfulness He dwells in us and fills us with gladness, as David says, ‘I was mindful of God and was gladdened’ (Ps. 77:3.LXX).

It is a source of spiritual insight and thoughts because Christ is the treasury of all wisdom and knowledge (cf. Col. 2:3), and He bestows these things on those in whom He dwells. It delivers us from sins because when St Peter confessed this name Christ said to him that whatever he loosed on earth would be loosed in heaven (cf. Matt. 16:19). It heals soul and body because it is in the name of Jesus Christ that St Peter said, ‘Rise up and walk’ (Acts 3:5), and, ‘Aeneas, Jesus Christ cures you’ (Acts 9:34). It fills us with divine illumination because Christ is the true light (cf. John 1:9), and grants His illumination and grace to those who invoke Him: as the Psalmist says, ‘Let the illumination of the Lord our God be upon us’ (Ps. 90:17.LXX), and as Christ tells us, ‘Whoever follows Me will have the light of life’ (John 8:12).

This name is a fount of divine mercy because, when we seek for mercy, the Lord is indeed merciful and has compassion on all those who invoke Him (cf. Ps. 86:5, 145:8.LXX), and He swiftly vindicates those who cry out to Him (cf. Luke 18:7). It grants divine revelation and initiation to the humble, as happened through the revelation of the Father who is in heaven to the humble fisherman Peter (cf. Matt. 16:17), and as happened also to St Paul who was caught up in Christ and divine things were revealed to him (cf. 2 Cor. 12:2). And it always works in this way. It is our only salvation because, as St Peter says, there is no other name that is capable of saving us (cf. Acts 4:12), and He – the Christ – is the Saviour of the world (cf. John 4:42). It is for this reason that on the last day everyone, willingly or unwillingly, will confess and proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (cf. Phil. 2:11).

This name is the sign of our faith, since we are Christians and are called such, and through this name we bear witness that we are from God; for, as St John says, every spirit which confesses that the Lord Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God (cf. 1 John 4:2), whereas whoever does not confess this is not from God. For not to confess Jesus Christ is the sign of the Antichrist (cf. 1 John 4:3).

Thus all the faithful ought to confess this name unceasingly, both so as to proclaim the faith and out of love for our Lord Jesus Christ, from which nothing at all should ever separate us (cf. Rom. 8:35); and also because this name is the source of grace, of remission of sins, deliverance, healing, sanctification, illumination, and above all of salvation. For it was by means of this divine name that the Apostles performed and taught such astonishing things. And the divine Evangelist says: ‘These things have been written so that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God’ (John 20:31) – see, here is our faith – and ‘so that by believing this you might have life through His name’ (John 20:31) – see, here is our salvation and life.

Every Christian, then, both in his intellect and with his tongue should ceaselessly invoke the name of Jesus Christ in prayer. This he should do when standing, walking, sitting, lying down, or however he is occupied or whatever he is speaking about. He should force himself to do this, and then he will find great peace and joy, as those who devote themselves to this practice know from experience.

This task is appropriate for those who dwell in the world as well as for those monks who are living in the midst of turmoil. Everyone, whether priest

or monk or layman, should as far as he can establish a specific time and rule for the practice of the Jesus Prayer. Monks, since they are set apart for this and perform it as an indispensable duty, should always force themselves to practise it and to pray without ceasing to the Lord (cf. 1 Thess. 15:17), even when they are busy with their various duties or are beset by distractions and confusion, and by the so-called ‘captivity of the intellect’. They should not neglect it, abducted by the enemy, but should constantly return to it full of rejoicing as they say the Prayer. Priests should devote themselves to it as an apostolic task and as a divine injunction, as a means whereby God acts within us and Christ’s love is present to us. Lay people should practise it as much as they can, as God’s seal set upon them and as a sign of their faith, as a protection, a sanctifying power and a repudiation of every temptation.

Thus everyone – priest, layman or monk – must on rising from sleep first think of Christ and be mindful of Him, and must offer this recollection as the first-fruit of all his thoughts and as a sacrifice to Christ. For before every other thought we ought to be mindful of Christ, who in His great love has saved us. Because of Him we are Christians and we call ourselves such. We have been clothed in Him through divine baptism (cf. Gal. 3:27), we have been sealed by Him through chrismation, and we have partaken and continue to partake of His Holy Flesh and Blood. So we are members of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 12:17), His temple (cf. 2 Cor. 6:16), we have put on Christ (cf. Gal. 3:27), and He dwells in us; and because of this we must love Him and always be mindful of Him. Let each of us, then, in so far as we can, set aside a definite time for this prayer, and establish a rule as to how often we repeat it.

This is all we will now say on this theme, since for those who wish to know about it there are many treatises from which they can learn.

ST MARK OF EPHESOS

Introductory Note

This short piece on the Jesus Prayer is described as anonymous by the editors of *The Philokalia*, but it is in fact the work of St Mark (Evgenikos), Archbishop of Ephesos (*c.*1392–1445).[1] Mark is chiefly remembered for his opposition to the act of union with the Roman Catholic Church promulgated at the Council of Florence (1438–9), but he was also a follower of the hesychast tradition, writing on 'neptic' and mystical themes. In the present text he follows closely the *Exact Method* of Kallistos and Ignatios Xanthopoulos. Like them, he recognizes that some may be moved to recite the name 'Jesus' on its own. He also allows the recitation of the end of the Prayer with the words 'on *us*' (rather than 'on *me*'), thus expressing more explicitly our love for others.

1 On St Mark of Ephesos, see in particular Nicholas Constas, in Carmelo Giuseppe Conticello and Vassa Conticello (ed.), *La théologie byzantine et sa tradition*, vol. II (Turnhout, 2002), pp. 410–75 (with full bibliography). This includes an English translation of the present text concerning the Jesus Prayer (pp. 465–7). In *The Philokalia* this work by St Mark appears in a modern Greek paraphrase. A critical edition of the original Greek has been made by Hieromonk Irenej Bulović (now Metropolitan of Bačka), in the periodical *Kleronomia* VII (1975), pp. 345–52; this is the text that has been used in the present translation. See also Antonio Rigo, 'Marco Eugenico autore e lettore di opere spirituali', in *Bulgaria Medievalis*, vol. II (Sofia, 2011), pp. 179–93. On Mark's career, see Joseph Gill, *Personalities of the Council of Florence and other Essays* (Oxford, 1964), pp. 55–64; on his role at the Council of Florence, see Joseph Gill, *The Council of Florence* (Cambridge, 1959), especially pp. 114–25, 145–63, 195–211.

On the Words of the Divine Prayer ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me’[1]

How much power is possessed by the Prayer ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me’, and what gifts it confers on those who practise it, and to what spiritual state it leads them, it lies beyond our power to say. The words which constitute this Prayer were initially formulated by our Holy Fathers. They did not, however, themselves make up these words, but took them originally from Holy Scripture and from the chief disciples of Christ. Or, to express it better, they received them as an inheritance from the Fathers who were before them, and passed this inheritance on to us. Thus from this alone, for those who have not learnt it from experience, it is clear that this holy Prayer is something divinely inspired and is as it were a sacred oracle. For we believe that Christ spoke through the holy Apostles, and that everything He entrusted to them – either to repeat verbally or to write down – constitutes divine oracles, spiritual revelations and the words of God.

Thus St Paul, addressing us from the third heaven (cf. 2 Cor. 12:2), states: ‘No one can say “Lord Jesus” except through the Holy Spirit’ (1 Cor. 12:3). By using the negative words ‘no one’, St Paul admirably reveals that the invocation of the Lord Jesus is very sublime and beyond the power of most people. In addition, St John the Theologian, who speaks of things spiritual ‘with a voice of thunder’, begins with one of the words that St Paul provides, and then gives us the continuation of the Prayer, as follows: ‘Every spirit that confesses Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is from God’ (1 John 4:2). Here certainly he makes an affirmative statement, but attributes, as does St Paul, the invocation and the confession of Jesus Christ to the grace of the Holy Spirit. Then, thirdly, St Peter, the chief of the Apostles, completes the Prayer. Thus, when our Lord asked His disciples, ‘Whom do you say that I am?’, St Peter, as usual in his enthusiasm forestalling the other disciples, answered, ‘Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God’, this being revealed to him, as the Saviour Himself testified, by the same heavenly Father or – which is the same thing – by the Holy Spirit (cf. Matt. 16:15–17).

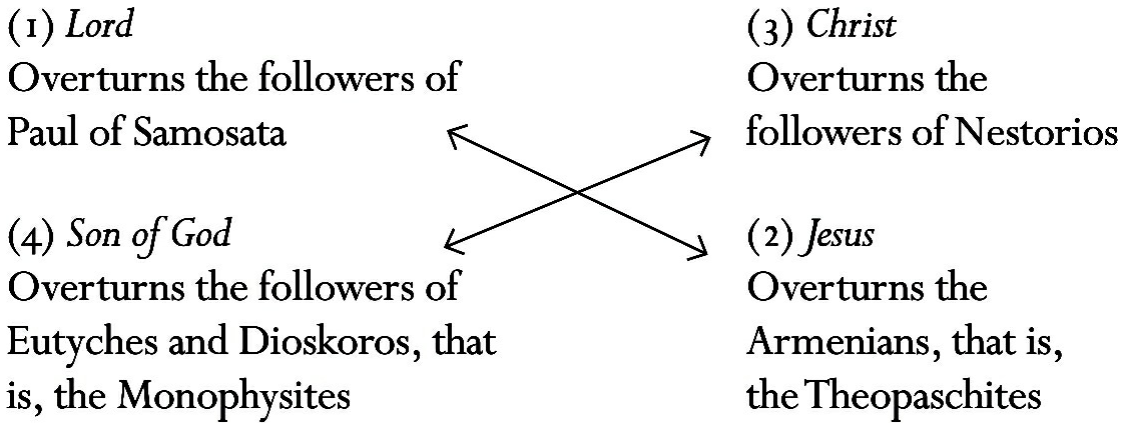
Observe, then, how these three holy Apostles follow one another as though in a circle, the one taking up from the other the divine words in such a manner that the last word in the statement of the first is used as the first word in the statement of the second, and the last word in the second is used as the first word in the third. Thus St Paul says, ‘Lord Jesus’; St John, ‘Jesus

Christ’; and St Peter, ‘Christ, Son of God’. Thus the last links up with the first as though in a circle, as we said; for there is no difference in saying ‘Lord’ and ‘Son of God’, since both these titles reveal the divinity of the only-begotten Son of God and affirm that He is of one essence and of equal rank with the Father.

In this manner the blessed Apostles taught us to invoke our Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God and to confess Him through the Holy Spirit; and since these Apostles are three, they are entirely to be trusted, for according to Holy Scripture every statement confirmed by three witnesses is valid (cf. Matt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim. 5:19).

In addition, the order of the Apostles who uttered these divine words is not without significance; for the mystical tradition of the Prayer takes its start with St Paul, the last of the disciples chronologically, and through St John it proceeds to St Peter, the first chronologically, who through love came closer to Jesus than the other disciples. This sequence appears to me to correspond to the proper order of spiritual progress, and of our ascent to God and union with Him through ascetic practice, contemplation and love. For St Paul is the image of ascetic practice, as he himself confirms when he says, ‘I worked harder than all of them’ (1 Cor. 15:10); St John is the image of contemplation; and St Peter is the image of love, for our Lord testifies that he loved more than the others (cf. John 21:15–17).

Furthermore, one can see how the divine words of the Prayer also reveal the true doctrine of our faith and overturn all the false teaching of the heretics. The word ‘Lord’, which denotes the divine nature, denounces those who say that Jesus is only man. The word ‘Jesus’, which denotes Christ’s human nature, excludes those who say that He is only God and that He took on a human form that was merely phantasmal. The word ‘Christ’, which denotes the two natures, the divine and human, rebuts those who believe that Christ is indeed both God and man, but think that His two hypostases are separated from each other. Finally, the phrase ‘Son of God’ silences those who dare to teach that Christ’s two natures cannot be distinguished; for it makes clear that Christ’s divine nature is not confused with His human nature, even after their union. So these four terms, being divine utterances and spiritual swords, overturn two pairs of heresies that, albeit from diametrically opposite points of view, are both equally evil and equally sacrilegious.[2]



Such, then, is the way in which divine utterances have been handed down to us, and rightly they may be called a monument of prayer and of the true faith. In themselves they suffice for those who have attained maturity and spiritual perfection in Christ: such people embrace all three of these divine utterances, as they were given by the holy Apostles – that is to say, 'Lord Jesus – Jesus Christ – Christ, Son of God' (sometimes even the tender name 'Jesus' on its own) – and they adopt the three together as a perfect and complete prayer. Through it they are filled with inexpressible joy; they rise above the flesh and this world, and are granted divine gifts. Such, they affirm, are the mysteries that are known to the initiated.

For those, on the other hand, who are beginners in this Christ-like practice and are still imperfect, there have been handed down as a suitable addition to the Prayer the words 'have mercy on me'. This phrase indicates that they are aware of their limitations and are in need of great mercy from God. In this way they imitate that blind man of whom the Holy Gospel speaks: longing to be able to see, he cried out when Our Lord was passing and said, 'Jesus, have mercy on me' (Mark 10:47). Others, again, show greater love and give the Prayer a plural form, saying, 'Lord Jesus Christ, our God, have mercy on us'. They do this because they know that love is the fulfilment of the Law and of the prophets (cf. Rom. 13:10; Matt. 22:40), since it contains and recapitulates every commandment and every spiritual practice. Out of love they include their brethren in the communion of prayer and entreat God to show greater mercy, since they recognize that He is the God of all and so they beseech Him to bestow His mercy upon all. And assuredly God's mercy does indeed come to us, when He sees that we keep the true faith that He has taught us and that we fulfil His commandments. As we have shown, both of these requirements are included in this brief prayer.

Further, we may note that the divine names ‘Lord’, ‘Jesus’ and ‘Christ’, through which doctrinal orthodoxy has been given to us, were revealed chronologically in that sequence and order, and so we are repeating them as they were initially disclosed. For everywhere the Old Testament, both prior to and after the Law, proclaims that the divine Logos is ‘Lord’. Thus it says, ‘The Lord rained fire from the Lord’ (Gen. 19:24); and, ‘The Lord said unto my Lord’ (Ps. 110:1). Again, in the New Testament, at the time of His Incarnation, God sent His angel to the Virgin Mary to declare His name, saying, ‘You will name Him Jesus’; and this was done, as St Luke tells us (cf. Luke 1:31, 2:21). Because truly, as God the Lord of all, He desired through His Incarnation to save us; and the name Jesus means precisely ‘Saviour’. Again, ‘Christ’ manifests the deification of the human nature which our Lord assumed. Prior to the passion He forbade His disciples to proclaim to anyone that He was Christ; but after the passion and resurrection St Peter declared openly, ‘Let all the House of Israel know that God has made Him Lord and Christ’ (Acts 2:36). The human nature, that is to say, which the divine Logos assumed was from the beginning anointed by His divinity; and then, after my Jesus had been glorified through the passion and had arisen from the dead, it became fully deified. That, therefore, was the right moment for the name ‘Christ’ to be proclaimed. When He originally created us and when after our fall He recreated and preserved us, He did indeed act truly as our benefactor. But now He did more than this: He raised human nature to the heavens and glorified it with His own glory, and enabled it to sit at the right hand of the Father. Precisely at that moment He began to be proclaimed as Son of God and God by the Apostles. Previously, at the outset of their preaching, such titles had inspired fear in them, and so they seldom used them. Subsequently, however, they proclaimed all this openly from the rooftops, as the Saviour Himself had foretold (cf. Matt. 10:27).

Consequently, these holy words of prayer were put in the order they are in because thus they correspond to the chronological manifestation of the faith. Hence from every angle the divine wisdom of those who set them in that order and handed them down to us is clearly revealed; for they follow exactly the apostolic confessions and traditions, and they make clear the orthodox doctrine of our faith. Thus they remind us of the times when God, in His providence, revealed these words to us in various ways, guiding us in the worship of God with the befitting names on every occasion.

These explanations, then, we have offered, in so far as lay in our power, of

the words of the Prayer, as though we were cutting blossom from some great and beautiful tree. But the fruit which they contain let others gather, those, that is to say, whose long study and practice have earned them the privilege of being received by God and taken into His presence.

---

1 The Greek *Philokalia* gives no indication of authorship.

2 The diagram may be understood as follows:

‘Lord’: Paul of Samosata (third century) considered that Christ was a ‘mere man’, in whom the Word of God dwelt.

‘Jesus’: the Armenians or ‘Theopaschites’, at the opposite extreme from Paul, believed (or were supposed by their opponents to believe) that Christ was only God, and that His human nature was phantasmal.

‘Christ’: Nestorios (fifth century) was supposed (perhaps unjustly) to make such a sharp distinction between the divine and the human natures of Christ that these became in effect two distinct ‘hypostases’ or persons.

‘Son of God’: Eutyches and Dioskoros (both fifth century), at the opposite extreme from Nestorios, taught that Christ had only a single nature (hence the title ‘Monophysite’), and so they were accused of confusing His Godhead and His manhood.

Thus the first pair [(1) and (2)] hold ‘diametrically opposite points of view’, the one neglecting or denying His Godhead, and the other his manhood; likewise the second pair also hold opposite views, with (3) separating and (4) confusing His two natures. (1) and (3) resemble each other, for they both overemphasize Christ’s manhood, while (2) and (4) similarly resemble each other, for they both overemphasize His Godhead.

AN INTERPRETATION OF ‘LORD HAVE MERCY’[1]

The Prayer, ‘Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me’, and more briefly, ‘Lord have mercy’, has been granted to Christians from the time of the Apostles, and they have been enjoined to say it unceasingly, and this is indeed what they do. But what this phrase ‘Lord have mercy’ signifies is known today only by very few people, while the rest, alas, vainly and unavailingly merely repeat the words every day, yet they do not receive the Lord’s grace because they do not know what they are seeking. Hence we should reflect how the Son and Logos of God became incarnate and was made man, and after that He suffered many afflictions and was crucified, and by shedding of His holy blood He redeemed us from the hands of the devil; and so He became Lord and ruler of the whole human race. Indeed, even before He became incarnate, He was the Lord of all creatures, visible and invisible, as their maker and creator; yet He was not the Lord of human beings and demons who for their part did not want to have Him as their Lord and ruler, even though He was in truth Lord of the whole world.

For the all-bountiful God endowed both human beings and angels with free will and intelligence, so that they might acquire spiritual knowledge and discrimination; and since He is just and true to Himself, He did not want to deprive them of their power of free choice and to rule them forcibly and against their will. He rules and governs those who want to be under His authority and rule, while He allows those who do not want this to exercise their own choice, since they possess the power of free will. This is why God allowed Adam – who was led astray by the apostate devil and became himself an apostate, refusing to obey God’s commandment – to possess free will and did not seek to rule him in a despotic manner. But the envious devil, who had led him astray to start with, went on deluding him until he had made him as witless as the beasts that lack reason and intelligence, and had induced him to live exactly as they do.

In the end, however, the all-merciful God had compassion on him, and

bowing down the heavens He descended to earth (cf. Ps. 144:5) and became human for the sake of us humans; and with His most pure blood He delivered us from slavery to sin, and through the Holy Gospel He instructed us how to live in a manner pleasing to Him. In addition, according to St John the Theologian, He gave us the power to become children of God (cf. John 1:12). Through divine baptism He granted us a new birth and recreated us, and through His most pure sacraments He daily nourishes and vivifies our soul. In short, in His supreme wisdom He found the way to remain always inseparably with us and for us to remain inseparably with Him, so that the devil could no longer have any place in us.

Yet there are Christians who in spite of the many gifts of grace they have been granted and the many blessings they have received from the Lord Christ have again been deluded by the devil, and on account of their worldly and fleshly inclinations they have estranged themselves from God and are dominated by sin and the devil, carrying out his wishes. None the less they are not so completely insensible as to be unaware of the evil they have suffered; they perceive their error and recognize the state of slavery to which they have reduced themselves. But by themselves they are incapable of escaping from it; and for this reason they turn to God and cry out ‘Lord have mercy’, so that the greatly merciful Lord may have compassion on them and show them His mercy, and may receive them back, as He received back the prodigal son (cf. Luke 15:2), and may once more bestow His divine grace on them, thus enabling them to escape from their servitude to sin, to separate themselves from the demons, and to receive again their freedom. In this way they will be able to live in a manner acceptable to God and to keep His commandments.

Those Christians, then, who, as we said, with this as their aim cry out ‘Lord have mercy’, will without fail be granted the mercy of the all-bountiful God. They will receive grace to free themselves from slavery to sin and they will be saved. But those, on the other hand, who have not the slightest understanding of the things we have said, and are not aware of their misfortune in being enslaved to their fleshly desires and to worldly things, and who do not have occasion to reflect on their slavery, and without such an aim in view simply cry out ‘Lord have mercy’ for the most part from habit – how is it possible for them to receive God’s mercy, especially since His mercy is so wonderful and infinite? For it is better for them not to receive the mercy of our God, than to receive it and to lose it again, because then their

offence is double. If someone gives a precious stone to a little child or to some boorish man ignorant of its value, and these, after taking it into their hands, then lose it, it is evident that it is not they who are responsible for losing it, but he who gave it to them.

So that you may better understand what has been said, reflect on how in this world a person who is in need and poor, and wants to receive charity from some wealthy man, goes to the latter and says ‘Have mercy on me’, that is, ‘Take pity on me because of my poverty and give me help.’ Again, a person in debt who wants his creditor to cancel what he owes goes to him and says, ‘Have mercy upon me in my indigence, and cancel the debt which I owe you.’ In a similar manner, an offender, wishing to be forgiven by the one he has offended, goes to him and says ‘Have mercy on me’, that is, ‘Forgive me for the offence I have committed against you.’ Now if a sinner cries out to God ‘Lord have mercy’ out of mere habit, not understanding what it is that he asks, how will God grant him His mercy, when he, not understanding what this mercy is, despises it and swiftly loses it again, and falls into even greater sin?

The mercy of God is nothing else than the grace of the All-Holy Spirit – the grace that we sinners must seek from God, crying out unceasingly ‘Lord have mercy’, that is, ‘My Lord, have compassion on me, a sinner, in my pitiful state, and receive me again into Thy grace. Grant me the spirit of strength, to fortify me so that I may resist the temptations of the devil and the evil habit of sin. Grant me the spirit of self-restraint, so that I may restrain myself, become aware of myself and reform myself. Grant me the spirit of fear, so that I may fear Thee and keep Thy commandments. Grant me the spirit of love, so that I may love Thee and no longer estrange myself from Thee. Grant me the spirit of peace, so that I may preserve my soul in a state of peace and may collect my thoughts and be calm and tranquil. Grant me the spirit of purity, to keep me pure from every defilement. Grant me the spirit of gentleness, so that I may be gentle to my Christian brethren and refrain from anger. Grant me the spirit of humility, so that I may not inflate my mind with fantasies and grow proud.’

Thus the person who knows the need he has of all these things and seeks them from the all-merciful God, crying out ‘Lord have mercy’, will most certainly receive what he seeks and will be granted the Lord’s mercy and His divine grace. But he who knows nothing of these things about which we have spoken, but simply from habit repeats ‘Lord have mercy’, will never be able

to receive the grace of God; for previously he received many gifts of grace from God, but did not recognize them, nor did he thank God who gave them to him. He received God's mercy when he was created and became a human being. He received God's mercy when he was re-created through holy baptism and became an Orthodox Christian. He received God's mercy when he escaped from the many dangers to soul and body which he experienced in his life. He received God's mercy on all the many occasions when he was privileged to partake of holy communion. He received God's mercy every time he sinned before God and deeply grieved Him with his sins, and yet was not destroyed or chastised as he deserved. He received God's mercy when in various ways he was granted blessings from God and did not acknowledge them, but forgot all about them and took no thought whatever for his salvation. How can a Christian of this kind receive God's mercy when he is not aware of it and does not recognize that he receives such grace from God, as we have described, and does not know what he is saying, but only repeats 'Lord have mercy', without any aim or purpose, but merely through habit?

---

1 The Greek *Philokalia* gives no indication of authorship.

FROM THE LIFE OF ST MAXIMOS KAPSOKALYVITIS[1]

When St Gregory of Sinai met St Maximos and talked with him, among other things he said this: ‘I beg you, most honoured father, tell me, do you practise noetic prayer?’ The latter smiled a little and answered: ‘I do not want to hide from you, honoured father, the miracle of the Mother of God which I experienced. Ever since I was young I have had great faith in our Lady the Mother of God, and I entreated her with tears to give me this grace of noetic prayer. One day, as was my custom, I went to her church, and I entreated her again with untold warmth of heart; and as I lovingly kissed her holy ikon I felt in my breast and in my heart a certain warmth and flame that came from the holy ikon. It did not burn me – rather it refreshed me, filled me with sweetness, and brought to my soul a great sense of compunction. From that time, father, my heart started to say the Prayer[2] within me, and my intellect began to be filled with sweetness as it remembered my Jesus and my Theotokos, and it continued always to hold them in remembrance. Since that time the Prayer has not left my heart. Forgive me.’

Then St Gregory said to him: ‘Tell me, Holy Father, while you were saying the Prayer “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me”, did you at any time experience a divine transmutation or ecstasy or any other fruit of the Holy Spirit?’ And St Maximos said to him, ‘Father, it is on account of this that I used to go to a solitary place and always longed for stillness, so as to enjoy the fruit of prayer more fully – this fruit which is an overpowering love for God and the intellect’s rapture in the Lord.’ And St Gregory said to him: ‘I beg you, father, tell me, do you always experience these things you have spoken about?’ St Maximos again smiled and said to him: ‘Give me something to eat and do not pry into my delusion.’

Then St Gregory said: ‘Would that I, too, was afflicted with this delusion of yours, Holy Father. But tell me, I beg you, what does your intellect see with its spiritual eyes when it is rapt in God? Can the intellect, along with the heart, offer up the Prayer at that time?’ St Maximos replied: ‘No, it cannot;

because when by means of the Prayer the grace of the Holy Spirit comes upon someone, then the Prayer ceases. For the intellect in its entirety is possessed by the grace of the Holy Spirit and can no longer exercise its own powers, but remains inactive and submits only to the Holy Spirit, who leads it where He wills: either to a non-material realm of divine light, or to some other inexpressible vision, or often to communion with the Divine. In short, the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, gives comfort to His servants as He wills. He bestows His grace in the way that is appropriate to each person.

'What I am saying can clearly be seen in the case of the prophets and Apostles, who were granted so many visions, even though men mocked them and considered them deluded and drunk (cf. Acts 2:13). Thus the Prophet Isaiah saw the Lord on a high and exalted throne, with the Seraphim on either side of Him (cf. Isa. 6:2); and the first martyr Stephen saw the heavens opened and Jesus on the right hand of the Father (cf. Acts 7:56). In the same way even now the servants of Christ are granted various visions, even though some people do not believe in these visions, refusing to admit that they are true, and regarding them as delusions and those who see them as deluded. I am very surprised at this and wonder how these people have become so unfeeling. How is it that, blind in soul, they do not believe that which our ever-truthful God promised through the mouth of the Prophet Joel to give to the faithful when He says, "I will pour the grace of My Spirit upon every one who has faith, upon My servants and upon My handmaids" (cf. Joel 2:29; 3:2)?

'Our Lord has given this grace and gives it even now, and He will continue to give it until the end of the world to all His faithful servants, as He has promised. Hence when this grace of the Holy Spirit comes to someone, it reveals not ordinary common things, or sensory objects of this world, but things that such a person has never seen or imagined. For then our intellect is initiated by the Holy Spirit into sublime, occluded mysteries, mysteries which, according to St Paul, our physical eye cannot see, and our intellect can never of itself grasp (cf. 1 Cor. 2:9).

'So that you may understand how our intellect does see such mysteries, ponder what I am going to tell you. When wax is kept away from fire it is solid and you can grasp it in your hand; but when you put it in fire it melts, and there in the flame it burns and ignites and becomes pure light, and in this way it is consumed in the fire. And it is impossible for it not to melt in the fire and not to become like water. In a similar manner, when our intellect

functions by itself and is not united with God, it perceives things to the extent that it lies within its power so to do; but when it approaches the fire of the Divinity and the Holy Spirit it is entirely overmastered by that divine light and itself becomes wholly light, and there in the flame of the Holy Spirit it catches fire and dissolves in the incandescence of divine perceptions. And when it is inside the fire of the Divinity there is no way in which the intellect can perceive according to its own light or as it may wish to perceive.'

Then St Gregory said to him: 'Are there other things similar to these, father, that are in fact the result of delusion?' And St Maximos replied: 'The signs of delusion are of one sort and the signs of grace are of another. For when the evil spirit of delusion approaches someone, it confuses his intellect and provokes it to anger; it hardens and darkens his heart; it induces cowardice, fear and pride; it makes his eyes grow wild; it deranges his mind; it convulses his whole body; it deludes his eyes with a light that is not bright and clear, but red; it makes his intellect hysterical and demonic; and it incites him to utter indecent and blasphemous words. The person visited by this spirit of delusion is generally full of wrath and anger. He knows absolutely nothing of humility, true grief and tears, but always prides himself on his good qualities, overflows with self-esteem, and shamelessly, with no fear of God, he is always under the sway of the passions. Finally he goes out of his mind and is completely destroyed. May the Lord, through your prayers, save us from this delusion.

'The signs of grace, on the other hand, are as follows. When the grace of the Holy Spirit enters someone, it concentrates his intellect and renders him attentive and humble. It makes him mindful of death, of his sins, of the future judgment and of age-long chastisement, and disposes of his soul to compunction, weeping and grief. It makes his eyes gentle and full of tears. The more deeply it penetrates, the more it assuages his soul, solacing it by bringing to mind the holy sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ and His infinite compassion. It confers upon his intellect sublime and authentic visions: first, concerning God's incomprehensible power and how with a single word He created all things out of non-being and brought them into being; second, concerning the infinite power whereby He sustains and governs all things, and dispenses His providential care to all; and third, concerning the incomprehensible nature of the Holy Trinity, the inscrutable ocean of the divine essence, and other things of this kind. Then when his intellect is rapt by that divine light and is illumined with the illumination of divine

knowledge, his heart becomes serene and full of gentleness, and overflows with the fruits of the Holy Spirit: joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, compassion, love, humility and the rest (cf. Gal. 5:22). And his soul exults in a way that is inexpressible.'

Hearing these things, St Gregory of Sinai was filled with ecstasy and rapt wonder at what St Maximos had said to him. And he regarded him no longer as a man but as an earthly angel.

---

1 St Maximos 'Kapsokalyvitis' ('The Hutburner') was so called because, having built for himself a temporary hut of branches, he would regularly burn it down and move elsewhere, constructing another hut which in due course he would again burn down before moving on once more. In this way, denying himself a fixed residence, he pursued an extreme form of monastic *kenosis* or self-emptying. His dates may be reckoned approximately as 1270/80–1365/75. After becoming a monk at Mount Ganos in Thrace and then moving to Mount Papikion on the border with Macedonia, he visited Constantinople, and from there he travelled to Mount Athos, where he remained until his death. Dwelling at first in the Great Lavra, he then took up the eremitic life, following a nomadic existence in the remote and wild regions at the southern end of the Athonite peninsula. His meeting with St Gregory of Sinai probably took place not long before 1325 (on St Gregory of Sinai see *The Philokalia*, vol. 4, pp. 207–11).

The extract concerning the meeting between Maximos and Gregory, included here in *The Philokalia*, is taken from the *Life* of Maximos by Theophanes, §§ 15–16 (*Analecta Bollandiana* 54 [1936], pp. 85–8). Our translation is based on the neo-Greek paraphrase in *The Philokalia*, which differs somewhat from the text of Theophanes. Particularly significant in this extract is the description given here concerning the divine light, which agrees with the teaching of St Gregory Palamas. On this, see Kallistos Ware, 'St. Maximos of Kapsokalyvia and Fourteenth-Century Athonite Hesychasm', in Julia Chrysostomides (ed.), ΚΑΘΗΓΗΤΡΙΑ. *Essays presented to Joan Hussey for her* 80*th birthday* (London, 1988), pp. 409–30, especially pp. 420–9.

2 By 'the Prayer' is meant the Jesus Prayer. The way in which Maximos links the invocation of the Name of Jesus with the remembrance of the Mother of God is altogether unusual.

FROM THE LIFE OF ST GREGORY PALAMAS[1]

That all Christians should Pray Unceasingly

Let no one think, my Christian brethren, that only clergy and monks, and not lay people, have the duty to pray unceasingly and at all times. No, no! All of us who are Christians, of whatever kind, have the duty always to engage in prayer. The most holy Patriarch of Constantinople Philotheos writes in the life of St Gregory Palamas of Thessaloniki that St Gregory had a beloved friend named Job, a most simple and virtuous man.[2] Once, while conversing with him, the saint spoke to him about prayer, and about how every Christian without exception ought always to exert himself to pray and should pray unceasingly, as the Apostle Paul enjoins all Christians to do when he writes, 'Pray without ceasing' (1 Thess. 5:17). St Gregory explained how, despite the fact that the prophet David was a king and was burdened by all the cares of his kingdom, nevertheless he said, 'I beheld the Lord always before me' (Ps. 16:8.LXX), that is, 'Noetically, by means of prayer, I see the Lord before me at all times.' And St Gregory the Theologian is addressing all Christians when he tells them that we ought to invoke the name of God in prayer more often than we breathe.[3] Besides saying this and many other things to his friend Job, St Gregory told him that we ought to obey the precepts of the saints; and that not only ought we ourselves to pray always, but we should also teach everyone else to pray unceasingly, whether monks or lay people, whether learned or unlearned, men, women and children.

When the elder Job heard this, it seemed to him to be something new and unusual, and he began to dispute it and to say to the saint that to pray at all times is appropriate only for ascetics and monks who live far from the world and its distractions, and not for lay people who have so many concerns and tasks. And the saint again offered him further indisputable testimonies and proofs, but the elder Job was not persuaded. So as to avoid too much talking

and disputation, St Gregory fell silent and each went to his cell.

Later, as Job was praying in his cell alone, an angel of the Lord appeared before him, sent by God, who desires everyone's salvation. After rebuking him strongly for disputing with St Gregory and for contesting things clearly effective in bringing about the salvation of Christians, he enjoined him on behalf of God to be very careful from now on, and to be on his guard not to say anything contrary to any similar soul-nourishing practice, for in so doing he was opposing the will of God. Not even in his mind should he again dare to entertain ideas contrary to or different from those imparted to him by St Gregory. Then this most simple of elders Job at once went to the saint and fell at his feet, asking to be forgiven for having opposed him and for disputing with him; and he revealed all that the angel of the Lord had told him.

Do you see, my brethren, that all Christians, of whatever kind, from the least to the greatest, have the duty to practise the noetic prayer 'Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me'; and that their intellect and heart should grow used to saying it at all times? Consider how much God is pleased by this and what great benefit comes from it, seeing that in His extreme compassion He even sent a heavenly angel to reveal this to us, so that we might no longer have any doubt about it.

Yet what do those who live in the world say? We, they complain, are beset by so many worldly concerns and cares. How, then, can we pray unceasingly?

This is my answer. God does not command us to do something impossible; He commands us to do only those things that we are able to do. Thus this, too, is something that everyone who persistently seeks the salvation of his soul can achieve. For were it impossible for lay people in general, there could not have been so many in the world who have in fact achieved it. Of these, let the father of St Gregory of Thessaloniki, the wonderful Constantine, provide an example.[4] He served in the imperial palace and was known as the father and teacher of the emperor Andronikos, and was occupied daily with royal affairs; and besides that he was occupied with his own affairs, for he was very wealthy, had many estates, servants, children and a wife. Yet despite all this he was so inseparable from God, and so given to unceasing noetic prayer, that more often than not he would forget what the emperor and his counsellors were discussing with him in relation to some matter of state, and would have to ask what was said to be repeated,

sometimes more than once. On account of this the other counsellors, ignorant of the cause of his inattention, often became irritated and rebuked him for forgetting so quickly and for vexing the emperor by having to ask for things to be repeated. But the emperor, who realized why Constantine was like this, defended him and used to say: ‘The good Constantine has his own concerns, and these do not let him pay attention to our words, which are about transitory and vain matters. The mind of this blessed man is concentrated on things true and celestial, and that is why he forgets earthly things, all his attention being directed to prayer and to God.’ Hence, as the most holy Patriarch Philotheos relates, Constantine was respected and loved both by the emperor and by all the high officers of state, as he was also beloved of God.

This man of blessed memory was also privileged to perform miracles. For on one occasion – so the most holy Philotheos recounts in the life of St Gregory Palamas, the son of Constantine – he embarked on a small ship with his whole family to go beyond Galata[5] to visit a hermit who was leading a life of stillness there, in order to receive his prayers and blessings. On the way, he asked his servants if they had brought some food to give to the hermit, so that he could entertain them. They said that in their hurry they had forgotten to bring any. Constantine was upset about this, but did not say anything. Only, going to the prow of the boat, he put his hand into the sea, and with silent, noetic prayer he entreated God, the master of the sea, to let him catch something. After a short while – such are the miracles, Christ our King, by means of which Thou dost glorify Thy servants – he lifted his hand from the sea holding an extremely large bass. He threw it into the boat before his servants and said: ‘See how the Lord has provided for His servant the holy hermit, and has sent him food!’ Do you see, my brethren, with what kind of glory Jesus Christ exalts those of His servants who are always with Him and always invoke His holy and gracious name?

Was not the righteous and holy Evdokimos[6] likewise living in Constantinople, in the imperial palace and involved in royal affairs? Was he not in close contact with the emperor and the high officials of the palace; and was he not burdened with many cares and distractions? Yet, as Symeon Metaphrastes relates in his life of St Evdokimos, there was never a time when he was not engaged in noetic prayer. In this way, although he lived in the world and in the midst of worldly things, he led a truly angelic and celestial life, and was granted by God, who rewards us as we deserve, with a blessed and divine end.

And numberless other people who lived in the world were completely devoted to that noetic and saving Prayer, as accounts of them show. Thus, my Christian brethren, together with St John Chrysostom[7] I beg you, for the sake of the salvation of your souls, do not neglect the practice of such prayer. Imitate those of whom we have spoken and follow them as much as possible. If the task appears difficult to start with, be fully assured, as though by almighty God Himself, that the very name of our Lord Jesus Christ invoked by us unintermittently every day will erase all our difficulties; and with time, as we become used to it and are renewed and transformed by it, we will know from experience that it is not impossible or difficult, but both possible and easy. This is why St Paul, who knew better than we do the great profit to be gained from prayer, enjoined us to pray unceasingly. He would never have counselled us to do something difficult or impossible; for then we would not have been able to do it and as a result inescapably we would have appeared disobedient, transgressing his injunction, and for this reason subject to condemnation.

But the intention of the Apostle's words, 'Pray without ceasing' (1 Thess. 5:17), was that we should pray with our intellect; and this is something that we can always do. For whether we are engaged in some handicraft, or are walking, or sitting, or eating, or drinking, we can always pray with our intellect and practise noetic prayer that is pleasing to God and genuine. We can work with the body and pray with the soul. We can be outwardly engaged in some form of bodily task while inwardly we are completely absorbed in the worship of God; and we need never suspend this spiritual practice of noetic prayer.

We are enjoined to pursue such practice by Jesus the God-Man in the Holy Gospel, for He says, 'But you, when you pray, enter your inner room; and when you have shut the door, pray to your Father who is in secret' (Matt. 6:6). The inner room of the soul is the body; its doors are the five senses. The soul enters its inner room when the intellect does not wander hither and yonder among the things of the world, but remains within our heart. And our senses are closed and stay closed when we do not allow them to attach themselves to sensory visible things. In this way our intellect remains free from worldly attachment, and by means of secret noetic prayer it becomes united with God our Father. And then Jesus says: 'Your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly' (Matt. 6:6). God who perceives what is hidden, perceives our noetic prayer and rewards it openly with great gifts; for

this is true and perfect prayer, and it fills the soul with divine grace and spiritual gifts. As with aromatic oil which the longer it is enclosed in a vial the more the vial smells sweetly, so also with prayer: the more you close it up inside your heart, the more it fills the heart with divine grace.

Blessed and more than blessed are those who grow accustomed to this celestial practice, because through it they vanquish every temptation of the evil demons, just as David vanquished proud Goliath (cf. 1 Sam. 17:51). Through it they quell the disorderly desires of the flesh, just as the three children quelled the flame of the furnace (cf. Dan. 3:19–27). Through it they calm the passions, just as Daniel tamed the fierce lions (cf. Dan. 6:16–23). Through it they make the dew of the Holy Spirit to fall on their hearts, just as Elijah made the rain fall on Mount Carmel (cf. 1 Kgs. 18:45). It is this noetic prayer that rises up to the throne of God and is kept in golden vials so that the Lord may be sprinkled with it, as St John the Theologian says in the Apocalypse: ‘And the four and twenty Elders fell down before the Lamb, all of them holding harps and golden vials full of aromatic oils, which are the prayers of the saints’ (Rev. 5:8). This noetic prayer is a light which always illumines the soul and kindles the heart with the flames of God’s love. It is a chain which keeps God and man joined and united with one another.

How incomparable is the grace of noetic prayer! It enables us always to commune with God. How truly wonderful and remarkable this is, to be physically with men and spiritually with God! The angels do not have material voices, but with their intellect they render unceasing praises to God. This is their task, and to this their whole life is dedicated. And you, too, my brother, when you enter your inner room and close the door – that is, when your intellect does not disperse itself hither and yonder but enters into your heart, and your senses are sealed and not attached to the things of this world, and you always pray with your intellect in this manner – then you become like the holy angels; and your Father, who sees the mystical prayer which you offer Him secretly in your heart, will reward you openly with great spiritual gifts (cf. Matt. 6:6). Indeed, what more can you desire than to be always spiritually together with God, as we have said, and to commune unceasingly with Him? Without Him no one can ever be blessed either here or in the other life.

So, my brother,[8] whoever you are, when you take this present book into your hands, and reading it find that it nourishes your soul, remember, I warmly beseech you, to make a prayer of entreaty to God – saying ‘Lord

have mercy' – for the sinful soul of him who toiled to produce this book and of him who defrayed the expense of printing it. Both are in great need of your prayer, so that their souls, and yours also, may receive divine mercy. May it be so, may it be so!

---

1 The *Life* of St Gregory Palamas was composed by his disciple St Philotheos Kokkinos, who was Patriarch of Constantinople from 1353to1354/5 and from 1364to1376: there is a critical edition of the text by Dimitrios G.Tsamis, Φιλοθέου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως τοῦ Κοκκίνου Ἁγιολογικὰ Ἔργα, vol. I (Thessaloniki, 1985), pp. 427–591. The present piece in *The Philokalia*, however, is not an exact extract from this work; but, while embodying material from the *Life* by Philotheos, it often diverges from its source. It seems, therefore, to be a free composition by the editors Makarios and Nikodimos (perhaps entirely by the latter). The text which is used in this translation is in neo-Greek.

As the subtitle indicates, the purpose of this piece is to insist that St Paul's injunction, 'Pray without ceasing' (1 Thess. 5:17), is addressed not merely to monastics but to all Christians. Palamas and his disciples did not seek to advocate an esoteric method of prayer intended only for a chosen elite, but they sought to address the Church as a whole.

2 For the encounter between Palamas and the monk Job, see Philotheos, *Life*, § 29 (ed. Tzamis, pp. 457–8).

3 Gregory of Nazianzos, *Oration* 27, 4 (*P.G.* xxxvi, 16B); ed. P. Gallay and M. Jourjon (*Sources chrétiennes* 250: Paris, 1978), p. 78.

4 On Constantine, the father of Gregory Palamas, see Philotheos, *Life*, §§ 3–7 (ed. Tzamis, pp. 429–35). He was a member of the Senate and a close associate of Emperor Andronikos II (reigned 1282–1328).

5 The district of Galata occupies the promontory on the north side of the Golden Horn facing Constantinople.

6 St Evdokimos (807–40), although he was a soldier and not a hermit, displayed the whole range of the traditional virtues, including celibacy, and was especially noted as a protector of widows, orphans and the poor.

7 This probably refers to *Letter to Monks* (*P.G.* lx, 752–3), attributed to Chrysostom, but considerably later in date. In the authentic works of Chrysostom there is no mention of the Jesus Prayer.

8 In this, the final paragraph of *The Philokalia*, the editors make a direct appeal to the reader, asking for his prayers. The words ‘him who toiled to produce this book’ presumably refer to both St Makarios of Corinth and St Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain. The one ‘who defrayed the expense of printing’ is John Mavrocordato, whose name is mentioned on the title page of the Greek *Philokalia*.

GLOSSARY

AGE (αἰών – *aion*): the ensemble of cosmic duration. It includes the angelic orders, and is an attribute of God as the principle and consummation of all the centuries created by Him. The texts distinguish frequently between the 'present age' and the 'age to come' or the 'new age'. The first corresponds to our present sense of time, the second to time as it exists in God, that is, to eternity understood not as endless time, but as the simultaneous presence of all time. Our present sense of time, according to which we experience time as sundered from God, is the consequence of the loss of vision and spiritual perception occasioned by the fall and is on this account more or less illusory. In reality, time is not and never can be sundered from God, the 'present age' from the 'age to come'. Because of this the 'age to come' must be thought of, not as something that belongs to the future, but as an ever-present mode of existence that we fail to realize so long as we persist in the state of spiritual blindness to which we are reduced by our alienation from God.

APPETITIVE aspect of the soul, or the soul's desiring power (τὸ ἐπιθυμη-τικόν – *to epithymitikon*): one of the three aspects or powers of the soul according to the tripartite division formulated by Plato (see his *Republic*, Book IV, 434D–441C) and on the whole accepted by the Greek Christian Fathers. The other two are, first, the intelligent aspect or power (τὸ λογι-στικόν – *to logistikon: see* Intelligent); and, second, the incensive aspect or power (τὸ θυμικόν – *to thymikon*), which often manifests itself as wrath or anger, but which can be more easily defined as the force provoking vehement feelings. The three aspects or powers can be used positively, that is, in accordance with nature and as created by God, or negatively, that is, in a way contrary to nature and leading to sin (q.v.). For instance, the incensive power can be used positively to repel demonic attacks or to intensify desire for God; but it can also, when not controlled, lead to self-indulgent disruptive thought and action.

ASSENT (συγκατάθεσις – *synkatathesis*): *see* Temptation.

ATTENTIVENESS (προσοχή – *prosochi*): *see* Watchfulness.

COMPUNCTION (κατάνυξις – *katanyxis*): in our version sometimes also translated as 'deep penitence'. The state of one who is 'pricked to the heart', becoming conscious both of his own sinfulness and of the forgiveness extended to him by God; a mingled feeling of sorrow, tenderness and joy, springing from sincere repentance (q.v.).

CONTEMPLATION (θεωρία – *theoria*): the perception or vision of the intellect (q.v.). It may be contrasted with the practice of the virtues (πρακτική – *praktiki*) which designates the more external aspects of the ascetic life – purification and the keeping of the commandments – but which is an indispensable prerequisite of contemplation. Depending on the level of personal spiritual growth, contemplation has two main stages: it may be either of the inner essences or principles (q.v.) of created beings or, at a higher stage, of God Himself.

COUPLING (συνδυασμός – *syndysamos*): *see* Temptation.

DELUSION (πλάνη – *plani*): *see* Illusion.

DESIRE, Desiring power of the soul: *see* Appetitive aspect of the soul.

DISCRIMINATION (διάκρισις – *diakrisis*): a spiritual gift permitting one to discriminate between the types of thought that enter into one's mind, to assess them accurately and to treat them accordingly. Through this gift one gains 'discernment of spirits' – that is, the ability to distinguish between thoughts or visions inspired by God and the suggestions or fantasies coming from the devil. It is a kind of eye or lantern of the soul by which man finds his way along the spiritual path without falling into extremes; thus it includes the idea of discretion.

DISPASSION (ἀπάθεια – *apatheia*): among the writers of the texts here translated, some regard passion (q.v.) as evil and the consequence of sin (q.v.), and for them dispassion signifies passionlessness, the uprooting of the passions; others, such as St Isaiah the Solitary, regard the passions as fundamentally good, and for them dispassion signifies a state in which the passions are exercised in accordance with their original purity and so without

committing sin in act or thought. Dispassion is a state of reintegration and spiritual freedom; when translating the term into Latin, Cassian rendered it ‘purity of heart’. Such a state may imply impartiality and detachment, but not indifference, for if a dispassionate man does not suffer on his own account, he suffers for his fellow creatures. It does not consist in no longer feeling the attacks of the demons, but in no longer yielding to them. It is positive, not negative: Evagrios links it closely with the quality of love (*agapi*) and Diadochos speaks of the ‘fire of dispassion’. Dispassion is among the gifts of God.

ECSTASY (ἔκστασις – *ekstasis*): a ‘going out’ from oneself and from all created things towards God, under the influence of *eros* or intense longing (q.v.). A man does not attain ecstasy by his own efforts, but is drawn out of himself by the power of God’s love. Ecstasy implies passing beyond all the conceptual thinking of the discursive reason (q.v.). It may sometimes be marked by a state of trance, or by a loss of normal consciousness; but such psychological accompaniments are in no way essential. Occasionally, the term *ekstasis* is used in a bad sense, to mean infatuation, loss of self-control, or madness.

FAITH (πίστις – *pistis*): not only an individual or theoretical belief in the dogmatic truths of Christianity, but an all-embracing relationship, an attitude of love and total trust in God. As such it involves a transformation of man’s entire life. Faith is a gift from God, the means whereby we are taken up into the whole theantropic activity of God in Christ and of man in Christ through which man attains salvation.

FALLEN NATURE (παλαιὸς ἄνθρωπος – *palaios anthropos*): literally, the ‘old man’. *See* Flesh, sense (ii).

FANTASY (φαντασία – fantasia): denoting the image-producing faculty of the psyche, this is one of the most important words in the hesychast vocabulary. As one begins to advance along the spiritual path one begins to ‘perceive’ images of things which have no direct point of reference in the external world, and which emerge inexplicably from within oneself. This experience is a sign that one’s consciousness is beginning to deepen: outer sensations and ordinary thoughts have to some extent been quietened, and the impulses, fears, hopes, passions hidden in the subconscious region are beginning to break through to the surface. One of the goals of the spiritual life is indeed

the attainment of a spiritual knowledge (q.v.) which transcends both the ordinary level of consciousness and the subconscious; and it is true that images, especially when the recipient is in an advanced spiritual state, may well be projections on the plane of the imagination of celestial archetypes, and that in this case they can be used creatively, to form the images of sacred art and iconography. But more often than not they will simply derive from a middle or lower sphere, and will have nothing spiritual or creative about them. Hence they correspond to the world of fantasy and not to the world of the imagination in the proper sense. It is on this account that the hesychastic masters on the whole take a negative attitude towards them. They emphasize the grave dangers involved in this kind of experience, especially as the very production of these images may be the consequence of demonic or diabolic activity; and they admonish those still in the early stages and not yet possessing spiritual discrimination (q.v.) not to be enticed and held captive by these illusory appearances, whose tumult may well overwhelm the mind. Their advice is to pay no attention to them, but to continue with prayer and invocation, dispelling them with the name of Jesus Christ.

FLESH (σάρξ – *sarx*): has various senses: (i) the human in contrast to the divine, as in the sentence, 'The Logos became flesh' (John 1:14); (ii) fallen and sinful human nature in contrast to human nature as originally created and dwelling in communion with God; man when separated from God and in rebellion with him; (iii) the body in contrast to the soul. The second meaning is probably the most frequent. If the word is being employed in this sense, it is important to distinguish 'flesh' from 'body' (σῶμα – *soma*). When St Paul lists the 'works of the flesh' in Gal. 5:19–21, he mentions such things as 'seditions', 'heresy' and 'envy', which have no special connection with the body. In sense (ii) of the word, 'flesh' denotes the *whole* body-soul structure in so far as a man is redeemed. The soul as well as the body can become fleshly or 'carnal', just as the body as well as the soul can become spiritual. Asceticism involves a war against the flesh – in sense (ii) of the word – but not against the body as such.

GUARD OF THE HEART, OF THE INTELLECT (φυλακή καρδίας, νοῦ – *phylaki kardias, nou*): *see* Watchfulness.

HEART (καρδία – *kardia*): not simply the physical organ but the spiritual

centre of man's being, man as made in the image of God, his deepest and truest self, or the inner shrine, to be entered only through sacrifice and death, in which the mystery of the union between the divine and the human is consummated. '"I called with my whole heart", says the Psalmist – that is, with body, soul and spirit' (John Klimakos, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 28, translated by Archimandrite Lazarus [London, 1959], pp. 257–8). 'Heart' has thus an all-embracing significance: 'prayer of the heart' means prayer not just of the emotions and affections but of the whole person, including the body.

ILLUSION (πλάνη – *plani*): in our version sometimes also translated as 'delusion'. Literally, wandering astray, deflection from the right path; hence error, beguilement, the acceptance of a mirage mistaken for truth. Cf. the literal sense of sin (q.v.) as 'missing the mark'.

INCENSIVE aspect or power of the soul (θυμός – *thymos*; τὸ θυμικόν – *to thymikon*): *see* Appetitive aspect of the soul.

INNER ESSENCES OR PRINCIPLES (λόγοι – *logoi*): *see* Logos.

INTELLECT (νοῦς – *nous*): the highest facility in man, through which – provided it is purified – he knows God or the inner essences or principles (q.v.) of created things by means of direct apprehension or spiritual perception. Unlike the *dianoia* or reason (q.v.), from which it must be carefully distinguished, the intellect does not function by formulating abstract concepts and then arguing on this basis to a conclusion reached through deductive reasoning, but it understands divine truth by means of immediate experience, intuition or 'simple cognition' (the term used by St Isaac the Syrian). The intellect dwells in the 'depths of the soul'; it constitutes the innermost aspect of the heart (St Diadochus, §§ 79, 88). The intellect is the organ of contemplation (q.v.), the 'eye of the heart' (*Makarian Homilies*).

INTELLECTION (νόημα – *noïma*; νόησις – *noïsis*): not an abstract concept or a visual image, but the act or function of the intellect (q.v.) whereby it apprehends spiritual realities in a direct manner.

INTELLIGENT (λογικός – *logikos*): the Greek term *logikos* is so closely connected with Logos (q.v.), and therefore with the divine Intellect, that to

render it simply as ‘logical’ and hence descriptive of the reason (q.v) is clearly inadequate. Rather it pertains to the intellect (q.v.) and qualifies the possessor of spiritual knowledge (q.v.). Hence when found in conjunction with ‘soul’ *(logiki psychi), logikos* is translated as ‘deiform’ or as ‘endowed with intelligence’. Intelligence itself (τὸ λογικόν – *to logikon*; τὸ λογιστικόν – *to logistikon;* ὁ λογισμός – *ho logismos*) is the ruling aspect of the intellect (q.v.) or its operative faculty.

INTENSE LONGING (ἔρως – *eros*): the word eros, when used in these texts, retains much of the significance it has in Platonic thought. It denotes that intense aspiration and longing which impel man towards union with God, and at the same time something of the force that links the divine and the human. As unitive love *par excellence*, it is not distinct from *agapi*, but may be contrasted with *agapi* in that it expresses a greater degree of intensity and ecstasy (q.v.).

INTIMATE COMMUNION (παρρησία – *parrisia*): literally, ‘frankness’, ‘freedom of speech’; hence freedom of approach to God, such as Adam possessed before the fall and the saints have regained by grace; a sense of confidence and loving trust in God’s mercy.

JESUS PRAYER (Ἰησοῦ ενοχή – *Ïisou evchi*): the invocation of the name of Jesus, most commonly in the words, ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me’, although there are a number of variant forms. Not merely a ‘technique’ or a ‘Christian mantra’, but a prayer addressed to the Person of Jesus Christ, expressing our living faith (q.v.) in Him as Son of God and Saviour.

LOGOS (Λόγος – *Logos*): the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, or the Intellect, Wisdom and Providence of God and in whom and through whom all things are created. As the unitary cosmic principle, the Logos contains in Himself the multiple *logoi* (inner principles or inner essences, thoughts of God) in accordance with which all things come into existence at the times and places, and in the forms appointed for them, each single thing thereby containing in itself the principle of its own development. It is these *logoi*, contained principally in the Logos and manifest in the forms of the created universe, that constitute the first or lower stage of contemplation.

MIND: *see* Reason.

NOETIC (νοητός – *noïtos*): that which belongs to or is characteristic of the intellect (q.v.). *See also* Intellection.

PASSION (πάθος – *pathos*): in Greek, the word signifies literally that which happens to a person or thing, an experience undergone passively; hence an appetite or impulse, such as anger, desire or jealousy, that violently dominates the soul. Many Greek Fathers regard the passions as something intrinsically evil, a 'disease' of the soul: thus St John Klimakos affirms that God is not the creator of the passions and that they are 'unnatural', alien to man's true self (*The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 26, translated by Archimandrite Lazarus, p. 211). Other Greek Fathers, however, look on the passions as impulses originally placed in man by God, and so fundamentally good, although at present distorted by sin (cf. St Isaiah the Solitary, § 1: in our translation, Vol. I, p. 22). On this second view, then, the passions are to be educated, not eradicated; to be transfigured, not suppressed; to be used positively not negatively (*see* Dispassion).

PRACTICE OF THE VIRTUES (πρακτική – *praktiki*): *see* Contemplation.

PREPOSSESSION (πρόληψις – *prolipsis*): *see* Temptation.

PROVOCATION (προσβολή – *prosvoli*): *see* Temptation.

REASON, MIND (διάνοια – *dianoia*): the discursive, conceptualizing and logical faculty in man, the function of which is to draw conclusions or formulate concepts deriving from data provided either by revelation or spiritual knowledge (q.v.) or by sense-observation. The knowledge of the reason is consequently of a lower order than spiritual knowledge and does not imply any direct apprehension or perception of the inner essences or principles (q.v.) of created beings, still less of divine truth itself. Indeed, such apprehension or perception, which is the function of the intellect (q.v.), is beyond the scope of reason.

REBUTTAL (ἀντιλογία – *antilogia*; ἀντίρρησις – *antirrisis*): the repulsing of a demon or demonic thought at the moment of provocation (q.v.); or, in a more general sense, the bridling of evil thoughts.

REMEMBRANCE OF GOD (μνήμη Θεοῦ – *mnimi Theou*): not just calling God to mind, but the state of recollectedness or concentration in which attention is centred on God. As such it is the opposite of the state of self-indulgence and insensitivity.

REPENTANCE (μετάνοια – *metanoia*): the Greek signifies primarily a 'change of mind' or 'change of intellect': not only sorrow, contrition or regret, but more positively and fundamentally the conversion or turning of our whole life towards God.

SENSUAL PLEASURE (ἡδονή – *hidoni*): according to the context the Greek term signifies either sensual pleasure (the most frequent meaning) or spiritual pleasure or delight. Sensual pleasure is often an illusory or deceptive form of spiritual delight.

SIN (ἁμαρτία – *hamartia*): the primary meaning of the Greek word is 'failure' or, more specifically, 'failure to hit the mark' and so the missing of the mark, a 'going astray' or, ultimately, 'failure to achieve the purpose for which one is created'. It is closely related, therefore, to illusion (q.v.). The translation 'sin' should be read with these connotations in mind.

SORROW (λύπη – *lypi*): often with the sense of 'godly sorrow' – the sorrow which nourishes the soul with the hope engendered by repentance (q.v.).

SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE (γνῶσις – *gnosis*): the knowledge of the intellect (q.v.) as distinct from that of the reason (q.v.). As such it is knowledge inspired by God, and so linked with contemplation (q.v.) and immediate spiritual perception.

STILLNESS (ἡσυχία – *hesychia*): from which are derived the words hesychasm and hesychast, used to denote the whole spiritual tradition represented in the *Philokalia* as well as the person who pursues the spiritual path it delineates (*see* Introduction, pp. 14–16): a state of inner tranquillity or mental quietude and concentration which arises in conjunction with, and is deepened by, the practice of pure prayer and the guarding of the heart (q.v.). Not simply silence, but an attitude of listening to God and of openness towards Him.

TEMPERAMENT (κρᾶσις – *krasis*): primarily the well-balanced blending of

elements, humours or qualities in animal bodies, but sometimes extended to denote the whole soul-body structure of man. In this sense it is the opposite of a state of psychic or physical disequilibrium.

TEMPTATION (πειρασμός – *peirasmos*): also translated in our versions as 'trial' or 'test'. The word indicates, according to context: (i) a test or trial sent to man by God, so as to aid his progress on the spiritual way; (ii) a suggestion from the devil, enticing man into sin.

Using the word in sense (ii), the Greek Fathers employ a series of technical terms to describe the process of temptation. (See in particular Mark the Ascetic, *On the Spiritual Law*, §§ 138–41, in Vol. I of our translation of *The Philokalia*, pp. 119–20; John Klimakos, *Ladder*, Step 15, translated by Archimandrite Lazarus, pp. 157–8; Maximos, *On Love*, I, §§ 83–4, in Vol. II of our translation; John of Damaskos, *On the Virtues and Vices*, also in Vol. II of our translation.) The basic distinction made by these Fathers is between the demonic *provocation* and man's *assent*: the first lies outside man's control, while for the second he is morally responsible. In detail, the chief terms employed are as follows:

(i) *Provocation* (προσβολή – *prosvoli*): the initial incitement to evil. Mark the Ascetic defines this as an 'image-free stimulation in the heart'; so long as the provocation is not accompanied by images, it does not involve man in any guilt. Such provocations, originating as they do from the devil, assail man from the outside independently of his free will, and so he is not morally responsible for them. His liability to this provocation is not a consequence of the fall: even in paradise, Mark maintains, Adam was assailed by the devil's provocations. Man cannot prevent provocations from assailing him; what does lie in his power, however, is to maintain constant watchfulness (q.v.) and so to reject each provocation as soon as it emerges into his consciousness – that is to say, at its first appearance as a thought in his mind or intellect (μονολόγιστος έμφασής – *monologistos emphasis*). If he does reject the provocation, the sequence is cut off and the process of temptation is terminated.

(ii) *Momentary disturbance* (παραρριπισμός – *pararripismos*) of the intellect, occurring 'without any movement or working of bodily passion' (see Mark, *Letter to Nicolas the Solitary*: in our translation, Vol. I, p. 153). This seems to be more than the 'first appearance' of a provocation described in stage (i) above; for, at a certain point of spiritual growth in this life, it is

possible to be totally released from such ‘momentary disturbance’, whereas no one can expect to be altogether free from demonic provocations.

(iii) *Communion* (ὁμιλία – *homilia*); *coupling* (συνδυασμός – *syndyasmos*). Without as yet entirely assenting to demonic provocation, a man may begin to ‘entertain’ it, to converse or parley with it, turning it over in his mind pleasurably, yet still hesitating whether or not to act upon it. At this stage, which is indicated by the terms ‘communion’ or ‘coupling’, the provocation is no longer ‘image-free’ but has become a *logismos* or thought (q.v.); and man is morally responsible for having allowed this to happen.

(iv) *Assent* (συγκατάθεσις – *synkatathesis*). This signifies a step beyond mere ‘communion’ or ‘coupling’. No longer merely ‘playing’ with the evil suggestion, a man now resolves to act upon it. There is now no doubt as to his moral culpability: even if circumstances prevent him from sinning outwardly, he is judged by God according to the intention in his heart.

(v) *Prepossession* (πρόληψις – *prolipsis*): defined by Mark as ‘the involuntary presence of former sins in the memory’. This state of ‘prepossession’ or prejudice results from repeated acts of sin that predispose a man to yield to particular temptations. In principle he retains his free choice and can reject demonic provocations; but in practice the force of habit makes it more and more difficult for him to resist.

(vi) *Passion* (q.v.). If a man does not fight strenuously against prepossession, it will develop into an evil passion.

THEOLOGY (θεολογία – *theologia*): denotes in these texts far more than the learning about God and religious doctrine acquired through academic study. It signifies active and conscious participation in or perception of the realities of the divine world – in other words, the realization of spiritual knowledge (q.v.). To be a theologian in the full sense, therefore, presupposes the attainment of the state of stillness (q.v.) and dispassion (q.v.), itself the concomitant of pure and undistracted prayer, and so requires gifts bestowed on extremely few persons.

THOUGHT (λογισμός – *logismos*): generally signifies not thought in the ordinary sense, but thought provoked by demons, and therefore often qualified in translation by the adjective ‘evil’ or ‘demonic’. It can also signify divinely inspired thought.

WATCHFULNESS (νῆψις – *nipsis*): literally, opposite to a state of drunken stupor; hence spiritual sobriety, alertness, vigilance. It signifies an attitude of attentiveness (προσοχή – *prosochi*), whereby one keeps watch over one's inward thoughts and fantasies (q.v.), maintaining guard over the heart and intellect (φυλακὴ καρδίας / *νοῦ – phylaki kardias / nou;* τήρησις καρδίας / *νοῦ – tirisis kardias / nou*). In Hesychios, *On Watchfulness and Holiness*, §§ 1–6 (in our translation, Vol. I, pp. 162–3), watchfulness is given a very broad definition, being used to indicate the whole range of the practice of the virtues. It is closely linked with the purity of heart and stillness (q.v.). The Greek title of the *Philokalia* is 'the Philokalia of the niptic Fathers', i.e., of the Fathers who practised and inculcated the virtue of watchfulness. This shows how central is the role assigned by St Nikodimos to this state.

WRATH, wrathfulness: *see* Appetitive aspect of the soul.

ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS

TO PREVIOUS VOLUMES OF THIS TRANSLATION

VOL. I, pp. 11–12. On the editorial principles followed by St Makarios of Corinth and St Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain, and on the different editions of *The Philokalia*, see Kallistos Ware, 'Philocalie', *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* xii (1984), col. 1336–52; Elia Citterio, 'Nicodemo Agiorita', in Carmelo Giuseppe Conticello and Vassa Conticello (ed.), *La théologie byzantine et sa tradition*, vol. II, pp. 905–78, especially pp. 919–21; also in the same work, Vassa Conticello and Elia Citterio, 'La Philocalie et ses versions', pp. 999–1021. On the Slavonic version of Paisii Velichkovskii, see Dan Zamfirescu, *A Fundamental Book of the European Culture* (Bucharest, 1991); and Kallistos Ware, 'St. Nikodimos and the *Philokalia*', in Brock Bingaman and Bradley Nassif (ed.), *The Philokalia: A Classic Text of Orthodox Spirituality* (Oxford/New York, 2012), pp. 9–35, 277–84. Consult also Philip Sherrard, 'The Revival of Hesychast Spirituality', in Louis Dupré and Don E. Saliers (ed.), *Christian Spirituality: Post-Reformation and Modern* (New York, 1989), pp. 417–31; revised version in P. Sherrard, *Christianity: Lineaments of a Sacred Tradition* (Edinburgh/Brookline, MA, 1998), pp. 245–67. See also Kallistos Ware, 'Gerald Palmer, the *Philokalia*, and the Holy Mountain', *Friends of Mount Athos: Annual Report* 1994 (published in 1995), pp. 23–8; Antony M. Coniaris, *Philokalia: The Bible of Orthodox Spirituality* (Minneapolis, MN, 1998); Andrew Louth, 'The Theology of the *Philokalia*', in John Behr, Andrew Louth and Dimitri Conomos (ed.), *Abba: The Tradition of Orthodoxy in the West*, Festschrift for Bishop Kallistos (Ware) of Diokleia (Crestwood, NY, 2003), pp. 351–61; Christopher C. H. Cook, *The Philokalia and the Inner Life: On Passions and*

Prayer (Cambridge, 2011); Kallistos Ware, 'Spiritual Guidance according to the *Philokalia*', in Graham Speake and Kallistos Ware (ed.), *Spiritual Guidance on Mount Athos* (Oxford/Bern, 2015), pp. 25–42; John Chryssavgis, '*Philokalia*: A Vocabulary for Our Time', in Andreas Andreopoulos and Graham Speake (ed.), *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth, Studies in Honour of Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia* (Oxford/Bern, 2016), pp. 113–29.

VOL. I, p. 12. The reference to the 1857 translation of *The Philokalia* by Ignatii Brianchaninov seems to be due to a bibliographical confusion; probably no such work exists.

VOL. I, p. 12. The Romanian *Philokalia* had reached vol. 12 by the year 1991. For the revised second edition of the French translation by Jacques Touraille, see Olivier Clément (ed.), *Philocalie des Pères Neptiques*, 2 vols. (Paris [?], 1995).

VOL. I, p. 21. There is now a full translation of Isaiah the Solitary by John Chryssavgis and Pachomios (Robert) Penkitt, *Abba Isaiah of Scetis: Ascetic Discourses*, Cistercian Studies Series 150 (Kalamazoo, 2002).

VOL. I, p. 29. For a comprehensive English translation of the 'practical' writings of Evagrios, see Robert E. Sinkewicz (ed.), *Evagrius of Pontus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus* (Oxford, 2003).

VOL. I, p. 72. There is a more recent translation of Cassian by Boniface Ramsey: *The Institutes*, Ancient Christian Writers 58 (New York/Mahwah, NJ, 2000); *The Conferences*, Ancient Christian Writers 57 (New York/Mahwah, NJ, 1997). See also Columba Stewart, *Cassian the Monk* (New York/Oxford, 1998).

VOL. I, p. 109. There is now a critical edition of Mark's writings (with French translation) by Georges-Matthieu de Durand, *Marc le Moine: Traités*, 2 vols., *Sources chrétiennes* 445 and 455 (Paris, 1999–2000).

VOL. I, p. 251. The volume devoted to Diadochos of Photiki is *Sources chrétiennes* 5 (not 4). Two English translations have appeared recently: by Janet Elaine Rutherford (with critical edition of the Greek text), *One hundred*

practical texts of perception and spiritual discernment from Diadochos of Photike, Belfast Byzantine Texts and Translations 8 (Belfast, 2000); and by Cliff Ermatinger, *Following the Footsteps of the Invisible: The Complete Works of Diadochus of Photikē*, Cistercian Studies Series 239 (Collegeville, PA, 2010). See also Kallistos Ware, 'The Jesus Prayer in St Diadochus of Photice', in George Dion. Dragas (ed.), *Aksum-Thyateira*. A Festschrift for Archbishop Methodios of Thyateira and Great Britain (London, 1985), pp. 557–68.

VOL. I, p. 297. A further work by John of Karpathos, not included in *The Philokalia*, has been edited by David Balfour, in collaboration with Mary Cunningham: *A Supplement to the Philokalia: The Second Century of Saint John of Karpathos* (Brookline, MA, 1994) (Greek text with English translation). Balfour examines in detail the evidence concerning John's life, but is not able to add significantly to what is stated in our brief introductory note.

VOL. II, p. 13. The *Century* attributed to Theodoros the Great Ascetic is largely a compilation of extracts from Evagrios. The *Theoretikon* may be as late as the eighteenth century.

VOL. II, p. 358. Theognostos should be assigned to the thirteenth century rather than the fourteenth. See Joseph A. Munitiz (ed.), *Theognosti Thesaurus*, Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca 5 (Turnhout, 1979), pp. xxix–xliv; also by the same author, *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* xv (1990), col. 443–5.

VOL. IV, p. 11. On Symeon, see also Hilarion Alfeyev, *St. Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition* (Oxford, 2000).

VOL. IV, p. 175. There is a critical edition of the Greek text of Theoliptos (with English translation) by Robert E. Sinkewicz, *Theoleptos of Philadelphia: the Monastic Discourses*, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Studies and Texts 111 (Toronto, 1992); see especially pp. 76–7, 86–108 and 352–83. See also Ioannis K. Gritsopoulos (ed.), Θεολήπτου Φιλαδελφείας τοῦ Ὁμολογητοῦ (1250–1322) Βίος καὶ Ἔργα, 2 vols. (Katerini, 1996), especially vol. I, pp. 255–66; vol. II, pp. 174–96, 277–302.

INDEX

Major entries are given in bold type

AUTHORS AND SOURCES

Abraham/Abram (the patriarch, 18th cent. BC) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Adam 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12
Angelikoudis, Kallistos (Kallistos Tilikoudis or Kallistos Kataphygiotis; second half of 14th cent.) 1, 2, 3
Antony the Great, St (251–356), St 1
Apollo, St (4th cent.) 1

Basil the Great, St (Basil of Caesarea; *c*.330–79) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19

Chrysostom, St John (*c*.347–407) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14
Constantine (father of St Gregory Palamas; 13/14th cent.) 1

Daniel, the prophet (6th cent. BC) 1, 2
David, the divine/the blessed/the Psalmist/the King (reigned *c*.970–1010 BC) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38
Diadochos of Photiki, St (*c*.400–*c*.486) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13
Dionysios the Areopagite (*c*.500) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9

Elijah, the prophet (or Ilias; 9th cent. BC) 1, 2, 3
Ephraim, St (*c*.306–73) 1
Evagrios the Solitary (345/6–399) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
Evdokimos, St (807–40) 1

Gillet, Fr Lev (1893–1980) 16 Goliath (late 11th cent. BC) 1, 2
Gregory of Nyssa, St (*c*.330–*c*.395) 1
Gregory of Sinai, St (*c*.1265–1346) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Gregory the Theologian, St (329–89) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

Hesychios, St (8th–9th cent.) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

Ilias the Presbyter/the Ekdikos, St (late 11th–early 12th cent.) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
Isaac, St (St Isaac the Syrian, St Isaac of Nineveh; 7th cent.) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27
Isaiah, the prophet (8th cent, BC) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
Isidoros of Pelusium, St (d. *c*.440) 1, 2

Jacob, the Patriarch (16th cent. BC) 1
James, St (1st cent.) 1, 2
Joel, the prophet (late 6th/5th cent. BC) 1
John of Damaskos, St (*c*.675–*c*.749) 1, 2, 3
John of Karpathos, St (7th cent.) 1
John, St (St John the Theologian, St John the Apostle; 1st cent.) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11

Kavasilas, St Nicolas (b. *c*.1322) 1
Klimakos, St John (6th–7th cent.) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24
Kokkinos, St Philotheos (Patriarch of Constantinople; *c*.1300–1377/8) 1, 2

Luke, St (1st cent.) 1, 2

'Makarios' (the Great, the supposed author of the 4th-cent. Makarian Homilies) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5,
Makarios of Corinth, St (1731–1805) 1, 2, 3n., 4n., 5n., 6
Mark (Evgenikos) of Ephesos, St (*c*.1392–1445) 1
Mark the Monk/the Ascetic, St (Marcus Eremita; early 5th cent.) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Mavrocordato, John (b. 1712) 1n.
Maximos 'Kapsokalyvitis', St (1270/80–1365/75) 1
Maximos the Confessor, St (1
Metaphrastes, Symeon (d. *c*. 1) 2, 3, 4
Moses (13th cent. BC) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13
Motovilov, Nicolas (1809–79) 1

Neilos, St (d. *c*.430) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13
Nikiphoros the Monk (13th cent.) 1, 2, 3
Nikodimos the Athonite, St (*c*.1749–1809) 1, 2, 3n., 4n., 5n., 6, 7

Palamas, St Gregory, of Thessaloniki (1296–1359) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Patriarch Kallistos I (in office 1350–3, 1355–63) 1, 2
Patriarch Kallistos II, see Xanthopoulos, Kallistos
Paul of Mount Latros, St (d. 1) 2, 3
Paul, St (d. prob. 62–5) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52
Peter of Damaskos, St (fl. *c*.1156/7) 1, 2, 3
Peter, St (d. 64) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
Philimon, St (6/7th cent.) 1
Poemen, Abba (4th cent.) 1

Seraphim of Sarov, St (1759–1833) 1
Solomon (10th cent. BC) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
Stephen, St (d. *c*.35) 1, 2, 3
Symeon of Thessaloniki, St (d. 1492) 1, 2, 3
Symeon the New Theologian, St ((949–1022) 1, 2

Thalassios, the holy (possibly the Libyan, 7th cent.) 1

Varsanuphios, St (d. 540) 1, 2

Xanthopoulos, St Ignatios (d. between 1423 and 1429) 1, 2, 3, 4
Xanthopoulos, St Kallistos (Patriarch Kallistos II; in office 1397) 1, 2, 3

SUBJECTS

abandonment (by God) 1, 2, 3
activity: *and see* energy
Adam: old, first-formed 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9;
    second, spiritual 1
Age to come, the 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
Apophthegmata ('Sayings of the Desert Fathers') 1
analogy 1
angels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15
anger: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5;
    God's 1
animals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
antitypes, sacramental 1
apophatic 1
Apostles 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14
ardour 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
ascetic: labour 1, 2, 3, 4;
    life 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12;
    practice 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25
asceticism 1, 2, 3, 4
Athos, Mount 1, 2
attentiveness 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13
awareness 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

balance and moderation 1
baptism 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11
Belial 1
beauty 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6;
    created 978, 1, 2 (of image), 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8;
    of God 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19;
    soul/noetic 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7;
    of silence 1
bliss 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15
bodily transfiguration 1
body: human 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38;
    of Christ 1, 2, 3;
    sacramental 1, 2, 3;
    transfigured 1, 2
breathing in prayer 1, 2
Byzantium 1

calling to account 1
Carmel, Mount 1
cell 1, 2, 3, 4 5, 6, 7, 8
carnal 1, 2, 3, 4

cenobites 1
changes 1, 2, 3
Cherubim and Seraphim 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
Christ 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15n., 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68
Christian law 1
commandments 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26
compassion: God's 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16;
    natural 1, 2, 3, 4
compunction 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
consolation 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
contrition 1, 2, 3, 4
Constantinople 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
contemplation 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11
contemplative life 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
Council of Constantinople (1351) 1
Council of Florence (1438–9) 1
Crete 1n.
Cross, the 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
crucifixion, the, *and see* Cross, crucify 1
crucify 1, 2, 3, 4

death 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18;
    Christ's 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8;
    contemplation of 1, 2, 3
deification 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13
delusion 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11
demonic energy 1
demons 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26
desert 1, 2, 3
desire 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27
despair 1, 2, 3, 4
detachment 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
Dialogue against all the heresies 1
discernment 1, 2, 3, 4; *and see* discrimination
discrimination 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12; *and see* discernment
dispassion (*apatheia*) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17
dispensation: *and see* Incarnation
distraction 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21
divine: adoption 1, 2;
    bliss 1, 2;
    commandments 1, 2, 3;
    consolation 1, 2;
    contemplation 1, 2, 3;
    energy 1, 2, 3;
    gifts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5;
    grace 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24;
    hope 1;
    illumination 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13;

inheritance 1, 2, 3, 4, 5;
judgment 1;
knowledge 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9;
light 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18;
light of Tabor 1;
Logos 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11;
love 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21;
mercy 1, 2, 3, 4;
mysteries 1;
nature 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8;
pleasure 1, 2;
prayer 1, 2;
providence 1, 2;
transmutation 1, 2;
truth 1, 2, 3, 4;
union 1, 2;
utterances 1, 2;
visions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7;
wisdom 1, 2, 3, 4;
words 1, 2
Divinity, the 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23

eating 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12
ecstatic love 1; *and see* eros
elements 1, 2, 3, 4
energy 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, **7**, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18
enlightened guide 1; *and see* spiritual father
eros 1; *and see* ecstatic love
essence: in general 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6;
God's 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12
Eucharist, the 1, 2
Evagrian-Maximian 'current' 1
Exact Method and Rule, The 1, 2, 3
experience 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19

face 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8;
of Christ 1, 2;
of God 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
face-to-face 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
faith 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27;
confession of 1;
genuine 1;
lack of 1, 2, 3;
Orthodox 1, 2;
personalized 1, 2, 3, 4;
profession of 1, 2;
true 1, 2, 3;
true doctrine of 1;
twofold 1, 2
faithful, the 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14

fall, the 1, 2, 3, 4
fall short 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
falling 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
fantasy 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
fasting *see also* Lent 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
fear of God 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
figurations 1, 2
flesh 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13;
    of Christ 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
flight from the world 1, 2
forgiveness 1, 2, 3

garden of Eden 1, 2
gentleness 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
gift of the spirit 1, 2
glory of God 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14
God: impossible to know 1;
    perceives what is secret 1;
    to whom prayer is addressed 1, 2, 3; *and passim*
grace 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
Great Fast *see* Lent
grief 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11

heart 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 *and frequently*
hermitage 1, 2 *see also kellion*
Hesychast Controversy of 1337–51 1, 2
hesychast way of life 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
hesychasts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
Holy Communion 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
hope 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15
humility 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25
Hundred Texts on Purity of Soul, A 1
hypostases 1, 2, 3

idleness 1, 2, 3
ignorance 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12
illumination 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 1323, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17;
    divine 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14;
    false 1;
    of grace 1, 2, 3;
    inner 1;
    intellect's 1, 2, 3;
    personal 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7;
    of the spirit 1, 2, 3;
    supranatural 1, 2
imagination 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
incensive (power of the soul) 1, **2**, 3, 4, 5, 6
inner essence (principles, *logoi*) 1, 2, 3
insight 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12
Israel 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9

invocation with faith 1, 2, 3

Jesus Christ, see Christ
Jesus Prayer, the 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 *see also* Prayer, the
judgment 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15;
    God's 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
justice 1, 2, 3, 4

kellion 1, 2
kingdom 1, 2, 3;
    of God/heaven 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15
knowledge 1, 2, 3, 4, 5;
    mystical 1, 2;
    of Scripture 1, 2;
    spiritual 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6;
    of the Unknowable 1, 2

law of God 1, 2
learning or erudition 1, 2, 3, 4
Lent 1, 2
Letter to Monks 1
life of stillness 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11
light 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13
listlessness 1, 2, 3, 4
Liturgy 1
Logos of God 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
love 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
lust 1, 2

Macarian Homilies 1
manna 1;
    noetic manna 1, 2;
    spiritual manna 1
manual labour 1, 2, 3
matins 1, 2, 3
matter 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
meditation 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16
mercy 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27
memory 1, 2
Midnight Office, the 1
mindful/mindfulness 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12
miracles 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
monad 1, 2, 3, 4
monastic state 1
Mother of God 1, 2, 3

Name, invocation of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 *see also* Jesus Prayer
noetic: activity 1, 2;
    beings 1, 2, 3, 4;
    dimension 1, 2;

form 1, 2;
hope 1;
light 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7;
manna 1, 2;
nature 1, 2;
perception 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6;
powers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5;
prayer 1, 2;
realities 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12;
realm 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6;
soul 1, 2, 3;
stillness 1;
vigilance 1;
vision 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6;
way 1, 2
number 1

obedience 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
oil 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
On Prayer 1
On Watchfulness and Holiness 1
On Watchfulness and the Guarding of the Heart 1
Orthodox faith 1, 2

Paraclete, the 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
paradise 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
passion 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13
Passion of Christ 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
passionateness 1, 2
peace 1, 2, 3, 4
peaceful state 1
perfection 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21
person of Christ 1, 2, 3
perspicacity 1
physical technique, the 1
pleasure of the flesh 1, 2, 3
prayer: attentiveness, and 1;
fervent 1, 2;
genuine 1, 2;
in the heart which is not pure 1;
Jesus, the (the Prayer) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8;
mystical 1, 2;
noetic 1, 2;
pure 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15;
sacred 1, 2, 3;
sinews of the soul 1;
spiritual 1, 2, 3, 4;
texts on 1, 2, 3;
true 1, 2;
unceasing 1, 2;

what is needful for 1
Prayer, the 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 *see also* Jesus Prayer
pride 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
prophets 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11
prostrations 1, 2, 3
provocation 1, 2
psalmody 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11
Psalms 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
punishment 1, 2
purification 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14
purity 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28

rapture 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11
reading 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16
reliable teacher 1
renunciation 1, 2, 3
repentance 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11
repose 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24
resurrection 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

Sabbath, the 1, 2, 3, 4
sacraments, the 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
saints 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23
salvation 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22
self-abandonment (to God) 1, 2, 3, 4
self-condemnation 1, 2
self-control 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
self-indulgence 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
senses 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29;
  spiritual/noetic 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
silence 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14;
  blessed 1;
  choose 1;
  cultivate 1, 2, 3, 4, 5;
  keeping 1, 2, 3, 4;
  observe 1;
  visionary 1, 2
sin 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11
sloth 1, 2, 3, 4
solitary: life 1, 2;
  place 1 *and see* desert
sorrow 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 *and see* grief
soul: aspects of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6;
  contemplative faculty 1;
  divine love 1, 2;
  first man, of the 1;
  five faculties of 1, 2, 3;
  movement of 1, 2, 3;
  noetic 1, 2, 3, 4;
  noetic faculty 1, 2, 3, 4;

nourishment of 1;
organs of 1, 2, 3;
perfection of 1;
powers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12;
pure 1, 2;
tripartite 1
spiritual: contemplation 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7;
gifts 1, 2, 3;
glory 1;
grace 1, 2, 3;
growth 1, 2;
joy 1, 2, 3, 4, 5;
knowledge 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22;
light 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15;
manna 1, 2;
perception 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8;
pleasure 1;
power 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7;
practice 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12;
senses 1, 2, 3;
state 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6;
vision 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9;
warfare 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
spiritual father 1, 2
stillness 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18;
cognitive 1;
inner 1;
life of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12;
noetic 1;
state of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

tears 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23
temptations 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
Texts on Prayer 1, 2, 3
thanks 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
theandric logos 1
theology 1, 2, 3
threefold form of love 1
tower of Babel 1, 2
triadic monad 1, 2
triadic orders of mysteries 1
Triadic Unity 1, 2
trials 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
Trinity 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
truth 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25

union with God 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, **27**, 28, 29

vices 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

vigilance 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
vigils 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
virtues 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25
vision of God 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13

warmth: from heart 1;
    in prayer 1, 2, 3, 4
watchfulness 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12
weakness 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11
will of God 1, 2
wine (diluted for ordinary use/unmixed in the kingdom) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9;
    sacramental 1
wisdom: virtue 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8;
    of God (sometimes explicity identified with Christ) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
Wisdom of Sirach, the 1
work: monastic 1, 2, 3, 4, 5;
    angelic 1;
    pre-eminently prayer 1, 2, 3, 4, 5;
    creation as God's work 1, 2, 3
worldly cares 1, 2
worship 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14
written rule 1, 2

zeal 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

COPYRIGHT

First published by Faber & Faber Limited in 2023
Bloomsbury House, 74–77 Great Russell Street,
London WC1B 3DA

This ebook edition first published in 2023

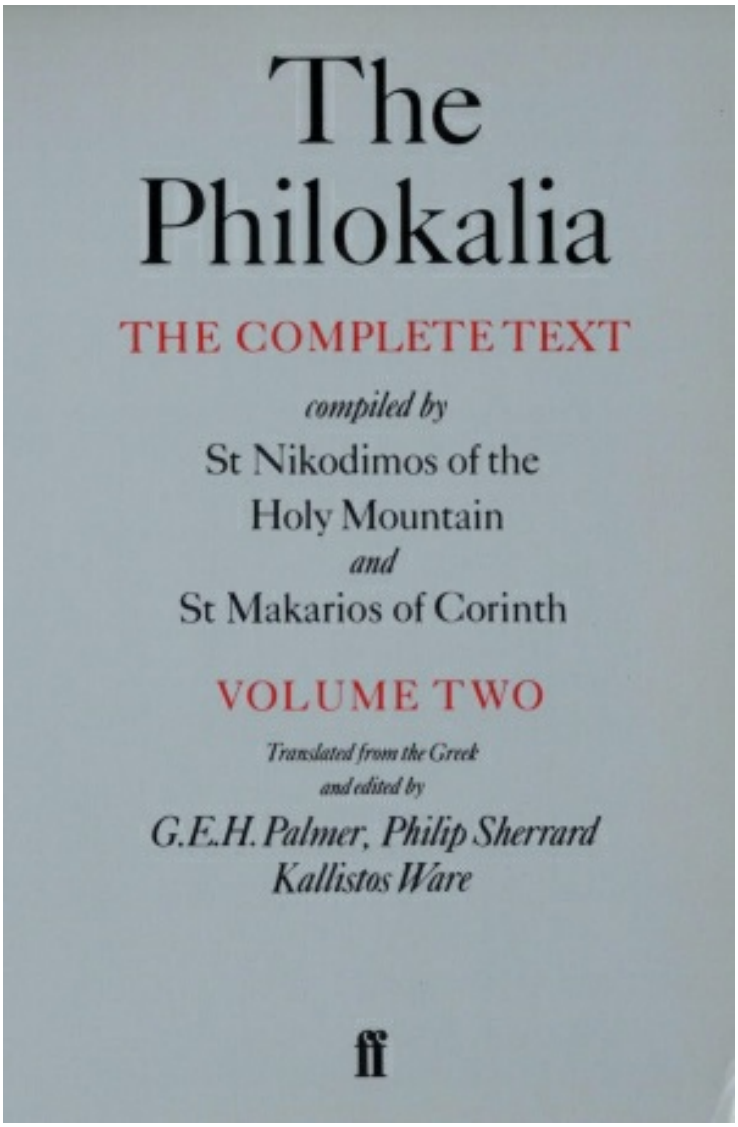
All rights reserved
© The Eling Trust, 2023

Cover design by Faber

The right of Philip Sherrard and Kallistos *Ware* to be identified as author of this work has been asserted in accordance with Section 77 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988

This ebook is copyright material and must not be copied, reproduced, transferred, distributed, leased, licensed or publicly performed or used in any way except as specifically permitted in writing by the publishers, as allowed under the terms and conditions under which it was purchased or as strictly permitted by applicable copyright law. Any unauthorised distribution or use of this text may be a direct infringement of the author's and publisher's rights, and those responsible may be liable in law accordingly

ISBN 978–0–571–37465–6



The Philokalia Vol 2

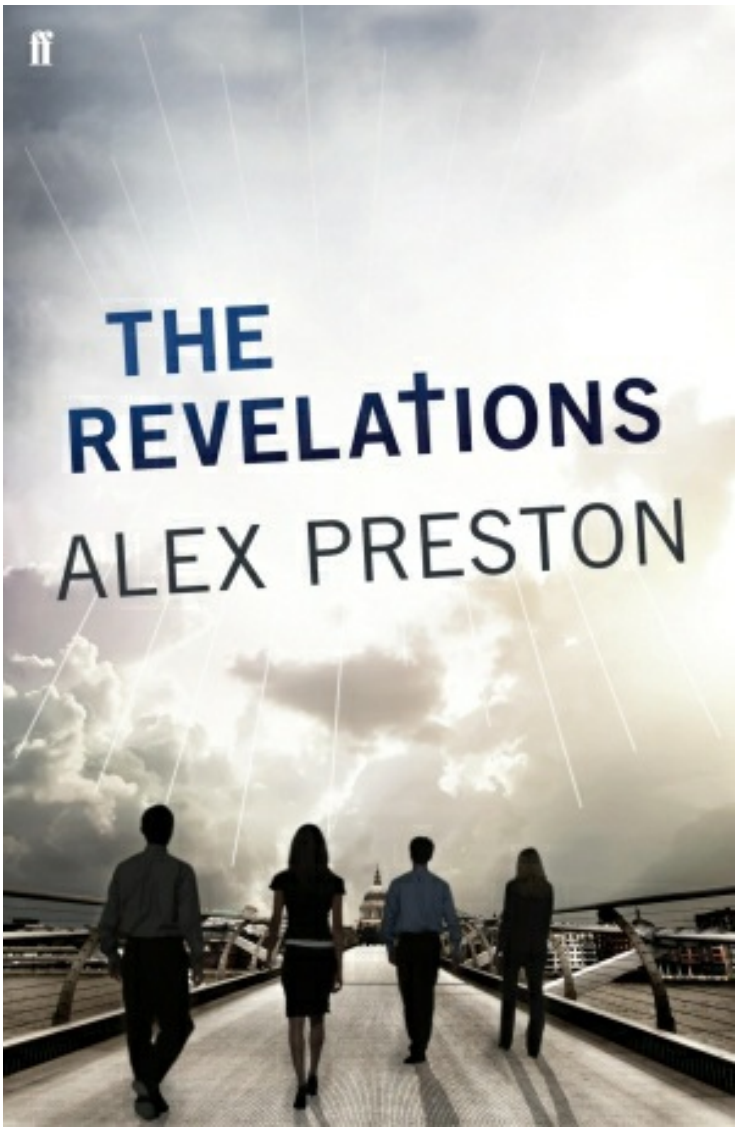
Palmer, G.E.H.
9780571268764
742 pages

Buy now and read

The Philokalia is a collection of texts written between the fourth and

the fifteenth centuries by spiritual masters of the Orthodox Christian tradition. First published in Greek in 1782, translated into Slavonic and later into Russian, The Philokalia has exercised an influence far greater than that of any book other than the Bible in the recent history of the Orthodox Church. It is concerned with themes of universal importance: how man may develop his inner powers and awake from illusion; how he may overcome fragmentation and achieve spiritual wholeness; how he may attain the life of contemplative stillness and union with God.Only a selection of texts from The Philokalia has been available hitherto in English. The present rendering, which is a completely new translation, is designed to appear in five volumes. The first of these was published by Faber & Faber in 1979. The second volume consists mainly of writings from the seventh century, in particular by St Maximus the Confessor, the greater part of which has never before been translated into English. As in the first volume, the editors have provided introductory notes to each of the writers, a glossary of key terms, and a detailed index.

Buy now and read



The Revelations

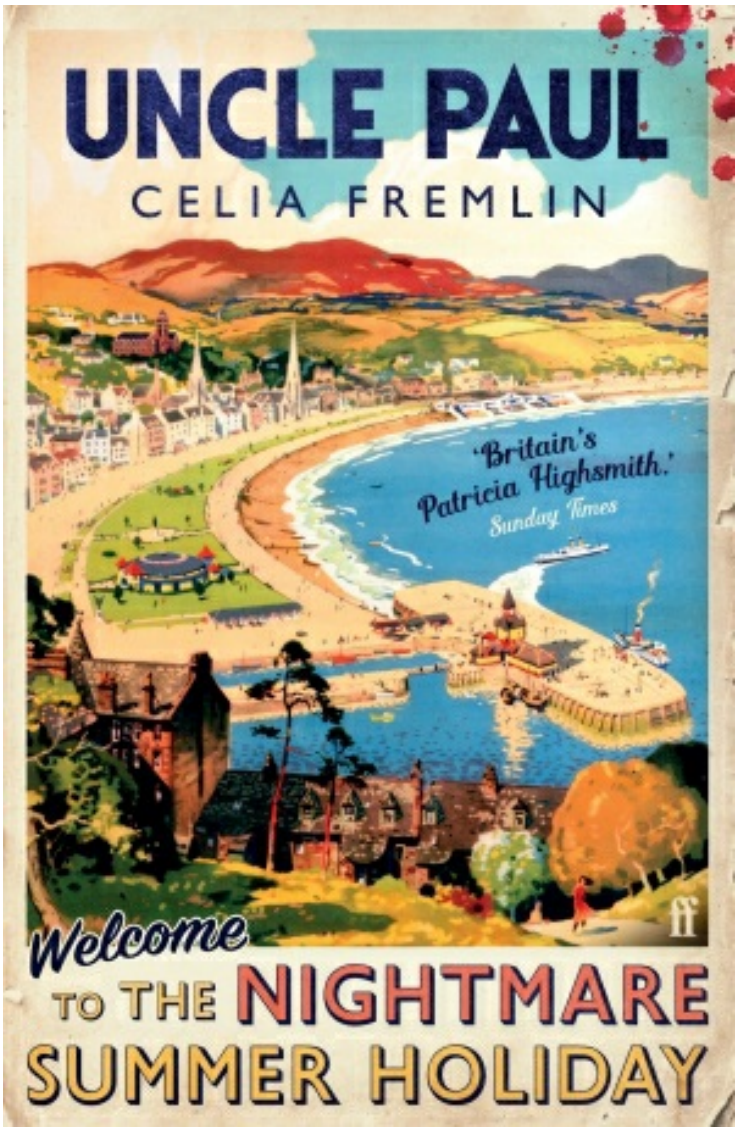
Preston, Alex
9780571277605
336 pages

Buy now and read

A group of young people are searching for meaning in a dark and

directionless world. The Course, a religious movement led by a charismatic priest, seems at first to offer everything the friends have been looking for: a community of bright, thoughtful, beautiful people. But as they are drawn deeper into the Course, money, sex and God collide, threatening to rip them apart. This gripping novel of ideas lays bare a world where the advancement of a movement becomes more important than the lives of its followers.

Buy now and read



Uncle Paul

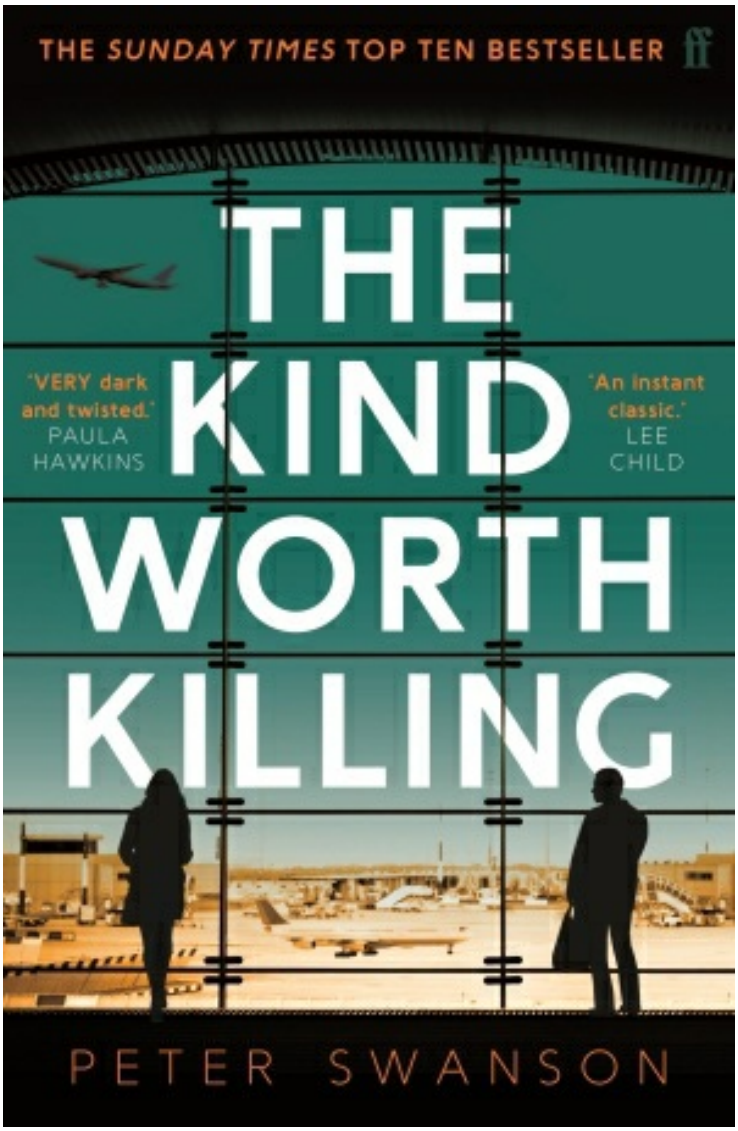
Fremlin, Celia
9780571380886
225 pages

Buy now and read

One family's skeletons emerge on a 1950s seaside summer holiday in

this classic mystery from 'Britain's Patricia Highsmith' and 'the grandmother of psycho-domestic noir' (Sunday Times)'A slow-burning chill of a read by a master of suspense.' Janice Hallett'Sinister, witty and utterly compelling. A genius.' Nicola UpsonAnother face, cool and smiling, framed against another rose arch, fifteen years ago. Cool in spite of the summer heat; smiling for the last time before the fearful discovery was made ...The summer holidays have begun. In a seaside caravan resort, Isabel and her sister Meg build sandcastles with the children, navigate deckchair politics, explore the pier's delights, gorge ice cream in the sun. But their half-sister Mildred has returned to a nearby coastal cottage where her husband - the mysterious Uncle Paul - was arrested for his first wife's attempted murder: and family skeletons emerge. Now, on his release from prison, is he returning for revenge, seeking who betrayed him? Or are all three women letting their nerves get the better of them? Though who really is Meg's new lover? And whose are those footsteps ...?

Buy now and read



The Kind Worth Killing

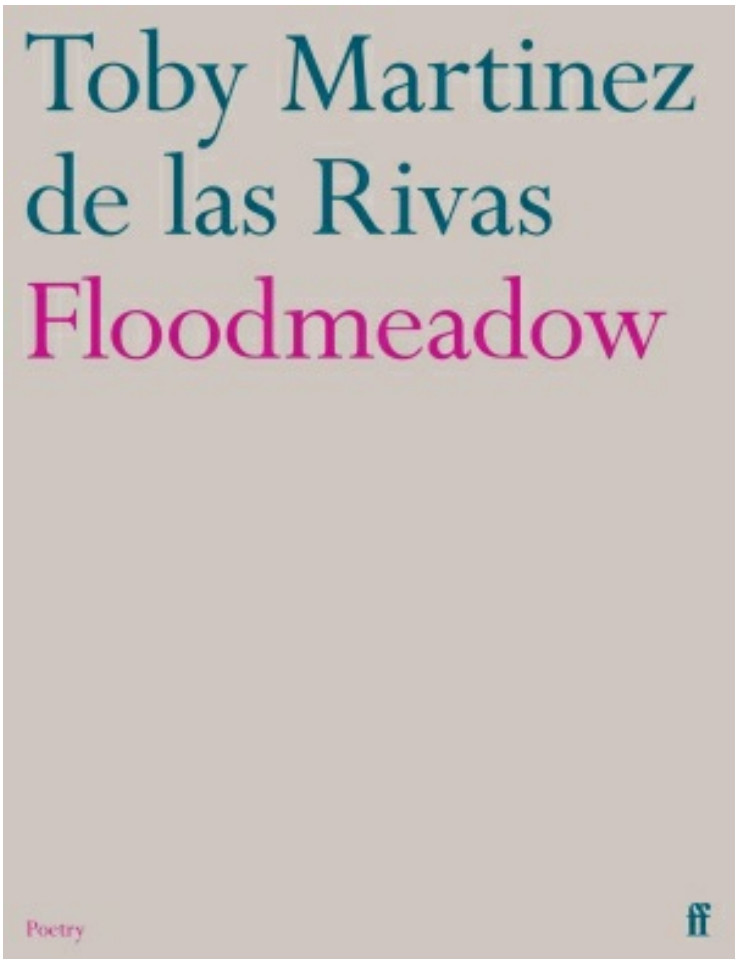
Swanson, Peter
9780571302239
320 pages

Buy now and read

THE SUNDAY TIMES TOP TEN BESTSELLERA RICHARD & JUDY

BOOK CLUB CHOICEBEST THRILLER, iBOOKS BEST OF 2015SHORTLISTED FOR THE IAN FLEMING SILVER DAGGER, 2015SUNDAY TIMES, TATLER, GOOD HOUSEKEEPING AND GOLDSBORO BOOK OF THE MONTHYou should never talk to strangersWith his flight delayed, Ted Severson meets Lily Kintner, a magnetic stranger, in an airport bar. In the netherworld of international travel and too many martinis, he confesses his darkest secrets, about his wife's infidelity and how he wishes her dead. Without missing a beat Lily offers to help him carry out the task.'Gripping, elegantly and stylishly written and extremely hard to put down.' Sophie Hannah'A work of lovely violence and graceful malevolence, it slips into your life like a stiletto in the ribs.' Joe Hill'Gone Girl on speed.' Daisy Goodwin'Chilling and hypnotically suspenseful ... an instant classic.' Lee Child

Buy now and read



Floodmeadow

Martinez de las Rivas, Toby
9780571376445
80 pages

Buy now and read

The Floodmeadow draws us into a seething pastoral where lightning threatens and thunder gathers, pylons and powerlines hum, and steel-framed gates sing out into the wind. In these incantatory pieces, everything is present at once. The landscape, teetering on

apocalypse, is characterised by collision and disintegration. Among fragments of memory and history are meticulously journaled observations of the natural world: the moorhen who 'with exaggerated delicacy steps / free of the reedbeds'; the dragonfly that 'pushes itself through the armour / of its body' to be born. The world is populated by archangels and wild gods, the roar of military aircraft, hunting dogs caught permanently suspended in the chase and a car that veers from the road into the floodwater in which the whole collection is saturated. Human relations are fleeting and vulnerable, appearing in the impression of a wedding or the recurring moments captured between a father and son, who make between them delicate balsawood constructions, which - as the poems do themselves - take flight in the turmoil, ecstatic one moment, plunged into darkness the next. This is a visionary collection that invokes other times, dimensions and soundscapes to tell out some word of beauty and abundance in the here and now.

Buy now and read