

[APPENDIX]

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On Prayer: 69 Texts

1. PARADISE AS AN IMAGE OF MAN

Just as the visible body of man is an image where what is invisible in him can appear, so the Paradise of all beauty that God in his wisdom planted in Eden in the East (cf. Gen. 2 : 8) is also an image of the interior of man, which has for land the heart, and for trees the numerous and diverse contemplations of God; the intellect, created in the image of God, ought to plant with all its will those trees; they are thoughts and particularly thoughts which manifest the divine. These contemplations bear a variety of spiritual forms and odours. I would add that they are food, joy, and above all pleasure. The things of Eden signify what the heart is when it has fed naturally and finds its pleasure and joy openly in the divine.

The sensually experienced paradise is in the East and feels the touch of the sun. But the ideal paradise by contrast is in man, under the light of knowledge shed by the ideal sun. For according to the fathers, it is impossible for a heart which lacks the light of knowledge to contain thoughts, visions and manifestations of God, and to be entirely surrounded by the most complex or even the most simple of divine representations, which are like the recreation of a paradise beyond the world.

But paradise is not without water. For he who has disclosed paradise to us also takes care of the plants and naturally the fruits. In the middle of paradise of Eden one sees a flowing source divided into four streams watering the face of the land, as it is written (cf. Gen. 2 : 6). In man the source of the living water is the vivifying water of the Holy Spirit, of which the Lord has said: 'The water which I will give him will be for him a source of living water' (John 4 : 14). It flows out from its source in the heart like that which came miraculously from Eden. This source divides into prudence, modesty, justice, and courage, the four streams which spring like rivers of virtue equal to God. That is why it is said later on that the water, that is to say the energy, covers all the face of the land, or if you prefer, the whole face of the heart, evidently so as to bring about growth, for ripening and for harvesting of the choice fruits of divine virtue.

The knowledge of what flows now and what it is at the source, is a marvellous thing, gentle and full of grace; the knowledge provides a depiction of the movement and energy of the supernatural life-giving Spirit, flowing from the middle of the heart, as has been said. The source does not have the nature of plants, nor of the land. For they are other than the source. Water suffices for all the numberless plants. The water is one, it gives them all moisture, feeds them, assisting them with what they need, even while they differ one from another in the matter of their opposing temperaments, some being dry, others humid, some hot, and some cold. The source, as I have said, flows therefore to all the diverse plants. It sheds single and simple water, which is of the greatest help. Dividing itself into four streams, it makes itself available to all of them. It does not have the nature of things inside us, which would shall call virtues, nor the nature of knowledge, or the contemplation attached to it. Nor does it have the nature of our heart. It is the divine supra-natural flame of Him who creates life, being his movement and his inexhaustible energy. It has been given to the faithful by grace. It comes continually from the depth of the heart and goes in the same manner toward what is foreign to it. It is clearly divided into four virtues, as I have said. Those are the four virtues which above all it gives assistance to. It is the same water for all, for one thing after another. By it the Spirit assists prudence first of all. And after providing spiritual knowledge, it helps him who does works of justice. Finally, showing itself through wisdom and power, this water reveals before long its energy by bringing about modesty and courage.

Of this love and of this wisdom, Paul and Isaiah are the most trustworthy witnesses. The first says precisely this: 'The love of God is shed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us' (Rom. 5 : 5). And Isaiah, among the seven energies of the Spirit, clearly counts the spirit of wisdom as one (cf. Is. 11 : 2). Now the Spirit does not merely assist love, it becomes a spirit of zeal antithetical to love, to the extent that love must cover a multitude of sins, as it is written (cf. 1 Peter 4 : 8). Zeal gives way to disgrace, and sometimes indeed to murder. It is said that the great prophet Elijah, that friend of God, killed with a sword many shameful priests (cf. 1 Kings 18 : 40). And before that, Phineas thrust a javelin through the Midianite and the Israelite (Num. 25 : 8). And

before them, Moses himself, the most holy legislator of the Old Testament, through zeal and the hand of men of his race, often sent men to their deaths. In the things of action, knowledge is best. And in the things of contemplation, best is the ignorance which surpasses intellect. But it is impossible that these are achieved in the soul without the spirit of truth and without the spirit of knowledge. Joy of heart, and sadness opposite of joy, are manifestly effects of the Spirit. Hear the Scriptures, which say: 'The fruit of the Spirit is joy' (Gal. 5 : 22); and: 'God gives to some a spirit of compunction' (Rom. 11 : 8).

To summarise: according to the fathers, the life-giving and Holy Spirit intervenes in all things respecting virtue, and in those states of being which, apparently, as I have said, seem to oppose each other; so the scriptures call the Spirit fire and water, things totally contrary, because it brings aid to all those that are good and beautiful in the soul, and it also rouses that energy which gives life and force. That is why the Scriptures talk of it in the singular and the plural: the Saviour says it is well-spring and rivers. So it is that it divides into four rivers and assumes all the virtues. A soul is remade completely, because life is given supernaturally to it in communion through the Spirit, and it is borne toward what is right for it and through whatever comes its way, and so that the soul does everything it should.

Therefore I think that the rock which Moses the legislator struck with his rod, which made water supernaturally flow like a river, is the heart petrified through hardness. When God, in the place of the rod, opportunely strikes such a heart with his words and penetrates it with compunction, the power of the Spirit aroused beneficently, flows from that heart in a supernatural manner like rivers of life-giving water, and accords immense help in everything. And how to put this? That which is single and the same water by nature, that gives life to all beings which receive it, numberless and infinite, to the measure of each. It is truly marvellous that this rock carried by a single cart (cf. 1 Cor. 10 : 4) was able to make a stream of water big enough to fill myriads of carts indefinitely. But from whence did this come? Where did so much water come from? From what source? But how great this miracle must be in the reckoning of those who wonder how the cup of the heart, borne so briefly in such a weak body, never stops flowing in a flux of myriad spirits and bodies, both infinite and living. It reaches the heart but where does it originate, in such a way that it is able to do this in so many cases? The Spirit, as He says who is the truth itself, truly blows wherever it wants. You hear his voice, but you do not know where it comes from nor where it goes (cf. John 3 : 8). It blows on all and forever.

If therefore we have received from God such a dignity, so that we must plant the divine in ourselves in the imitation of God, then it is a paradise, but certainly not a paradise that the exterior senses can know, rather an intellectual paradise, as we have said; truly more elevated to beatitude, and beyond the

understanding, of those who have not yet experienced the sacred dignity. Let us give ourselves therefore, entirely, and in total piety, with the firmness of faith, to the basics of the life of stillness, and through observance of the commandments, to Christ God in the Trinity. Persevering in this way in a contemplation which collects visions and the divine ideas of which we have spoken, and adding to them the theological mind which it digs and plants into the heart for God, with all our resolve pray to him as is fitting to abide in us and make flow in our hearts those thoughts superior to the world. The Holy Spirit, we can say, is of rivers. For 'he who believes in me, as the Scripture says, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water' (John 7 : 38). And the well-beloved Apostle adds that he said this about the Spirit, that would be received by them who believed in him (John 7 : 39). The glory of the ages, to him who gives that which surpasses intellect.

2. OF THE GIFT OF SPIRIT

See the gifts of God which do not turn around and retreat, and the blessings of God which nothing can surpass. And rejoice in the miracle which comes divinely, when you consider the things which God did in the first creature, Adam, and the greater things which he did later in us.

He breathed into Adam a breath of life, the grace of the life-giving Spirit. Then Adam became a perfect man. He became a living soul (cf. Gen. 2 : 7), and more than a soul. The soul of man is not the Spirit of God, but it is a living soul through the Spirit. Through the holy and life-giving Spirit it becomes in truth, for the soul which lives as it should, a soul endowed with reason in the image of God. But the Spirit of God does not take on a body with the soul. Alas, that is fallen. It has lost the image of God, and what is necessary in life to a soul with reason. Bestiality, or ferocity, has sadly overtaken it. Without God, the Saviour has said, we can do absolutely nothing (cf. John 15 : 5) of what we ought to achieve in the Spirit and in Christ. That is why man was created without fault, that is to say, complete. Adam became not simply a soul, but a living soul. For God breathed in him a breath which is the life of souls with reason. Then the breath of God breathed into Adam gave to him, as much as was possible, a real glory. God offered to man a glory equal to his own, so that man could participate by applying himself to things with vision and prophecy, to find himself truly a creator with God and a second God by grace, passing through divine visions and the luminous prophecies, as it has pleased the Creator of the universe, the most wise Creator.

But by his fall man bent the knee, and submitted himself, to the great evil of disobedience. Alas, he has been detached from the life-giving Holy Spirit which enlightens us, he no longer knows how to protect such a great honour, he has been truly reduced to the state of beasts without intellect, and resembles them (cf. Ps. 49 : 12). And he has gone in total

ignorance and obscurity far from the divine goal, incapable in any way of raising his head in those terrible shadows, manifestly deprived as he has been of the divine gift, the supernatural gift of the breath that God breathed into him.

But the time of God's compassion has arrived, and God has sent his Word to heal us of our corruption (cf. Ps. 107 :20). Now the Word carries the Spirit which naturally accompanies it, which illumines and makes his divinity clear, one can say his power, of which the prophet speaks, when he rendered grace to God for all of mankind: 'You have sent your light and your truth. They have conducted me, they have sent me to your holy mountain, to your unique and supreme spiritual knowledge, in your dwellings and the contemplations of your glory' (Ps. 43 : 3). It is there that, carried by God, the intellect is elevated, and it is there that it abides. It is beneath visible things, approaching in a certain manner the Most High God. Since then the legitimate Word of our God has come, as we have said, naturally bearing with him, in the holy Word of God, the holy Spirit of God, all those who have received in faith the holy Word of God have since then received immediately the Holy Spirit of God, which always indubitably accompanies the Word. And not only have they received from God the Father face to face as Adam did at the origin, and as much later the disciples of Christ when he breathed on them (cf. John 20 : 22), but receiving suddenly the invisible like a breath, that is to say the Spirit, which breathes into them clear the grace itself of the Spirit, those who participate in the depth of the heart seeing in their intellect the Spirit which surrounds the waters forever flowing as from a source, and which meanwhile shines and gives to the intellect to see marvellous things of the new birth and things inaccessible things of the divine glory. In a word, through the supernatural participation in the Spirit by way of grace, the intellect puts itself to mystical contemplation and abundance of great good.

Progressing in the patient conception of grace, it arrives at visions and prescience by enlightenment of the Spirit, and it rises into the rank structure of God. It sees the hypostatic union which surpasses understanding, that union of the divine being and the incarnated personal being of man. It sees the outflowing of Spirit in everything, that effusion which Adam did not see, for he did not communicate with the divine being, nor truly receive the adoptive filiation of God.

3. OF THE DIVINE ENERGY IN MAN AND OF PEACE

Let us consider the energy from the Holy Spirit in the heart, as best we can, followed by consideration of the things which it carries out. Let us also consider the energy which is merely our own, and the things which are ours by nature. We will see that in no way possible, by virtue of the energy which is ours by nature, to find peace. For that is precisely, along with love and joy, the true fruit of the energy of the Spirit: patience, gentleness, generosity, sharing what is good with our neighbours. Straight away, we can see that any energy

which is ours by nature is not distinct from the normal activity of the soul, and the soul's activity is obviously based in the workings of the soul's incensive faculty. But such natural energy does not come work in us without the working of the will. And the will of the active monk allies itself with desire, while the will of the contemplative attaches itself in general more with restraint of desire. Thus it is impossible that any energy which is naturally ours can totally extinguish the desire and passion with which we are usually joined when engaged in activity.

However, the energy of the Holy Spirit in the heart is supernatural, and its genesis does not happen in or through natural process, but it manifests itself in those who have received mercy and in a manner which exceeds our understanding: it is clearly aroused in spite of nature, or to say all that we can, it simply shines with light. For no one can tell what bears us to the energy, to the flames and the manifestation of the Spirit, except those alone who have been supernaturally received by it, so as to see it without cloudy vision, and to enjoy it in the heart. The divine energy has no concern for the will, nor the natural impulses, when deploying itself. It is clear that the appetite and wrath do not operate here and they do nothing. To summarise, the passible aspect of the soul becomes incoherent and has no power for action, when the life-giving breath of the Spirit rises supernaturally from the heart. But the intellect exults and lives. From then onwards the soul is also at peace, in the calm, in a state of necessary dispassion. It contemplates God. Marvellously, its relation to God, its enlightenment, its restraint, it is the Spirit received blessedly from God. The soul sees that it has entered into the spiritual knowledge of the inexplicable more than luminous splendour of divine beauty, and it abundantly loves the more than beautiful God. It enjoys knowing the Father of the Lord who is, to speak at the limits of language, so infinite, unlimited, incomprehensible; enjoys knowing its origins and inheritance, and knows it intimately in even if only in the ineffable divine compassion, and then it attains marvellous peace, for it sees that it wants in nothing, by the grace of the extreme beauty which exceeds the intellect.

As we have said, when the incensive power is supplanted in its action by the energy of the Comforter, who comes of his own accord, patience and sweetness, joined with the greatest happiness, are granted to the life of the soul. They are the fruits of the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal. 5 : 22), in which those who have received the mercy of God can take part. But the spirit of illusion and deception, even when it seems to be active in the soul without the will and the impulses of the one who receives it, never calms the impassioned state, but rather arouses it, and puts to work neither love for God, nor joy, nor peace. Because deception is disorderly, so it gives rise to nothing, and it is a stranger to peace and to the calm which comes from God.

4. AN ADDRESS

I am amazed, Lord, before the joyful light of this enviable peace, before such restful, beloved light, which transgresses what is natural, and is full of grace, the greatest of all light sources. It is purely and completely the life of the intellect. I am amazed, too, All Powerful, Holy Master, that touched by the ineffable flowering in your infinite generosity, that anyone can live totally for itself, and not for you (cf. 2 Cor. 5 : 15), who are higher than all being. For you are the life which created all lives, and the source of all happiness and all beauty. If, for example, a woman has touched you, or not even you but your garments, or not even that, but the fringe of your garments, in secret, and if she was then suddenly and completely released from a life of illness, and delivered into health contrary to all expectation (cf. Matt. 9 : 20 ff.), then what shall we think, O King, and what ought to happen naturally, and what life which ought he to lead, who in your generosity you touched with the ineffable divine flowering, and to whom you gave in all clarity and marvellously your compassion? We know that you took the hand of the mother of Peter, and that the fever left her on the field. She recovered her health, raised herself and served you (cf. Mark 1 : 30 ff.), full of admiration and fervour. Now that woman was only touched once, and on the surface: for you took her hand. If then, according to the words of the Evangelist, she was entirely cured in an instant, how is it for those that you touch ineffably, not one time only, but continually, night and day, and not at all some external part, but in the most profound interiority of the heart, you who love their soul so much, clearly helping them with your force in whatever happens to them, consoling them in their grief, and doing a myriad of good and beautiful things for them? How, O Most High, can such men live for themselves, and not totally for you, as would be natural? Or more to the point, now that they live for you alone, how do they not consider themselves diseased, how do they not prostrate themselves humbly, when they find themselves, for the sake of brief satisfactions, distanced from the great and extraordinary security of your grace?

Glory to you, truly glorified, you who glorify the humble. And when they are glorified, you render them yet more humble, since then by your ineffable gifts, they are due so much immense good. When you accord grace to the humble, you root yourself marvellously in their hearts, and they are truly glorified. You have said clearly in the book of Solomon that the wisdom of God takes root in a glorified people, beyond all imagination. 'That is why I raise myself in the heart like a cedar of Lebanon' (cf. Sir. 24 : 12-13). 'I who have surpassed the things below, that is to say the things of the earth. Arrived at the summit of divine thought, I have attained the height, the mountain of God. Like a terebinth, I have extended my branches. That is to say that those where I set down my roots by spiritual grace, my branches are the boughs of glory and grace' (Sir. 24 : 16).

Lord, you are truth. What I say is entirely true. That is why the pure soul, the soul which has received you like a wife, has

desired very wisely to abide in your shadow, as soon as the shadow was available to it. It is clear that your fruit is sweet, and not simply that, but that it also sweet in the mouth. For the sweetness of God does not happen out in the open and for all, to the senses alone, but it is more; just as it is said in the text: 'Like cassia and camel's thorn I gave forth the aroma of spices, and like choice myrrh I spread a pleasant odour' (Sir. 24 : 15), but it does not do this for everyone. This is what Paul means, when he says: 'The unique and self-same perfume was for some the odour of life which leads to life, and for others an odour of death which leads to death' (2 Cor. 2 : 16). So it is the same but superabundantly, if I might speak thus, that the divine gentleness and the glory of God are revealed at the same time; however, they are not revealed to all people except to those who perceive them with the senses of the intellect: therefore, to those who practice the life of stillness and who have self-evidently received the divine blessing through the communion of the Spirit which dispenses light and life; in summary, those who are pure of heart, in as much as it is possible to have that. If a person leading an impure, tumultuous life, manifestly deprived of the communion of the Spirit, were yet found to be entirely worthy, that person would naturally sense the glory of God, its perfume and sweetness. But this is not possible and cannot be. For it requires distance from the world, and therefore solitude, the life of stillness, the cloister, the life devoted to the duties of virtue, watchfulness, prayer and attention, and all the things carried by those who repent, so as to make a place for the unsurpassable wealth of divine mercy. Through love for man, He inclines himself away from his proper movement and abides in the soul which is looking for Him diligently. It is a wondrous mercy. God – O what grace – becomes, for the soul, a single spirit rooted in the depth of the heart, shining with a strange light, as if growing and raising itself to a height, extending itself in the branches of the intellect and carrying spiritual fruits: love, joy, peace, patience, generosity, nobility (cf. Gal. 5 : 22), and a myriad of good and beautiful things, those fruits which they receive who will eat. If you judge in the right way, you will be able to imagine to yourself what feeling of glory, of perfume, of sweetness passes through the mouth of the soul, when once it receives the fruits of the Spirit in complete purity which the light and the life dispenses.

That is why the pure in heart who have the science of virtue, are truly blessed. For they will see God (cf. Matt. 5 : 8) in the age to come in a more complete way. And in the meantime they have a pledge (cf. Eph. 1 : 14), according to the Scriptures: not only do they see now and will see in the age to come, but they will be able to experience supernatural things in measure then, just as they experience them in part now, while rejoicing in Christ.

5. ON THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE. THE DUTIES OF THE CONTEMPLATIVE. THAT PRAYER IS THE BUSINESS OF THE CONTEMPLATIVE PART OF THE

SOUL. AND THAT CONTEMPLATION IS LIKENED TO PRAYER BY THE FATHERS

The contemplative life rests with holy prayer. It is its constant companion. The one and the other are the seeds given by God, the deifying seeds of the intellectual life of the soul. They are the indissociable works of the soul that God carries and achieves in his law. By tradition, contemplation and prayer are united in such a way that the fathers speak of them in the singular: they call them the action of the intellect and contemplation. St Isaac says: ‘The act of the intellect finds itself in this subtle work, in the assiduous meditation on the things of God, in persevering prayer and in what follows from it. It is accomplished through the appetitive power of the soul, and it is called contemplation.’¹ Consider that there is here a sign of the unity higher than the unity of two things, that is, between prayer and contemplation. The same writer adds that ‘this contemplation purifies the energy of love and the soul, which is natural desire, which results in a clarification of the intellect in the soul.’² Understand that there is a single energy of the contemplative part of the soul, in order to know prayer and contemplation.

This is also what St Maximos demonstrates, when he says: ‘The intellect cannot purify itself without reacquaintance with and contemplation on God.’³ And again: ‘Withdrawal, contemplation and prayer reduce intense longing and suppress it,’⁴ and ‘the soul is led by the power of intellect, when it leads to God through spiritual contemplation and prayer.’⁵ And again: ‘Give to reason the wings of study, of contemplation, and prayer.’⁶ So in all things, contemplation is necessary to prayer and accompanies it. The two are the same energy of the intellect, or better of reason. They are inseparable the one from the other. This energy breathes health into the intellect; contemplation and prayer are working together when the intellectual power is strong and exercises itself in the life of stillness in total awareness. That’s why the fathers say that the intellect which prays without power of contemplation is a bird without wings, since it cannot raise itself toward God in pursuit of its proper disposition, it cannot distance itself without fault from terrestrial things, and with all the force of the soul in use it cannot approach the things of heaven.

According to St Maximos, contemplation purifies the intellect, but the state of prayer carries it naked toward God. In consequence the intellect which does not tend toward contemplation will not be purified, as the law of God says. He

asserts that the purity of the intellect is in the revelation of mysteries, since the purity of the intellect is the perfection which brings the return of celestial contemplation aroused from outside the senses by the spiritual power of the world above, the world of innumerable marvels. The contemplative prays toward a height such that the science of contemplation purifies reflection and the intellect in him. This purity permits him to see God with closed eyes, as far as it is possible. He who prays is truly presented to beatitude.

6. ON ‘GOD IS SPIRIT, AND THOSE WHO ADORE HIM SHOULD ADORE IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH’

It is said that God is Spirit, and that those who adore him should do so in spirit and in truth (cf. John 4 : 24). It is said ‘those who adore him’, in the plural, and not ‘whoever adores him’ in the singular. And that is natural, since he wants to save all beings and direct them to spiritual knowledge of the truth (cf. I Tim. 2 : 4), he who has prepared a number of different mansions (cf. John 14 : 2) for the eternal happiness of those who will be justified, he the grand angelic Counsellor (cf. Is. 9 : 5-6), the saviour who, from the height of his love for man, extended his raised hands to call those whose mind is wise, and also to the foolish, the weak and sick. The same or similar road to health is offered to all men, once and for all time. They arrive by multiple routes and they take their ways by diverse methods, according to the state and the resolve of each, and I would add according to their strength, and also depending on the way they were taught, and on the one who sent them in God’s direction, who chose to adore God on his own behalf, as has been said. For it happens that one cannot be sure about the one who taught us, and that one doubts that his nature was good. But now one lacks the perfect aim, which is God. Certain people, on the other hand, have had a good master proven in things spiritual and divine, but by their own unfitness, they have been stopped from attaining perfection. Meanwhile, the one and other, and in the end all, if they so wish, can adore God in spirit and in truth, whether according to the order proper to him, or, it must be said, according to his strength, or whether according to the gifts he has received from the God of the whole world.

So a simple and uneducated man, if he walks observing the commandments while living in faith, and if he humbly follows other sensible men, that man truly and clearly adores God in spirit and truth (cf. John 4 : 24). For the faith which speaks clearly of God and of divine and invisible things cannot come except from the Spirit. The Lord affirms on this point: ‘The words that I say to you are spirit and life’ (John 6 : 63). As for the marvellous deifying commandments of him who is the truth itself, I do not imagine that anyone can be so weak of intellect as to wish in one manner or other, to separate them from the truth. So he who, in faith, as we have said, follows God in spirit and in truth, just like the one who taught him the dispositions of that faith, is known as a practitioner or a contemplative.

¹ St Isaac the Syrian (Isaac of Ninevah), *Ascetical Homilies*; (P.G., vol. lxxxvi(a)); F.T., *Discours ascétiques, selon la version grecque*, trans. R.P. Placide Deseille; *Monastère St Antoine le grand* (Saint-Laurent-en-Royans, 2011), §30, p. 239.

² *ibid.*

³ St Maximos the Confessor, *Second Century on Love 3*; E.T., *Philokalia*, vol. ii, p. 65; P.G. vol. xci, p. 983.

⁴ *ibid.*, 47; E.T., *Philokalia*, vol. ii, p. 73; P.G. vol. xci, p. 999.

⁵ St Maximos the Confessor, *Fourth Century on Love 15*; E.T., *Philokalia*, vol. ii, p. 102; P.G. vol. xci, p. 1051.

⁶ *ibid.*, 80; E.T., *Philokalia*, vol. ii, p. 110; P.G. vol. xci, p. 1067.

But he who attaches himself both to the knowledge of beings and of the Holy Scriptures, as is natural to some and not others, so that he continues to meditate on God, to pass from the visible, from the known and the flesh, toward the things of the intellect, such a one evidently rises to the Spirit; and from there in a direct line toward what surpasses the intellect, I would say toward the most high truth beyond all truth, toward God; such a one very clearly adores God in spirit and in truth. Likewise those who practice psalmody and those who pray, if they understand the power of the words that they chant, and the power of prayer, and if they meditate on the words within as much as is possible, they totally adore God in spirit and in truth. For by all evidence, spirit and truth are the holy words of the psalms and of prayer. And certainly those who are bound by their own will in visible communion and under the impulsion of the Spirit, then who, in his unpretentious body and with eyes closed, sees God by the light of spiritual knowledge, he also, in the highest way, loves God in spirit and truth.

Finally whoever sees as in a mirror the light of glory and of the economy of Christ, as much as it is possible, and the effusion of Spirit which comes from the Father through Christ, animating and consoling the faithful, this person truly adores God in spirit and in truth, in Jesus Christ.

7. ON PRAYER

It is God who teaches spiritual knowledge to man (Ps. 94 : 10. LXX), as it is written. But how does he teach it? He gives prayer in the holy impulse which luminously transmits to whoever prays the breath of the Holy Spirit. Such a sacred prayer is truly the resting place, the great dwelling of more than excellent grace. It is a teacher for whoever has received it. It is manifestly like a mirror of the face of the soul. In it the intellect sees clearly its own tendencies, its evasions, its alienation, its listlessness, its deception. And not only that. It is also the air of purity, the splendour of contemplation, the spirit of striving of the divine labour toward God, the flame of fire of burning longing for God, the simplicity of the intellect disengaged from forms, the silence far from all and the immense joy of the miraculous. In a word, the intellect sees and knows infallibly through prayer the states and passions of the soul. It is luminously initiated into the first causes of principles which give to the soul its movement. It serves the first type, and it attaches itself to the second type, as much as possible, successively, because they are in every way worthy of love or of attention respectively.

To lead the life of monks devoted to this science implies then not only that one know perfectly through asceticism and how words and the intellect must be used, how mind and the senses must be used, but also so that one can discern what must be given to the incensive and the appetitive powers, that one grasp wisely through action and contemplation how to form in

the self, thanks to natural knowledge and the mind, the beautiful ordered harmony of powers of the soul, and to chant the intellectual melody, so that it will also become infinitely sweet. So the peace of God, the beloved peace, and the joy which it engenders, totally in grace and in holy love, will come to rest in the monk initiated in true prayer and dressed in the fruits of the Spirit.

Then he who has decided that he must, by all the methods and means, pray continually, as the Apostle demands (cf. 1 Thess. 5 : 17), and who makes of this prayer the very heart of his activity, has been counted among the disciples of Christ. By following their counsels touching the sacred prayer, he becomes a child of grace in Christ.

8. WHAT THE BUSINESS OF PRAYER IS, AND WHY IT IS WORTHY OF HONOUR

If the holy spiritual prayer were nothing more, as has been said, than a master who teaches and demonstrates the duties of virtue, would it not still be worthy of the highest things? But if the prayer is more than just a master who teaches and demonstrates, but also a consoler who actually leads to everything that is good and in order, then what sacred offering would not be due to it, and how far beyond all praise would it be? For, always, teaching and consolation, relatively speaking, serve nothing, if those taught and consoled are weak. A power to stimulate their desire is needed. And if you search for that desire, you will find it in prayer, and you will discover that energy which encourages the soul toward the Spirit. The power of prayer is so great in those who are devoted to virtue. And for good reason.

The breathing prayer, and so to speak the prayer which lives, makes a continual flux rise from the heart. And it is manifestly such because of the communion and the energy of the life-giving Spirit. Three things are most necessary therefore: the teaching appropriate for spirituality, then certainly consolation during the combat of spiritual labour, and finally, above all these, the power which overcomes difficulties and events. Our Lord who gives the Spirit has said: 'You will receive the power of the Holy Spirit which will come upon you' (Acts 1 : 8). And this power, he calls it precisely the Comforter and the Teacher, when he says: 'The Comforter, the Holy Spirit which the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and you will recall what I have said' (John 14 : 26). Thus through prayer everyone is given, for his good, the manifestation of the Spirit. To one is given a spirit of wisdom; to another a spirit of spiritual knowledge; to another a spirit of healing; and all those things which the Apostle has mentioned, and which the one and only Spirit animates, which takes part in each person as it will (cf. 1 Cor. 12 : 11). This is clearly what the teaching of St Paul reveals to us.

These three things are necessarily bound to whoever, in whatever manner, has a share in the gifts of the Spirit: the power higher than nature, the education higher than the world, and the divine consolation which the holy words of the Lord have revealed, as we have said. When, elsewhere, the Lord said: 'Without me you can do nothing' (John 15 : 5), he shows indubitably that anything which tends to happen has by all necessity the need of divine power. And when he says: 'Do not call any person on earth your master, because you have no master or guide other than Christ' (Matt. 23: 8-10), he clearly means that man has need of divine instruction in order to understand what he ought to do and what comes to him from God. And when he asserts: 'I will speak to my Father, and he will send you another Comforter, the Spirit of truth, who will remain with you always' (John 14 : 16), he reminds us that the consolation is entirely necessary and inseparable from grace.

The distinction between the charismatic gifts depends, so to speak, on the particular self. To be precise, wisdom is one thing, and spiritual knowledge is another. Prophecy does not resemble either of them. And the gifts of healing are again another thing entirely. To be brief, each of these gifts of the Spirit which the Apostle enumerates (cf. 1 Cor. 12 : 8-9) are distinguished from each other. However, whatever grace may be, it is the equal of the three energies of the life-giving Spirit which we have described. On this matter, how would the created intellect confined in a body be able to relate to its personal good and to virtue, if it were not given it to have a share in the power higher than heaven, which even the angels do not possess? And how would it find the means to have a share in the mystery higher than the world, without the initiation of the Spirit? Which is to say that it would be gripped by vertigo after arriving at such heights where the great gift of God and the great strain toward virtue carries it, if it had not also discovered the holy consolation of the good God.

What should we think then, of the prayer made under the impulsion of the Spirit, that prayer which dispenses to the soul every spiritual gift and brings with it the power, the instruction, and the consolation of the Spirit? What praises are not due to such prayer? How much should those honour it, who have received it through grace? And how much should they search for it, those who do not yet have it, those who, through the holy union, bind the intellect to God in Christ Jesus, the Son of God in truth?

9. ON PRAYER

When the measured study of things surrounding God and the saving breath of the life-giving Spirit, has given the intellect, through grace, a clear idea of God, then the student sees himself and reflects on how his own weakness, and the negligence which dominates him, and the forgetfulness of his duty, as well the ignorance of the work proper to him, have

distanced him from what he ought to do. So you, who labour to blame yourself and to humble yourself before what is true right and the true, go continually toward God through prayer, with a meek spirit, in the certainty and the hope of the incomprehensible love which God brings to man through ineffable goodness. That overflowing love makes us approach the throne of grace with assurance (Heb. 4 : 16), as St Paul teaches us. For it is not when we are following our paths that God customarily acts in us: it is while following his infinite compassion. We do not seek to have regard for ourselves during the time of our prayer. Rather we look toward the force of purity and of great compassion which is in our God, our Father greater than all good, so that also in us too there will be, without evil, his truly saving love.

10. ON 'GOD SAID TO ABRAHAM: LEAVE THIS LAND.' AND OF CONTEMPLATION

God said to Abraham, that is to say to the emigrant: 'Leave this land, the land of your family, the house of your father, and go to the land which I will show you, a land flowing with milk and honey' (Gen. 12 : 1).

It is the same thing he said again, and at a higher level, to the intellect emigrating and leaving the sensible for the ideal: 'Leave the senses and sensible things, and at length the entire visible world, and come to the land which I will show you.' These words can be likened to those of the Saviour: 'Sell what you have, and give to the poor, and take up your cross - that's to say, be crucified to the entire world, in your senses and in sensible things - , and come, follow me' (cf. Mark 10 : 21); and whoever follows will rise toward the Father, under the direction of the Spirit (cf. Ps. 51 : 11. LXX). The text says: 'God said to Abraham.' And this means God, that is the Father, who speaks through the Word, therefore through the Son. The text continues: 'Come to the land I will show you.' And such words are what customarily would be done by the pointing of a finger, to allow something to be revealed. Here the finger of God is the Spirit. For 'if I cast out demons with the finger of God' (Luke 11 : 20) means, in other words, 'by the Spirit of God' (Matt. 12 : 28). The magicians of Egypt too, said: 'It is the finger of God' (Ex. 8 : 19), thereby designating the spiritual energy. 'To the land which I will show you.' It is as if he had said: to the land where I will conduct you with my Word and my Spirit. 'To the land flowing with milk and honey,' which means the comprehension of God himself, in the spiritual knowledge of what it is by nature.

Through this spiritual knowledge can only become what it must be, if it is illumined and enlightened by the flaming of the life-giving Spirit, that ambience which one contemplates around the Son. The God who loves man invites the willing intellect, like another Abram, making the invitation in a higher form than the aggressive way that evil spirits do, to pass from sensible things to ideal things and to things of the beyond;

there one receives in its simplicity the vision and the contemplation of the Divinity in three Persons. That vision is, by the fact of this invitation, naturally revealed through the three-fold power and the three-fold energy of the single Origin. For God the Father himself is properly the land promised to the upright in heart, and which the meek will inherit (cf. Matt. 5 : 5; Ps. 37 : 11. LXX). We have the promise of the divine Spirit. The heirs will have the ardour of hope: the land where milk and honey flow, the light of the morning, the twin rays, life, delights, the purification from the entire world, until they invoke Him who was born of the Father, his inseparable Son, when he incarnated in man like a ray of sweetness, when the human race will be, as it is said, wrapped in sweetness and marvellous joy by the teaching and the flowing gifts, and through the myriads of other good and beautiful things. The milk is the Holy Spirit. It is simple. It is not born, but it proceeds. And its white light gives its divine nourishment to beings of reason which are children called to enter into the kingdom of heaven, as the Lord said.

It is natural in the land flowing with milk and honey to see the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is to this land that the intellect emigrates transports itself, as it has been said, under the guidance, and by the power and energy of, the Divinity in three Persons. For just as, according to Paul, no one can say 'Jesus Christ' if he is not already within the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12 : 3), just so no one can carry the intellect of his soul toward the glory and greatness of the simply unity of the three Persons, and see them, if he is not already under the sway of the power, the energy and the grace of the Trinity; and that means in the rejection of sensible things by the senses, and likewise in the rejection of ideal things revealed by Scripture itself and by the sensible world, and at a distance from everything measurable.

So it is in your light, the light of God, which is to say in the unity of your fire, that we will see the light (cf. Ps. 36 : 9. LXX); that we will see you, you who enlighten our hearts and our intellect. And we should force ourselves to recognise, by contemplation, that what goes to you comes from you; so, we see that no thing of the flesh will seem to be glorified by its own means (cf. 1 Cor. 1 : 29). That is why he who was Abram, who we would name the emigrant, once he had departed and left everything behind as he had been ordered to do, and when he had come to the land flowing with milk and honey, was given the new name of Abraham, which means the father of many nations. Likewise the intellect worthy of being called 'the emigrant', when it has departed the sensible, the world of the sense in its entirety, through the power and the energy of the Divinity in three Persons, and bears itself toward the simple fire of the Trinity, toward the contemplation and vision, that intellect engenders and revives equally numerous nations, and as many great thoughts, mysterious and ineffable. It is in a state of joy, rejoicing and exulting before the extraordinary things which are revealed to and born through it, like a father in the presence of his children, and it takes on the peace which is in Christ.

11. OF HUMILITY AND CONTEMPLATION

Three works are greatly respected, Lord, and my soul is ravished by knowledge. The same cause which raises the intellect awakens extreme humility. That which bears the soul in to infinite heights is also the what abases it the most. Humility is the beginning of contemplation, and contemplation is the perfection of humility. When one has understood all the wisdom of this world, it is impossible to proceed to the contemplation which elevates without humility. I say: the contemplation which elevates. For the Greeks had a type of contemplation which did not elevate. Without the contemplation which raises one, and if one does not bow his neck like a ring (cf. Is. 58 : 5), it is impossible for any man to be humble.

O the ineffable wisdom of Him who has created us in such a wise manner. But who will ever know him, if he has not experienced both the highest elevation which derives from humility, and the extreme humility which derives from the heights? And if one says of the intellect equal to God, that He who descends is also He who ascends, one should add that what ascends is also what descends (cf. Eph. 4 : 10). So the intellect which understands the art of humility, having received through grace the delights of the heights, rejoices to bear in itself things which surpass the mind, and transports itself above everything, through humility. David says: 'Lord, I have not been high minded: I have not had proud looks; I have not exercised myself in great matters which are too high for me, without also refraining my soul, and keeping it low' (Ps. 131: 1-2. LXX). Meanwhile the intellect, not without cause, can say the contrary: 'Lord, I have not been humiliated, I have not avoided giving myself trouble; I have not called myself earth and ash, without also elevating my heart, raising my vision above, and exercising myself in great matters too high for me.'

O King, enviable Creator! You brought ecstasy into my heart, the heart of one who understands the work of your wisdom: the intellect which you providence has created.

12. ON THE SAME

The intellect which grace points in the direction of God knows however a primordial condition of guilt. That is why the man who has an intellect laments over himself in grief and suffers in tears. He beats his breast, as much as he can. He purifies himself daily of his passions. He humiliates himself naturally without the least tenderness. But when, by the gift of Christ, he arrives at the purification which the life of stillness brings, when he opposes with spirit the attacks of the idea within himself, when he raises himself toward God and toward his glory and remains reaching out in contemplation, he discovers a second guilt, which comes from his intellect, and that guilt

is great, lasts forever and is without any aftermath. He acquires a more certain humility, more real and clear, to the extent that, if it were possible for it to be said with certainty that all men are happy, in the same instant he would see himself as the worst of all beings, or he would not see himself as simply the worst of all beings, but, through the senses of the soul and in truth, he would see himself as worse than things which have absolutely no being at all. For what is not cannot sin any more. But he himself is in a state of continual sinfulness.

From this humility comes to him. Although he rejoices and glorifies over many things, he will absolutely not do so over himself. For he does not cease to condemn himself about his sin. However, he gives himself to the compassionate God, who approaches with his breath, or to speak with more precision, who revives him and spreads beneath him in his heart the flux of celestial light and the marvellous waves of the eternal Spirit, which make visible the intellect and say with spiritual knowledge: 'I am with you' (Jer. 1 : 8). Then God reveals to him the mysteries, as to a friend, and surrounds him with joy. He is then called to respond with the words of David: 'He does not deal with us according to our faults, he does not reward us for our sins' (Ps. 103 : 10. LXX), etc. And following Paul: 'It is through grace that we are saved' (Eph. 2 : 5) even and especially when one has fulfilled in the measure possible to us all the divine commandments, and even when one has rejected as much as possible any unjust ways (cf. Ps. 119 : 128. LXX), and certainly when one has forced oneself to loose nothing, if possible, of what tends toward salvation.

He who does not see himself when thinking of these things, and who does not understand himself when putting these ideas to the test, has not yet touched true contemplation. He has not yet wept for long enough. He has not considered the unity, of faith on one hand and spiritual knowledge of the truth on the other (Eph. 4 : 13). He does not see divine glory in what happens to him, nor see what is beyond human affairs. In a word, in whatever he does, the science of human and divine inner essences is not there.

13. OF CONTEMPLATION

Creation in the ideal, and Scripture in the spiritual, bear witness to the glory, the kingdom, to the wisdom, the power, and to say it all, to the magnificence of God. But by how much? Why don't they bear witness by much? Is it so very little, like a mouthful of water from an ocean? No, this is not so. For it is in contemplating freely, and so to speak when freeing his motion and activity, that his power, wisdom, glory, and magnificence created everything that was created. And he has given us to see great and glorious things, full of wisdom and power. Many things are binding; but not on him; only what is necessary for the abundance of highest good and use. And as one who decides, and once decided, does, so with

great harmony and in consideration of our stature, and for our benefit, to let man live and pass his time on the earth, he decided and did; and he took care to attach man to himself, and to give him such happiness as is suitable. He created Adam single and unique, although considering a future multitude of men. It is permissible to see that his patient work of creating only one man neglected nothing, and at the same time that he let nothing be lacking for such men as would come to live in the world later. The earth bears in itself what is necessary for the simple and basic things. The sky, the sun, the air and the sea are themselves in correspondence with the earth. Certainly, each of them is in correspondence with the other, and they are distantly in correspondence with God, who knows all things in the all, and who knew all things before they were made, according to type and power, having in mind their correspondence and harmony.

For if the Creator had not undertaken only to do what is needful for the genesis of beings in a world, but worked in view of his own wise and powerful nature alone, great and glorious, there would be myriads of worlds in place of this single one, and not only worlds such as we see now, but strange worlds, supernatural, which escape our understanding. The soul would not be able to easily support the glory and the splendour of their beauty and their wise diversity, but in its ravishment it would fly from the body.

A single united work was what God wanted when he made man, king of the earth and a second God over what is God's, the whole cosmos was offered and straightaway given for him to use with ease. Of course, one of the prophets has said: he made the earth as if it were nothing, and made it hang on nothing (cf. Is. 40 : 23; Job 26 : 7); and elsewhere: he stretches out the heavens like a curtain (Ps. 104 : 2. LXX). He had only to look at the earth, and each thing trembled like the next (Ps. 104 : 32. LXX), so great is the surfeit of his potency. So he has brought into being with a single word all visible things, but he reserves for the age to come the most glorious and greater things, which he will refashion through death after having founded them in the tomb, so that the soul is able to see them. And man will become a new creature devoted to these new benefits, new delights, new visions. As for the things which we see now, they are never more than a shadow and a long dream, one could say.

If you want more certainty, then first consider how the order of angels is possible, replete with their intellect, with the beauty of their appearance beyond anything in the world, in their glory, their wisdom, their power, which are to us not only indescribable, but incomprehensible. Such a variety, with all the things of the beyond, is marvellous, especially since these beings from the world to come could not happen if all things depend on a single unique thought of God. If such things depend on a single thought, why have they not already existed, if we have assumed that the entire volition of God was in motion, all his wisdom, all his power? But if that one single thought were the cause of everything, how is it possible

to conceive that it is also infinite? The infinite has no limit, and where there is no limit, there is no movement, but only effusion of energy deriving from the power which comes from the essence, so to speak and speaking very generally. What creation or Scripture reveal of God, if that can be compared to the power of God, is therefore something very obscure, a mouthful of water from a bottomless and limitless ocean. However, all is not in vain, for we can, I understand, discover and know this spiritual mouthful. So when we have reached into the infinite intellect, after having contemplated it as if it were a mouthful its beauty, its glory and its pleasure, and when we have celebrated by analogy, as far as it is permissible, Him who is infinitely more infinite than the infinite, we would be able, both simple and infinite intellects which imitate the angelic, to become God beyond all limit, unite ourselves to him in a unique form, in a state which carries us beyond the world, in the ineffable joy, in the joy and the overflowing of heart, through the energy and the grace of the Spirit. Amen.

14. OF THE PRACTICAL AND THE THEORETICAL LIFE

Not singing or chanting is impossible for the practical minded monk in whom the mildness suitable to such a practical person has been aroused. But the monk leading a contemplative life is not in a state of being able to psalmodise. He no longer has the will to do so. He cannot do it, because he has been taken up into the energy of divine grace, carried in the silence to the summit of spiritual pleasure, with the joy of a calm heart which can no longer be shocked by the outside. And he does not need to wish for it, because he contemplates only one thing, and because he sets in motion the intellectual faculty of the soul, with unchanging and peaceful thoughts, in a profound serenity. That is why the work toward the vision of God necessarily passes through the silence of contemplation. It is true that vision may be given through reading. One need not need to be astonished about that. One should put this down to the adaptable nature of the intellect, and our changeable and composite character. But one should be aware that after a period of reading, which can direct one toward the entrance into contemplation through grace, one is still at the lowest level of the work of contemplation. As much by its own nature as by any force of natural development, the intellect cannot, thanks to reading alone, be unified. But in intellectual liberty, mysteriously accomplished in the heart of silence, one experiences a unity which overcomes division. To put it another way, does not what one sees in sensible things surpass what one hears about them? The eyes, it has been said and everyone knows it, are more faithful than the ears. And as in perceived things this is the case, so in ideal things: to see, that is to say, to contemplate something of the ideas, is much better than to hear, which is what reading is. For just as the Samaritan woman, after having spoken with the veritable Word, preached his divinity to the citizens, but when the Word in the overflowing of his extreme generosity, came to the town and spoke to the inhabitants in person, they said that

they no longer needed the evidence of the woman herself to establish the divinity of the Word (John 4 : 42); and just so when the mind is outside the soul and its powers, it receives evidence of the divinity only through reasoning and words.

But when the soul and all which is in it see the divinity of the Word through grace, then the time when the soul needs evidence from the outside is passed. Whoever hears, that is to say, must also see what they hear. One who has seen has no need to be taught about what he has seen, since he is counted among the sighted, those who have eyes. It is the same thing one observes with Thomas, who heard and was not persuaded, but said: 'If I do not see, I will not believe.' But when he had seen, he cried: 'My Lord and my God!' (John 20 : 25-8). When he did not believe until he had seen, he recognised the truth. What he lacked when he merely heard – namely faith – was acquired when he had seen.

We must therefore distinguish between contemplation and action, in the same way that we distinguish the intellect from the senses.

15. ON THE SAME

The very small child and the man in the flower of his age have need of milk. But for the first milk is nourishment, while for the other it is a pleasure. It is the same for the active monk when he reads the psalms, and the contemplative when he reads them. The first does so for comfort and assure his soul, the other – the contemplative – does it for joy, and above all so as to let the fire of our hearts sleep, its straining toward God and the flowing of its tears. For the Spirit jumps in the heart, wraps it in joy in the splendours of the beauty of God, transfigures it with glory of glory (cf. 2 Cor. 3 : 18) and makes it grow. But the complexion of the flesh and the clay of the heart are weak. So the active monk spends his time in divine reading to gain spiritual knowledge, and the education and the science which they give. But the contemplative gathers the spiritual knowledge of the words of God into the silence. No description can express what he receives ineffably and what his contemplation sees. Scripture says that the ears hear the marvels in stillness (cf. Job 4 : 12). They say: 'marvels'. But they have not been able what marvels they were. They have not tried to express what is not expressible among things which surpass the faculty of reason. That is why I would like to call those active monks blessed which the divine word has glorified for having believed without having seen (cf. John 20 : 29). But I consider that the contemplatives are the most blessed. For if the active monk, even if he has not seen, has equally through his faith alone received the state of blessedness, everything which the contemplative touches is inconceivable, because he walks with a faith much higher than that of the active monk. For he sees great and marvellous things, he experiences an upward journey of his heart (cf. Ps. 84 : 5), and he is naturally in a state of contemplation all of the time.

16. CONTINUATION

The Creator and Law giver of the universe has given enjoyment of life to both of the composing parts of man. To the outside man he has given the visible creation. To the inside man, which is the soul, he has offered whatever is ideal in sensory creation. For just as in the mind of man the ideal is related to the senses, so in all the visible creation ideal beauty can be perceived at the heart of each thing. The least one can say is, there is nothing in sensation things which is deprived of the connection with the intellect. And that is natural. For nothing which has been done for man through the divine word of Him who rules the universe can be without some element of mind. But that would be the case, if the material creation were not penetrated by the intellect. If the body could content itself with the synergy of the visible alone, the Christian soul would remain empty. The body would be superior to the soul. Which is absurd. Or again where would the soul receive direction about the life proper to it? From God? But a creation without mind goes contrary to the order of Him who created everything with the Word. For if physical creation had no mediation by the ideal, then single and unified beings which have one nature only would be inferior to composite ones like ourselves which have both body and soul, because such composite substances as ourselves would raise themselves toward God by their own power. But isn't it the case rather that physical entities make their way to God by means of simple ideas and discover the delight of spiritual vision? If it happened that material intellects, exceeding their nature, were to rival immaterial intellects when grasping at the good, that would permit composite and physical beings to accede to an order equal to the angels. Angels have their life in themselves and approach the level of the original beauty. From inside their own selves, they exist in the dawn of the unique light of God. But we who, by our nature, stand beneath them and are second after the angels in the order of things, who came after them so to speak, at our rank we must recollect ourselves in God and in his beauty, without neglecting the separate substances or things purely ideal. For that would be the activity of angels, the activity of those who find in themselves the divine impulse. But starting as composite beings and advancing through reason and arriving at a state of simplicity, we move through to the uncreated in the manner of things of nature that we are, as I have said. After that journey we might compose ourselves in simplicity and in God.

That is why, so far as it is our role to play, to live and to raise ourselves toward God in our intellect, we must contemplate the idea surrounded completely by the sensible and united to visible things, that idea which the active monk cannot and does not want to see. One who cannot see it has no man or no Scripture to show it to him. And the one who does not want to see it, even when it is given him, determines not to want through malice or presumption, and when he defies his neighbour and does not believe him, and when he has no taste

for being educated in these things, and considers a literal reading of Scripture to be sufficient for him. He is content to put creation at the service of his body. He thinks that this is piety. It suffices him, and he does not look for anything else. The contemplative, by contrast, has received the invisible in the visible creation, he discovers in Scripture what accords with the Spirit, and he steps with joy toward the substance which is different. He sees the beauty and their splendour, he pleases himself to travel with their grace, and he walks toward the uncreated idea of God. Vowed to the delight of the infinite and contemplation, to the extent possible, in the simplicity and the supernatural, he is ineffably suspended in a ray of divine beauty. In an astonishment higher than the world, in a state of unity and simplicity, he plays naturally among inexpressible beauty and a luminous splendour. He is wrapped with joy and admiration. He receives there the flow without end of divine playfulness, and in his generosity he demonstrates to the active monk, by his words and his writings, the road which leads to the truth.

17. OF THE COMMUNION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Do you know what spreads in the hearts of the faithful, and the sign of its breaking out? It is above all the Holy Spirit who comes from the Father and the Son, and who fills the world. It is all in all, and it spreads in all the faithful. It shares impassively, and it gives in an irresistible communion. The sign of the communion, or of the breaking out from us, is the desire for humble poverty, tears which flow without effort or end, true love, total love of God and of neighbour, joy of heart, playfulness in God, patience in labour, gentleness with everyone, and simply goodness, union of the intellect, contemplation, light, ardent force of constant prayer, finally the absence of interest in temporal things, and the memory of the eternal. 'How marvellous are your works, Lord!' (Ps. 104 : 24. LXX). 'They have said about you, city of God, truly glorious things' (Ps. 87 : 3). Here, the city of God is the heart of the believer.

18. CONTINUATION

When you have understood and heard the great counsel of our God, a counsel inconceivable in its good intention for us, which in his supernatural love for man the Father has revealed to us, and which Jesus brought and transmitted to us, in his limitless goodness and his holiness surpassing understanding, and in his love for our race, who was the angel of great counsel (cf. Is. 9 : 6) who brings together all the reason of visible things into a single and concise reason which God had promised to give us (cf. Is. 10 : 23), then you will not cease to be amazed, joyful and peaceful.

19. CONTINUATION

If you knew the final end which the grandeur of God has assigned for us, and what happens between us and God because of this end, and have understood what God wants for us, how he accomplishes our being, and how we need what he has, your activity would be imprinted with the affectionate sadness loved by God, and with a total and true humility.

20. OF CONTEMPLATION

He who meditates on all that the love of God gives to him of experience in ideal visions, will without doubt notice these three things rising into his soul which the Scriptures and the holy books have underlined with fervour – as if men must acquire them by all possible means – , I mean faith, hope, and love (1 Cor. 13 : 13), which are the fulfilment, or better the foundation, of all virtues of action and contemplation. Such is the holy trinity which is in us and can unite us to the Holy Trinity, if we have them as the other angels do.

21. ON CONTEMPLATION

The healthy intellect can generally contemplate three systematically arranged orders around God, which are themselves each threefold: the order of persons, the order of nature, and the order which follows after nature. The first trinity reveals itself to the intellect in the holy books. The natural trinity discloses itself from the study of beings. As for the third trinity which follows the natural order, it comes with the truth of reason. So when the intellect enters into the order of the first trinity, or more precisely when it tends toward it, it encounters something inaccessible, but the intellect is not yet simple. When it reaches the second order, astonished, it discovers joy in wisdom. But when the intellect enters in the third trinity, it penetrates truly into shadow, where God is. It becomes entirely simple, infinite, outside of all limit, in a state where there is no longer in it any form or figure. When at length it considers, or when it looks to find these three trinities as in a tenth order in which the prophets of truth have said that the plenitude of divinity abides in a body (cf. Col. 2 : 9), then in perfect nature and the extreme of the grace of contemplation, the intellect sees truly the peace which surpasses it.

22. ON CONTEMPLATION

If it sub-divides again, the intellect contemplates in the peace-bringing gift of Christ, three states commanding spiritual grace from within mystery: what is beyond the world, what embraces the world, and what is in the self. In the unitary trinity, or in the ten, or in the perfection of contemplation, the intellect, by the goodness of grace, celebrates in the soul the stings of the love of God and the mysteries of that love. It shines around them, it is radiant, it beams with a joyous light. It no longer sees except in spirit. It turns the soul's love

toward God. It pushes the soul toward divine eros, as far as possible. After that, it begins to love God, and with reason. It stands up and walks with that love, it attaches itself to the commandments, it contemplates them, it impresses itself toward them as much as it is in its power. It forces itself continually to flourish through grace, insofar as it is permitted, and to make divine love perfect. Then God and the intellect become marvellously a single Spirit. As God is spiritually in the intellect which receives him, so the intellect is in God who penetrates it. Consider now what Paul clearly says: 'He who allies himself to the Lord is a single spirit with him' (1 Cor. 6 : 17). Then God becomes for the intellect brightness, light, eros, love. And the intellect rejoices in God with a marvellous joy, exultant in the unique splendour of the triple light. It quiets itself and rests naturally in Christ with ravishment.

23. ON CONTEMPLATION

Whether it speaks, or conceives, or sees them, the speculative intellect sets these five inner principles (cf. 1 Cor. 14 : 19) around the Jesus who the man: glory, of course, and love, grace, peacefulness, and repose.

First the word glory: the Word is reflected in the creation of the visible and the ideal. For 'all has been made by him, and nothing that has been done was done without him' (cf. John 1 : 3; the ages and what is in eternity, which means the order of the world higher than the heavens, and with much more reason the temporal world. And again, he is the same nature and on the same throne as the Father and the Spirit. He is the image of the invisible God (cf. Col. 1 : 15) and the light of his glory (cf. Heb. 1 : 3). He has by nature all which belongs to the Father (cf. John 16 : 15). That is why he is in the Father and the Father is in him (cf. John 14 : 10). Then the word love: for the Word was made flesh of the same kind as ours, and he lived among us (cf. John 1 : 14). The word peace, that peace of which the Word has announced the good news to those who were near and those who were far (cf. Eph. 2 : 17); he founded peace (cf. Eph. 2 : 15), he reconciled those who are on the earth and those in the heavens (cf. Col. 1 : 20). This is why the Father renewed our life and established us with him in heavenly places with Christ (cf. Eph. 2 : 6). Finally the word of rest: for through that we are incontestably heirs of God. Not only is nothing stronger than God, but nothing can equal Him who, beyond all measure, is super-infinite.

At the same time he who is conducted in spirit and in truth through the five words contemplates in the unique Trinity the three associated inner principles, keeping in mind the extraordinary accomplishment of the unique secret end. So by love and temperance, by wakefulness, reading and prayer, in fundamental humility and active justice, as much as possible, it progresses at the same time to the contemplation of God and divine conceptions, and it lives alone with God, giving no

attention to itself, nor abandoning itself to the fear which comes with that. Then it plays ineffably with numerous and very luminous gifts of the Spirit, in holy love, in joy of heart, in supernatural peace, in the goods which follow in truth, and he is a temple of God, a new heir. Once for all grace makes him a God by adoption.

24. CONCERNING WHAT GOD SAID TO ABRAHAM: 'I WILL MULTIPLY YOUR SEED'

When, in the power of the Spirit which gives life and light, I contemplate the Lord with a peaceful glance of the soul, the God-Man, and when I recall clearly the five words which I have mentioned, I see marvellously fulfilled the promise which the incarnate Word made to Abraham when he announced: 'I will multiply your seed like the stars of the sky and like the sand on the edge of the sea' (Gen. 22 : 17). Likewise when he said: 'All nations will be blessed by your seed' (Gal. 3 : 7), the seed for St Paul means Jesus. The multiplied seed of Abraham is therefore surely Jesus Christ, who, through the union and the energy of the divinity, is only able to revive superabundance. His grandeur is infinite, his depth immeasurable, and his truth multiplied like the stars of heaven and like the sand which is at the edge of the sea, for he is the God of grace. It is from him that the race of Abraham comes. God is not talking about Ishmael, for he was not the child of a free woman (cf. Gen. 16 : 1-2; Gal. 4 : 22). It is said: 'In Isaac you received a son' (Gen. 21 : 12; cf. Heb. 11 : 18). He does not speak of Israel, for he speaks less of a multitude which encompasses all men of the world than of the Lord, of Christ, derived from the seed of Abraham, through God the Word: a unique person, man and God. Only his peace has no frontier (cf. Is. 9 : 6), his judgements are an abyss (cf. Ps. 36 : 7) and his ways are measureless. His power, his wisdom, and all the divine which follows are the infinite infinitely infinite. In him the invisible nations have been blessed against all odds, and such a multiplication succeeded, by all the evidence which has been advanced here. But it is not appropriate nor necessary in any manner for God to promise the patriarch that he would give him the grace to multiply people by their seed. For to rejoice over such things is for pagan monks and the like. But a man devoted to better things, like Abraham, beloved of God as that patriarch was, can do no other than love and let his soul be in joy of spiritual knowledge and contemplation of God, because he received a superabundance of thoughts, of contemplations and divine illuminations, and they multiply more and more, as God sees fit.

So Moses knew how to beg, with the aim of clearly seeing God, who had appeared to him (cf. Ex. 33 : 18ff). And when he had seen, he was considered so just that he could multiply. And such a quantity of divine spiritual knowledge came to him that he was not able to tell of it. Solomon also received from God a profusion and a mass of wisdom and science of beings equal to sand which is at the edge of the sea (cf. 1 Kings 5 :

9). And he multiplied himself more than any of his contemporaries.

If one reflects, one discovers very easily how God multiplies man, or the seed of man who has received grace. However, God does not rejoice simply in a multitude of people. Rather he rejoices in wisdom, in the spiritual science of the soul, and other divine virtues which are well beyond all number. The Lord Jesus, who has all of these virtues in a superabundance, is himself the fulfilment of the wisdom of Abraham, he Christ who dwells in a body with all the plenitude of divinity (cf. Col. 2 : 9), who surpasses infinitely all orders of greatness. It is from the plenitude of divinity that all this abundance comes, and the treasures of spiritual knowledge and the hidden wisdom in Christ (cf. Col. 2 : 3). And it is truly a gift fitting for God, a gift entirely eminent, justly promised to the eminent friend of Christ, Abraham.

See therefore the divine multiplication in Christ Jesus, as something infinite, which comes from the five words of which I have spoken. The radiation of divine nature is revealed through the glory which surrounds Christ. For he is the true God. The theological meditations of the fathers on his grandeur are infinite, and with the abundance of the multiplication they are limitless. For all that concerns the filiation with the Father, the just doctrine of the consubstantiality, the things concerning the communion of the Spirit, the effusion of gifts in which the myriad of men have a part, sometimes on the entire earth, which has never diminished, and again the things of the economy of the incarnation, and all that follows from these, all that is ineffable and without number. Now all that, to resume, which comes from his glory, what comes from love, from grace, from peace, from our calm, tends to multiply secretly, as much as it is permitted, more than the number of stars of heaven and more than the sand which is on the edge of the sea, in Jesus Christ, of the seed of Abraham. That one strives to praise and glorify such a high promise, marvellous and secret, worthy of God alone, the source of grace, made to a very faithful friend elected among others, for the immense common happiness of the human race, and particularly of the believers. Glory to Him who has willed that the seed will multiply. Amen.

25. ON 'PRAISE THE LORD, MY SOUL'

Praise the Lord, my soul (Ps. 145 : 1), for the heaven of heavens, that heaven which has the light for its being. Praise him at the height of the heavens, in all the angels and in their power. May his power and wisdom be profoundly praised. And bless his holy name. Praise the Lord, Praise him for the waters which are over the firmament, and for the light which is over the waters. Praise him for the firmament of the sky, for his order and his marvellous turning. Praise him for the blue which enflames everything. Praise him for the sun, the moon and the stars, for their glory and their beauty, for their

diversity, their position and their movement, for their flaming state and their ardent existence of fire without matter, that thing completely terrible. Praise him for the light of day, and for his changing when it extends, that change for which in all wisdom it surrounds in a equal manner what is in the world.

Praise, my soul, the Lord for the peace and marvellous equilibrium, in which the irreducible elements confront each other, the four great elements composing all: water, fire, air and land. Praise him for the most great proliferation and diversity of birds, for the providence which guides their life and their movements. Praise him for the sea and its immense power restrained by the most feeble of barricades, by the sand. Praise him for all the innumerable beings which live in the waters, in such a diversity of forms, of greatness, of quality, of instincts, of habits, of customs, of force and energy.

In peace and ravishment, again praise the Lord for all that the sea can gather so quickly, which contributes to the necessities of the life of man.

Praise the Lord in joy for the earth, and the animals or the serpents without number which live on it, so different and so varied. Praise him equally for the trees growing, and paradoxically giving fruits or not even within the same species, in an incomparable diversity. Praise him for the plants, the fruits, the cereals, vegetable, which are bound to perfumes, to heat and cold, humidity and dryness, and which differ from each other for reasons which exceed reason. Praise him for the waters which divide and spread themselves, for the rains, the snow and the ice, for thunder and lightning.

For these things and many others like them praise, my soul, and bless the Lord, for his incomprehensible power, his ineffable wisdom, his inexplicable glory. For all visible things have been given by such a Creator through the unspeakable love which he has for you, so that surrounded by these luminous glorious things, you see in their intimacy and their reason, that you reflect the glory, the wisdom and the power of your Creator who has loved us so much that he has given us his only Son (cf. John 3 : 16), who was made man: a thing marvellous and new which exceeds the intellect.

26. OF CONTEMPLATION

We ought to say: what was the force of your power trying to achieve, exceeding all power, Master higher than all being? And what did you want through this exercise of power, if it can be spoken of, most wise King? What was you will in your blessed incomprehensible foresight, God most good? And what have you done, most glorious Lord who dominates the universe, in your infinite love, in the ineffable providence of your goodness toward us? Glory to your infinite goodness with which you have surrounded us without limit in your prevision, in your wisdom and power which we cannot

understand, O you who in all things are totally inaccessible. Can I say, I also, with the blessed David: 'How great are your works, Lord, and your thoughts profound' (Ps. 92 : 6. LXX). For I see through the intellect as much in truth as in spirit: and here, the house of the Lord is full of glory (cf. Is. 6 : 1). But in the same manner, when I receive this vision, I see myself, I also, in the house of the glory of the Lord, full of glory and grace, full of ineffable rest and indescribable eternal peace. I am, and not without reason, entirely outside myself, beaten, killed by the arrow of divine love, and I burn with the ardour of desire of love, in spiritual joy, the highest happiness and joy in the world. I am almost at the bottom of heart and through the gift of God full of holy light in the Spirit, that lamp which never goes out, if I can say so. I penetrate into the principles of things, collected in the unique and secret principle alongside all the principles of the universe, and I see all the things of Scripture converge in that principle. So many mysteries are revealed to me leading to that unique principle, and manifesting themselves through it alone to those who see in spirit and in truth. That principle is the great Counsel of God. It is for it that David sang, when he saw it: 'The Counsel of the Lord is in eternity, and the thoughts of his heart from ages to ages' (Ps. 33 : 11. LXX). For nobody will ever turn the Counsel of the Lord (cf. Is. 14 : 26). This Counsel is seen or is transmitted not through teaching, but through a genuinely existent illuminating spiritual grace enlightening in truth the intellect and disposing it to see what is higher than the world.

'Who knows the power of your anger, Lord? And who takes notice of your ardour and fears you?' (Ps. 90 : 11. LXX) says Holy Scripture. But spiritual wisdom in me says: Who knows the power of your love? Who can measure by your acts your love? The works of your love are marvellous, Lord. My soul knows this well. The spiritual knowledge of your love is a wonder (cf. Ps. 139 : 6. LXX). But who can go directly toward it? This spiritual knowledge, which extends infinitely to the infinite, is not only above all things in quality, it is also above them in diversity. One cannot speak of it from this and then that source, with a wisdom without limit and a corresponding power, O ineffable Lord. By nature, by power, by energy, you are unity. By virtue of the persons, by the personal properties, you are a Trinity. You are blessed, you who have blessed us with a total spiritual benediction in the Person of our Christ Jesus, in whom you have raised and established in the celestial places (cf. Eph. 2 : 6) above all principle, all power, all force, all domination, all names borne in this age or in the age to come (cf. Eph. 1 : 21), you who made us heirs of the Trinity of the single God, and who has marvellously given us power over all which is in the heaven and on the earth. For it is in him, in Christ Jesus, that we, earth bound, have been justified by mind and grace.

O you, God of the Trinity, who flow with divine love and marvellous eros! Through you we have a share in the gift of God the Word. You are truly glorified, Lord who has given like this, beyond all understanding, the glory which is in you.

You are truly ineffable. What you do is incomprehensible. And the eros which, beyond all measure, carries you toward us remains hidden.

27. CONTINUATION

Happy the man whose intellectual sense has flowered thanks to the admirable life of stillness, is so to speak returned to himself and sees by inspiration and instinct of the Holy Spirit. Redressing the dispositions of the soul, waking the intellect and transforming the heart, such a sense is through grace the fruit of a healthy mind, because such a thing makes flight to the divine. But it cannot come back to itself without experience of the life of stillness and the purity which grace gives to the intellect. Without these it is more difficult than that a man swim in the air. With it, the remembrance of God and the contemplation of God is an useful and effective activity. But without it, as if one had forgotten God, the memory of God is more like ignorance and blindness than contemplation and spiritual knowledge. He who through grace has found this divine sense, can be said to have found God. He has no need of words. He holds close to God. He has chosen to celebrate the divine liturgy. He embraces silence, or better he is silent even when he would rather not. The Spirit of God abides in him. Love, peace, and spiritual joy arise in him. He lives another life than the habitual and common one. He rejoices in God. And his eyes see the intellectual light. For they are intellectual. His heart contains the fire. The simplicity, the immutability, the infinite, the absence of limits and of beginning, the eternal, are joined marvellously in him to ravish him. Tears do not cease to flow from his eyes. He has no less than the source of living water in his heart, spiritual water. He rediscovers the unity and the totality in unifying himself with the inner essence. He is surrounded with the unique light. He plays with happiness higher than the world. He is ravished by ecstasy, he shines with joy, amazed, out of himself in being absorbed by God.

He who has tasted this will understand and celebrate God Most High, aside from any figure, any quality, all age, all quantity, simple, without form, infinite, unlimited, unknowable, intangible, invisible, ineffable, inexplicable, without beginning, eternal, uncreated, incorruptible, incomprehensible, bottomless, higher than all being, more than powerful, more than good, more than beauty. To him are due glory and praise in the ages.

28. ON DIVINE ILLUMINATION

Lord, wisdom has said to the one lacking beauty of mind: 'Come, eat my bread and drink the wine which I have mixed for you' (Prov. 9 : 5). So I am confided in your ineffable love for man, Lord, and I come truly lacking and a sinner in all that I do. I pray therefore, compassionate one, I pray to you, allow me the gift of your spiritual nourishment and the drink

of you Spirit, that Spirit which is incontestably also the light. For your people say it: those who bear the Spirit bear the light. So when the light appears ineffably, I will know truly what I am in a manner which exceeds nature. For you are with me, my clothing, my holy and blessed life. Those who bring the light as yours have brought it, Christ, are clothed in you (cf. Gal. 3 : 27), the luminous dawn of glory of the Father, the true life, the life without illusion. And such men, as your saints, have also put on the Father. They are so clearly the houses, the abodes, the temples of the Divinity three-times bright, the Divinity celebrated above all. They leave the visible, they detach themselves from the principles, they repose spiritually in you, the Divinity more than divine.

29. WHERE DIVINE INTENSE LONGING IN THE SOUL COMES FROM

Divine intense longing comes to dwell in the soul through the commandments and the dogmas of God, when the life-giving Spirit reignites in the heart. It catches fire with a burning flame. Such love is like a soul full of divine pure prayer, eternal, always overflowing. It is a movement, an energy. It unifies and gathers together. It is ecstasy and vision. It is truly sacred joyfulness which comes from illumination. It is the straight way of perfect and marvellous union from God. It is the incontestable source of supernatural light, that intellectual genuinely existent illumination of which the Fathers speak. It is the source of the gift of deification, deposit of the future inheritance of the saints, pledge of the glory of Christ, more than celestial clothing of joy higher than the world, seal of holy adoption, and to say it all, the splendour of Christ, which renders those who receive it like God (cf. Rom. 8 : 29; Phil. 3 : 21), and gives them part of his ineffable deification. They will be called his brothers, heirs of God, heirs with him (cf. Rom. 8 : 17). And that is a thing entirely marvellous.

That is why they are blessed who, dedicating themselves ardently to that which we have described, has acquired the ineffable intense longing for God and it is applied to holy prayer while leading a life devoted to the life of stillness. For it would be truly attached to God, and transformed by the deifying change which exceeds the intellect. To suffer for Christ will be a joy for him (cf. Col. 1 : 24). And he will consecrate his will toward the commandments (cf. Ps. 112 : 1. LXX). To him be glory in the ages. Amen.

30. OF INTENSE LONGING

God is naturally to an infinite extent infinitely elevated above contemplation, even that of the cherubim. But one can by all means contemplate intense longing, which derives from an infinite goodness. It is through him, that is to say through the force of the intense longing, that created things are conceived as inner essences, and that the visible comes into being because of the inner essences or principles of creatures. That

is why divine intense longing, from its first effusion, manifests itself in beings which are pure inner essences, that is to say in the angels and in souls, for they are closer to God, closer to him. These are above all intellectual natures which have divinity as their character. For through them God manifestly makes other things in his love and the greatness of soul, or more exactly the greatness of intellect which is his own, as it has been revealed to us. So it is possible to them which contemplate in clear light, in a manner or another, to truly see the intense longing of Him who is in himself completely invisible, throughout visible things, as in the middle temples, the inner essences higher than the world.

Between God who loves man and the man who is loved, many things, however, derive profoundly from the divine intense longing, though it calls out from the in many ways as is natural, and above all when the intellect is rooted in the enlightened heart, when it bears in spirit the vision and is afire. Then the soul receives through grace in the heart the deposit of the spiritual life. Effectively it is given to feel the energy of the intellect. It begins to contemplate supernaturally in the divine light, without error and in total certainty, with such gifts from Him who loves it. It feels its drawn to recall him, and it seeks to return continually to those gifts. It represents the face of Him who loves it, it is astonished without measure, it is consumed by love for God and it is not permitted to feel or conceive anything else. In the excess of contemplation, it knows no longer, it ignores what it itself is. So engaged, it is radiant, it exults, it rejoices, it flows with joy, it becomes to love God, it attains happily the burning of intense longing, it is carried into the mysteries of God, it is led in the fire of heart by the life giving All Holy Spirit.

There is a sacred and gentle circle here: the circle of love. This circle is marvellously animated by the divine intense longing which allows creatures to appear; it is the intense longing by which God, in the grip of love for us, indicates manifestly the way, and which makes us into beings in the grip of love for him. So God finds himself loved by us, and, coming from God who was at our beginning, we end up at God. When we arrive at the image and resemblance of the divine, through the sweetness and the playfulness of the intense longing which we receive from God, we are wise, that is to say that we are completely engaged in contemplation, we are loved by God and we love God, experiencing the mysteries of vivifying divine union and ecstasy, and in a word the blessed passion of the wholly radiant light of spiritual knowledge, in Christ our Lord.

31. OF FEAR IN LOVE

You who have chosen the love of God and the spiritual repose of mystical intense longing, you who, with all your sensibility, bring with you the divine chalice, who are ineffably radiant and joyful, you who contemplate the depths of mysteries higher than the world, who enjoy the unspeakable and repose

in profound peace, you still fear and pray, attentive to God, devoted to humility in every manner, and listen to what the divine David said openly to God: 'You are my joy, deliver me from those who have encircled me' (Ps. 32 : 7. LXX), and what he teaches in his natural nobility, or because he carries the Spirit: 'Serve the Lord in fear and rejoice in him in trembling' (Ps. 2 : 11); and equally see Paul, the vase of election (cf. Acts 9 : 15), who had been raised to the third heaven, who was taken into sacred paradise and who heard the ineffable words which he was forbidden to speak to any man (cf. 2 Cor. 12 : 2-4), to fear following that, after such great things, to have preached to others without having been tested or experienced enough (cf. 1 Cor. 9 : 27).

Just as the divine David, the master of the entire world, says: 'You who love the Lord, hate what is evil' (Ps 97 : 10. LXX), it is as if he had taught: 'You who love the Lord, be in fear.' He say evil attempt to oppose him through jealousy for the love of God and mix naturally into the soul. That is why to those who love the Lord, who are arrived at such a state, and who are attentive to hate evil, he said likewise: 'If you have understand that you must hate evil, you should also fear it.' For if it was not something to fear, the prophet would not have given the order to hate it to those who love Christ.

For if it is an elevated state, a divine state, truly a state filled with grace, in which to feel joy and to exult in God when contemplating the supernatural mysteries, our soul is meanwhile naturally changing and is distanced from the terrestrial matter of the body which surrounds it. The soul must as quickly as possible cover itself with fear for a little time in the struggle which makes it direct itself to the eternal. The soul is astonishingly well united to matter. Whether it cares or not, it breathes with the body, it suffers with it, and it changes naturally in form, as if it had no power of its own, so to speak. Matter opposes itself to the soul implacably, and matter commands the soul in many ways to send it to ruin. There must therefore be struggle and the prayer which awakens fear. The soul direct toward God has such need of fear and of trembling. And I ask the most noble among those who hear me to look and discern what such prayer and attention are, while the soul contemplates these things with illuminative grace of the Spirit and ardently experiences the love of God.

If Adam been afraid naturally, once he had received so abundantly the prophetic gift which allowed him to imitate God, about which he was so glad, he would not have been so ignobly vanquished, alas. And the same with Samson, born under a promise (cf. Judges 13 : 3), and David who carried God, and others too, including the renowned Solomon. If therefore such men were overcome like this, if they had need of fear, need of struggle, of attention and of prayer, what should we think of those who have not yet received the gift and the supernatural energy of the Spirit? Or of those who are not yet raised into the ecstasy of divine intense longing, to that mad love which bears us toward the visible beauty of God?

What fear and what trembling, what regulated attention and what sort of prayer do they have need in Christ Jesus, humble in heart, and continually?

32. THE THREE FORMS OF LOVE

Experience shows that the principle of love is threefold, and that analogically the first things are threefold. The inner essences of love are therefore threefold.

There is sensible love, that is the love of the senses, aimed at sensible things. That love is a passionate desire for something one can search for. This is the way animals love, creatures which lack mind.

There is another love which is a movement in the soul, a movement of the mind toward what we think of as good, and to receive some advantage which will do us good.

The third love is the love of the intellect, or intellectual love. But it comes from the life-giving Spirit. A supernatural charm pushes beauty into the heart without the heart's awareness, enflaming and activating in it contemplation of supreme good, which is to say God. For it is not by its will, but through nature, that the soul considers that God is beauty and that it is infinitely more beautiful than everything else. So its divine intense longing does not get inflamed to such envy under the action of the will. Rather it is always revived by the natural energy of the life-giving Spirit working in the heart, and is far from being animated by the will. On the contrary, it is itself what controls and awakens the will. Divine consolation, as is natural and as we have said, is therefore the energy of God carried into the soul by the breath and the coming of the Spirit. It is the relationship of the soul to the God who gives it life. Consolation is simply marvellous. It is union and compassion. It brings all the intellect to unity with all its force, with all the forces of the soul, to divine beauty in the intellectual desire for beauty.

It follows that consolation is not really anything like the other things described: it is not hunger after the sensible, nor desire for the good. Only the love of intellectual beauty perceived in contemplation is called consolation, that love which comes from the energy, energy awakened throughout the heart in a sensible manner by an impulse of the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit which sets in motion that energy is called the Comforter. It is this energy which is truly love. The two others are no more than idols. True the love from the soul which searches through reasoning for the good for good's own sake is naturally an idol of divine and spiritual love. As for the love of sensual things, it is merely a consequence of the soul's type of love.

It is not therefore possible to reasonably know the things of love, gentleness and consolation, nor completely the purity of love, for as much as the heart is not animated, in a continuous

and manifest way, by the vivifying power of the Holy Spirit. For reasoning cannot in any manner put in inner movement the siege of forces of the soul, or I prefer to say the heart. It can only deal with the exterior. As it is for the senses, much more so for the reasoning faculty. That is why through sense and reasoning, one loves everything in a partial way, idolatrous and tenebrous. But the power and the energy of the vivifying Holy Spirit, penetrating to the bottom and the interior of the place of the soul, then by its magic, as we say, awakening and sending entirely the powers of the soul in intellectual contemplation and extreme beauty, steals the soul toward divine beauty, through veritable love and a magic higher than the world. Then, he alone who bears God and is divinely animated by this force that we have described, has understood in total certainty, in the secret of his soul, what true love is and what delight is, and how any man can not love anything, nor love God himself, before having had experience of the Holy Spirit, though he may love in some other way. For he does not know what love truly is and the ineffable pleasure which is given in Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom is due all glory.

33. THAT THE INTELLECT ARRIVES AT THE CONTEMPLATION OF GOD BY THREE ROUTES

Just as bodily movement has concern for an extraneous element which determines own proper functioning, I mean the vision eyes, and again for another which is higher than itself, namely the light, so the movement of the intellect has concern of extraneous elements: for its proper functioning it has its eyes, and nature higher than itself, the light. This is why not all the movements of the soul are appropriate. Only those are appropriate, as we have said, which are aroused by the grace of the eyes and of the light.

Through faith, the eyes of the intellect are the door of the heart in me. The light is God himself acting through the Spirit in the heart. And as the sensible light awakens nothing in a just manner if the eyes are closed, for what sees is not open, so the essential light, God, does not animate the intellect of him who has not opened the door of his heart. It only passes into him who has that opening. But open eyes cannot see in the dark, and an open heart serves nothing without God. Or again, it is impossible for the heart to open itself if God does not work in it, and if the heart does not see him.

34. HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN VISION

When the heart, through grace, is unified with the intellect, without error it sees the spiritual light and moves toward what it desires, which is proper to it, and that is God. It is entirely outside of the senses, outside of all colour, all quality, all imagination: it rests from fantasies of the senses. Our intellect is like a divine vase which receives as much as possible the inaccessible splendour of the beauty of God. It is a miraculous

vase, which expands under the abundance of the divine Spirit, when that penetrates it. The more the Spirit flows, the more expansive the vase is. But if the Spirit enters a little, the vase is small. Strangely, the vase is at its strongest when the flux is most great. And it is more fragile when the flux is least. If the Spirit penetrates it with strength, the vase gathers it in and watches it closely so as not to lose anything. But if it receives just a little, it is entirely fragile and unprepared, and it can barely retain what is turned on it. Rightly, it gets lighter when receiving. But it is heavy and more attached to the earth, when it is empty of what would be of benefit. It is easier for it to contain more than less. It is entirely contrary to terrestrial vases, which are better suited to contain a little than a lot.

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and Word was God' (John 1 : 1). The intellect is dilated when it hears the immensity of this language. Bearing the light higher, it opens up a vast space for the intellect. By the volume which the voice gives to contemplation of God, it renders the intellect sound, permitting it to gain possession of itself, to be ready for elevation, and ready to contain the extreme divine wisdom. And when Jesus, speaking of Paul, says to Ananias: 'He is a vase of election for me' (Acts 9 : 15), it must be understood in the sense of the inner man: ravished to the third heaven, as he himself when writing has given it out to be heard, Paul received ineffable words, which it is not permitted a man to speak (cf. 2 Cor. 12 : 4).

35. MISSING

36. OF CONTEMPLATION

What is the place of our intellect, when it receives the splendour of the manifestation of God? It has a marvellous property of which we will speak, which situates it opposite to the place of the body. For the more it grows, the more it is able to receive. The intellect works in a contrary way. The more it can contain, the more it is gathered together. And when it is has grown able to reduce all movement of thinking and intellect in itself, or any other movement, it sees what is greater and higher than all: it sees God. It sees him in as much as the grace of the All Holy Spirit gives to be seen, and that created and material nature permits him to see Him who is outside of visible things. The intellect does not fantasise in a void. It does not go over the same thought again and again, like a dream. But through the ineffable power of the divine Spirit, operating and experiencing the transformation which exceeds nature in the light of heart, which it receives by grace, the intellect rests calmly and the heart awakes (cf. Songs 5 : 2). And it is better to have lost awareness of who one is, than to fail to recognise that this is a divine and spiritual energy. For a continual movement of the heart happens at that moment, a spiritual movement all in heat overflowing of life, accompanied by sweet tears for much of the time. This movement puts the heart at peace not only with

itself, but with all men. It engenders purity, playfulness, quiet supplications, opening of the heart, joy, ineffable pleasure. The man who has discovered this movement having heard it spoken of, truly abandons, and not in a pretentious way, all pleasure of the body, all joy, all wealth, all glory of external things, which are abolished as far as he is concerned.

He who has received these things carries them divinely and spiritually, though heart and intellect, and not simply in his mind. It is certainly not from that sensible light that he finds enjoyment. For letting himself be distracted by the senses, he dims the divine light, the gentle light of the intellect. That is why if he give himself to the divine light, even by a little, it seems to him he has given some strength to the external man. It supports all things, it endures all things (cf. 1 Cor. 13 : 7), and strengthens itself in all through his internal aptitude for divine love and contemplation. No affliction weakens him, not to speak of any sin.

It is for this place, that is to say for the loving intellect, that the great David had some much trouble, that he mastered his desire and avowed his fatigue, when he said that he had not had not given sleep to his eyes, nor given rest to his eye lids, until he had found a place for the Lord (cf. Ps. 132 : 4-5. LXX). And the wise Solomon advised: 'If the spirit of the king raises against your heart, do not give place to it' (Sir. 10 : 4). The Saviour commanded this to his disciples: 'Get up, leave this place' (Mark 14 : 15). It is this same place which he indicated, when he celebrated the ritual of Pascha in an upper room (cf. John 14 : 31). That is why, when we say blessed are the poor in spirit (cf. Matt. 5 : 3), I believe that poverty of spirit means the retreat of the intellect before all things, and so to speak the nakedness and the collecting together into itself. For then, the intellect sees not only the kingdom of God, but it experiences it. It acquires immortal enjoyment in peace.

37. OF THE ACTIVE AND THE CONTEMPLATIVE

The contemplative gathers the pleasing fruits of the best part of contemplation, when he applies himself in silence to the contemplation of Jesus. The active monk is ignorant of that pleasure and has not tasted it. He bothers himself and stirs himself over many things (cf. Luke 10 : 41). He sings, he reads, he exhausts his body and sometimes calls them lazy who do not do their duty and extend their intellectual faculty toward inner essences which are not apparent to the senses; but so to apply yourself is an ineffable pleasure, and to repose there is a joy which cannot be expressed. It has not come to his mind, it seems, that the true Word of God which has left nothing out in his great love for man, also gives enjoyment through inaction. This enjoyment is born in divine contemplation. For God is perfect, and he has no need of the rest which is proper to us. That is why he praises and brings Mary to sit at his feet (cf. Luke 10 : 42), nourishing herself on his words, and, so as to understand them, holding awake in herself the interior life. But he does not praise Martha in the

same manner, even if she troubles herself and takes care of many things, as it is said. He not only exhorts them to better things, but he teaches all men not to make accusations of the idleness against those who want to contemplate and consecrate their lives to stillness, but even to make them praise and imitate them as much as possible.

38. HOW CONTEMPLATIVES CONTEMPLATE

Among the things already present in the world, contemplatives contemplate as if in a mirror the enigma of the state of future things which are yet to come about. But as a mirror has nothing in itself which has a real consistency, and only reflects what really exists, yet whoever loves the truth knows that a mirror allows us to contemplate reality in an image very clearly; so things which are and which happen have no other consistency or other substance than what they display, yet they no less reveal incontestable images of true reality for the contemplative. For he has received the faculty of contemplation, and he leads himself toward the truth.

When we hear Paul say that we walk with faith and not with vision (cf. 2 Cor. 5 : 7), do not think that he speaks of the faith which comes from hearing a simple word, a naïve belief in something he has heard about. For how can the same say: 'Now I know in part, but then I will know as I am known' (1 Cor. 13 : 12), and: 'When what is perfect has come, what is partial will disappear' (1 Cor, 13 : 10)? Do you see that this spiritual knowledge of present things makes us contemplate what will be in the age to come, and that the unique difference which separates spiritual knowledge of the age to come from knowledge of the present is like that which separates the perfect in its unique form from the imperfect? He who says he walks in faith and not in vision says elsewhere: 'So I run, but not into the unknown. I fight, but not as if beating the air' (1 Cor. 9 : 26), so great the spiritual knowledge of things of the age to come were true and certain.

And it is not without consequence with him when he said these things; far from it, but it seems that he was concerned with faith, which has a twofold meaning, as the meaning of vision is twofold. For there is a faith which has need of proof, because it is born from simple assertion of facts. And there is a faith which has no need of proof, where certain evidence sufficiently persuades the person who believes: we call this the faith of genuinely existent illumination.

You will understand clearly with an example what I mean to say. Suppose that I told you I had seen a man who wove a cloth of good quality, capable in his weaving of inserting winged animals, vultures, lions, horses, chariots, battle, and other similar things. If you had not seen the cloth with your own eyes, it would be necessary, in order to accept its existence, that you had faith in an assertion about it. But if you happened that you had seen it, not the weaver, but the cloth, you would know it in itself, without any need for being

instructed, that it was the work of a man: for it is not in the nature of cloth to make itself, or to have been woven by another living being who resembles it. Now another faith, very different from the first, fills his soul. So the sense of the visible form is discovered by faith. In your faith you see a man with blond hair, or perhaps black hair, and eventually a body; all is harmony in him, the eyes, the colour of his cheeks, the nose, the lips, all the other traits by which his visage is formed. That form which you have seen in faith is the genuinely existent. Now if anyone were to ask you how the weaver whom you have not seen was made, you would show in a general manner and an air of certainty, after having seen the cloth, that he was a man. But you would say that you don't know entirely the genuinely existent form of that man because you had not seen him with your eyes. However, you cannot deny that it is a man, you do not deny knowing that he who wove that work had a human form. You see his form in an impersonal manner. While it was not contemplated directly, it is however accepted in a general way, as if it had been given you to see him in reality.

There are then, to repeat, a faith which one has by virtue of simple assertion and after having heard something. And there is a faith in the genuinely existent, which comes from being clearly persuaded. So there exists a form which appertains to someone, which is contemplated in its fundamental reality, and which is termed genuinely existent. And there exists a form which is not in anything in particular, but which is contemplated in a general manner and does not express itself in the numerous differences of its kind.

All contemplatives have in them the genuinely existent faith. But they see in general a form which, itself, is not genuinely existent. For if God was not an inner essential form, how could he be called beauty? The beauty of God contemplated by the intellect outside his person, is therefore the essential form, the eminent, profoundly admirable and glorious form, which awakens the ravishment of the soul, enfolding and enlightening the intellect with intellectual light, bathing it in an abundant and diverse splendour, and opening it to the sense of God. Manoah after his vision, said to his wife: 'We are lost, because we have seen God' (Judges 13 : 22). Whoever has seen the form confesses that it is an apparition of God. It is also in that form that the great Moses saw God, as it is written: 'God appeared to Moses in a form, and not as an enigma' (Num. 12 : 8). But if he were entirely naked of the divine form, God would be totally invisible. And beauty agrees with the form, so much so that the form is no longer visible.

If, speaking of God, one ceased to say that his form agrees with divinity, it would be the same for beauty, and with greater force for the face, which expresses form and beauty. Now we have seen that it is said in the prophets that he has neither form nor beauty, and that he lacks form (cf. Is. 53 : 2-3). But the prophet who said that of the divinity of the Word, meant to say it about him when he was hanging from the cross

like a criminal (cf. Luke 22 : 33), without any other sign of the divine nature. As for human nature, however, even if it has no more beauty due to death, it is evident that it would still have the form of a dead person. David celebrates him elsewhere by saying that he is fair beyond all beauty (cf. Ps. 45 : 2-3. LXX), but not in his human nature. For he adds: 'Grace is poured into your lips' (ibid.). This manifestly applies to the divinity, to whom is bound up beauty. David frequently mentions the face of God. For instance: 'You have withdrawn your face, and I have been ruined' (Ps. 30 : 8. LXX). Again he prays: 'Do not turn your face away from me' (Ps. 27 : 9. LXX). And elsewhere: 'Turn your face from my sins' (Ps. 51 : 11. LXX). So he does not refuse to say that the face and the beauty are attributes of God, above all figure and all fundamental reality, he is right to say the same about the form, which is face and beauty.

This is also what Paul meant when he said: 'I run, but not blindly. I fight, but I do not idly beat the air' (1 Cor. 9 : 26). For one cannot see God in himself, nor have any part in what he is in himself. But one can see him in another way. The incomprehensible allows himself to be comprehended. That is why David also counselled us to seek the face of the Lord always (cf. Ps. 105 : 4), so that having entered in the vision of his divinity, we could discover the immense and ineffable grace, and the pleasure and enjoyment of the divine. He says this of God when speaking of himself: 'I will be satisfied when seeing your glory' (Ps. 17 : 15. LXX). For the glory of the splendour of the divine face rises, abundant and infinite, over those who contemplate God in spirit and in truth. In those who experience it, the enjoyment and the delights of the glory are inextinguishable, and insupportable in their superabundance so to speak. But for those who have not seen them or tasted them, they are beyond description and inconceivable. If any word can never render the sweetness of honey to those who have not tasted it, what medium could render these things of light which exceed the intellect of those who have never seen them, and have never received the enjoyment and the pleasure which they give?

But we will say no more about it. St Paul, who had genuinely existent faith in God and in the eminent form of God, more than beautiful, did not have it in the Person, through the form contemplated in God's fundamental reality, for faith does not awaken uncreated deification. St Maximos says the same: 'I call uncreated deification the illumination of the divinity in the genuinely existent form. That illumination has no origin, but it manifests itself in an inconceivable manner in those who are worthy.'¹ It is through the form that one can see the beauty, that beauty of which the great Basil says: 'What is more worthy of love than the beauty of God?'² And again: 'True

beauty, the beauty most worthy of love, which only the man of pure intellect can contemplate, brings with it the divine and blessed divine nature.'³ It is in this sense that Paul was able to say of himself that he was ignorant of the art of speaking, but not in spiritual knowledge (cf. 2 Cor. 10 : 6). For he is great, who has arrived at spiritual knowledge by which he has understood in part, in its essential form, the God who surpasses understanding.

It is this partial spiritual knowledge which Moses had, seeing the form with God's help. Considering the divine form and the beauty one can see in the fundamental reality (**hypoikeimenon), he says: 'If I have found grace before you, reveal yourself to me in all knowledge that I have seen you' (Ex. 33 : 13). Since the manifestation of divine beauty and divine glory have been revealed to him another time, but not in the fundamental reality of God, he asked for what was more perfect. But God did not accord him what even the angels cannot see, nor all souls endowed with intellect, something which exceeds the bounds of all spiritual knowledge. For Moses was a seer. I had seen God in the shadows, not in his substantial reality, but in the form of essential beauty aside from fundamental reality. Thus God allows himself to be seen. That is what Moses and Elias say, and the numerous prophets who have seen God.

We walk with genuinely existent faith born of contemplation of God, confirmed by the shining glory of the beauty of his face, attested by the vision of his light which exceeds all splendour, and not with the faith which comes from simple affirmation of what one has heard said. We walk through the genuinely existent faith, not through vision (cf. 2 Cor. 5 : 7) of the fundamental reality. It is not in the age to come that we will need faith. It is here that we have genuinely existent faith. Then one will see more clearly the entire beauty of the divine glory. Meanwhile one sees it in the darkness. And as Gregory the Theologian would say: 'When a vision results in the appearance of the truth, it no longer itself.' This is what is properly meant when we say that see in the shadow. For in future we will see face to face (cf. 1 Cor. 13 : 10). The partial will disappear and the perfect will be revealed. But now, as St Augustine says: 'The partial vision of God is what ravishes every soul endowed with reason in the ardent desire of its glory.' In this the soul becomes simple and sees in its simplicity a single thing: the secret of God which exceeds all. In this form, this beauty, this face, every intellect covers itself in joy, beauty and light. It is joyful, lovely, and full of light, in the Spirit, and beyond the world. It is through these that it hears, raises itself, bears itself to the ravishment of its contemplative faculty. It is through these that the soul is mysteriously enlightened, that it is filled with playfulness and divine pleasure. In a word, it is through these that those who love to contemplate and understand the divine origin are glorified and deified, and that they become friends, disciples, initiates of God, even when they are still bound to the body. It

¹ St Maximos the Confessor, *Responses to Thalassios* 61 & Scholion 14; P.G., vol. xc, L); E.T., Fr Maximos Conostas, *Catholic University of America Press*: (Washington D.C., 2018). p. 447. Also cited earlier, in Kallistos and Ignatios Xanthopoulos, Ch.68.

² St Basil the Great, E.T., *Ascetical Works*, 'The Long Rule,' Rule 2; p. 234. This also is cited in Kallistos and Ignatios, Ch.84.

³ St Basil the Great, Homily on Psalm 44.

is through these, finally, that they see and reflect like a mirror, through the sense of the intellect, the playful joy of future good, and in part the condition of the age to come, that the eye has not seen, nor the ear heard, nor the heart of man carried (cf. 1 Cor. 2 : 9).

39. ON 'JERUSALEM IS BUILT AS A CITY IN WHICH THE INHABITANTS LIVE TOGETHER. FOR THE TRIBES GO UP THERE, THE TRIBES OF THE LORD, IN WITNESS OF ISRAEL' (Ps. 122 : 3-4)

Jerusalem translates as: place of peace. It means the place of God, which is to say the soul which has peace in Christ. However the first soul which comes along does not bear peace in Christ or have the name of peace, but rather the soul built like a town, the soul which has cut stones (cf. Is. 28 : 16), venerable stones which God laid in Zion as a promise. Zion is the place of watching, the high place of Jerusalem, the image of the contemplative intellect of the soul at peace. One would not find anywhere else, if one looks, the intellect rising, which watches the height and contemplates truth. One will not find it except in a heart which has had experience of the peace of Christ and has been totally transformed by attaining a state of life which spreads peace.

The soul which has divine peace therefore has the venerable stone, the cut stone, and the precious stones rolled in the sacred texts by which the animals which try to take possession of the mountain of God are stoned (cf. Ex. 19 : 13). It also has asphalt, which means the humility which arouses the Holy Spirit, which burns the heart in the fire of God (cf. 2 Macc. 1 : 20ff) hardened like a stone and smoothing beings until they become humiliated and broken (cf. Ps. 51 : 19) spirit. It has water from the rains, which the Saviour gives for flowing rivers of our heart (cf. John 7 : 38). It has wooden beams which do not wither – thoughts of good works – which permit union with God. It has nails, and the hard drill bit of the fear before the commandments of God. It has for architect the divine Word and those which come after it, I would like to say those which, through science, build the powers of the soul. It has marbles, which are simply works of carpentry, the young, the old, psalmodie, reading of other books, what in a word organic reason has transmitted to us with virtue in mind. It has thread of scarlet (cf. Josh. 2 : 18), which is the sacred law of God in the Scriptures. It has the more than radiating light, the sun of the intellect, which reflects in the life of the soul.

In summary, the soul which has received in an obvious manner all the things needed for the construction of a town divinely and spiritually, that soul is the essential or intelligible Jerusalem, and it is built like a town for receiving the God of the universe, of the life-giving Trinity which has no beginning. Christ says: 'The Father and I will come – that is spiritually – and we will make in him our habitation' (John 14 : 23). That is as if he had said: 'We will make of him a town, a town truly marvellous extending to infinity.' That is why it

is said: 'Jerusalem is built' and not 'has been built'. Because he who lives in it has no limit, it is natural that it extends to the infinite. That is also why it is not said 'the town is built' but 'it is built like a town'. For it constructs itself. The convergence of numerous and various labours tends towards a common accomplishment in a single work built in height, length and depth. Thus the town would be called with the appropriate name 'Site of the Kingdom which has no beginning.' But because the infinite dwells in him, it is not permitted to think that the edifice can have an end, which is not proper to a town which is built in the usual way. That is why in the sacred Writings it is not called a 'town which has been built' but something 'which is built like a town', and not without reason. And such is the evident sign that it is Jerusalem and that it is built like a town: its inhabitants, that is to say its powers, have a common life, they are not divided, they do not err, they do not revolve in a void. But they have a single and unique life and they carry the peace which is in Christ.

Another sign is that guides and leads the building works toward the good, and permits the inhabitants of the town to lead a communal life. It is said: 'there the tribes rise up, the tribes of the Lord, as evidence of Israel' (Ps. 122 : 4). Those who have been called most high inhabitants of the soul name themselves tribes. For the forces of the soul which are strangers to it do not belong there. The forces which were once simply the tribes of the soul became the tribes of the Lord. They are raised in the peaceful soul on the divine degrees and higher than the world. All the things of Israel – the intellect which sees God¹ – constitute evidence and confirmation, and all collaborate in the unique work of God: the spiritual knowledge of God. And all these essential tribes push themselves to build the holy and peaceful city of God which dominates the universe. For it is there in truth that the powers of the soul have risen in their degrees, and that they have given the ability to bear and understand to the intellect which sees God. While the powers or the tribes of the soul dispersed and submitted to alienation and division do not lead a common life, it is impossible for them to raise themselves or to build edify the soul. For there is no place nor peace there, nor the Jerusalem which is built, through which one would be able to see the presence of intellect. But when the forces are reunited together, it is impossible that they would not climb up high toward the Lord on the intellectual degrees which lead to great things, defending and saving the intellect which contemplates God. When in a peaceful and calm state, the soul builds itself in the Spirit as a town whose inhabitants – its powers – live together, the essential forces raise themselves on the degrees of the Lord. They exist in unity and solitude, carrying their alliance to the intellect which contemplates God. Sing then: 'Jerusalem, built like a town whose inhabitants live together. For there the tribes are raised, the tribes of the Lord, in witness of Israel,' in Christ Jesus our Lord.

¹ A classic interpretation. Cf. Origen, *Treaty on Principles* IV, 3, 8.

40. CONTINUATION

Without wanting to go too far, one can add this to what has already been said: Seek to know if the divine light, the light which comes from peace, has started to cover your soul with its shadow. Learn whether your soul is Jerusalem built like a town. See if the inhabitants live together, if all its thoughts and its forces are unified and reunited in their desire to build the town not separately, but jointly; and if to Jerusalem build like a town rise the tribes of the Lord, which means those general forces of the soul, the divine forces which rise together in spirit. If you see these things accomplished in you, do not stop building. But remind yourself of the tower of Babel, of its construction and the division of languages (cf. Gen. 11 : 1-9). And know that all construction is not good, even if it appears to be so on the outside. Those who have eyes will see two modes of building and to raising things in general. The one is founded on good and allows God to come and live in us. Such a town is known by the fact that its inhabitants live together and that the tribes which rise toward it are the tribes of the Lord, announcing great things which surround the soul in marvels, peace, love, sanctification, which edify it. The other is founded on evil and leads to the ruin of the soul. One will know it infallibly in the division of intelligible essential languages, in the disastrous confusion, the passions finishing by remaining in us like the centipede in the tower of Babel. Understand then the sense of the one and the other of these constructions, and do not sin when choosing the better of the two.

But if from time to time and often, peace, unity of thought, the light of intellect are not surrounded by the profundity of your heart, if the contemplation of God does not make an ineffable pleasure rise in your heart; if the genuinely existent energy of the Spirit and its reanimating fire does not flow continually from the most internal place of your heart, to the point that it seems to you often that it exhausts you, when the heart bears rejoicing, intellectual joy, profound and mystic vision in the upper parts of the body; if your soul does not taste the ineffable mysteries in spirit; if an indescribable joy and an unconceivable ravishment does not act coherently in you; if you do not receive deep within you the sanctification of Christ when it rises, know that your soul is not Jerusalem, that it is not built like a town, that the inhabitants, thoughts, are not together a single being; that the tribes, the universal forces, have not become the tribes of Jesus and are not elevated up there in the soul to bear the extraordinary, initiate the intellect and preach to it what the eye has not seen, what the ear has not heard, that which has not mounted in the heart of man (cf. 1 Cor. 2 : 9) who has not received the Spirit of God. Be careful therefore not to build in yourself a tower of Babel of the intellect, that tower whose end was the fall, the division and the confusion of essential language, and complete perdition, as has been said.

I want to recall the reason these had their soul built like the city of Jerusalem, and what the causes were of the construction and the ruin of the tower of Babel. I want to say also why the inhabitants of the first lived together, and why the tower of Babel knew many manners of division of language. But I halt here, being careful by means of brevity to bring about proper understanding in those who listen to me.

41. ON 'THEY WERE NOBLE AMONG THE SONS OF THE EAST' (Job 1 : 3)

Noble among the sons of the East are those who, through contemplation and the vision of God, have been rendered free and best in their thoughts by the Orient – the light and the splendour of the spiritual sun of justice (cf. Mal. 3 : 20); those who are not born of blood nor of the human will, nor the wishes of the body, but of God (cf. John 1 : 13); those whose heart and intellect love to remain in divine temples which are the heavens; those who have been judged worthy to meet God; those who have received the divine mysteries, the ineffable mysteries of the Kingdom; those who have become the Body of Christ the Son of God, and his limbs each for his part (cf. 1 Cor. 12 : 27); those who make with him a single body, a single heritage, a single communion (cf. Eph. 3 : 6); those who have inherited from him and have for Father God in the highest heaven; those who, beyond all reason, have had part in the divine nature (cf. 2 Peter 1 : 4); those who have received the seal of the life-giving Holy Spirit, in whom they commune, in which they live, in which they see. They are covered with white vestments (cf. Apoc. 4 : 4) which they have as theirs from the Spirit, and gold embroidered tunics, studded with precious stones and pearls, their headdress and their crown is made of rubies, of diamonds, all sorts of stones, and they eat and drink at the table of the King. Their food is inexhaustible, and nectar abounds. For all things are his spirit, and they receive them in spirit.

He does innumerable things all entirely marvellous in his royal house. Fire which refreshes and reanimates, and the stirrups of love go through his heart. A living water sings and pours its waves of eternal life. The air is charged with perfumed breath, the Spirit dispenses life, and the light in unique splendour is three times luminous, simple, higher than being. Such men have known these contemplations and these delights. They are separated from low things and united with things on high. They have surmounted the visible and they are entirely turned toward the inner essence. They have exceeded passing things, and sleep with those which remain. They lie below and they turn toward the height. Their body attaches them and binds them below. But the Spirit calls them and detaches the cords consumed by the fire. Their body is then delivered at the same time that it ascends above the heavens, ravished and rapid. They are simplified by the simplicity of their effort toward God. They separate themselves from others by their unique contemplation of God, they are transported with glory of the Spirit into glory (cf. 2 Cor. 3 : 18) ever

more grand, they pass through wealth to wealth more abundant, and they play among delights of the ineffable. They say to themselves: 'The wealth of the glory and of delights is marvellous.' Then they have been ravished to have seen things yet more great than the first. And as if stripped of everything, they are impoverished in themselves. They are drowned in ecstasy, or more justly they are open to ecstasy, and they have filled their hearts with joy. They follow the King of Forces, they share his great grace, profoundly happy in that indescribable inheritance, that ineffable love of man. Such are, as best I know, the noble ones among the sons of the East (cf. Job 1 : 3), in Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom belong the glory and the power in the ages. Amen (1 Pet. 4 : 11).

When the intellect has seen divine truth in Christ in all simplicity, then it is time to fall silent (cf. Eccl. 3 : 7). It is the time to drink the nectar of God, blessing and great spiritual playfulness. It is the time for mystic visions, the joy of spiritual things. For the intellect sees manifestly then in the hand of the Lord the cup full of an mixed pure wine (Ps. 75 : 9. LXX). The intellect watches this wine sway from one side to the other in the light, and it knows by evidence that it is inexhaustible. For the depth of the cup which divine goodness has given us to pour, and so to speak the depth of the riches and the accomplishment of grace, are not yet visibly consumed in the present life, even after the greatest ascent toward God and deification. Accomplishment and perfection are protected for the equal delight of all during the age to come. According to the beloved disciple, 'what we will be has not yet been revealed' (cf. 1 John 3 : 2). And according to St Paul, we know in part now (cf. 1 Cor. 13 : 9), but perfection will come, when all sinners will brink with the righteous from the mystical cup of God and we will discover the end, the mirrors removed and truth clearly revealed, because they will have attained perception of mysteries currently veiled in secrecy. The just will know a more than perfect joy. They will receive the reward for their hope in God and will possess the fruits of virtues work, as it is written: 'They will be drunk on beauty of the house, and you will drink of the rivers of delight' (Ps. 36 : 8. LXX). It is about them that the Lord has said that he will open the Kingdom of the Father and he will serve them (cf. Luke 12 : 37). And it is with them that he promised that he would drink the new cup and be content in his Kingdom (cf. Matt. 26 : 29).

But the sinners will drink the bile of bitterness and eternal grief. And they will drink like this to the point that they will know how they unhappily deprived themselves when they refused the very sweet nectar that the divine David commanded we should drink in this age, when he said: 'Taste and see that the Lord is good' (Ps. 34 : 8. LXX). Sinners refuse to come to this nectar. However those who come, those who let themselves naturally be persuaded by the commandment, see the cup and watch the wine roll from side to side (Ps. 75 : 9. LXX). In the goodness of grace, they drink and taste it on the side where it runs, they fill the senses of their soul with sweetness, and they spontaneously sing odes

on the power of grace to God. They say: 'Your cup which makes us drunk is my delight (Ps. 23 : 5. LXX). Your inconceivable mercy, like wine, like what remains at the bottom of the vase, follows us all the days of our true life (Ps. 23 : 6. LXX), the unchanging and immortal life of the age to come.' Always having these divine benefits, we will have them in future assuredly, tasting then the libation from one side or the other of the new and vivifying cup which is in the hand of the Lord. Those who drink from that cup every day truly know what is hidden in what they drink. They discover in what is poured out the fundamental, and they know in part, as a pledge, the age to come. So it is clear that the right will have in the beyond a share more abundant and more total than what they have had already in part while they were still attached to the heaviness of the body and the lower darkness.

But it is equally clear that David did not say that all will drink, the right and the sinners. On the contrary he thought that it was doubtful that sinners would drink. And he let it be heard that he said of the right that they drink. One can ask if sinners drink, but not if the right drink. Because the just and right it is evident, when they are gathered and seated for the libation, when they rejoice and say: 'You have filled me with joy, Lord, with what you have done, and I rejoice in the work of your hands' (Ps. 92 : 4). Through the works of his hands, he wants to say that God holds and offers the cup full of mixed pure wine; and in his great love of man, he inclines it from one side to the other (cf. Ps. 75 : 9); and he keeps the wine which is in it for the age to come. But now here they sing to God in their inebriation: 'Your cup which enlivens us is our delight (cf. Ps. 23 : 5) in Christ Jesus.'

I will sing for you who have created me, and I will praise, Most High who pour on me, through grace, your compassions. More than good king who loves souls, your sacred finger touches me at the depth of my heart, as you know it, you who alone do marvels and prodigies (Ps. 72 : 18. LXX). Him whom you have awakened, you carry him naturally to see the letters that your holy hand has written in the book of life through your divine Spirit, and to contemplate through the sense of the intellect the beauty which exceeds all ravishment, the beauty of your hand, and all which fills with joy and mystic joy in Christ Jesus our Lord.

There is a peace more apparent than real, which, while the body lives in its pleasures, provokes in the soul much trouble, to the extent that it counterfeits serenity for a time. And there is also a peace which pursues the flight far from all and the life of stillness. However this, even if it is far superior to the first, does not last long. For while the soul is troubled by thoughts, the body and the entire man suffer and are naturally troubled. But there is a third peace, a peace of the senses and the soul higher still. A conduct and an effort in concert awaken forces of the soul and the interior man through the life of stillness, when it is given us to have a pray more pure, tears more gentle, and to acquire with the pleasure the words of God. But this no less is not yet the perfection of peace.

It is impossible that the flautist or the cithara player commits himself to play continually the most marvellous tunes, for they also must support the work and tiredness of their hands, and because a weakness or a state of pain supervenes on these, the one and the other eventually stop playing; just so, when the soul has taken up the fundamental harmonies and its own force, the unchanging does not always stay in its possession, but relaxes bit by bit; willingly or not, the ardour falls, or the mutability or listlessness proper to creatures allies itself against every effort with the heaviness of the body.

But when the soul has received through grace the coming of the Uncreated which created the universe, when it has communed with the immovable and life-giving Spirit, it is astonished, it is filled with another life, it is naturally provided with life by the breath of the vivifying Spirit, following that it enjoys supernatural and truly immutable life. And in the same way it lives through the vivifying power, so it sees that what creates life is the light, and it pleases itself to contemplate the supernatural works of Him who is higher than nature, it is filled with a peace which exceeds all intellect (cf. Phil. 4 : 7), through the incomprehensible vivifying action of Him who creates life beyond understanding, through illumination, through vision, through the joy of that which it sees in mystery. It never changes in any thing, it never lets itself go, it takes no interest in the ruses and traps of the enemy. But always in movement towards God, it contemplates the things which gather around God, not by its own will, but through the power and the impulsion, and I would say through the will of the indefatigable divine Spirit which, through its energy and its substance, works in the heart, not as one would imagine, but as only the Spirit itself knows, which plumbs and knows the depths of God and initiates the sense of the soul which receives it. Then so long as we watch attentively inside our self, the grace of Spirit set alight, and take care not let it be extinguished, living in the life of stillness, we are filled with sanctity and ineffable and supernatural peace, in God, in the Trinity, and we bear then without trouble and truly, in humility, love and prayer, peace of body, of spirit, and of soul, as has been said. For peace which comes with trouble is not perfect peace, but it awakens it. Perfect peace, according to what we have been transmitted, comes without the least bodily trouble in the calm and perfect sabbath celebration, and in the repose which is in Christ.

O you who have understood that you were nothing, who have easily taken to knowing Him who created you and formed you, who have discerned in your immobility the movement which is the cause of your passage toward being, you who, in your desire for love, you are, with all your dispositions, all of you, offered to the very gentle Jesus, your Creator who formed you, you who have done nothing but to contemplate his face, you who, thanks to numerous gifts of God, see this movement through action and contemplation, you the creature, you will become God, spiritual, and in all things similar to the Creator, you will please yourself eternally with your Lord and

his Father in the calm of desire for God, in the repose which is in God, through Jesus Christ, in the ages of ages, for you will be beyond all visible things. Amen.

42. CONTINUATION

When I have seen, that is when I have taken to knowing through vision of the intellect where I have come from here in a manner so marvellous, and how I came to my end, my third vision is when I imagine Him who conducted me, carried me, accomplished me, I think of the ineffable Father, I do not ignore his love for the world, and I watch in every manner the mystery of the goal which is mine. I rejoice then in these three things more than I know how to say. But a sadness no less grand often succeeds such a great joy, when I understand how much I lead a life incontestably unworthy of my vocation. Then when I see how, through the creation, you show me your inaccessible glory, when I consider how, through the incarnation of your only Son, you reveal your ineffable love for me, when I know the ineffable supernatural union that you offer me in giving me to have indescribable part in the continual effusion of the Spirit, I admire profoundly your glory, I marvel at the new compassion that you have for me, for you allow me to exit all visible things, you raise me to all the inner essential things, and you let me repose and rejoice ineffably in you, holy Trinity higher than all being.

God, in his great wisdom, wanting to make of man an other angel on the earth, a celestial living being which resembles him and may be equal to him, has put in him a soul endowed with intellect and capable of understanding spiritual knowledge and divine science. That is why he said: 'I have said: You are all the gods and sons of the Most High (Ps. 82 : 6. LXX) through grace.' Which is to say: You are second angels, who contemplate God in silence and you rise amorously toward him in the spiritual light. But it is impossible that man born of the earth can raise himself to the angelic state, for he is not purely spirit like the angels. It is through faith that the believer becomes spirit, through All Powerful God who gives infinitely, as if transformed into a mystic and divine creature. The Saviour reveals this when saying that what is born of the Spirit is spirit (John 3 : 6). And to those born of spirit, those whose soul is ready, the faithful John bears witness when he says: 'He has given the power to become children of God to those who believe in his name, who are not born of the blood of man, nor of the wishes of the flesh, but of God' (John 1 : 13), to be interior man, that is man in the image of God who created him.

It is this birth, not according to nature but according to grace, which attaches to them who are born of the Spirit, according to the sure doctrine which we have received. This is why the intellect which has a share in grace becomes naturally the throne of the Holy Spirit. As iron heated in fire becomes itself fire – not that it transforms into fire, but that it participates through transmission until it is assimilated by the fire, that it

might be the throne of fire and that the fire reposes in it - , so the intellect, born in the Spirit, uniting itself or communicating with it, finds itself to be Spirit and throne of Spirit: God clearly surrounds it. He sits and reposes on it as on a throne. This is the marvellous beginning of progress for the soul, not that it will enter into the order of angels, which is said to be the lowest order of celestial powers, but it enters into the order of the Most high God. The intellect passes after that into the order of thrones, then into that of the cherubim, then the seraphim, until it receives entry into the angelic order, then into the lowest, announcing to those who are near in Spirit the glorious mysteries of God. For if, speaking with the divine sages, participation should precede transmission, how is it not very clear that it must have part in the Spirit, in the measure that the intellect is his throne, and so transmits spiritual things, as it happens to the cherubim, in the Spirit which reveals the effusion and the amplitude of spiritual wisdom, and want to give that wisdom to others, and be accomplished among the seraphim through the spiritual knowledge of wisdom and, thanks to the cup and the drink which that knowledge brings, arrive at ardent love of God who awakens us? That is what the order of seraphim demonstrate. One can transmit to other beings the warmth of divine love, and so animate his own fire and attain the order which permits us to teach those who are near: the order of angels. That is why those who, having become God in Spirit and thrones of God, cherubim and seraphim, pass through the lower spiritual orders, are not quite sure of being angels, and cannot serve God and teach in truth and in spirit what ought to be, as the true progress of the soul would require, who receive the beginning of their participation in God Most high and, as has been said, go into Christ Jesus our Lord.

I will confess to you, Lord, ineffable Trinity, not only through what is according to you, Master, but what is according to my measure, as much as possible. With what is your own, indescribable God; you are, and you extend infinitely above all words and all intellect which would understand you or speak of you. You have created me from nothing through the greatness of your will, you have formed me with your hands like a different sort of nothing, and you have made me in your image and your resemblance (cf. Gen. 1 : 26). But I am vain before such precious and glorified things. I sadly lack insight before your commandments full of health, of true joy and divine creation. For it is completely marvellous that before having given me being, you had for me and my life, so that I could see you, know you, experience the extreme spiritual pleasure of the things which surround you, created a world of such greatness and beauty and glory, such power, of such creative wisdom, a world covered with things so abundant and so diverse without which I would not have been able to live one hour, and with which I live happy in my body, and by which I can do things, and nourish myself. It is through them, when I contemplate them in my soul, that I understand and admire the ocean of your foresight and your love, all wisdom and power.

But, ineffable God, I have led my life until now in disorder, rebellion, alas, toward your commands truly sweet and lovable and wise. Alas, my soul, what is this insensibility, this hardness! Do you not know, impure man, that to live only in the body and to live with perishable things, the poor servant depends on the wealth above him, and ought to submit without delay to the commands of the Lord, even if the submission is late sometimes. For the origin of these things is not manifestly him who acts, but Him who orders. How, man without intellect, can you refuse the commands of such a Creator, such a benefactor, a nurse, now when they are clearly in your sight and for your immortal glory? How do you turn away from them? Alas, what insolence and what eternal evil is in you!

When I return to you, God more than good, toward ineffable happiness, Lord lover of the soul of man, I say to your creature, to my poor truly sinning soul: 'You have, my soul, many spiritual things, eat, drink, be merry' (cf. Luke 12 : 19). And when the sinning man is apparent in me, I am broken and I am truly humiliated (cf. Ps. 38 : 8. LXX). But, o, the richness and the goodness, very beneficent God! When I turn myself dangerously aside from the straight and lovely way, you marvellously bring me gifts without measure, and you have made me return. I have eaten, I have truly drunk, I have been given natural solace in the Spirit through your compassion. But once again I was banished, I let myself become separated through the ill-intentioned game of a demon or through my own inattention, I don't know which, or perhaps by both of these. Perhaps it is your more profound judgement which led me into this abandon, into neglect and punishment. Often and again, I find myself stuck in the bog of the abyss, where nothing supports me (cf. Ps. 69 : 2. LXX), and I have suffered, I am inclined toward what pierces me with darts and arrows (cf. Ps 32 : 4. LXX) of sin which bring death, and all the evil things which the enemy has massed as a barrier against my soul as a result of my sad negligence and my pitiable madness. You however, to have never totally abandoned me. My God more than good, you have called me with your spiritual voice in the most secret place of my heart, and you have said to my annihilated soul: 'I am your salvation (Ps. 35 : 3. LXX). Do not be afraid. But return to a calm condition. Do not lead yourself astray.' So you have consoled me, patient Jesus, you have manifestly become for me the undergirding rescue. Like the right hand of the Father, like the right hand of the Lord, you have received me with all your force, and your correction has re-established me again (cf. Ps. 18 : 36), as so often, in the great joy of ineffable secret.

Come then, Word of God, like a seal in my heart, through the contemplation of your ineffable supernatural beauty. Come in my arms, through the action of your holy vivifying commands. Come, Jesus Christ, King higher than heaven. Come so that I live in your spiritually. Approach me visibly, I who return to you with all my soul. Joy higher than the world, joy of those in whom you live ineffably, sends your light, God infinitely wise, so that my soul endowed with

intellect returns to itself, so that it brings itself to you, and so that those who in vain fight with me (cf. Ps. 3 : 8) will be dispersed and decline, those who persecute me for no cause, those who do me harm pitilessly. Watch over me constantly, Lord, I pray you, like the apple of your eye (cf. Ps. 17 : 8), so that with you I will contemplate you eternally, ineffable Master, glorious above all.

43. CONTINUATION

Who am I, dust and ash (cf. Gen. 18 : 27)? And when I pass like a shadow (Ps. 144 : 4) and a dream so quickly, what is my time compared to you, uncreated Lord who has no beginning, in the eyes of whom a thousand years are like a yesterday which has passed and like a vigil in the night (Ps. 90 : 4. LXX)? And what is my awareness before you, who in full awareness created the heaven and the earth (Ps. 136 : 5. LXX), who in wisdom in an instant founded the universe in its abundance, so that I hold myself to be entirely judged before you who loves souls so much? But no, Master, no, I pray you, I supplicate you, parents do not judge the actions of their newly born child, they do not demand anything, but, in one manner or another, they simply foresee in all piety and with zeal, what they need, feeding them and taking care of them as much as possible.

That is why, holy God, truly our eternal Father, profoundly loving, the Creator who extracted from nothing everything that we are, do not be irritated by my faults and my injustices, I pray you; you who love man, do not demand from me works equal to you grace. No, good God, no. But as is appropriate for little children, and yet again, be infinitely indulgent about what I do, and increase your pure gift in me, I who call for help, for wisdom is lacking in me. Yes, you have created me, you have formed me, you have formed me anew in baptism in view of an goal infinitely good, God hymned above all, so that after having created me for better things and having made me equal to beauties of divine creation, as you faithful image, you glorify me in the most pure things and the most high, for you come not to judge, but to save the world (cf. John 3 : 17). Amen.

44. CONTINUATION

I condemn myself. You see it, Lord who knows what is in the heart, God more than wise. I have no need of any judge. As for uncertain things, God more than good, a judgement is made with justice. He who opposes himself cannot but condemn himself in advance. In truth he sees and he confesses, that he is not merely a sinner, but that he sins each day and every hour. Lord who loves man, spare me your punishment. Abundant source of mercy and grace, I implore your mercy, I ask for grace. You have chosen to become a man for me. In your overflowing goodness, you did nothing according to our faults. In your immense love for us you

rendered us nothing according to our sins (cf. Ps. 103 : 10). But you allowed yourself to be defeated by love, and as the east is far from the west you distance us from our iniquities (cf. Ps. 103 : 12). I supplicate you then, Jesus Christ, patient Lord, suffering Master, and I pray you. Although I am unworthy, forget all my injustice and all my sin, send in my heart the perfect seal of your Holy Spirit, accord me the true holy gift, in your power and your wisdom, so that, through the power of your grace, in your wisdom and spiritual comprehension, I can do as much as it is possible what is pleasing in your eyes, that the spiritual flux of your pure wisdom spill into my heart anew and again, in the spiritual knowledge of the truth and in the light which accompanies it, so that I find myself in communion with you and what belongs to you, illumined in the ages of ages and through the more than glorious light, in the incomparable compassion and ineffable grace. Amen.

45. CONTINUATION

One does not know with complete certainty whether any trick, or what we could call any suggestion, is fundamentally diabolical, and therefore whether one has had to flee from the demons or if one has escaped their attacks in any instance. And nothing escapes the demons, as I have said, unless he has received in the solitude of his heart the fundamental and continual impulse from the divine breath. That is what active faith joined to humility, to the love of God and men, knows how to engender through the life vowed to stillness and watchfulness, through reading dedicated to practice, above all to contemplation, and finally through theology which accompanies prayer. As for active love, it is, one can say with reason, the fulfilment of the holy commandments of God, as much as possible. Not only does this love make comprehension of God more pure and clear, but it gives the games of the demons and their irruption in the soul an exact spiritual knowledge and discernment more sure. Nevertheless the envy of the demons exceeds all measure, they always react with more violence, they rival our ardour in the struggle, they bear themselves furiously, without taking a breath and with the greatest savagery, toward what can nurture the soul devoted to God. And if Christ, the true Saviour of his people, does not come, in his love of man, to make a defence of his faithful, no man would be saved, whatever he does, even among the saints.

46. ON THE SAME

I know it by all evidence and I confess it, Lord: through my inattention, my ingratitude, my absurd conduct, I who was endowed with reason, I am unhappily led yet lower than animals without reason, for they protect their proper nature and live by following it while I, I never come to know, not for an instant, what my pure and true energy of nature is, marked as I am by the dirt of my wicked passions, through my

penchant for transgressions and the confusion which they bring. So I have lost the intellect, and I do not know in truth, as I ought, what my nature is. I have exceeded the tribe of demons through malice, and I bear truly in intention all their vices. For if I could live as they live, disengaged from all sickness, from all death, from all need, there would be no doubt that I would flow with vice, miserable me, incapable of restraining my mad impulses. But not only am I not immortal, but I am often and chronically ill, even while I transgress, I expose myself to sin and rejoice. The worst is that I do not head toward a single vice and neglect the others, as each demon does. For one is the demon of love of money, another that of love of vain glory, another that of love of pleasure. Each is the worker for a different passion, or better the friend and the collaborator of those who are persuaded to yield to such and such a passion. I alone live and set in motion all the passions at the same time, and in any manner, with such ardour that, without any demon approaching or assailing me from outside, I go of myself toward them, or I fall lamentably toward them. And even the faults that I have not committed, I have not fled them from open choice, I have not wished to reject them by design, but at bottom I have not committed them because I have not had the chance.

I have then justly and secretly more vice than those immortal beings who are insensible to sickness and lack of life, and that is because each of them betakes himself to one sort of sin only. But I whose days are not only short, but as I've said, are overwhelmed by illness, weakness, malice, I who am dressed in all the sins and am ready alas, to commit them quickly, I am in reality worse than the demons themselves. But, Lord, Lord, nothing is naturally higher than the compassion by which you save us, since without any resentment you have accorded this even to the demons who wish to repent. Give me the force, the wisdom and all that which I need to act so as to repent over the sins I committed and that you all holy Face will calm me, Master, supreme life, blessed life, continual joy of the righteous beyond the world, unthinkable absolute love, love of man and ineffable mercy. Fill my soul with your great and marvellous compassion which says: 'Have mercy, you who forgive,' so that to those who know may be clearly demonstrated that even the demons who are returned and, such as they are, have said 'Have mercy' have your infinite goodness, you have not abandoned them far from your compassion, you have not turned yourself from them, source of grace. For if you have had pity for me who am more wicked than them and worse than animals without reason, there is in reality no man nor any demon guilty of sin who, prostrating himself in front of you and saying 'Have mercy,' will not find the most rich and the most marvellous compassion before you, in the eminence of your infinite goodness beyond all hope. Have pity on me, Jesus, our Father and the source of compassion.

47. ADDITIONAL

Many things, Lord, come to me by spirit, on which I have reflected. But there is truly nothing that I can clearly understand in total certainty and once and for all. It is nothing then, in one manner or another, the understanding which does not escape me. By all evidence, I am incapable of knowing simply and totally, and that is natural. I see the heaven and, of course, the earth. But what they are, on what they are founded, how all these things turn around each other, and what their nature is, it is clear that I am ignorant, even though it is easy for me to point to the air, water, or fire to whoever desires this of me. But who will know how to say the nature of each, and why water falls, why fire rises, why the air pours into everything? I would answer in a murmur without opening my mouth. But I renounce speaking of my knowledge of these things. A hair, a thing apparently the most common, hardly touches our senses. Things don't affect us at the moment when they happen. How can they? Everything happens with time progressively. And what do I know of hair in its inner nature?

That is why I pray, Master, for deliverance from the presumption which makes me condemn and judge my neighbour and it doesn't matter who else. Hold me then in your powerful arms, for I have not the intellect nor the force to acquire that wisdom. Who knows the measure of heaven, the volume of pounds of earth, and the path of the sun, so rapid and indefatigable, ruled marvellously and so justly ruled? Who will ever totally understand when he is not capable of knowing what a mosquito is? I have no intellect, I have lost the power of wisdom, but I trust through grace to what must be called deification, to the supernatural union in God, which comes from divine action which is proper to you and the intellection in you.

48. OF THE SAME

Only those who, through the vision given by grace, know the spiritual sense can assist those who have not acquired this sense and who let themselves be led over the psychic plane by visible signs, at least by the more manifest ones. After the divine Paul, such a man discerns all, although he is not judged by any (cf. 1 Cor. 2 : 15), though in every manner the others, not only do not recognise one denuded of the Spirit of God, but in their foolishness go so far as to call them blessed; but these should more properly complain that they have never received the spiritual sense through grace and have been led by the spirit of the world, and that they are what the divine word calls natural man (cf. 1 Cor. 2 : 14). For the spiritual ones who, having touched the divine, know that sense, judge absolutely nothing, not with precipitate judgement, nor according to appearance, as others do for the most part. They judge after immutable and eternal truth which is in them. For they are initiated in all by the life-giving Spirit which illumines them, granting them a supernatural life entirely different than the habitual life and give them the light and the

spiritual knowledge to their actual eyes for the most part, to whom it reveals itself so manifestly.

Such was Jacob the patriarch, who changed place so as to abide in a unique place, who saw with his penetrating gaze many things and pronounced admirable words about his sons (cf. Gen. 49 : 1ff).

Such was Isaiah, too, that great voice among the prophets, who, seeing Jesus led to sacrifice like a lamb (cf. Is. 53 : 7), was not overcome by that suffering, nor injured by that abasement and its consequences, but contemplated mystically, with a spiritual eye, the glory which was natural in these things. He saw that Jesus did not have form nor beauty (cf. Is. 53 : 2). He saw all that he suffered elsewhere. However it is in this that he recognised his divinity.

Such were, in a word, all the prophets who, in the illumination of Spirit, attached themselves with all their intellect to the inner essences of things. As for those who bear the spirit of the world, or, to speak more exactly, who are carried by the spirit of the world, those who want to recognise them easily should remember the race of scribes and pharisees in the Gospels, and remember how they occupied themselves only with appearances, did not live except to let themselves be seen and attempted by their entire manner, through the wealth of their clothing and their gait, to be called doctors of Israel, wanting nothing more or other than to maintain themselves, while simulating virtuous life through fancy words (cf. Matt. 23 : 3-7). It is thus – o blindness – that, through the jealousy which the spirit of the world engendered, they cruelly condemned Jesus Christ to death, the true Son of the God of the universe, the divine life, the true life. For if the Holy Spirit does not speak to us through jealousy (cf. James 4 : 5), as it is written, it is evident that the spirit of the world, it speaks through jealousy, and judges in iniquity and in the shadows. That is why they will lament (cf. Rev. 1 : 7), as it is written, when the last Judgement of God comes, and they will torment themselves not without reason, for they saw Him who they pierced (cf. Zac. 12 : 10) and interrogated. The will say: ‘Isn’t that him who we imprisoned for nothing and who we claimed was mad? How has he been counted among the sons of God?’ (Sag. 5 : 4-5) Misguided by the shadows of presumption where the spirit of the world leads, and sadly lost, they have not known the truth naturally, and having not made way toward it, where those with the attentive Spirit find themselves, the Spirit which leads and sheds light on them. As for the spiritual ones, Paul says: ‘Do you know that we will judge the angels? And with much more reason we will judge the things of this life’ (1 Cor. 6 : 3). So those who bear the Spirit judge (cf. 1 Cor. 2 : 15) that the world, as the Lord says, can not receive or contemplate (cf. John 14 : 17).

So those who, through the true sense of the soul, have not put on the clothing of the more than celestial Holy Spirit and have not known Him more who with mystery accomplishes the ineffable and speaks the inexpressible, by all evidence have

the spirit of the world. ‘But you,’ says Paul, ‘you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God is always present in you. Now if anyone has not the Spirit of Christ, he is not of Christ’ (Rom. 8 : 9). Do you see how those who have the Spirit in themselves are not carnal? And how those who, so pitifully, alas, are deprived of the Spirit, are not only incapable of bearing a direct judgement in divine things, but cannot be with Christ any longer? The Apostle shows again more clearly elsewhere how the spirit of the world and the Holy Spirit are opposed when he says: ‘We have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit coming from God, in order to know what God has given us by grace’ (1 Cor. 2 : 12). Do you understand that only those who have received the Spirit of God can know the divine and the truth? This what the Lord has said: ‘When he has come, the Spirit of truth, he will conduct you in all truth’ (John 16 : 13).

Do you see where total truth emerges from in a natural way? Is it not when judgement is right and free from all error? That is why the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of counsel, Spirit of science, of intellect, of wisdom (cf. Is. 11 : 2), guiding Spirit, right Spirit (Ps. 51 : 10), Spirit of truth (cf. John 14 : 17). The Spirit is also called by Isaiah the Spirit of judgement (cf. Is. 4 : 4). For it is in him that the soul bears itself resolutely into what we have described. It is by him that it is judged, while he works those virtues in it and it receives them. And without it everything is full of darkness and lacks truth. He who has not the Spirit of truth, and as a result discerns only falsehood in is said to him, cannot come to the truth. ‘No one, it is said, can know what is in another man, if the Spirit is not with him’ (1 Cor. 2 : 11). For the Spirit searches all depths (cf. 1 Cor. 2 : 10). If it were permitted to discover the truth without it, one would never call the Spirit the Holy Spirit of truth and Spirit of judgement, the names which we have listed would not have been given. If he who judges speaks without the Spirit of truth, he is the advocate of lies in supposing what is not so; in a word he would be deprived of the truth (for the Spirit of truth is also the Spirit of judgement), he would be exiled from himself far from God and from the glory of God, and justly divided. Judging and explaining precipitately in despite of the truth, in his ignorance and stupidity he will betray the righteous, like another Judas. Now he, the thrice-miserable, has been condemned for having negligently betrayed, in despite of his duty, our Lord Jesus Christ that the Father sent to us, and who is himself justice (cf. 1 Cor. 1 : 30) and truth (cf. John 14 : 6), as has been said.

Miserable pharisee, blind, coming and going without having the Spirit which gives light for the spiritual eyes of the soul, and moved to judge by appearances, hastily and falsely, what is in a man which the spiritual eye sees, if you had seen the paradoxical resurrections and the thousands of divine miracles which Jesus, because he was the true God, did in his own person, it would be right to venerate, celebrate, believe in him, rather than be irritated and discontented by what with great wisdom and love of man, that he broke the sabbath, and that the disciples of the Bridegroom did not fast (cf. Matt. 9 :

15) and did not wash their hands (cf. Mark 7 : 2). Pharisee without heart or intellect, filled with darkness it can be said, do you want to command the source of wisdom and of such marvellous and ineffable graces? And now that you despise the most simple works of such a great power, those works the reason of which is up to this moment inconceivable to you, how can do pretend to see? You are truly ignorant, ungrateful and insensible. And if you deceive yourself as it is not permitted anyone to deceive himself, what can we say? Have you admired the extraordinary works, the greatest ever done, have you glorified as much as possible and celebrated Him who did them, have you gone humbly toward him and with the uprightness of them who, on your advice, neglected tradition, did you ask the reason why he broke the sabbath? But presumption, with the malice which follows it, if apparently the most evil and punishable thing in the world. It grows darker by the same amount that it insists that it knows. And the intellect fails the more definitely as it denies its own ignorance.

And then, blind pharisee, not searching to know if the interior of the cup is clean, but taking interest in the exterior and visible part of the plate only (cf. Matt. 23 : 26), didn't you hear what Christ, true wisdom, commanded on the subject of judgement when he said: 'Do not judge on the basis of appearances, but judge according to justice' (John 7 : 24)? Do you not understand that it is impossible to judge justly and to make right decision, if one fixed on appearances only? Appearance means what everyone can see. How, madman, is it that one who does not fear the order of the Father, nor understand that the true man does not judge the visible on the basis of the visible, does not feel shame? How can he not hide his face? That is what you should do, because, deprived of the true way, you see yourself far from the light, from wisdom, from truth, from spiritual knowledge which gives truth, and so many other goods which the Holy Spirit pours and dispenses, and without which not only is it impossible to judge things which are strange to you infallibly, but you cannot see in what evil you are yourself involved. If you want to trust me, take the beam from your eye. I mean: lift ostentation, presumption, from your intellect. You will see then by reason if you can lift the mote (cf. Matt. 7 : 5), eventually yourself seized by sin, and secretly you can clear the eye of your neighbour. But to the extent that your internal eye does not see the inner essential light, it is evident that the beam which is laid in it fills it with darkness. Then, before you have searched around yourself by all methods, before you have rejected the evil far from you, do not attempt to fight the offense of demons and the tests of ignorance. Only those who have received the light can do this. For the enterprise is very random. Impulse is dangerous. So that only those should speak, and at bottom only those should judge, as the blessed David counselled, whom the Lord has delivered from the hands of their enemies – the enemies of the intellect – and when they have gathered far from hostile places (cf. Ps. 107 : 2ff. LXX) – passionate states of mind, strange, divided states - , when he has united them with themselves and with his glory. So that they speak

and judge, delivered and saved, those who have been composed, unified, enlightened by the light.

But if you are not full of spiritual light, as has been said, fortify yourself in silence and do not fear to embrace for your benefit and to confess that you are unaware of things which bring you salvation and not perdition. How can this word of Christ not make you reflect: 'I judge no man' (John 8 : 15)? But you, what do you say? 'I judge everyone.' What ignorance, not to say: what mindlessness! It is said: 'The Father has given all judgement to the Son' (John 5 : 22). The Son has received from the Father the power to judge. And you, where did you get the things which were not given to you? The Trinity is inside you clearly? It walks (cf. 2 Cor. 6 : 16) visibly in your as it was promised? You see yourself in God the Word, and see God the Word in you? Are you in God? The waters of the river of the Holy Spirit flow and spring clearly in inaccessible light deep in your heart? Have you received all the other graces through which God works manifestly in his saints? Or do you have no great need of the mediator? Watch then for bad advice. Keep you lips from speaking lies (cf. Ps. 34 : 14). Search, ask others with measure, instruct yourself, but do not teach, but let yourself ask others, and judge nobody for your self. Truly naïve the blind man who believes himself capable of reading the words in a book. But much more foolish he who, without the living Spirit, attempts to know what is in others. For there in the deep where we have not been, we cannot know what is in ourselves, and no more know the obstacles and traps that the jealous and malign demon who hates the good opposes to us ostensibly; we who, by presumption, fall into evil and, contrary to our duty, allow ourselves to be persuaded, and make it our business to judge others.

So by not allowing ourselves to be instructed, we fool ourselves, sadly we do not arrive at the truth and, rather than advance and grow, we become useless. And at the same time that we harm ourselves, we are a cause for scandal and ruin to those who are close to us and we are liable to the terrible judgement of God. But if we discern the intrigues of the demon, if we are obedient to the order which the great Paul gives to not judge before the time (cf. 1 Cor. 4 : 5), until the Lord who brings light comes to us in the Spirit, who abundantly reveals the depths in us, who has taught us in all certainty the spiritual knowledge and the revelations of divine visions and of good mystery, and who has made us truly spiritual and without fault, bearers of God, or even better who has made of us gods, then he raises us. He will re-establish us in his glory when we will receive the grace of discernment, when we will know purely to what evil any judgement brings if it lacks the gift of Christ. Only then can we judge in complete rectitude without the risk of falling.

49. FURTHER REMARKS

Since the beginning God has helped Israel a great deal. He has surrounded it with a great and marvellous concern, and he has made of it his inheritance among all other peoples (cf. Deut. 32 : 9). But God has also invested the faithful in Christ with this assistance and this concern, through great extraordinary labours for them. And these labours exceed those he did for Israel, as the soul exceeds the body. They cover them up as the sun hides the stars. The works of Christians are more important than those of the Israelites like the body is more important than its shadow. For those things of Israel, if one chooses to understand them properly, are truly a shadow of our things. Pharaoh is a bitter and pitiless master, and heavy cavalry (cf. Ex. 1 : 8-11) are the image of Satan and his followers, not in doing many bad things to the body, but because they impel themselves to merciless torment of the soul. In the one case Moses led the people of God (cf. Ex. 3 : 10). But we ourselves have – and how this raises us! – the true Son of God, the Word in person (cf. John 1 : 14), which prevails infinitely over the letter of the Law. On the one hand the rod (cf. Ex. 7 : 9-20), on the other the cross (cf. Matt. 27 : 32). The wood, changing its appearance paradoxically, devoured serpents (cf. Ex. 7 : 12). But the cross, an instrument of evil transformed into a sign of goodness, is given to the destruction of demons. There Egypt gave up its gold, silver and the ornaments of its clothing (cf. Ex. 12 : 35-6). Here, we do the same thing secretly and in spirit, when removing our senses from sin we bear our sensual need for beauty toward God. There a column of cloud and of fire led the Israelite to the sea (cf. Ex. 13 : 21). Here the vision of God and his burning love allows the faithful and contemplative intellect to weep tears in which all the things of hate perish and die, when that intellect has escaped, as the Egyptians and pharaoh were miraculously lost in the sea (cf. Ex. 14 : 28) when the Jews had already traversed it.

To summarise, if one wanted to consider, and then contemplate, all that which the Jews had lived through, one would find the shadow and the image of what is accomplished in true Christians. Then if one wanted to know in a more general manner and with more light shed on the matter, what differentiates us from the Jews, one must think on what the ancient Law announced and what the new Law announced, which the Christians have. One will see without error. For the first speaks of creatures, and visible creatures, and that they are come from God, when it affirms: ‘In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth’ (Gen. 1 : 1), etc. As for the preaching of Christians, it does not speak of physical creatures, but of essential creatures. It speaks of the inner essence when it says: ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God’ (John 1 : 1). The preaching of the Jews affirms: ‘God said: Let us make man in our image and likeness’ (Gen. 1 : 26). But that of the Christians: ‘The Word was made flesh and he dwelt among us’ (John 1 : 16). The one says: ‘They will rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, over the beasts, and over all the earth’ (Gen. 1 : 26). The other says: ‘We have all received of his fulness’ (John 1 : 16). The one affirms: ‘God said: “Let

there be light”’ (Gen. 1 : 3). But the other: ‘God who has said: “The light will shine in the bosom of darkness”, has shone in our hearts’ (2 Cor. 4 : 6).

It is therefore permitted to those who is deciding between the one or the other of these of which we have spoken, to state things very clearly: the experience which Christians have of God outweighs the good things of the Jews and far exceeds them. Such a man would say that these good things are the shadow and the image of a truth completely supernatural, the truth which the Christians possess, or the truth of Christ. And he would celebrate and glorify for the abundance of grace and the divine providence which, from the shadow and the image, have, through the superessential compassion of things higher than the world, gently raised humanity into Christ Jesus our Saviour.

50. THAT GOD, OUT OF LOVE OF MAN, MAKES HIMSELF ACCESSIBLE TO ALL THE SENSES ENDOWED WITH INTELLECT

O very holy genuinely existent Word, Wisdom and Power of God! How, Lord, will I praise you essence, or your glory, which is inaccessible? How will I celebrate your goodness, which is infinite? I am only a man, and my intellect is limited. Nevertheless I will praise you, I will celebrate what I can apprehend.

For it is in my gift in every manner to feel your glory and your goodness, and my soul will attach itself to you with all its force (Ps. 63 : 9. LXX) and will follow you. So when I will hear you, I will fear as is natural, and then I will be ravished by all that is in you, speaking with the prophet who says: ‘I have heard, Lord, what you have announced, and I have feared. I have understood your works, and I have been ravished’ (Hab. 3 : 1-2). Most High, incomprehensible Word, you have knocked at the door, at the hearing of the Bride in the Song of Songs, the heart upturned by you. It was outside itself and looked to see you in ardour. It said: ‘Show me your face. Let me hear your voice. For your face is lovely, and your voice is sweet’ (Song 2 : 14). I also love what Job says: ‘I had heard with my ears, but now I see with my eyes’ (Job 42 : 5). For as you are Word and Wisdom, so you are the true light which shines on all men who come into the world (cf. John 1 : 6). You are the light which shines and reveals from the expanse to the origin. So, the sun of justice (cf. Mal. 3 : 20), you are also the unconcealing light which gives vision to those who, in complete beatitude and through the grace of the virtues, contemplate the divine and supernatural mysteries of the single God, and the ineffable nature of those things bound to divine intense longing and which exceeds the world. John proclaims it clearly: ‘We have seen his glory, the glory of the unique Son of the Father, full of grace and of truth’ (John 1 : 14). For as you are true God, you are also truly the light, which John evidences, there again. Since those who, through an unspeakable gift, have received of your plenitude, God

ineffable, saying overtly: ‘God who has said: “The light shines in the bosom of the darkness”, has shone the same in our hearts’ (2 Cor. 4 : 6).

You shine ineffably, you disclose with all your light, in order to give us to see things of grace and of truth higher than heaven, those things which exceed the nature of the world, and to offer us marvellous rejoicing. That is why in his love of man, not only you are rendered accessible to hearing and sight, but in addition also to the our touch. The beloved disciple says: ‘What we have heard, what we have seen, what we have contemplated, what our hands have touched of the Word of life’ (1 John 1 : 1). If you have re clothed the faithful, giving to your own people rest once and for all, it is clear good God, that you allow yourself to be touched by them in spirit and as if by miracle. According to Paul, the very holy preacher of truth, those who have been baptised in you and in the faith that they bore for you, have been dressed in you and become yet more blessed (cf. Gal. 3 : 27), God who fills us with gifts. So Isaiah, the prophetic trumpet, the great voice, rejoiced with all his soul in God the Father and the Lord. For the Father marvellously re clothed him in you, Lord, as with a mantel of salvation and a tunic of joy, and he covered himself in you (cf. Is. 61 : 10) beyond all intellect. Seeing you around him, embracing him like inaccessible and entirely amazing light, gave to the man inspired by God such rejoicing, such joy, and more yet, until he understood that it was salvation, because you yourself are salvation.

So in the infinite abundance of your love, you let yourself be felt anew by the intelligible nostrils which have healthy faith, and through that you give rest marvellously to those who celebrate and praise you, singing that your name is a perfume which pours (cf. Song 1 : 3) and announcing it to their neighbours. ‘For my beloved is a fruit beautiful to behold, good to feel and sweet to taste. And his perfume has poured the pleasing odour of your myrrh’ (Song 1 : 12). This is why Paul, who carried you, said that we are the sweet savour of Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 2 : 15).

But you have given yourself to be tasted and eaten by the faithful. You are the true nourishment and the true drink of the soul (cf. John 6 : 55). You vivify and nourish marvellously, you make us grow and progress, and you mysteriously give joy to those who receive you. This is what the holy prophet David said, when he had proven that he had tasted you when bearing God: ‘Taste and see that the Lord is good’ (Ps. 34 : 9. LXX). For you are revealed not only as a fruit, but those who eat in full, the poor in spirit (cf. Matt. 5 : 3), the humble, they eat you as a good nourishment and will be satisfied, and those who search for you always in their desire to find and to eat praise you (cf. Ps. 22 : 27. LXX), Lord, for the great sweetness that they experience. For to the one comforted by your life-giving power holy food and drink is offered. The hearts of those who eat will live in the ages of ages (Ps. 22 : 27. LXX). You are eternal and incorruptible, and you make those who eat incorruptible. By your natural

and generous action, you carry them into eternity. That is why in your infinite goodness which awakens so much beauty and such generosity, you call and you pray to reasonable beings, saying: ‘Come, eat my bread and drink the wine that I have mixed for you’ (Prov. 9 : 5). Now it is your own self in holiness that you speak of, for you say also: ‘I am the bread of life’ (John 6 : 35), and ‘I am given to be the source of life’ (Jer. 2 : 13). Therefore, you offer them your holy body and your sacred blood to eat and drink (cf. Matt. 26 : 26ff).

Thus, feeding them all through their intellect’s sense, you rejoice in your own people, Lord who loves our souls so much, you are the light of life for them, you fill them with such joy, with things good and beautiful higher than all being. You are blessed, Jesus, spiritual manna, celestial, infinite nourishment. Glory, Master, to the indescribable love which surrounds you, to your ineffable mercy, to your patience. Amen.

51. THAT THE SPIRIT OF GOD IS IN THE FAITHFUL

It is an amazing thing for the intellectual sense, or for respiration, that the effusion of the life-giving Spirit comes from God the Father into bodily hearts which have acquired faith under the management of the incarnate Word. What pours out the gift, the divine power, the energy of the uncreated Divinity higher than being, is marvellous, we would say. But that the energy unites with the heart, becoming a perpetual movement in the heart, this is supernatural and arouses fear.

52. Another thing is very marvellous: that the Father, in the Spirit, and through the divine Word of God, has created through him both all physical sensible things and the inner essential reality (cf. Col. 1 : 16), and this Trinity can live together, walk (cf. 2 Cor. 6 : 16) and clearly make its home in the human mind. This is a great miracle that in every faithful person devoted to piety, the Divinity in three Persons sends an angel. But that the Trinity itself, infinitely powerful and living, wants the best for a man, communicating to him the energy and spiritual force of God, exceeds all miracles.

53. It is a thing truly and completely marvellous that the heart can carry the holy light of the Most high God who rules the universe, and rely on him continually. From outside, through the Scriptures, God gives light to the intellect; he makes it gentle and open to rescue, and he surrounds it with love of man and with miracles. As for the light – of the joy! – it gives itself really and truly to the faithful, beneath in the heart, not on the outside, and always without any harm or loss. It is above all admiration and exceeds comprehension.

54. Another completely marvellous thing: He who bears the seraphim miraculously and carries the powers of heaven, the faithful heart carries him, too. That is very impressive. Nevertheless, the heart not only bears him, but is united to him, makes a body with him; how could this not be beyond all admiration?

55. That is a genuine miracle out of all measure that the soul may, through grace, become the throne, the couch, the chariot of God infinitely wise and infinitely powerful, whose throne is heaven. But that the soul should be so loved by him that it can be the same breath as him, that it communes in things higher than heaven, and that such high mysteries are confided in him, who could ever admire this properly?

56. It is a truly marvellous and shocking thing: God who has himself no place to rest (cf. Is. 66 : 1), divinely lies down in the heart. A terrestrial king, who has his limits, if he embraces anyone with love, if he takes someone's hand generously, plainly and justly gives glory, honour and also the exuberance of joy, to those he embraces and with whom he comes into contact. But we are not talking about a terrestrial king, but God without beginning, uncreated God, the Creator and Lord of the universe, assisted by myriads and myriads, thousands and thousands of angels serving him in fear (cf. Dan. 7 : 10); it is God himself who, far from merely holding whoever he touches, touches him clearly in the depth of his heart and comes to live with him, not only for a time, but for eternity, thus unifying himself to whoever has acquired him and received his grace, glorifying him and marvellously deifying him, and showering him with myriads of mysterious goods. What ineffable glory, what honour, what happiness, what joy, such marvellous and inconceivable things he gives you for ever! Lord, Trinity, have mercy!

57. It is astonishing: God, the creator of the universe, who contains it in himself, lets himself be contained in an incomprehensible manner, yet obviously and continually, by the faithful heart. A mortal king, whose power is limited, if he goes to knock on the door of anyone, if he enters the house, if he eats and drinks there and shares the life of the people there, covers in glory, honour, joy, pleasure and great confidence whoever it is who received him. But the eternal King, the Lord of the universe, the Creator of sensible and essential things, enters discretely not the house, but the heart of him with whom he feels compassion, and not so as to enjoy the goods which are in the heart, but to dispense the power of heaven, consolation higher than the world and supernatural, lasting glory, so what would he think having received this? How joyful would he be? What happiness, what pleasure would he have? And what beatitude, so to speak? It would be immense and blessed. For it is truly an incomparable marvel that He who fills everything and is above all things, makes his home and eternal temple in the heart of man.

58. God has said: 'The light will shine in the bosom of darkness' (2 Cor. 4 : 6) shines with joyous light in the heart of the faithful. The love of God is poured in their hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to them (cf. Rom. 5 : 5). For God sends in their hearts the Spirit of his Son, which cries 'Abba, Father' (cf. Gal. 4 : 6). So attached to the Lord – of, a marvellous union! – , the faithful are with God a single and same Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 6 : 17). What other thing, among all we have said, makes us feel so near to grace?

59. It is clear that the faithful are heirs of God, heirs with Christ (cf. Rom. 8 : 17). They are like second Christs, communicating with the divine nature (cf. 2 Peter 1 : 4) like sons of God and like gods by adoption and through grace: that which dispenses all intellect and overwhelms all mind. They contemplate and experience supernaturally what is higher than the world, or more precisely they enjoy it. They enjoy what the eye has not seen, what the ear has not heard, what does not rise naturally in the heart of man (cf. 1 Cor. 2 : 9). Glory to the incomprehensible love of God the Father who has truly loved us. Glory to the love of the Trinity, in its extreme and ineffable goodness, higher than heaven.

60. He who is born of the Spirit is Spirit (John 3 : 6), as Christ has announced. O incommensurable grace! O ineffable gift! God created man with a number of truly marvellous graces. So long as he remains created, man is therefore a creature, naturally. But in his overflowing generosity, the all compassionate Lord, the Trinity which is higher than being, and which has created the universe, has given to his creature at the extreme limit – o joy! – the grace of the uncreated Spirit. A thing forever inconceivable, he united himself to man, deified him, has made of him his son and given him the means to be Spirit. He has said effectively: 'I have said: You are all gods, the sons of the Most High' (Ps. 82 : 6. LXX). It is written of God: 'He has made an order, and that order will never be withdrawn' (Ps. 148 : 6). And: 'All that he has wished, the Lord has done it' (Ps. 135 : 6. LXX). And: 'The will of the Lord abides in eternity, and the thoughts of his heart from ages to ages' (Ps. 33 : 11. LXX). For his nature is truly unchanging and never stranger to itself. And his Word in person has come to bring his words, his order, his will, his counsel. He was the angel of that great and marvellous supernatural counsel (cf. Is. 9 : 6). And he gives the breath of the Spirit to his disciples (cf. John 20 : 22). He gave them rebirth spiritually. He incorporated them mysteriously in the Spirit and made them sons of God. For those who are sent through the Spirit of God, those are the sons of God (cf. Rom. 8 : 14). Now, if they are the sons of God, it is clear that they are equally gods. The child bears the nature of his parent, by necessity. That is why the Saviour taught the disciples to call God their Father (cf. Matt. 6 : 9), since they have the communion of the Spirit. The Holy Trinity made gods, then,

Sons of God, the faithful, but it hid with extreme care all the marvellous gifts that, even now, only thought can grasp. Amen.

61. ON 'HE HAS SPREAD HIS WINGS, HE HAS GATHERED HIS OWN, AND HE HAS PUT THEM ON HIS SHOULDERS' (Deut. 32 : 11)

Understand with use of the sense of the intellect what I want to say now. Know well that you will be amazed, filled with the joy of the Spirit and without doubt penetrated by divine pleasure.

The Holy Spirit spoke through David: 'Reveal yourself, you who are enthroned between the cherubim' (Ps. 80 : 1. LXX). And again: 'He who sees the abysses, who is seated between the cherubim' (Ps. 99 : 1. LXX). And again: 'He is mounted on the cherubim' (Ps. 18 : 10). Why then does he now come among the faithful? What an exceptional thing, surpassing all measure, has happened in the interval? For God not only comes among us as a hen defends the life of its chicks and keeps them warm, we see and we rejoice marvellously, but – O ravishment of the order of divine love! – he puts us on himself and, in the abundance of his infinite love, he makes a new chariot surpassing understanding, for us and of himself; he watches over us with total care and carries us ineffably toward the things of a life higher than heaven, indescribable things which are beyond the world. He disposes us to live higher than being, in the delight, the peace, the stillness, ineffably, to rejoice in spirit in divine joy, and to know his gentleness. The blessed Moses says this in the Spirit: 'He – that is God – has spread his wings, he has gathered his own, and he has put them on his shoulders' (Deut. 32 : 11). O ineffable love! Now that he has spread his wings, that he has gathered his faithful, so that he could become himself the one who carries them; and this goes further in fact than the honour accorded the cherubim, and showers them with an immense and ineffable joy. That he takes in charge these same faithful ones, who he receives on his shoulders, who he covers in his shadow, this is a thing, speaking with the divine David, that the intellect of the cherubim will never see and worthily celebrate. And your grandeur, your compassion is incomparable (cf. Sir. 2 : 18). Holy Trinity, glory to you!

62. The training by degrees which monks undergo, the promises which accompany it, and the monastic life in general demand an intellect devoted to solitude. For only God animates such an intellect and works in it with all attention possible and in total justice. He animates the intellect when transmitting vivifying grace. And he works in it while giving to the monk the means to contemplate the unicity and simplicity of his glory and his Kingdom dominating the universe. For only he is Most High, of another order than all other beings, different from them by virtue of his incomparable pre-eminence. Only he is sovereignly powerful,

and he communicates to all things a part of his power. Only he is truly wise, and he dispenses to the wise all wisdom. Only he is, really and eternally, and he is in every manner the Father and the Creator of all beings. It is then right and good that it is said: 'All things come from him and are through him and in him. To him be glory in the ages' (Rom. 11 : 36).

If it is so, as we have said, then all good and beautiful things receive their existence from God once and for all, guarding and maintaining themselves through him, tending toward him and finding their end in him. And those who live with these good and beautiful things as is fitting attach themselves and unify themselves to God as to their Father, by means of them. They are goodness, love, prudence, wisdom, spiritual knowledge, contemplation and corresponding activity, deification, divine pleasure and the holy joy it gives, peace higher than heaven, religious fear, power, counsel, the way of piety, science, all of what is proper to a nature endowed with reason, all that charms, all that gives glory, gives joy, identifies us with God, and deifies.

If all the good and beautiful things which we have spoken of come from God and from him alone, then he who loves these beautiful and good things loves them in vain if he finds himself separated and divided from God, the source and the root of all beauty and all good. For by turning so ignobly from him who created everything, who maintained in himself and founded all things good and beautiful, that person will never possess as his own what by nature is good and beautiful. But what he believes he possesses of the good and the beautiful will never be truly so. It will be no more than a dream or a cruel derision. It is of God, and of him alone, that one should expect things with all one's heart. Naturally this requires that one applies oneself with ardour and attaches oneself strongly to his law and to it alone. It is only thus that we will discover glory without admixture, the inflexible happiness, the inalienable infinite wealth; only in this way we will simply carry the whole collection of beautiful and good things we have spoken about. But also, o miracle, we will discover God himself, who abides and walks in them (cf. 2 Cor. 6 : 16), and we will experience things which are beyond the world, things that the exterior senses can neither see or hear. It is thus that we will live in total simplicity, in total solitude, in Christ Jesus our Lord.

63. When the heart which carries the Spirit leads a life into humility devoted to stillness, and lets itself be animated by grace, the intellect happily accorded to the truth of God sets itself to contemplation of a number of divine visions; it is initiated into ineffable things which are beyond the world, it considers itself a new arrival, like a stranger among beings. It lives in the delights, it plays very clearly in the spirit of things which exceed the intellect and are well beyond all mental cogitation. To say it all, often it sees God in a completely different manner, it experiences the ravishing ecstatic state which unites him to God, it jumps with silence and vision

toward deification; if it is true that it is a blessed state, and it rises above itself receiving intense longing, under the impulsion and ardour of the Spirit which gives life and light in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

64. He who, according to providence, leads his life and remains in God alone, and sees clearly in spirit God walking and abiding in him, has manifestly accomplished the divine commandment of the Lord Jesus who says: 'Abide in me, and I in you' (John 15 : 4). He is united to God, like a stranger to the world, he is dead with him marvellously and very happily, and he is become a labourer over all the commandments for the Saviour. For he who abides in me and I in him, says the Saviour, he bears many fruits (cf. John 15 : 5), which means virtues.

He should be quick then, he who out of divine love, using contemplation, using the prayer and the life divine, wants to carry the virtues, abide and to persevere in God as much as possible. When that happens God, seeing the sacred combat of the soul, inclines the heavens, o miracle, against all waiting. He walks and abides in that soul so as to give to him enjoyment of all kinds of good and beautiful things, and the fulfilment of holy commandments. For he said: 'Without me you can do nothing' (John 15 : 5), whatever you think of doing.

65. If, through love and in the interest of all, it is not possible hide a treasure, some wisdom, it is quite clearly unnecessary to hide it in the intellect, to stop writing it down, this work of intellect devoted to God, the contemplation and the effort, but rather it is necessary, through love and in the interest of all, to transmit it through writing and visible signs. For man is an animal endowed with reason, who has received intellect and science. That is why, when he thinks of God and considers the fruits of faith in him, he recollects the divine intellect then in every manner which is proper to him, and he enters thereafter with science and courage in the place of holy commandments. But in order to arrive, he has need for help and rescue from God, or more exactly his protection. He prays, asking with his tears for easy treatment before God through across the commandments.

But when he wants to have compassion on he who prays, like a father has compassion on his son, o miracle, God pours on him of his Spirit in his heart. He is carried marvellously to the state of ardent divine love he who has received it. And, this goes without saying, as a father will do to his son, he accords him all his confidence, a living pledge, through the effusion and the energy of the Spirit. He showers him with sweet overflowing sweetness and good. He gives him humility, but through the union he lifts him in every manner into the glory and honour, and he leads him in the fire of inner longing so that all that he sees around God, and what he sees, is all as if his own being. For to be brief, the abodes of the Father, the

wealth, the glory, the force, the beauty, the wisdom, the power, the total spiritual knowledge, all the good and beautiful things, are naturally the glory and praise, the delights, the honour and the joy of the son. When then the soul, in its natural contemplations, has a part of the Spirit, that is to say when it contemplates the Trinity in God, as the great Basil reports it, then it is gripped in truth by a great love, it sees God truly as his own Father and sees things of God as if they were his own being, as we have said. It suffices him to see God simply alone. His joy is immense, and it exults in Christ Jesus our Lord.

66. WHAT PLEASURE IS, PROPERLY UNDERSTOOD

I think that nothing, while it finds itself in spiritual knowledge of the causes of these things which touch on what we could call pleasure in its proper sense, can ignore that, in their most high activity, they are condemned neither by nature nor reason. They fill the heart with joy and rejoicing, even when they are finished. For they are well far from what we call the pleasure of the flesh, which is the idolatrous pleasure and not pleasure in its proper meaning. So, he who desires pure pleasure, the indissoluble spiritual pleasure of the intellect, should seek it and will not sin in doing so, because when making himself pass from the things of the earth to those of the heavens, his soul as a whole will go along too. Such is in effect true pleasure, the immovable pleasure of the heart which the immortal soul endowed with reason bears innately within itself, which remains eternal, luminous, which flows always and which nothing condemns, desirable, called to beatitude, for it lives with the saints since the origin of the ages, silently, peacefully, good, open, radiant, smiling, divinely wise, transparent, consolation, full of joy, active, and what follows from these. If you have known from experience this pleasure intellectually and spiritually, to will find yourself in accord with all that we have written. If you have not yet had experience, nevertheless be keep what we have said in mind in faith.

67. ON THE PLEASURE OF THE BODY

As for the pleasure which is not that of the intellect and the spirit, but that of the flesh, it is with difficulty that we call it pleasure at all. For once fulfilled, it brings with it bitterness and regret. By all evidence, it is therefore false to call it pleasure. It foreign to the soul, far from the soul with reason, stripping it of reason, low, cold. It enjoys the darkness, it is trouble, brings torment, it passes quickly and withers. And it leaves reluctantly, and in shame, when the body has grown old. It condemns itself, it renders life guilty and difficult, it is a prisoner of itself, it is full of infamy and thinks of nothing but corruption, it is lazy, without a face, without hope and does not let itself be seen. Once accomplished, it covers in sad darkness those who acted on its behalf. If you have known this pleasure, know at least the truth of what we have written. And

if, thanks to God, you have protected yourself, be persuaded that my words witness to the truth, know well how to gather the glorious fruits of life.

68. I have the continuous light of the spiritual source, I have the life higher than the world, I have the nourishment and the divine delights, I have the strength and the desire, the union and the enjoyment of the Divinity in three Persons, I have the ineffable and marvellous love which attaches me to Christ Jesus, the Lord of the universe. But, o my misery and foolishness, o the evil of my madness, my intellect raised through grace higher than the heaven lets itself be deceived, it arrives at an inclination toward what makes it fall back, toward terrestrial things, toward the smoke, and it is very full of bad smell, alas. Who is not astonished by my illness and will not commiserate, praying, in his pity, God who loves man ineffably to give me greater divine power through the life-giving Spirit which pours the light, so that I can escape with more ease the games of the devil and the malign enemy, throughout my holy and marvellous life? All the very holy angels and all the just souls, pray God for me, living in insensibility of intellect and baseness.

69. My God, my God, nothing is greater than you, for you have no limits. You bear everything, for you are the Creator of the universe. And you are to the infinite extent infinitely above all, for you are higher than all being. Lord, my Lord, holy unspeakable union, ineffable breath that you give to Christians on whom you have pity, glory to you. How, Master, now that I see you shine in my heart day and night, am I not always outside myself under the overflow of your grace? How can I be negligent and insensible before the immensity of such a gift, God more than powerful? Alas, what a sinner I am.

If you know who he is who has consecrated me, and for whom and to whom he has consecrated me, in your ravishment you will celebrate the work of God higher than being, giving him thanks to the highest level for the glorious things he has done in his goodness, beyond all measure.

Nevertheless if, before admitting to your amazement, you had understood how I am far from true mystery which is in Christ, you would understand my nonchalance, my heaviness, my negligence, not to mention my insensibility, my manifest madness.

About such things as these Jesus says: 'I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent, but revealed them to babes. Yes, Father, I praise you for having wished it to be so' (Matt. 11 : 25-6). Pray, demand that it be given us to experience nothing which flies contrary to the love of wisdom, both in the afflictions of life and in the things of God, and to do nothing which would be unworthy of both. And forgive me.