

ON DIVINE UNION AND THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

1. Everything which lives is naturally submissive to the energy which dominates it, and receives from it the repose and the pleasure which accompany submission. Every living thing is full of joy, and it consecrates itself with all its heart. Then man, since he has intellect and naturally comprehends life, plainly rejoices and receives repose, when he conceives the highest things and those which concern him, good or beautiful, according to the name one wishes to give them. This is what happens to him, if he has God in his intellect and when he considers the virtues of Him who is truly the most high, who beyond all intellect is the intellectually known, who beyond all intellect loves man to the end, and who beyond all intellect prepares for them who return to him an inheritance of the good and beautiful. And that inheritance is eternal.

2. All birth gives to those who are born to resemble the one who engendered them. The Lord has said: 'What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is Spirit' (John 3 : 6). If then he who is born of the Spirit is Spirit, that means that he will be God, according to the Spirit which has engendered, since true God is the Spirit from whom is born through grace he who has a part of the Spirit. But if such a man is God, he will be manifestly and naturally contemplative. It is because he contemplates that he is called 'God'.¹ Then he who does not contemplate, whether because the spiritual birth have not yet been given and he has not received the Spirit, whether having received it, he has lost through ignorance his power of contemplation, in his inexperience would be turned away from the inner essential rays of light of God who accompanies the inner essential Sun of justice (cf. Mal. 3 : 20). He has had a share of the contemplative power, but he remains unhappily deprived of that energy, even when he is aiming toward sanctity and health.

3. All beings have received their proper movement and their proper nature from Him who created them through the word. It is the same for the intellect. But the movement of the intellect is eternity. And eternity has no end or limit. It is therefore by the action of something contrary to its condition and its proper nature that the intellect will be stopped or limited in its movement. But such will be the law imposed on it, if it moves in finite and circumscribed things. For it is not possible that things should be finite and limited, and that the movement of the intellect which covers them or which surrounds them takes flight to the infinite. The eternal movement of the intellect therefore has need of a being which

should be without end or limit, toward which it carries itself always, because this is in conformity with its reason and is natural to it. But nothing is truly without end nor limit except God, who is one by nature and in his proper being. The intellect should therefore make its way, watch, set itself in movement toward God, toward the unity properly infinite. Such is its nature.

4. What we contemplate about God has neither end nor limit. Nevertheless the intellect which searches Him from whom comes these things cannot simply rejoice in them. For each being receives naturally its joy from what is similar to it. Now the intellect is one by nature, even when its thoughts are multiple, while it is heading and as if in movement toward God, whose nature is one and whose energy is multiple. And it is impossible for it to simply rejoice before it has arrived in the One which is naturally without limit, by passing through the multiple. The intellect cannot therefore naturally and simply rejoice other than in God. Each being finds its greatest joy in its proper nature. So the proper nature of the intellect is completely to move itself, to direct itself, to rejoice simply in God who is alone is simply and infinitely one.

5. All movement of a creature, whatever it is, all movement of the intellect itself, tends toward pause and calm, toward immobility and peace. The end of any created thing is to arrive at rest through force. But the intellect, which is one among creatures, cannot, by its own movement, have part in the pause and the calm in the middle of the created things. If the created thing is destined to finish since it has had a beginning, it follows that eternal movement of the intellect ought to abandon the end so as to find its original cause. The intellect knows no peace, nor will it discover its proper end, nor will it have in itself the eternal movement of which we have spoken, insofar as it will find itself among finite or limited things. We are here far from its proper nature, which is manifestly eternal movement. It is not possible that the intellect find its peace and rest, if it remains among creatures. Where then will the intellect assume what is proper to it, that is to say assume non-movement and thus know calm, and so possess peace, receive in total certainty the sensation of repose, if it will not enter into the infinite and uncreated, where higher than the world, and essentially, God is to be found, who is unity itself? It must be that the intellect arrives through movement at this unity and this infinite, after discovering calm through the intellectual repose which is proper to its nature. And it is this halt and stop, indeed, which awakens the Spirit, the unforeseen repose, the infinite term of all things. Resting in the heart of such a unity, the intellect as

¹ To contemplate: *theorein*; God: *theos*.

a whole remains in movement, though it has discovered what has no end nor limit, that which has no end, that which has no image or form, what is absolutely simple, and which is the One of which we have spoken, that is to say God.

6. If God, according to David makes spirits of his angels (cf. Ps. 104 : 4), and if those men whom the Spirit engenders, he makes spirit, as the Lord has said, so the man who has been born in this way is therefore made an angel through his clear participation in the Spirit of God. But the work of angels is to always contemplate the face of our Father who is in the heavens (cf. Matt. 18 : 10), as the Lord has said equally. It follows that he who clearly has a share in the Holy Spirit should, as is natural, tend to contemplate the face of God. It is precisely this that David teaches when he says: 'Seek the Lord and his force. Seek his face always' (Ps. 105 : 4. LXX). So he who has taken part in the life-giving Holy Spirit, who gives light and does works of love, he who is arrived at the experience of the ineffable birth which comes of the Spirit, he who is raised up to the state of angels, who then with a faulty piety, puts an end in himself to the intellectual sense of perceiving God and refuses to direct himself toward God and what is divine, that one is not taking care over what is natural to him. For the Saviour demands that we abide in him, while he abides in us (cf. John 15 : 4). And David says: 'Go toward him and shine with light' (Ps. 34 : 5. LXX). In truth, if we do that which we ought to do and if we follow our ideal end, we will see in the light of God the Father, or better in the Holy Spirit, the light which surrounds God, that is to say, divine truth. If not, we will choose in our ignorance to turn away from the divine shining.

7. There are three ways in which the intellect raises itself toward the contemplation of God: through its own movement, through a movement which is foreign to it, and through a movement which has a hand in both. The way of movement proper to the intellect itself belongs to unique nature of the intellect. It makes appeal to the will of itself, moves through fantasy, and arrives at the contemplation of things which surround God. This is what the Greeks, in their way, engaged in. The second way is supernatural. It opens up because of the will and the illumination of God alone. Because it finds itself entirely under the control of God, it is ravished into divine revelations, it tastes ineffable mysteries, and sees the fulfilment of things to come. The middle way shares elements of both. Since it works through will and fantasy, it is in accord with its own movement. But it communicates with the foreign movement, because it is only unified under the divine light and because it sees God ineffably, united beyond its own unity of intellect. So it has gone beyond all that one could merely see or say of the things which surround God. It sees neither the original goodness nor deification, nor the wisdom or the creative power, nor the providence nor any other of the divine things. But it is full to the highest point with the light of the intellect mixed with the joy which arouses the love of divine fire.

8. The intellect making use of its own fantasy to contemplate the invisible is lead along by faith. When grace illumines it, it is confirmed by hope. But when it is ravished by the divine light, it becomes a treasure of love of men, and still more love of God. So the triple order of the intellect, its movement in faith, hope and love, is perfect and deifying, sure and steady. Once having reached this vast place of the acropolis, the intellect is certain of being in the citadel of love. This is what Paul says: 'Love covers everything, supports all' (1 Cor. 13 : 7), by the grace of faith and of hope. 'Love,' he says, 'never fails' (1 Cor. 13 : 8), in its ardent union with God and its ineffable conjunction.

9. Unity is not the privilege of any creature. One knows that each creature differs from others through some property. Creatures do not resemble each other except in one point: all have a beginning and an end, they are confined to their nature, and are not purely and simply the One. For only the Uncreated is truly one. Only he is simple, without beginning, without end, without limit. That is why he is the Infinite: that is God. It is toward this infinite that the intellect looks, with the participation and under the impulsion of the life-giving Spirit, for as long as it needs, in order to grow. It is then unified, simplified, it has a part in the work of God. This is very clear: it is impossible that the intellect should become better if it is outside the One and the vision of the One in the Spirit. For there the intellect is dispersed, submissive to the divided world and to the passions. It has in consequence, in order to attain to the vision, a need for a power higher than the world, then of supernatural unity, so that raised up out of the things which divide it, it discovers itself outside the passions and of the division, and can arrive at divine resemblance. That is why the Lord make this prayer to the Father for us, the faithful, being one (cf. John 17 : 22) through the Spirit in the Father and in the Son himself. And so that we might be one as they are one (ibid.) (and not in a mistaken way, as Sabellios has said that it was the One), we are, as it must be, through the grace of the unifying Spirit and though simple contemplation, fulfilled in the One, who is God. It is here manifestly the true road toward better things for us. And such is the end, the true and single rest. It is why the jealous cohort of demons who hate man, dispersing veneration over many gods, have fecundated with error the unity of the intellect and have not let it conceive in it the One higher than the world. So, persuading the intellect to go against its own nature, dividing the deity, while considering and adoring numerous gods, the demons have made it desire all kinds of passions and lies, in the place of virtue and truth. That is why the Holy Spirit commands, through the mouth of the Prophet: 'Go towards him, that is to say, to the One, and shine with light' (Ps. 34 : 6. LXX). And elsewhere: 'I, God, I am the first and I am the last. Other than me there is no God' (Is. 41 : 4; & 44 : 6). And again: 'Hear, Israel, the Lord your God, the Lord is one' (Deut. 6 : 4). For the three Persons of the distinct Divinity does not divide the united Sovereignty. But the Persons are precisely three, and are no less a Being undivided in essence and power, in will and energy, and in

other goods which are in it. Therefore adore the unity of God, tend toward it and gather in it as much as possible, detaching from the multiple; that is the will of God and the way through which the intellect reaches the best. It is there that one discovers the truth and it is there that divine intense longing is born, then deification.

10. The illusion is divided. But the truth is one. Therefore, the intellect which in the Spirit tends toward the One, toward what is outside the world, toward what is beyond all, toward what is the origin of the multiple, toward truth itself. But because it cannot be free of the passions if the truth has not set it free (cf. John 8 : 32) from some thing, the intellect liberates itself from passions by directing and heading independently toward the One higher than the world. Liberty carries the intellect toward the highest point of dispassion, resemblance of the divine, spiritual sonship. But not servitude. For it is said that the slave does not know what his master does (cf. John 15 :15). Ignorance is the property of the slave. But it is clear that he who has a part in liberty knows the mysteries of the Father. He has given him the means to rise against all, until what is good and beautiful, namely dignity of adoption. As, in fact, ignorance is manifestly contrary to spiritual knowledge, so the way of the slave is precisely the opposite of the way of a son. If therefore he who does not know is a slave, he who knows is not a slave, rather is free: to tell the truth, he is a son. For the Spirit of the truth sets free. It renders those into whom it has entered sons of God. It is said in fact: 'Those who are led by the Spirit of God, those are the sons of God' (Rom. 8 : 14). If therefore the thing proper to truth itself is to tend toward the One higher than being, then truth gives freedom to the intellect, and freedom is the evident sign of divine adoption. Nothing is greater than the gift of adoption. And nothing else is more appropriate to a nature endowed with reason. This is a thing entirely necessary, and it should make us think: that the intellect carried by the Spirit tends, in order to contemplate it and collect itself as much as possible, toward the One higher than the world, which is to say God.

11. The Holy Spirit says: 'The Lord your God, the Lord is one' (Deut. 6 : 4). It is thus demanded of the intellect that it elevate itself through the divinity of the Spirit toward the One higher than the world. It is not permitted therefore both to preach the One, and to also refuse to turn toward it, to contemplate it with the intellect. For the intellect aims to understand what the Holy Spirit says. And it should turn to what it understands. If, in fact, the turning around of the intellect toward the inner essence of things were to be fundamentally denied, then what lies waiting to be understood would also be denied. And there would necessarily be failure of the One, and also an absence of faith in the One. If this is absurd, then it is equally absurd that the intellect which turns and moves should not understand the One. [** i.e., if you have faith in the One, you must also try to understand him]

12. Nature pushes beings born because of a cause, and singularly beings of reason, to head toward and look toward

their cause, returning on themselves. The cause of all things is God, from whom comes likewise the intellect. Now God is the supreme One, the absolute One. So it is nature which pushes the intellect to look toward the supreme and absolute One, when it returns to its cause.

13. If everything comes from him, is through him and for him (cf. Rom. 11 : 36), and if the intellect is the unity of all, then it comes from him and through him. More precisely, it comes from God and is through him because it resembles him. For its own good it ought then to move toward him. And when we say toward him, this means by returning back on itself, it behoves the intellect to contemplate and manifest the One higher than the world. Thus the intellect simply must contemplate the One.

14. The multiple has its origin in the One. But the One does not come from a multiplicity. Now creation is multiple. Creation is therefore clearly the issue of the One. The contemplation of he who sees creation as it ought will accomplish itself necessarily in the One higher than the world. For the creatures bear in them numerous echoes of the Creator, through which one knows Him who, in his providence has created all as he willed, with art and wisdom, power and goodness. That is why Isaiah says in the Spirit: 'Raise your eyes and see who has shown all these things' (Is. 48 : 26). He says 'all these things' referring to the numerous creatures, and says 'who' while raising his intellect toward Him from whom things come (the One by nature absolute).

15. Created things are gathered into a unity, but in a composite unity, multiple. And it is not without beginning, for it is created. The One, the creator, he is one not only because he gathers things multiple and different things together in one breath embracing them, which would show him to be a single creator. But he is uncreated, like the prior cause at the foundation of the world. It is therefore necessary that the intellect which emerges in the wake of the Creator comes round to the original Unity, which founds and commands the visible order of beings, and is their genesis, their harmony, and their communal respiration in the One. If not, the intellect would go on infinitely, which is absurd. For every thing which is born and moves itself, has not always been in existence: there was a time when it was not. It was not, and it had a beginning. But if it has had a beginning, has been put into motion. And it will seek what gave it movement and what gave it birth. Now what set it in motion must itself be motionless. If not, what would be the cause of movement, which is itself not submissive to a prior origin, which in turn must have had an origin? Now if it is unmoving it is unchanging. And if it is so, then it is entirely simple, because a composed being would change what had seemed to us to be unchanging. For a mixture of elements implies that they can come to a rest. And the end of movement implies dissolution. There can be no mixture of elements in the cause therefore, for that would mean rest; and there is no rest because that would mean dissolution. And there is no dissolution for there

can be no change or movement in the unmoving and unchanging cause which gives movement but does not receive any, and leads to the birth but is not itself born or subject to becoming. So if the cause is unchanging and unmoving, it is necessarily out of all mixture, and that is why it is completely simple, it is the higher than the world absolute One. The intellect which so moves toward the One is in every manner outside all, through the respect which it bears for what is more than beautiful, and through the momentum which leads it near toward what is highest, or near the place from which everything comes, and toward which all things naturally tend. If that effort toward the One does what is best for it, the intellect is far from the passions. In fact it positions itself and establishes itself above with what is more than beauty, remaining at rest there. It will be ashamed of the passions. That is why you will can adore nothing but him (cf. Deut. 6 : 13), that is to say the One, says the holy Law. It is necessary for us to head toward the supreme One, if we want to accomplish the law of God and find ourselves above the passions.

16. It is said that the Lord alone led them, and that a strange god was not with them (cf. Deut. 32 : 12). Do you see here the power of the One and Only? Do you see that there is no strange god with them, because they are led only by the Lord? But the Lord leads those who follow him, not those who reject him. Now he who follows turns toward what he follows. If then we do not want strange gods with us, whether passion or demon, we must follow the Sole and the One by intellectual return, so that it would be said of us, too, not without reason: the Lord alone leads them, and there is no strange god with them.

17. If the multiple comes from the One, it comes from the One through different routes. For the manner by which beings come from the first Unity is not the same for all of them. Among them, some have a beginning and are created, others are uncreated and are aloof from any origin of time. But the cause of all of them, in every case, is the One higher than all being. But some are reliant on this cause because they are created things. Others are reliant by intrinsic nature. One should never approach them and associate with them in the same manner. But with the first type, which are dependent on something from their beginning and have been created, one must approach them by passing through something else, not through what they are in themselves, just as one approaches a mirror, through what is imaged or revealed in it. One sees the mirror only while seeing the things revealed in it. Creation, in fact, cannot attain its best state other than through a revelation of the absolute One which is concealed within it.

But toward those things which have no beginning and are naturally reliant on the cause, we approach without passing through something else. We pass through them so as to discover the Origin. For they appear exactly as they are in themselves. And the supreme One abides in them in an immediate and natural manner. They even make a single body

with the supreme and absolute One, directly and naturally, as we have said. One must not only approach them, but attach oneself to them, and try to receive the divine imprint, imitating through them the primordial beauty, the unique beauty, so as to attain through the synergy and the saving power of grace, the dignity of the glory of God, and his image and his resemblance (cf. Gen. 1 : 26).

So, respecting being beings which have their cause in creation, when they are observed properly and considered as they ought to be, it happens that the intellect is raised through that contemplation toward the vision of the One, and unifies purely and simply to the unique conception of the One higher than the world. But respecting beings naturally related to the cause, it is equally possible that the intellect animated by that cause or identifying with such beings, unites with the One itself. So starting with all the beings born of a cause, whether they are naturally related to the cause or if they are created by it, the intellect collects itself normally in the unique absolute Origin, by nature, or by action, or by contemplation. Nevertheless if the intellect dedicated to the One, or to numerous creatures, or to things naturally primordial, does not arrive at the One, nor bear itself toward the original and global One, to contemplate it totally, simply and uniquely, in the holy communion and the impulse of the Spirit which unconceals, this must be owing to sin, even if this dedicated effort had appeared to have been made honestly. What comes from the One leads those to the One who have vowed themselves as they ought. Deploying itself, all manifestation of the light which the Father arouses and which comes to stay in us through a pure gift of his goodness, says the great Dionysios, fills us anew, in fact, through the effort or strain which is like a unifying power, which turns us back to the unity of the Father who gathers us, and to deifying simplicity. For everything comes from him and everything goes toward him (cf. Rom. 11 : 36). But if the intellect does not raise itself toward this goal, it fails and its activity is as if deflected from the natural way.

18. There is an action which precedes contemplation, and there is an action which comes with the contemplative life. The first type is accomplished by the body. In him who has refrained impulsions of the body and is prepared to be born little by little into good order, it allows the intellect to advance freely in what is proper to it, that is to say among inner essences, and there, to work for its advantage. The second, which derives from the intellect itself and from comprehension in spirit, gathers in what is higher than intellect, which is to say God. As soon as it approaches God, the intellect goes toward the One. For God is the One. It unites itself to itself then, in the nearness of the One, and makes itself indivisible. For the One arouses unity and allows itself to be contemplated through in its simplicity like that of God. That the intellect should contemplate the One, and not in itself have simplicity in the One, are two irreconcilable things. Yet because it sees things that are composed and divided, it divides and diversifies itself necessarily. I say therefore that the absolute

One is simple in itself. And just as the intellect experiences changes in its energy, but remains simple and unified in itself, it means it must equally be One in its energy, when it sees the One.

Now if it sees the One and is divided in the least way into two, what can that part do, which is separated from the part which sees the One? In fact, either it sees something else, or it does not see anything at all, for two reasons: either because it does not want to see, or because it is moved or taken by another force of action and not by the act of seeing at all. If one supposes that this separated part sees something else, another thing, consider then that the intellect does not see the absolute One, but two things, which is contrary to reason. If the intellect sees two things, then it cannot be looking at the One. It is divided in what it contemplates, as we have shown; so the first option is disposed of. And, if it does not see at all, it is impossible that this should be because it does not want to see. For it does not belong to the intellect endowed with reason to suffer inaction and to be reduced to insignificance in such a way. Which leave us with the possibility that its energy is engaged in something other than seeing. Note that the intellect is not partly dull and partly sharp, or however else it might be described. If the intellect were made up of dissimilar parts, the intellect would be composite and not simple. Now that is what would happen if on one side it saw, and on the other it were consecrated to some other form of energy. One could accuse it of being a mixture of elements. It would then be completely impossible to say that the intellect is simple. The intellect is a unity and simple, and while it considers the absolute One it identifies with the One through energy. And if it is purely and simply the One, it must contemplate the absolute One. Then all action, or all contemplation, should necessarily be carried toward the One which surpasses the intellect. If not then the intellect would end in nothing, but whatever it does or however it contemplates, it would be in vain. For, held down by division, it would arouse the passions, from the moment when it was not moved by any perception of the soul toward union with the One which in a unique manner exceeds understanding. But it is actually the case that the union clarifies and purifies the intellect's contemplation, when that contemplation is raised and tends toward the One, full of love before Him from whom, through whom, and in whom all things have their being (cf. Rom. 11 : 36), and in view of whom they have become, exist, and abide.

19. The union of God and the soul, that union which exceeds the intellect, is the summit of all desire. But to arrive at the divine union, it is necessary to resemble God. And to attain divine resemblance, it is necessary to work according to the intellect, that is contemplate. Such contemplation is part of the divine order. That is why it has been given the name of God. Contemplation raises itself straight to the thought of God. For above all and in all things, God sends a kind of ray to the contemplative intellect. The intellect which contemplates is face to face with God. Now God is the One higher than the world. And the nature of the intellect can become, in its

energy, similar to what it sees. That is what the Theologian, the divine Gregory, when he said that he had seen and experienced the splendour of God. For what the intellect has seen, it has also experienced, or at least it has become like it. The intellect, Peter of Damaskos says, takes the colour of what it contemplates.¹ As when looking at divided things, it is divided and diversified by the multiple, so while it raises itself into contemplation of the absolute One higher than the world, it becomes the One, as I have said in the preceding. As soon as the intellect enters into the One, it sees what has neither end nor beginning, what is simple and without form. For such is the One. That is why the intellect is, respecting its energy, re-established in its original state, without beginning nor end, simple and without form. When it has experienced this, when it has been transformed like this, it finds itself to resemble the divine as much as is possible for it. And it throws itself at that moment toward the summit of all desire: the divine and ineffable union which surpasses it. This is the supreme aim, the divine target. That is why the intellect should force itself by all means to direct itself and look toward the Spirit for the attaining the contemplation and the consideration of the One higher than the world.

20. When the intellect disperses itself in the multiple, where it will find itself in duality, it is clear that it does not contemplate the absolute One. It is then limited, bounded, obscure. In fact, such is the lot of something which is not absolutely simple. But when it enters in intangible contact with the veritable One, through the intellectual contemplation in the Spirit, it bears itself toward the Spirit with closed eyes, it becomes without beginning and without end, without limit, for or figure, it vests itself in silence, it quiets itself in ravishment, it fills itself with delight and experiences the ineffable. But this does not mean that it is without beginning, end, form or figure in its essence. For it becomes these things in its energy. The transformation of the intellect is not done in its essence, but in its energy. For if it were transformed in its essence, seeing and experiencing deification, being deified when contemplating God, the intellect would be God according to essence. But this is not so, and no more are any of the angels in God's essence. Only God, in his unity and as the absolute, is God according to essence. If therefore affirming that the intellect is deified according to essence is absurd, it remains to say that it experience the deification through the fact that it sees. For it does not have a nature which permits it to change in its essence. But it changes in its energy. However, if the intellect transforms itself naturally, as it has been said, according to what it contemplates, it does not contemplate the divine essence at all, but the energy. In itself it will never change in its essence, but according to energy.

21. All things, after having sprung luminously from the One higher than the world, are not far distant from the place where they had their genesis in every way, but they are contained in

¹ Peter of Damaskos, *Book II, 'The Remembrance of Christ's Sufferings'*; E.T., *Philokalia*, vol. iii, p. 236.

it and fulfil what they were born to do. There is not a thing in all the universe which does not witness the shining origin and as it were the perfume of the creator One, that true One. Every thing which participates in being can do nothing but speak or reveal, not the One higher than the world itself (for that is founded above all contemplation of all intellectual activity) but a ray of the One higher than the world. So while the One is referred to by all things, while all things tend toward the One, and the One higher than the world reveals itself to the intellect through all beings, it is necessary that the intellect should be conducted, guided and led toward the One higher than the world. Above all it is forced by the persuasion of so many beings. Above all because the creator One – we have already spoken about this – , in the superabundance of its goodness wants to be contemplated by the intellect, so that the intellect, in that contemplation, experiences life, as the ineffable One has said: ‘I am the life’ (John 11 : 25). And ‘The eternal life, it is to know you, you the only true God’ (John 17 : 3). And elsewhere: ‘Seek the Lord and your soul will live’ (Ps. 69 : 33. LXX). For with research comes vision, and from vision comes life, so that the intellect exults, illumined and rejoicing, as David has said: ‘In you all of them abide who rejoice’ (Ps. 87 : 7. LXX). And: ‘In your light we see the light’ (Ps. 36 : 10. LXX). Or finally, how has he created the contemplative intellect, how has he seeded all being with what is his own, through which, as if through windows, revealing himself to the intellect in its intellectual flaming, he calls it to go toward him, filled with light?

22. What God has done, God who is good, who is One in three Persons, he has done it through his will. But what God has willed is profoundly good. For goodness is his nature. He has therefore created intellect so that it can contemplate himself, or what comes from him. And he knows it brings them together when the intellect contemplates the One. So it is the will of God that the intellect contemplates him. And this is profoundly good. Now God is properly the absolute One. So to head toward the One and to gather itself simply in him is profoundly good, as we have shown.

23. If absolute intense longing is one and gathered, as the wise men of God have said, then the beloved is therefore one. For if the beloved objects were two in number at least, then either indeed there would be two faculties of erotic intense longings, or the single faculty of erotic intense longing would be divided, and one would be unable to say with care that it is one and collected. But if one says that in reality absolute intense longing is one and collected, it follows that the loved object is also one. But the loved object exists before the love which one bears for it. Intense longing of eros is love offered, which both the natural law and the written law of God demand that we give to God. The one, the natural law, profoundly persuading the intellect which loves beauty, has made it think of the highest, which is God. The other, the written law, says: ‘You will love the Lord your God with all your soul, all your heart and all though mind. The Lord your God, the Lord is one’ (Deut. 6 : 4-5). The beloved is therefore One: that is, a

unity of three Persons, which exists before the love which the intellect bears for them. The intellect must desire to head toward the One higher than the world. So, through its discovery and its contemplation, the intense longing will shine around the One, and man will have the power to accomplish the law and the commandments, by loving, as has been said, the Lord its God.

24. It is impossible that the intellect, when it raises itself toward the One which surpasses understanding, should not be loved by him in return. For the ineffable and incomprehensible beauty which comes from him is given to us is the root which grounds the universe. The intellect finds itself before the divine splendours like the net which was fit to break under the weight of the many fish discovered there when it was drawn in (cf. Luke 5 : 6), and it is ravished by contemplating the beauty which exceeds it. It inebriates like wine. It is outside itself, like madness. It experiences amazement which exceeds all mind. For it is not capable of bearing the more than beautiful vision of immeasurable beauty. It is then taken by the cords of love and consumed as if with thirst. For the One which it contemplates exceeds understanding. But it is proclaimed by all things, like the first cause of all things, like the beginning, like the end, like the continuity of all things. Through the overflow of power which created the beautiful and good, it has aroused beauty and goodness of all things good and beautiful. For it is the unique Being, incomparably higher than the world, and rooted infinitely to infinity higher than all beauty and than all goodness. It is the one which loves by nature above all those who love, for it is the only truly good and beautiful which is above all goodness and all beauty, and it is alone truly loved by the law of nature and of order, for it is the cause of all. It so loves and is so loved that, through the overflowing of beauty and goodness, it surpasses all loved beings and all those which love. The One higher than the world is truly like the only Being which should, the only Being which did create all beings.

We must, and by the grace of God, as we said, return in the Spirit to the discovery and the knowledge of the One, from which the origin of all things comes, and where all things go at their end. The door of divine love will open of itself in every manner before us through the grace of Christ, and we will enter into the repose of our Lord (cf. Hebr. 4 : 3), we will rejoice, we will exult, we will know the joy of the One and we will taste divine delights, we will be become one ourselves, and we will no longer be divided and merely part, as the Saviour demands of his Father when he says: ‘That they will be one, as we are One’ (John 17 : 22). It is then that we will keep exactly the command which orders: ‘You will love the Lord your God with all your soul (Deut. 6 : 5), and your neighbour as yourself (Lev. 19 : 18)’. And we will have received the perfection of which man is capable. For the end of the law is love (cf. Rom. 13 : 10), on which depends not only the whole Law and the Prophets (cf. Matt. 22 : 40), but all those who have attained perfection in God in Christ.

25. When a being has arrived at unity through the Spirit, division is relaxation of the unity. So the intellect, when it divides its energy, is outside the state which grace gave to it. And this is what happens to it when it looks on multiplicity. For it is not possible for it to possess the indivisibility, while it is entirely engaged in diversity. If one were to suppose such a thing possible, it would not be easy to explain why the intellect devoted to the life of stillness is completely different to the intellect devoted to confusion. One would show that the intellect of those who bear God is just like the intellect of those troubled by the disorders of passion. Which is absurd.

For this last intellect, for as much as it sees with power, necessarily sees composite things and is itself modified. It distances itself from simplicity, and it cannot be in the indivisible state. Now he who is under the cut of division is never free of sin. That is how such a division was judged by those who had discernment in things. To be clear, the intellect devoted to the vision of the supreme One higher than the world, singularly and uniquely, ought to taste through its intellectual sense the beauty which surpasses nature, while grace has given it power it escape from division. It should then hold to the One higher than the world, and tender itself toward it with all its soul, and only toward it, if we want to escape division and alienation. On the other hand, if the intellect does not consider the One at all, but the creation, it is impossible that the intellect should not be divided. For one cannot say that the created one will ever truly simple. It is finite, composite, limited. That is why one does not have the right to call it the absolute One. While it is tending toward him, the intellect has not in its energy any simplicity, any unity. Its vision will be limited and enclosed for the created is composite. That which it contemplates is itself limited, and it will be cut off from divine grace which made it simple, withing beginning and without limit and without conclusion. It will be outside the hidden One, the One which surpasses understanding. It has therefore been deprived of its own glory, which is the joy of its original identity without beginning, the unlimited and the simple, the fact of being beyond all form. And it will never happen to come to or imagine the supernatural and completely ineffable beauty.

It must be that the intellect turns and direct itself toward what has no beginning, toward the simple, the unlimited and the truly One, and that it open itself to the light, that it unite with the unity which commands recollection, and through there that it unite itself, not only that it may be loved better, for its resembles him, as much as possible, through being unlimited and simple, absence of form and figure, but that it should be able to love the divine beauty more that beautiful and supernatural, raising itself toward resemblance, as we have said. When, in fact, loving state brings like to like normally, it is clear that the intellect would love God as it would be loved. For like is similar to like. And just as similarity implies reciprocity, love will call always in response to love. Nothing better unites God and the soul.

26. The intellect exceeds its proper nature when it pushes itself up beyond its own self, above all image and all figure, when it makes itself entirely, divinely without form, without beginning and without end, and so to speak higher than the union which is proper to it. But when it simply bears it is own mind, both when it consecrates itself to the divine and to the intellectual essential, one says that it moves and acts naturally, and that it keeps itself within its nature. Now the supernatural greatly exceeds what is natural. It is much higher. What exceeds nature must be ardently loved, for it is the best, according to the commandment which demands that we seek still better gifts (cf. 1 Cor. 12 : 31). That's to say that the intellect which is in the supernatural is in God. For God is beyond nature, while he is the most ancient and the absolute One. The intellect tends, watches and raises itself ardently toward the more ancient and the absolute One, so that elevated into the One higher than nature, above its proper natural energy, it could discover what is better than to remain with what it possesses simply by nature.

27. Each being rejoices and lets itself rest in repose in what is proper to it by nature, and which pre-exists entirely in the most ancient origin, which is the sole single cause. The intellect will enter naturally into true joys, it will have lasting joy and will find the most great repose when, having traversed all and abandoned all, it will be consecrated, through the returning of the intellect, to that original and first cause from which the universe and all things were born, at the beginning, the middle and the end; this cause is the one in which all things exist and maintain themselves, through which whatever is fulfilled is led toward its proper end, through which that which lives in the good is made happy, by which the intellect itself was founded, such as it is. In a certain manner, the intellect is called to return to itself, exactly by returning to that sovereign cause of all things which is its true model. All being loves itself, naturally, and it is a thing which the intellect experiences too, seeing itself as the marvellous beauty of the more than beautiful One which exceeds understanding, and is seized by a great love while returning and while contemplating its proper origin. For, as has been said, looking toward itself, it sees beyond and loves infinitely. Such, in another way, is the affection full of love which bears those who are born toward the authors of their birth, just as parents reciprocate and are seized with love for their children. That is why he who returns to the origin of all, toward the One, feels a great ineffable pleasure. For he returns toward his cause, and toward himself, as we have said. All pre-exists here in the cause. The intellect in particular, because it is the unity of all, existing in the One which exceeds understanding, as in its origin and its prototype.

28. Just as all being comes from the Being which is beyond any beings, and all nature comes from the Being higher than nature, and the temporal and the composite comes from the atemporal and simple, and finally the created takes its being from the uncreated, just so all form has its origin in what has

no form, and the multitude of visible things have their origin in the One higher than the world. Then he who does not consecrate himself to the One out of all form, who does not contemplate it and is not as it were suspended from it, but who watches something else which can be seen in a form and in creation, he has sent what is incomparably low before what is above, and he is among the idolators. For he searches for what interest him and what he sees. But what he researches dominates him. And what dominates him makes a servant of him (cf. 2 Peter 2 : 19). Such a man adores the creature in place of the Creator (cf. Rom. 1 : 25). The intellect of each is in effect put at the service by what it watches and what by that which occupies him. It adores and loves these things. But if the fact of being occupied and of noticing, far from the absolute One without form, provokes such a fall, we cannot carry our effort and our research toward the absolute and without form One, except by the return on ourselves and the effort of the intellect, so that the treasures of all spiritual knowledge (cf. Col. 2 : 3), wherever they are found, will be the rest and the end of all contemplation, the ceasing of all thoughts, the silence which exceeds the intellect, and the ineffable rejoicing in an immense astonishment.

29. All beings search for being. But in all things being has its cause in the One higher than being. So all beings, and singularly those which are endowed with reason which go as they must on their correct path, when they research after being, they look for the One higher than being. So the intellect which does not tend toward the One higher than being and does not research it, goes in the disorder and the confusion, and loses its dignity: spiritual knowledge of the One higher than being, the divinity and simplicity of the union and of the love of the beyond of itself, this it discovers in the One.

30. The causes bear to the highest point the beauty of effects that they engender. Now the cause of all things, that which is common to them, is the One higher than being. Then if the intellect attaches to one of these things which has followed the One higher than being, considering that it is lovely or that it is in every manner worthy of seizing, it is clear that it separates itself far from its aim. For in such a case it loves the beauty without being carried toward the one higher than being, toward the first and sovereign One, where all lovely things get their beauty. But letting themselves go to the negligence and ignorance, it turns towards things which do nothing but participate in the beauty of the One. As for the intellect which arrives at the ultimate vision, it turns the gaze of its thinking toward the One higher than being. It knows clearly that its desire will be exhausted beyond all measure, when it is in the intellectual contemplation as at its origin. And it knows that nothing can dispense beauty of its own, nor any other beauty, except the One higher than being. Certain beings do apparently have the faculty of dispensing what is proper to them. But those things do not remain eternally in the amorous intellect. Only the Holy Spirit fulfils them, as and when it wants. For he is the Lord, one of the three Persons of the Unity, and his nature is sovereign. It must be then that the

intellect returns to the One higher than being, there where is to be found not only the source of all goods, but the undefective source of spiritual gifts.

31. By nature all beings look for the good. But the true good is unique, though the names of the good are numerous. For you will not find anything simply and purely good and as it were perfect, in the numerous forms of good. But what we call good is always so be participation in the good. It has a part in the good of the One higher than being. It therefore has no good of its own. Only, in fact, this absolute good, uniqueness, higher than being, is more than good and the source of all goodness. It distributes what belongs to it only, all essence, all existence, all state, power, movement, energy, propriety, beauty, goodness, and it returns naturally to itself. Simply all beings, and what one sees around beings, have received their manifestation from the One higher than being, for he has created them. That is why they injure themselves, the movement and the intellect which bears itself toward any thing else, and not toward the absolute One higher than being. That intellect directs itself toward a good, but not the absolute good itself, toward what can fill with good through the overflowing of the beneficent effusion, and toward that which gives the best to what needs to receive the good or the best.

32. The intellect for the most part is vowed to ignorance because of division. It is as if sliced up among many goods. But it ignores the good, the absolute One. It does not search for it, nor value it. It is of these goods that the Spirit speaks in David: "Many say: 'Who will show us the goods?'" (Ps. 4 : 6). But not the good, rightly. They are restless and agitated about many things, while one thing alone is necessary. That part, the good (cf. Luke 10 : 42), which the holy word of God has revealed to us, either they have ignored it and passed it by, or they have neglected it and lost it. It has not come to them in spirit to take the trouble to search for what is more worth being found than any other thing. Those who have been taught by David, those who have resolved to follow these traces, say: 'The light of your face is revealed over us, Lord' (Ps. 4 : 6). That is to say: the spiritual knowledge of your unique glory is manifested to us as in a mirror. So the greater part of men rejoice over having many things. But those who live in the Spirit receive something higher than the world, the light of spiritual knowledge of the sole good, absolute good.

33. Just as the impetuosity of the course of water is greater if it flows in a single river bed, than if it splits and separates in many branches, so contemplation of the intellect, the movement and the impulsion which are proper to it will be stronger if they do not impose on themselves the sharing or modifying so much, but concentrate on a single point and avoid self-division. This is what happens naturally when the intellect, with all its contemplation, watches and heads toward the absolute One higher than the world. For the absolute One higher than the world truly gathers it together. It is impossible that the intellect to which has been given the ability to see the One, does not also naturally receive the form, like an image,

and does not attach itself to the unity of the unique order, does not become simple, without colour and without figure, without quality, intangible, invisible, without limit and without form, such an absolute One higher than the world, illumined by the rays of divine intense longing which is above all, crowned by the revelation of mystic spiritual knowledge, through the silence and the incomprehensibility which exceed reason and understanding, in the delights of the spiritual rejoicing and celestial joy. For it has known the change which leads to the most divine, it dresses in divine form, it acquires simplicity of spirit, the absence of form and figure, unity and the other qualities which we have described. But if it does not reach this point, if it does not experience the divine transformation, it is impossible for it to touch and see the One higher than the world. For God is the Unity which unifies. It is the intellect which exceeds understanding. Because the intellect sees God higher than the world when, with what we have described, it becomes the One which exceeds understanding and it experiences it through the divine vision.

34. The three Persons of the Divinity higher than all being gathers itself supernaturally in the Unity. For God is the Unity of three Persons. It is not possible that the soul makes itself an image in the resemblance of God, if it is not itself threefold and is not supernaturally arrived at the One. I say that the soul is threefold, not because it is divided between the intelligent, incensive and appetitive aspects. It is not properly in this that the soul is triple. For the intelligent soul does not have to commit itself to incensive or appetitive aspects, which are deprived of all reason, belonging to the life of the moment, the animal life, and are in themselves savage and dark. But the soul is devoted to reason, and its nature is full of intellectual life. It should be said here that it has in itself things without which it cannot put its energy to work. But it works very well without the need of incensive or appetitive passions. It is when it does without these two that it works best. They do not really make up a part of it, but as we have said, are animal and inferior parts of the soul. For intelligent soul contemplates the highest things by means of the intellect, it looks toward the inner essence, it directs itself beyond itself, it throws aside like a vulgar lie, and has nothing to do with, the incensive and appetitive forces. It has been said, it throws itself toward the place where simplicity, absence of image, of figure, of colour and form, and all the other things which a free and totally simple intellect demands, are found.

It is in its own simplicity that the soul is threefold. For it is the intellect which, through intelligence and spirit, does what is totally proper and does not damage in any way its simplicity. In fact, the fact that the sole Origin should be three-fold, the Divinity of which the soul is a resemblance and image, does not stop it being one and simple. The Divinity is justly the absolute One higher than all being. But is no less, and certainly, the Trinity. It is the same for the soul. The intellect (for the soul is the intellect, and is so totally), the intelligence and the spirit are supernaturally one. The soul allows us to precisely resemble the unique Divinity in three

Persons. And this by no other means than though the consideration and contemplation of the supernatural unity of three Persons. It is this unity which has made the soul such an image, and given it this image since the fall.

But without this consideration and contemplation of the unity, it is impossible that the soul could unify. If we cannot arrive at a view of the unity, if we do not rediscover the resemblance, we will remain imperfect because of it. So everything which permits us to attain contemplation and the truth is entirely worthy of our attention. Without these things it is not possible for us to arrive at the state of dispassion. For as we should head for the good in our action, so as to be among the dispassionate, so we should discover the truth through contemplation, so as to be equal to God, loving God who dominates the universe, and searching to become and to be gods by adoption, as much as it is permitted us to resemble the model. It is therefore necessary that we become one, through the resemblance to the model, which is One higher than the world. This is what consideration and contemplation of the One does, the effort, the turning around of the intellect, the glance faced toward him. In every way it is necessary to push on toward the One higher than the world and all understanding, to attach oneself to it with all fervour, with one's heart and all one's soul, and to nourish the intense longing for the One in the self – and toward it alone – which is higher than the world and rules everything, as if this intense longing which we bear him gives us holy wings to lift us toward him through the intellect. So as if in the air, in a state of simplicity outside all form, we will be always with the Lord (cf. 1 Thess. 4 : 17), the truly One. Through the intellect and the intelligence we will carry the triple celebration of the Trinity in spirit. Naturally open to it, and ravished, we will be united in simplicity to the One though our own union beyond all union.

35. Sensible unity is the beginning of all the multitude which it is possible to count. And the unity higher than the world is the beginning of all visible and invisible multiplicity and of all being. As all number holds on to its origin in unity, so all being comes in every way from the One higher than the world, in which it has its natural and creative cause. But the place of numerical unity, at the same time as that unity is sensible, flows from the proper nature of it. For it is the origin of all which is submitted to number. And in the sensible order of numbers, it is at the head. But for the One higher than the world, it is the contrary. For it is beyond the intellect. It is by nature the original unity of all things. And the intellect places it after all things. For any intellect cannot take for origin the One higher than the world, and from that direct itself toward the multiple. On the contrary, it is from the multiple that it rises toward the One and recollects itself in it. On one side, the numerical one is necessary to the senses so as to let it progress among the multiple: otherwise, any being could not count, or advance as it wants. On the other hand, the multiple is necessary to the intellect so that through and across it, the intellect can ascend toward the One higher

than the world and gather there, incapable as it is to depart in any other way so as to rise toward the contemplation of that One higher than the world.

Then the intellect, following its orderly and proper way, begins with the multiple and has its end in the supreme One higher than the world. For the numerical one as conceived by the senses is easy to understand and to define. The senses send it naturally to the foremost position, as nature demands. But the unity sought by the intellect, the unity higher than the world, while it is supernatural and does not let itself be understood, is far from the place which is its own by nature, a place such that the intellect can share in it. But as much as the intellect finds it not as a supernatural origin, higher than nature, but like an end after a journey, and so to speak after numbers have failed. At the same time, in fact, that the nature of the intellect is to understand, and that the One higher than the world is incomprehensible in itself and inaccessible, the activity of the intellect inclines itself despite itself toward the multiple. The intellect cannot make itself understand, but has not the force to grasp the supreme One higher than the world. When it looks at the multiple, it sees then in each thing what is essential, not what makes of it a being, but what binds it to the unity. Following that, collecting in each thing that it sees any thing which is intelligible, and considering that beings correspond and do not oppose each other, and that all are like flowers from the same root and the same plant, it goes from the multiple toward the supreme One, which permits to the multitude of all beings that they assemble naturally together, passing in this way from the natural to the supernatural order. And it contemplates the One higher than nature and higher than being then, because it is simply in its nature to see the supernatural on the basis of natural things.

But then the intellect which has had before its eyes, ineffably, the rushing source, the creative flowing of all the goods and all the beauties, and has found delights in the One higher than being, will not return of its own choice to the multiple, even if those beings are beautiful and contain the good part. For it naturally loves beauty to the point that it will not voluntarily distance itself from Him who is above all things, if circumstances do not demand it. But because beings do not present themselves all in the same way, the intellect has a different intelligent vision of them, and through them, it returns in different ways to the supernatural One higher than the world. To my mind, it must be forced to some extent to go through multiple things before finding the One higher than the world, beyond being, so that the intellect, raising itself by degrees, assured its own proper movement, will know if that movement is defective or if it is exactly as it should be, especially if it has taken its delight in the One for a while; and know what is its error, in the measure where it is distanced from that beauty and that elevation or that divine repose, and how it is possible for it to return there, from where it had fallen. Then it will know the fog of the passions, the clarity of the pure heart, and the discovery of truth. For it has seen in a mirror what it is. It will be part of celestial contemplation, it

will bear in itself the divine sense, and it will not withhold itself, whether it decline or grow in science of such admirable things. It will know what the end of the life of stillness is and of the cloister.

That is justly what we say here. All beings are in part created and sensible things, in part created and essential things, and in part uncreated and essential. The uncreated which exceeds the intellect is the One higher than being. Nevertheless the eye of the soul – that is to say, the intellect – which turns itself toward the One and sees it, if it chooses to live through asceticism in the life of stillness, raises itself as from the first degree before action which carries it to do in solitude which is natural to it, until contemplation which gives it to remain in the true One, where it receives the celestial delight, surrounded and rejoiced with rays of truth, enriches itself infinitely with the eternal, and is marvellously filled with charm and sweetness. Through the synergy of grace, at the right time, when the intellectual light settles firm in it in a continual manner, the intellect can be raised from the earth. Grippled by Him who is beyond it, and seeing Him who is incomparably beyond all beauty, it no longer feels the things of this world.

This ladder has five steps and raises from step to step until the extreme limit. But the distance between the steps is not in space. The difference, what separates a step from another, is of the order of quality or of specificity. So beings can be created and sensible, or created and essential. But the inner essence prevails over the sensible in a large measure, as intellect, through its own beauty, prevails over the senses. Likewise, uncreated and inner essential beings prevail from afar over created and inner essential beings. But the one and the other are both in the order of beings. Uncreated and inner essential beings are in themselves beneath the One, the uncreated which exceeds the intellect. But the matter is clear: that which permits the intellect to deploy itself to start to journey to Him who prevails over all beings, and who is at the greatest summit of secrecy, who rests beyond all the sensible and all inner essence, it is this: the vision of him and the contemplation of him, at once higher and humbler in the midst of created sensible things, and most of all in the active life. It must be, then, because it loves beauty by nature, searches for that which is the best in every way, not in order to play, but to gain experience of the greatest transformation, that which exceeds it. For, we have said, in the measure where it sees and it pays with what it sees, the intellect receives such a transformation. Nevertheless, because the tournament attached to the nature of the intellect will not finish of itself while this day lasts (cf. Heb. 3 : 12), and, as we said, until the shadows are dispelled (cf. Songs 2 : 17), that is, until we are parted from the present life, which shows us in a mirror and an enigma (cf. 1 Cor. 13 : 12) the truth like a shadow, we must turn ourselves with contemplation and the vision of the uncreated, of the One which exceeds the intellect, and through these approach inner essential and uncreated beings, all so as

to return to that uncreated, to the One higher than the intellect.

As much as the fog has descended, which wraps all comprehension and pours listlessness which stop the intellect from contemplating, we must turn ourselves through action, and a humble heart, toward prayer. And when, through the power of prayer and through tears, the darkness will part, when the light of intellect, through the genuinely existent illumination of the Spirit, in the first place of the heart, that is to say when the intellect is the first possessor of the heart, we must return like sensible creatures in a fundamental degree, in the power of the active life borne by science. The intellect raises itself then naturally, as if on the summit of a mountain or on an observation tower, and contemplates not only what the most of men do not see, but even what they do not look for and cannot understand, and without which nothing could ever be seen, not the self, nor God (cf. Heb. 12 : 14). We must now quickly speak of the active life. And we will not be far from our goal.

36. The soul has three faculties which call it to action: the intelligent, the appetitive, and the incensive faculties. And there are three more behind deriving from these: the search for fame, the search for pleasure, and the search for abundance. The soul which, in spiritual knowledge of the first cause, sees these two triads, also sees these four general virtues in the life which Jesus Christ led and incarnated, namely wisdom, justice, chastity, and courage; the soul is healed in the grace of the Lord Jesus and allows to his own intellect to be lifted out of the darkness, to see around it the divine and to contemplate God. When, that is, the Lord Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to combat the devil (cf. Matt. 4 : 1ff), he defeated the appetitive power with fasting, the intellectual power with watching and with prayer in the life of stillness, and the incensive power with refusal. He did not search for love of pleasure, nor love of vain glory, nor love of money, though he had hunger and the devil proposed that he transform stones into bread. He did not throw himself from the pinnacle of the temple so as to be glorified by the crowd if the fall did not cause him any harm. And he refused to prostrate himself before the promise that he would receive riches from all the kingdoms. But his ardent refusal was wise and just, chaste and courageous. He rejected Satan, teaching us to defeat him each time he attacks us.

One will see the same thing, and one will know it through the cross of the Saviour. Did the Saviour pray, when the time came, when distant from his disciples (cf. Matt. 26 : 36)? This is what heals the intelligence. Does it remain vigilant, does it watch, does it suffer thirst on the cross (cf. John 19 : 28)? It is the remedy against the appetitive faculty. It does not contest, it does not dispute, it does not cry (cf. Is. 42 : 2; Matt. 12 : 19). Injured, does it pray for those who insult it (cf. Luke 23 : 34)? Such is the true measure of the incensive power: to refuse the devil, response with silence, patience, to men who insult him, for they themselves undergo the insults of Satan,

and pray for them. Do they receive the scratches and are they spat on, do they bear the mockery and scorn (cf. Matt. 26 : 67)? This is what prevents the love of vain glory. Does vinegar quench thirst, is it fed with bile, is he crucified, pierced with a lance (cf. Matt. 29 : 34; John 19 : 20-30, 34)? This is the healing of the love of pleasures. Is he suspended on the cross, in the open air, naked, homeless, visible to all, like a pauper, like a beggar? It is that which destroys any inclination toward the love of money.

The Saviour has twice intended to cure the passions inside and out: at the beginning, by giving world his body; and at the moment when he left the world. That is why he who sees Christ, who sees his teaching and his cross, and who imitates him, insofar as it is in his power to do so, with wisdom and justice, chastity and courage of his own, will abolish the energy of those passions which push him to evil, and the energy of all the passions throughout those; he will treat them as they deserve, and he will treat all the passions in this way after that. He will be a man who follows after the truth, ready to contemplate and watch for God, to consecrate himself to this effort of the intellect. Therefore, the intellect which has begun among the multitude of beings which it can perceive, that is to say with created beings, the intellect which has seen them accomplish their work of beauty, and which has understood created and inner essential beings, and then inner essential and uncreated beings, has passed over four steps of this ladder. At this point talking stops, silence comes instead, and a divine transcendence which exceeds the intellect; in a word consideration and contemplation of the One higher than the world, the union which exceeds understanding, coronation with the life of stillness, the extreme end, the perfect goal of desire, for as much as one can attain it in the present life, the fulfilment of the truth, the fruit of faith, the clear splendour of the hoped for glory, the foundation of love, the culmination of intellect, the cessation of its constant movement, the incomprehensible end, the state of simplicity, the work which gives a pledge of the age to come, the cause of unimaginable joy, the treasure of peace, the extinction of the inclinations of the flesh, distance from the present age, the effort toward the age to come, abandonment of the passionate life, the natural acquisition of dispassion, the joyous celebration of the soul, the composure, the repose and the watch of its movements and its forces, and to say it all, the divine spiritual knowledge and dispassion.

The intellect which joins itself to a good intention or some external circumstance, should consider that it must return to the beauty which is proper to it, to the beauty of contemplation, while setting aside the passions which side-track it and distance it from its purpose. It should consider how far it is from having attained the extreme purpose of its desire and why, thought it ought to be given over to contemplating sensible and created beings, essential and created beings, or essential and uncreated beings, it is rather the case that, by virtue of vain thoughts or by some necessity, it is separated from the One higher than the world, which is

beyond all unity and which alone is real. He must scatter the obstacles between the intellect and the One, so as to return in simplicity, as the order of things itself demands, to the contemplation and the consideration of the One higher than the world. For the intellect which finds itself outside the One, outside the uncreated One which exceeds it, undergoes division and is not among real beauty, even if it conducts itself with good actions. This supreme beauty is, in fact, the One higher than being, simple and uncreate, beyond all intellect. And it is this which offers the intellect its final accomplishment and fulfilment. So the intellect which behaves in a healthy way will be raised though what we have described, and know the union which surpasses it.

It must pursue as much as possible the infinite, search what exceeds the intellect, contemplate the One which has no form, and understand the incomprehensible, so as to discover in its simplicity the inheritance of the Most High God, the inheritance of the One, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the life-giving Spirit, which accords us the splendour of contemplation of the gift of God: though adoption to become marvellously among the gods.

37. The intellect raised to the place where God hides himself, remains naturally silent. Simplicity has unified it. In unity and in the communion of the Spirit, it is therefore illuminated by the One which exceeds understanding. What could it actually say, since it is above its own faculty, when it is has been driven outside all thought, and is entirely bare, higher than meditation? If language remains, so to speak, it is plain that thinking is going on: because language comes after thinking. And if it thinks anything about, how can it be in a hidden place? For, nothing is properly hidden if, although few people have seen it, the intellect can think and see it. If this were not so, there would be many hidden things. For the majority of things, and so to speak all things which the intellect sees, are seen despite nobody else knowing that they are seen. Hidden things would be almost infinite in number, which is absurd. For what is truly secret is the One. And it is toward this that the intellect rises after all other things, as toward the origin of all which is visible and intelligible. Sure, when it is raised toward what is beyond everything visible, say and think, it has surpassed thought, vision and language. But it has not yet arrived at such a point, it has not yet entered in the secret of God, while it is able to speak of it. For it has thought. Now the secret is non-knowing. Since it is beyond all language. And the intellect which is raised in the secret divine place and is unified with it, is quiet, not voluntarily but naturally, simply, illuminated through the One which exceeds understanding.

38. If language allows the intellect to advance and progress, it raises itself also through its progression where language cannot go, that is in reality in perfect silence. But if language is always tied to intellect, and if the soul has need of it sometimes, I do not see for all that what intellectual progress one can make with language. For, sure, language is useful,

not only when doing but also, and no less, when contemplating. Nevertheless, starting with words which represent beings, the intellect raises itself partially toward the One properly so called, toward the simple One, without form, absolute, which exceeds understanding. Now there, all language seems to be a stranger, or to speak more honestly, to be an obstacle. For language passes generally from one thought to another. But what is simple, absolute, without limit and without form, in a word, the One properly so called beyond all language, how can it have need of language, and to do what? Or how could it comprehend this? For language searches habitually to comprehend. Now the incomprehensible has no limit or form. But if language cannot give itself to the hidden One which exceeds intellect, it will accord itself to silence. Those who have progressed in speaking out therefore to conclude by falling silent here, at the same time as they go toward pure contemplation, out of all figure and all form.

39. Language is tied to the known. Now what is hidden is unknown. So what is hidden is external to language. For if ignorance of what is hidden is higher than spiritual knowledge, that which is higher than spiritual knowledge has no need of spiritual knowledge, and even less need of language. The intellect raised to the absolute One, until the hidden One, is naturally silent. But if it does not fall silent by nature and if it requires an act of choice and will, then it is not yet arrived at the hidden One which situates itself above all things.

40. Just as it happens that men who live the life of stillness sometimes leave their cells, and know by this means the difference between holding themselves in stillness and going out; just so those who, attaching themselves to the glory of God through contemplation, who live in the silence, and afterwards give themselves to talking, know the difference between times, when silence comes to them by nature, not by intention, and those times when they can chose to be silent or not, namely in times of prayer. If all silence was intentional, while holding on to the state of stillness, they would never chose to open their mouths. For the silence is the land of the other angels: eyes closed, in total simplicity and collected unity, outside of every image and all form, in a world united to the truth in the immovable visions of the intellect, alone with themselves, they are amazed and admire without thinking at all, but still more when throwing their closed eyes in the divine fires which have no beginning. But such silence is not entirely an act of choice. For when the intellect, which has the faculty of changing, returns from such ecstasy, men conclude by talking and going from one state to another through thinking, passing numerous times and numerous ways from silence to language. And then in order to return to the state of silence, which is truly better than language, they must embrace the life of stillness as a discipline, watching their senses and being careful about anything in the sensible world, and, as they cease talking, forcing themselves by all means to no longer think, so that they can say with David: "I am quiet, I humiliate myself, I am silent, far from all good" (Ps. 39 : 2.

LXX). To speak of the good is lower than the silence which goes alongside language.

41. The divine is not totally apparent, nor yet totally hidden. That it appears very clearly, but what it is remains hidden. And the difference is great between knowing what it is, and knowing that it is. The one is revealed by energy. But the other – what it is – appertains to the essence, what even the angels cannot know about God. For God is infinitely to the infinite higher than all being, than all intellect and than all thought. When something happens which reveals that God exists, the intellect has a great deal to say, and it can truly philosophise. The philosopher can then also be called a theologian. But when it has gone so far and so high, then by virtue of the fact that the secret of God comes with it, it is given power by the vision of what He is. Grace gives a vision of something without form, without contact, without appearance. Any language which could speak something of God falls silent. The intellect, brought back to unity, remains immobile. It has entered into the incomprehensible. It gives itself entirely to what is beyond all, there where there is no path nor any language, nor thought, nor any reflective mind, but simplicity, the incomprehensible, silence and rapture. It sees infinity, what has no form or limit. It sees the invisible. But its vision is strange to the sense of sight. It is directly attached to a form which is formless. It itself becomes absolute, out of any figure. Following what it has contemplated in the invisible and received with eyes closed, in a word, it is touched by divine supernatural beauty, and it glorifies God who has created such beauty.

42. It is not only because God is simple, beyond all composition, that he is called the One, but because he is alone the Being among others which one calls beings, but which take their being from him. For what is not purely and simply Being is not purely and simply the One. God is in a manner totally incomprehensible He who is. He is the only one who differs from all and should be purely external to all. He is eternal, he has never begun and will have no end. He shines on all things equally and purely with the divine light of his providence, particularly when all things have not received in the same manner this light. In truth, he reveals himself absolutely to all as simple intellect, without form, without image, without colour, without contact with any other being whatever it is, always absolute from all, surmounting to the infinite, out of all limits, out of time, place, nature and the things which follow nature, and demanding that one contemplate it in simplicity, higher than essential inner union.

43. When, beyond all thought, the spiritual union between God and the intellect becomes steady, we say that then the intellect which sees absolutely, through the intellectual sense, the hidden supernatural, accedes to what is higher than its own nature. The intellect is itself what it experiences through its nature purified by grace. For thought is to the intellect what vision is to the eye. Just as he who looks around in the darkness does not see anything other than darkness, but only a

single sole thing, and he knows that his eyes work, and that he cannot see only because eyes are covered; for, he knows that there are things around him which he would see if there were light, but still he looks and sees clearly nothing: having passed into the darkness, the ability to see and know what is hidden is, in effect, too high for his eyes, for they cannot see what cannot be seen; just so, the intellect which is raised into a place hidden by God and finding itself beyond all thought, contemplates nothing. How is this? It contemplates that it is not able to contemplate, and that what it cannot contemplate is a single and sole thing hidden as if by a darkness, from which flows all being whatever it is, visible and essential, counted among creation or eternally uncreated. And if it had not been contemplating, it will not have seen itself extending infinitely beyond itself. But in reality it contemplates. And it contemplates very clearly that it is not contemplating, because it is actually above all contemplation. For it is impossible for it to contemplate what it is not contemplating.

To penetrate and contemplate the interior of the place of God, the unique and hidden place which is above, exceeds the natural ability of the intellect. But to consider the divine darkness of that hidden place, see in it the ineffable unity which dominates all things in an unspeakable mystery, and contemplate that it contemplates nothing in the interior of the divine darkness, is the property of the very pure intellect which contemplates in the Spirit. When, in effect, the intellect contemplates that it contemplates nothing, if not the absolute divine unity which is in the hidden place, its intellectual vision is not closed, shut and inert. This is simply the sign of the intellect's ignorance (not its inertia). But when it contemplates clearly, then it will rise toward what exceeds it and, considering the hidden place, the place of the absolute simple One, it contemplates its own blindness. That in truth, the One is the origin of all and that it is hidden, it contemplates this very clearly. But it does not contemplate what the One is.

It is said that the intellect in such a case has arrived at that which exceeds its own nature. For it is considering the place of God, the place infinitely simple and hidden. But arriving there is not a natural act, unless the intellect has become pure. Its nature is then, one could say, to arrive with eyes shut to what is higher than nature, and then to bear itself inconceivably toward the place of God, toward the unique and hidden place which extends infinitely beyond itself. For it ceases to have in it any spiritual knowledge whatsoever. It knows nothing more than the indivisible One. Arrived by its own movement at this point, it stops in the immobility of rest. I do not talk of the immobility denuded of contemplation. For that is mindlessness. I mean the immobility and the rest in which we cease to pass from thought to another, and which allows us to contemplate. For the intellect which is raised to this limit, which is arrived at the incomprehensibility of the place of God, of the hidden and invisible place, and finds itself in the inner essential light, at the heart of an infinite space which has no limits, so to speak to abandon self and remain immobile, experiencing nothing other than the rapture which

surrounds it in radiant joy. It does not leave itself. Nevertheless, it is animated by the energy of the inner essential light. Immobile, it contemplates the hidden place higher than being. In unity and simplicity, it is deprived of all spiritual knowledge, but it is filled with beauty through the inaccessible interiority of the indivisible fire. Contemplation does not leave it inert. If not, how could it experience the ravishment and the radiant joy? But when the intellect arrives at this point, one says that it remains immobile. It contemplates, it discovers the One without having to move, it bears itself toward the splendour of the One which fills it with joy and light, and it does remain immobile. But, it does not cease to put itself at stake in contemplation. For avoidance of this experience, that is blameworthy, full of the darkness of ignorance: in such a case, one is completely outside contemplation.

The halt of the intellect, of which we have spoken, takes place before an inaccessible blaze of light. Contemplation, here, does not seek change, the passage from one state to another, but rest and halt. For this supernatural One which abides, higher than being and reveals itself in the hidden place, is infinite. An intellect cannot approach it. However, it is not appropriate that the contemplative intellect contemplates anything else, since it has received purification which is proper to it and divine elevation. It does not fall away from this divine contemplation, from this splendour higher than all beauty and from this infinity, other than when gripped by the passions, or by avidity, or through the natural wandering from which it suffers.

44. The nature of the intellect is thought. And thought is in the movement and in change. But since the intellect entered in God finds itself above thought and movement, one can say with reason that when contemplating God, it has absolutely exceeded its proper nature. For it is clear that all thought has its origin in a thing. Where there is nothing to see, any thought cannot be born, nor found. God who, in any manner, cannot be seen in his reality, reveals himself naturally to the intellect through what follows and surrounds him, that is to say through that which he animates with his energy. Everything is, in fact, the place of power which comes from a powerful being. Then, since the intellect, in all the other things, habituates itself to contemplating the powers which come with powerful beings, it tends to know God. But it cannot do so. For such a thing exceeds the nature of every created intellect. It contemplates what surrounds God and, eyes closed, as it is said, it represents God while bearing to him all its attention, in composure and simplicity. It is arrived in a heaven of the life of stillness, it has gained the divine good will and, through the energy of the Spirit of God, of the Spirit of adoration working in it, it is continually ravished far from all thought, in a simple state, aside from all figure, aside from all ownership. The supernatural power of the Spirit makes it re-enter very quickly into the interior of the heart. It remains immobile in the vision of God. It cannot think of nothing. But it reaches beyond all thought. It raises itself in

divine vision, free of the thought of things which surround God, as we have seen, and it establishes itself in simplicity. So it is said that it surpasses its proper nature. For it reaches beyond all thought.

45. All which is hidden should in a certain manner of itself be revealed. That is why we can consider what is hidden: if not it would too closely resemble a nothingness. One can think, in effect: what does not give its being to be known entirely, in one way or another, is like something which absolutely does not exist. The secret of God does not go without certain revelations through which the intellect which follows the traces arrives at knowing this hidden place, raising itself toward the incomprehensible by the means which in God is comprehensible. It is then that it knows that something exists which escapes natural comprehension, which is too high for to be perceived, and that the angels cannot perceive, for the hidden place is supernatural. Cause, beginning and end of all nature, of all being and of all existence, it is itself higher than nature and than being, infinitely beyond all existence. It is outside all birth, all beginning, all limit. Nature, space, time cannot simply contain it. Such is the hidden One which surpasses the intellect.

And from this naturally comes the divine comprehension, which is so abundant, which we tend toward always anew, in its height, and which, guiding us in spirit, calls us to return and turn toward itself, leading us back to the original and hidden One, higher than nature. And it unites us to itself, so that we can know it, and that it is the One, but also that it is in every way impossible to know what this hidden One actually is. What is higher than intellect is what escapes thought, so how can we talk about it? Something which is intelligible and of which one cannot speak, the intellect contemplates in unity, in silence, without language, ineffably, beyond all thought, like a secret; it is pleased by it as by the cause and like providence; it astonishes itself with it as if with a more than luminous being, a more than good, more than wise, more than powerful one; it receives a divine joy, as from all beings which have neither beginning nor end, things which reveal the hidden One higher than being, and, certainly, like a thing which beings endowed with reason follow and seek out. It is not normal that the intellect which has known these things speaks about them when it passes from one state to another. Therefore if it does not keep quiet, but if it talks, it has not yet attained the extreme state. For such is that extreme state, as they can confess who put the truth as the most valuable thing. When the intellect arrives at the extreme limit of its energy, the extreme state is the contemplation of the highest point, which, as we have said, happens at a lower level and later on, eyes closed and in the silence.

46. When the intellect, with eyes closed, bears itself to the place of God, towards the summit of the hidden place, the sole, beyond any beginning, the perception that it has is itself blind. This perception comes to it from the beyond, imprinted with simplicity and unity, and full of ineffable splendour,

higher than all beauty and all light. It calls it in the silence, toward an abyss of admiration and ravishment. It invests the heart with spiritual energy and gentle joy. In this way it becomes intellectual illumination in the intellect, torch, image of divine intense longing, radiant rejoicing. It has its source in God, from whence every good gift (cf. James 1 : 17), by way of purity of the intellect. Its material, so to speak, is explained in the divine revelations of the Scriptures and discovered in the beings wisely and correctly contemplated in the life of stillness and in prayer. For the vision of the One hidden in the interior of the divine, beyond all thought, is not fortuitous. One sees the One in the splendour which comes from the hidden place, simple splendour which flows beyond all consideration and inner essential contemplation. He who has not experienced this in his reason and in spiritual knowledge climbs in an external manner toward the hidden simple and supernatural One. It has not in itself the energy of heart nor the light of the intellect.

47. The very clear, pure and simple contemplation of the intellect in God, the contemplation tending toward the place of God, the unique and hidden place, toward the splendour which shines from this place, the contemplation which has received the divine fire of the shining effusion without beginning or end, demands silence not only from the mouth, but of the intellect. When the mouth is quiet, it is possible that the intellect works on within, giving itself to thoughts and reflections the most diverse, as if speech continued within. But then the intellect is far from being raised toward the hidden place of divine unity, that place which extends beyond all image. In fact, the contemplating intellect is a thing, and its work, its thought which reveals the inner language, is another thing. The intellect which has entered in created and composite things, or simply diverse things, begins by contemplating, then it diversifies itself and sets itself to thinking. Often again, it will find in a single thing numerous thoughts. But in the place of God, in the internal hidden place, unique and simple, it tends and spreads its contemplative view, and it is brightened up by divine simplicity and light. It is not bothered about thinking then. For the simplicity of the One escapes all the attempts and adaptations of the intellect. And the secret place is away from all words which could express the mind through interior discourse and with the lips. That is why man who is raised in spirit to the place of God, in the hidden place, in the unique place of the greatest glory, naturally makes silence with his mouth and intellect.

48. When the intellect turns itself entirely to God, when its contemplation is absorbed by the perfectly luminous rays of divine beauty, when it is raised out of all image, into the simple and the illimitable hidden One which has no form, when it becomes in itself the One through its own straining toward the One and the admiration for what it sees in the breath of the Spirit, then this search from the heart clearly harks back to the state of childhood infancy. The intellect tastes the Kingdom of God, ineffable and supernatural, as the Lord says: 'If you do not turn and do not become like

children, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven' (Matt. 18 : 3). In fact, the intellect which has exceeded its limits, which leans toward the indescribable unknown above itself, is entirely re-established in its liberty and its independence, if compared to all beginning, all mind, all composition, all diversity. It naturally falls silent. Its state is not only higher than all language, but it is higher than its own energy. For at the same time that it is near the hidden place where there is no form, it bears the supernatural, the grace and the sweetness right up to the point of intellectual joy.

49. It has a supernatural form beyond all form, in an immaterial beauty which is not composite, and in the most simple figure by which the contemplatives contemplate God, the One in its unicity, crowned with infinite goods, dressed in innumerable lovely lights, surrounding all intellect with the luminous beauties of its light, like an ineffable and indescribable blessedness, an inexhaustible abundance of beautiful and good things which flow from the source infinitely, an immense treasure of glory, bottomless, inextinguishable, filling the blind intellect with so much delight, joy, grace and the greatest rejoicing which always mysteriously wells up from this divine supernatural unity higher than all, hidden in the inaccessible secret. From this hidden place there flows, so great that everyone can see the traces, an ocean of ineffable goodness, of inexplicable love, incomprehensible providence, at the heart of a power which has no limit and an indescribable wisdom: these things even the angels and the seraphim themselves cannot conceive, for they are beyond all intellect. An ineffable reason gives them to us to carry them inside during the present age. But it is in the age to come that they are re-established and as it were engendered and accomplished, and they astonish the intellect of the cherubim, who alone have received the means to obscurely understand.

O the good of the will of God, the love and the kindness, the power, the wisdom and the divine providence! Truly happy those whose faults have been raised and who sins pardoned (cf. Ps. 32 : 1). Blessed the man who the Lord instructs and to whom he gives instruction of the Law and of the Spirit!

50. It is in spirit and in truth (cf. John 4 : 23-4) that invisible things reveal themselves to the inhabitants of the world, who cannot receive the Holy Spirit (cf. John 14 : 17), as the Lord has shown. But other have judged that it was better to depart, to go be far from the world and from those who are in the world. Through divine grace, the light of the intellect, the dayspring from on high (cf. Luke 1 : 78), the Orient of the intellectual Sun, has opened the eyes of their heart. They have received rescue from God. The heights are in their hearts (Ps. 84 : 5. LXX). The flaming of divine visions enlightens them. They see naturally and clearly a number of other things which comes from God, which are offered to the intellect and are worthy of spiritual contemplation. Those who have so led a holy life are at least promised to future reestablishment, to eternal and unchanging reestablishment, which will not only

not be sensible, but will exceed the intellect. All those, in fact, who will have attained the state higher than the intellect, who will have arrived at life and to delights which exceed all understanding, will be entirely transformed. They will be like gods by adoption, overflowing with joy before Him who is naturally God, and will rejoice in supernatural good which the supreme God dispenses, by nature the sole unique God. They will be around him. Their life, in total holiness, in total purity, will be at the highest point the divine feast, the feast which exceeds the intellect. They share with all the intelligible orders of angels the unique rejoicing joy, the unique celebration of these blessed delights. The flux of pure joy of ultimate beauties is immense, and it is impossible to have an idea. For if the sensible beauty which, through the sense, has touched the intellect, that beauty which is limited and which passes, which is neither simple, nor uncreated, arouses delights in the soul habitually which are not without grace, and if those who have intellect and considering the analogy are not far from seeing and understanding, what can become of those who arrive at inner essential things, but which exceed intellect, which have no limits, which do not flow, which have their origin in God from whom comes all good and beautiful things? For they are not created, they have never had a beginning, they are made for rejoicing, for joy, for the divine life, in a manner worthy of the age to come and of that state.

51. The intellect which has expressed its joy in front of the expanse of time and space and in front of the properties which define nature, then which has exceeded these things, becomes truly naked in the unique simplicity and in the life despoiled of all art and all form. Without any veil, without any covering, above any beginning and all comprehension, any end and any limit, it would cease to think and to speak, it enters supernaturally into the power and the divine flaming of heart, power and flaming which the Spirit animates and which, in the infinite, extends itself the contemplation even of the intellect. Then the peace of God rises in the soul, and ineffable joy, indescribable rejoicing of the Holy Spirit spreads in it. The ravishment which exceeds understanding pushes it to sing. Nobody will see it. But the God of gods reveals himself in Sion (Ps. 84 : 7. LXX), in the intellect which goes high and contemplates the heights. Lord God of Powers, blessed the man who confides in you (Ps. 84 : 12. LXX)!

52. When the intellect which looks among God and divine things is illuminated in the ravishment of what it cannot think or speak, it eats as much as is permitted the true fruits of spiritual knowledge, it is deified, it rejoices, it progresses in divine intense longing. It speaks no more, it does not depart, not below back into itself, as it could do. But it ceases to think. It sees in itself, in unity, in the light of the truth of the Spirit, and it makes of what it sees an immutable delight.

53. When the face of the intellect bending itself into the heart sees flow from it the flaming of the Spirit like a continuous flood, it is then time to fall silent (cf. Eccl. 3 : 7).

54. When the whole face of the intellect faces God, when the intellect as a whole has entered God or, so to speak, when God has penetrated the intellect as a whole, it is then plainly, and yet more so, time to fall silent (*ibid.*).

55. When the intellect, to which it has happened, that it has entered in contemplation before God, in the communion of the Spirit, has as much as possible, enjoyed the glory and the splendour which shines in the face of God, it must naturally fall silent and contemplate in stillness, aside from all distraction. But if, awakened by a word like a luminous burning fire, some thing troubling were to come from the shadows, in one way or another, insinuating itself between the intellect and God, that word from the darkness must be rejected which might have a divine appearance, in this way effacing very quickly the darkness with light, the cold with warmth, at the same time opening and warming the intellect, to be able to know God again as before, to contemplate his beauty, naturally delight in him, be equal to his glory, experience the things which, coming from God, flow into the intellect when we receive the life-giving Spirit; it is necessary to return to simplicity and to be in God in spirit and truth, disengaged from all things and even from those which surround God. This is what is natural and fitting for the contemplative.

But he who applies himself only to the practice is still not at this state of being. For he is not yet unified with himself, and through himself with God. It is therefore normal that such a man should sing, or speak often about the things of God, in many ways. His words are like arrows which he is forever firing, in fear and in pursuit of the one who assaults us with evil and who is relentless in attack on us. Because the time of waiting comes to an end. It will come in the breath of the Spirit, when the brilliance of so many songs, of odes and divine words, like a flaming light, will assemble into a single fire, when the enemy will receive a deadly injury, burning, dissipating, or destroying the darkness, but also clearing itself in the fire, warming and standing up as high as possible toward divine intense longing, bearing to God himself the hymn of the heart in the silence and the ravishment, and showing how extraordinary the miracles and mysteries of God are. For it is not without reason that those who await the Lord are called blessed or that, when the times comes, the meek inherit the earth (cf. Matt. 5 : 5) promised them, the intellectually essential earth, in Christ our Lord.

56. When the intellect, opened up by all the luminous effusions of the Spirit experiences vertigo, loses footing and sees itself transformed, more and more extended beyond itself toward the infinite, toward the unlimited, it is then the moment to be quiet (cf. Eccl. 3 : 7).

57. But when it feels itself undone by the great clarity of what it sees, when it feels that it wants to disengage so as to have some repose after having relaxed the tension, then naturally is

the time to speak (cf. Eccl. 3 : 7), but briefly, in the way that is proper to divine illumination.

58. When the intellect, taking flight into the waters when fleeing the inner essential Pharaoh, crosses the night following the pillar of fire, and by day under cover of the cloud (cf. Ex. 13 : 21), that is the time of appropriate silence and stillness, the beginning, as far as the soul is concerned, of true purification. But when the terrible spiritual Amalec fights back with the nations which follow him, blocking the way to the promised land (cf. Ex. 17 : 8), that is the time to talk (cf. Eccl. 3 : 7). But it is sustained before God through spiritual action and true contemplation, as in other times Moses had his hands sustained by Aaron and Hur (cf. Ex. 17 : 12).

59. When the spiritual power spreading from the heart comes from the abyss of divine contemplation of the intellect, the contemplation which flows from source, then the time to be quiet has come naturally. Then the cult of God is ineffably celebrated, adoration through the intellect in spirit and truth (cf. John 4 : 24), and this throughout the true intellectual sense.

60. When by virtue of looking toward God through the intellect, the mind of the soul is totally filled with divine ravishment, when its intellect is filled with vision, when the soul itself is filled with joy, then it is incontestably the time to be quiet. For in its recollection and its sensibility, the intellect sees the truth in spirit, it venerates God who shines within and adores him in its ravishment.

61. Those who, as is fitting adore and serve God naturally, in spirit and in truth (cf. John 4 : 24), not only do not adore and do not serve him as if he were confined in a particular place, but they are unable to adore and serve him with words. As the intellectual sense which is correct and upright may not adore Him who cannot be contained in any specific place, and who has no place to rest (cf. Is. 66 : 1), so when it looks at what is necessary and what is truly happening, it cannot bear to adore him, because that would mean to serve with a diversity of words and with the definitions of language He who is infinite, who has no limits, no beginning, no form, who is perfectly simple and who, in summary, exceeds the intellect, especially when the time comes for the intellect, under the impulsion of the breath of the Spirit, must shine in simplicity and spiritual knowledge of the divine truth (cf. 1 Tim. 2 : 4). When, at the right time, the intellect is totally detached from everything and exits from itself, not only has it ceased happily to speak, but it has ceased to think; it promises itself to joy and ravishment and what the intellectual light gives best to reason and to it, and it contemplates the light, immobile and unspoken, outside all art, in blind attention and in a union which exceeds contemplation.

62. The intellect scrupulously attentive to itself commands its own spiritual state with prudence, wisdom and justice. When it feels that it contemplates the mysteries of theology, simple

mysteries, aside from any figure, it must remain in silence in stillness and amazement, without distancing itself from its own heart which receives the energy and the light of the Spirit. For it is now the time not only for all the senses to be in a state of stillness, far from sensible things, but for language to stop all discourse and be quiet. And above all, for those who have spiritual knowledge, it must be said, it is time to rest from all intellectual occupation in stillness and to cease seeing. For it must apply itself to remain completely immobile in its senses, in its language, in its thoughts, so that the intellect, totally alone as it is right and as it must, in pure and simple contemplation of God one and single in three Persons, can in total liberty and as much as is permitted it, to see what has no end nor beginning nor limit, and the other divine things, in a word immutable and absolute things, and unite with them, transformed and simplified through contemplation, and in the joy and the astonishment, become, through divine grace, totally equal to God. While it wants, if this were possible, to remain in this state – but it cannot do this, for it changes, it lives among things which change and it indebted to a body and to circumstances – , it must in spiritual knowledge not distance itself from its cause, not fall away from simple contemplation, and say little. But it ought to say a little, and speak of divine illumination, so that as not only to return quickly toward union with God who exceeds, but so as to feel in it that union both evident and continuous. The more the intellect watches, in fact, in every way what has been gathered in it and which does not flow, more quickly it feeds on the divine union, the more it unites with the flames and the light, and the more fecund the flames in the constant familiarity with the divine.

63. When the intellect which experiences the revelation of the pure and simple divine light has been transformed by the inner essential vision and finds itself illumined all around it by the unknown which is beyond all spiritual knowledge, it is re-established in its indivisible nature, simple, unlimited, it is unlimited in the unity as if by darkness. It contemplates infinite beauty in its borderless simplicity, the beauty without figure higher than any image, the beauty without beginning which exceeds all beginning, which has no limits and is infinite, for it fills the boundaries in an overwhelming plenitude all the goods which are in it, and extends all things whatever they are. In a word, when that which is higher than all beings contemplates all beings in a vision of the One through ineffable reason with an intellectual power which surpasses understanding, that is the time to fall silent, the time to be in the mystery beyond the world, or, so to speak, the time to experience without seeing and without speaking, the pure and simple joy, which divine initiation to the truth gives.

But when what we have described deserts the intellect, and when around it division appears, that is the time to speak, but while saying things worth elevation which lead back to silence. The silence which surpasses language and, one might say, which comes in its own time and naturally, is truly better than all words. Solomon put silence in the highest rank, when he said: 'There is a time to be quiet, and a time for talking'

(cf. Eccl. 3 : 7). The best thing is to set at the highest rank the silence which comes in its own time. But if the silence is still not arrived, if the intellect still not carried up to be what surpasses language, nevertheless language is still in second place, so that talking should almost the same as being silent and should be next to silence. Speak when it is time, but intend to come to silence, speaking of things of God, while thinking continually, and contemplating creation, while seeing as in a mirror, as much as possible, his Creator, whose miracles are spoken of. This is how to speak. And this is how to understand what we are trying to define.

64. When the intellect which has surpassed all things here and is naturally raised above itself, keeps itself quiet in joy, then the time is arrived for it to play among ineffable things higher than the world. It is the time of flame and the intellectual light, of the union of the intellect and contemplation, of simplicity, of no limits, of the infinite and spiritual knowledge higher than the luminous. In a word, it is the time of perception and of communion of spiritual wisdom, which allows the intellect to arrive at rest and silence, after it has received inexpressible joy in ravishment.

65. When the soul which has received the truth, which has drunk at the cup of grace, feels itself drunk and outside itself, it is clear that then it is time to be quiet.

66. When the interior man is in such a state that he begins to cry out: 'Lord, how numerous they are who torment me, numerous those who rise up against me' (Ps. 32 : 2), it is then time to speak, but to speak naturally, without saying anything unless in a measured suitable language, and to stand against the enemies, as it must be.

67. While the light of the face of the Lord is imprinted in the soul (cf. Ps. 4 : 7), so that it is filled with beauty and splendour, and an effusion of divine joy pours on it, then it is the time to be quiet.

68. But when it sees rising against it unjust witnesses who demand to be told things it does not know (cf. Ps. 35 : 11. LXX) troubling it, then it is the time to speak, and even to argue.

69. The summit, and if one might say, the extreme limit, of the highest point, of beauty and of good is God, in all intelligible inner essential beings, as it is for all visible beings. Man is in his nature a being truly better, he is without doubt incomparably greater than himself, he is truly through grace higher than the angels. So the contemplative intellect which, among so many things between God and men, approaches that which surpasses understanding, is re-established in ravishment even if it has not yet experience much of the grace which illumines it. But when it has tasted through the active power of the Spirit which is in the heart, if I may say, it raises itself toward the summit of beauty and good, toward God, and, through a divine gift, it enters into him. It sees to the heart of

the unity and it is ravished, standing in silence in the abyss which exceeds him. These are the first signs of the first Sabbath rest, whose image is the repose of God after the creation of all beings (cf. Gen. 5 : 5). But the contemplative intellect manifestly enjoys an other sabbatical rest, greater and different, whose example, which does not mislead, is given us by the people of God (cf. Heb. 4 : 9) when they were turned inward, far from God, to abandon the sabbath. Then that the intellect knows itself as an image which follows the model and which has entirely known the things which are between God and men. Not only has it made a road as it ought, in ravishing amazement, toward what is higher than it and surpasses thought, but beyond what can be said it is filled with joy and spiritual rejoicing, it shines in silence under the flames and the miracles of visions of God which open it to him beyond itself. And it is united to that unity of the supernatural Divinity, in Christ Jesus.

70. When the intellect, or in other words what truly is, destroys or effaces everything submitted to it, as if none of it had never been created, then the intellect which contemplates in spirit and in truth (cf. John 4 : 24), in the infinite superiority over mere contemplation on beings, considers God indescribably, higher than the energy and higher than any possible condition of union. It becomes simple, or it becomes the One, so to speak, ineffably possessed by silence. It is not then simply full of love and joy, but of things which come from the energy of the Spirit, from the delights of angels.

71. Just as, Lord, you are absolutely incomprehensible in your essence, and that nobody, no nature endowed with reason and intellect, nor any created understanding, not even that of the cherubim, can understand you, because you are infinitely to the infinite higher than all spiritual knowledge, just so the things which surround you, Master, are totally without end and without limit. It is this, with unsurpassable solicitude, ordered Moses, the Old Testament law giver, to preach that you are and to speak of you. But it is also this that you, who do not lie, who are unique, the highest truth, that you have said of certain of your people. You have appeared to them, in fact. And nevertheless you have not revealed your name. For it is incomparably above all name (cf. Phil. 2 : 9), not only names of things on the earth, but also the name of being in the heaven. Those who are full of your light reveal your essence, but not what you fundamentally are. For the intellect that we have about you has nothing fundamental. You therefore reveal yourself higher than being, to make yourself be known clearly beyond understanding, infinitely unknown, infinitely higher than all those who have the power to make themselves known. You are plainly revealed higher than time, without beginning, for you are life itself. You have no limits, you escape totally all spatial thinking, you who are in profusion present everywhere, and who are above all, like the creator of the entire world. You are truly the only one who embraces the intellectual natures, and you are the inaccessible place. You promptly surpass the intellect and you foresee its thought, for you are above all, you are inexplicably the hand which holds

the universe. And you are not submitted, if that were possible, to the limitations of nature. For you have no limits. Not only are you as supernaturally incomprehensible in your nature itself, but you are equally incomprehensible in natural beings which surround you, for you are the wisdom more than wise, the power more than powerful, the love and the goodness which surpasses all thought of love and of goodness.

What can we say about what you are? You are the light and yet the invisible light? But you are above the light. What can we say? Are you the judge and yet don't you already know us before our birth? Is it proper to call you a judge? You are really more than a judge. And what sort of creator can we say that you are, you who deify with a single and same motion of your will the multitude and the diversity of immaterial things? O the profundity of the eminence! Through a single impulse of the Spirit, so to speak, your unique nature rouses so many spiritual beings which distinguish so many conditions and persons. It is a thing completely marvellous and surpasses all thought. But is this proper for a creator? Not at all. There is here more than a creator. For can we call you creator in the sense of a builder or a craftsman? What mason builds without foundation, on any land, and quickly, like you, Master who founds the earth on nothing (cf. Job 26 : 7), with all its mountains, its rocks, and all the other elements of matter, which found it so securely? Or what craftsman creates from nothing such great things aroused in a single instant by a word, as you have created? If one says that your creature is a mason or a craftsman, do we speak justly? Because you are God, you are infinitely higher than a mason or a craftsman. Can one ever know, or grasp, or recreate a love such as your marvellous goodness has shown in such extraordinary conditions, when, beyond all hope, in your great love of man, you have taken on his nature? Those who without doubt contemplate this cannot do it except by grace, when they go straight toward the immensity, in the ocean of love and of providence which they should find so strange and great otherwise. But the violence of intense longing sends them beyond ourselves, and we do not know truly how to name things which come to us from you. The conditions of your incarnation in man, God more than good, surpass in effect the intellect and reason so much, exceeding all we can understand and think.

Are you the Father of all, and can you be called this? But you are ineffably above all paternity, all cause and all force, all providence and all instruction, all patience, and all constancy. Can one also call you king? But your royalty is not restricted to the present, still less to the future, and not at all to the past. But how? Marvellously, absolutely, and simply. Your Kingdom is, in fact, at the same time the Kingdom of all the ages, belonging equally to the present, the past, and the future. And your sovereignty extends from age to age (Ps. 145 : 13. LXX). So, in all and for all, once time for all times, you are immeasurable, absolutely and simply above all intellect. To say it in a word, you are incomparably and infinitely above all, incomprehensible Lord, you and the things which are

around you. The intellect which contemplates things is ravished by what it can see of you, it is entirely in the breath of the Spirit, it enters as if into a mysterious darkness, for it cannot perfectly see you, because of the infinite and inaccessible nature of glory. It is thus that, in the peace which rises above the world, you ineffably give peace to those who, marvellously, contemplate you and love you, and you do nothing without them seeing you. You give them anew divine and supernatural rest, ineffable God, incomprehensible, indefinable, unlimited, and, in a word, totally infinite. You give them rest in essence and energy. Amen.

72. When the intellect which confided itself in discordant things and divisive thoughts distances itself from all distracting activity, when it finds itself above its own dispersion, in the breathing and the participation of the Holy Spirit which unifies it and which does not cease to breathe and fill up the heart, when it loves to remain continually in the divine places through the grace of visions of God, and while it nourishes itself ineffably contemplating, in the unity and the desire of love, like a single spiritual watch, the great things which surround God, then it clearly enters in divine repose, it enjoys the profound peace of God, holy and very peaceful repose of heart, in Christ Jesus our Lord.

73. When the intellect turns itself toward God and prays, like a son, with all its being, gives itself to its very affectionate father, when it rejoices to see ineffably the light of Jesus, when it is ravished in its great desire of love, when it has clearly and supernaturally felt in its heart the intense longing and the energy of the Holy Spirit, when it wants to rise in the mystery and higher than the world, above even divine manifestations and accomplishments, then, in truth, it reposes from all its works (cf. Gen. 2 : 3) higher than all meditation, have exceeded thought, it rejoices marvellously and rests truly in the peace of the life-giving Spirit of Christ.

74. God rested from the work which he had done (ibid.), but after the achievement of creation in the Word and in the Spirit. So the equal to God intellect rests from all the work it has done since the beginning to accomplish the inner essential world devoted to virtue, but it does not rest until it has, in the Word of God and the life-giving Spirit, considered and remade, continually, the entire world and the intelligible things which it contains, and after being raised from there into the Word and the Spirit to things of which we have said that they follow natural things and lean toward mystical visions of theology, simple and absolute. Then it is in fact at rest, it plays in the intellectual truth of a great calm and a great peace. It is deified by the light of spiritual knowledge and the participation of the life-giving Spirit, in Christ Jesus our Lord.

75. Just as God, while at rest does not rest from all his works, but only those which had a beginning (cf. Gen. 2 : 3), and is not resting from uncreated works which have no beginning and come to him as it were by nature, so the intellect itself, imitating God, has, through the divine Word and the life-

giving Spirit, abundantly surmounted and exceeded the visible creation, and does not repose from all the labours which are natural to it, which did not have a start and cannot have an end, but only rests from its visible works which began at some time and will end. Because when, through immobility, rest of body is follows for the one reposing, the total opposite is the case when it comes to the intellect. For if the intellect is not always in movement under the life-giving and continuous breath of the Spirit in spiritual knowledge of what it sees, but rather in an inner essential repose, then it would no longer be involved in the unity and in a continuous movement toward God, the contemplation of Him who gives himself in the ineffable and indescribable peace of Christ.

76. 'Do not rush, says Solomon, to speak before the face of the Lord. For God is in the heavens on high, and you are on the earth down below' (Eccl. 5 : 2). This indicates and exposes very clearly and justly the time to fall silent (cf. Eccl. 3 : 7). In fact it says openly: when you who are below on the earth have been carried before the face of the Lord who is in the heavens above, and have been rendered worthy of a grace such that he who is down below can contemplate and meditate on the things above (cf. Col. 3 : 2) and, bearing yourself toward the heights through the intellect, to hold yourself before the face of the Lord, do not rush to speak a word. For it is the time to be quiet. Do not talk, when, in the unity and in the image of God, you are animated in your intellect with the energy of the truth. It is there, before the face of the Lord: bearing yourself simply and uniquely toward God, the intellect contemplates in their unity the multitude of beings surrounding God. If you have this experience, if you find yourself before the face of the Lord, do not rush to speak. Either you will do nothing except, by will and without knowing what you are doing, step back and demean yourself; or else your words will lack any obvious meaning.

Human nature was once different than it is now. It was pure, and therefore justly far from evil and close to God. It contemplated God. In Adam our Ancestor, with joy and in amazement, it enjoyed the glory of the beauty of his face. His delights were immaterial, intellectual, celestial, incorruptible. An immense grace of his effusion surrounded the soul of the first man. At the heart of the sensible paradise, his intellect equal to God bathed in a multitude of efforts toward God and contemplations which gave him spiritual knowledge. And he played in the inner essential paradise. I would say that his life was blessed. He was united to himself and he remained in himself near to God, naturally attached to God through the simplicity and the divinity of his state, and very justly, when he had been created in the image of God.

In a word, the benefits which came from God were throughout all around us. Now, this was a thing which the accursed demon, devoured by envy, hostile toward our happiness and our glory, could not bear. But why? This profoundly wicked being, through his so-called advice, deceived and suspended our hope. By appealing to the desire we had for a greater

divinity, the first act of evil deflected us from the straight path of the laws of God (cf. Gen. 3 : 4-5). We then suffered perdition pitifully where lies led us, and we were exiled far from God, far from divine happiness (cf. Gen. 3 : 23-4), we fell out of the simple spiritual life to which the intellect had promised itself, we fell away from the power which we had to contemplate the face of God and to be glorified, transfigured by the light ray of divine beauty. We found ourselves divided as ought not to happen, and overwhelmed by numerous divisions. And, what we ought not to do, we were happy with this divided lives and these alienations. We distanced ourselves until we began to venerate, in place of the unique Divinity in three Persons, many gods which, in truth, were not gods, but deceitful demons, corruptors and malevolent things, so that we lost the One itself, the life and the simple order, we divided our being in a multitude of different parts, and our intellectual force, the tension, or more specifically the energy which raises us, ended up leaving us and being absent from us. We went in the depths of an extreme evil (cf. Prov. 18 : 3), toward the lowest things. We who were the image of God (cf. Gen. 1 : 27), who were worthy of the celestial life on high, we chose madness (cf. Col. 3 : 2).

But our nature is not immutable, nor immobile. Just as we are miserably fallen from the immense glory until in the lowest dishonour, it is happily completely possible to return, climb back, and see again the very holy face of God. Certainly, we cannot see it as we used to in other times. But it is allowed us to see and to experience from afar the splendour of his beauty. Thus the divine Moses, together with the prophets, and those who were before him, Abraham and his children, saw the face of God as much as is permitted. They saw very clearly. They sufficiently enjoyed the light of that beauty, and they have been ravished by his inaccessible glory. Some said: 'Woe is me!' (Is. 6 : 5). While others have considered, have said, that they were no more than dust and ashes (Gen. 18 : 27). And other had nothing to say, under the weight of the glory of Him who they contemplated. They have judged that their voice was weak and their tongue heavy (cf. Ex. 4 : 10). And they gloriously crossed so many other blessed proofs.

The marvellous David, burning with desire to see the splendour of the beauty of the face of the Lord, called God and implored: 'When will I go and see the face of my God?' (Ps. 42 : 3. LXX). Wanting to explain in what state of soul it is possible to see the face of the Lord, he says: 'Upright hearts live with your face' (Ps. 140 : 14. LXX). And when he had wisely shown the force which gave to the soul the contemplation of the face of God, he said: 'You have turned your face away, and I am troubled' (Ps. 30 : 7. LXX).

But if the trouble comes when the divine face is turned away, spiritual peace follows his presence and his vision in the soul. The gift is so great that after divine love and joy, it is clear that the things of the Spirit appear – which we call the charisms or the fruits – and those who live in holiness and beatitude walk in the light of the face of the Lord. He says:

'Lord, in the light of your face they walk, and in your name all the day they rejoice' (Ps. 89 : 16-17). And this day is the spiritual day, when the inner essential Sun, the ineffable Sun, sends its pure life-giving rays to the interior man and that the perception of things higher than the world illumines in the intellect, at the same time that the memory of the soul is raised from the earth and carried to heaven.

Who can say at what point man is blessed, exalted, naturally singing hymns, and rejoicing in happiness, in delights and joys? He is radiant, and his heart is in festival of being filled by the splendour of the face of the Lord. That is why, elsewhere, he supplicates God. He says: 'Do not turn your face from me. I will be like those who fall in the pit' (Ps. 143 : 7). For moving away from the face of God is the cause of the darkness. But his return fills us with such light of the intellect, and then also, justly, spiritual joy, as David himself said: 'The light of your face is risen over me' (Ps. 4 : 7). And he adds: 'He has given joy to my heart' (Ps. 4 : 8). He witnesses anew to spiritual gift which divine grace has made to him when filling him with the light of the face of the Lord. He said that some who hold themselves close to the face of the Lord and who invoke him, the rich among the people (cf. Ps. 45 : 12), the rich in spirit. For so numerous are the saints and men of God are doubtless, is it permitted to all to see the face of God without any trouble, to lead an angelic life, and to live in this way on earth? There is more to it than that. Only those can do this who, in the wisdom and spiritual knowledge of God, think that they should serve and adore the divine in spirit and truth (cf. John 4 : 24). So it is a proper name for them when they are called the riches of the people of God, those who illuminate the mysteries of such contemplations. For they have for wealth the depth of a profound wisdom and a divine spiritual knowledge which, after Paul, is not given to all (cf. 1 Cor. 8 : 7). That is why the marvellous David says to God: 'The wealth of the earth implores your face' (Ps. 45 : 12. LXX).

In the same manner, Solomon who more than all had spiritual knowledge, who more than all was filled with divine wisdom (cf. 1 Kings 3 : 12), and who teaches the highest things with so much happiness, says: 'Do not push yourself to talk before the face of the Lord. For God is in the heaven on high, and you are on the ground down below' (Eccl. 5 : 1). When, by a gift of God, one arrives before the face of the Lord, when one has seen his divine and simple image, that is, when contemplation of the intellect is raised, it is time to fall silent (cf. Eccl. 3 : 7). Do not force yourself to say the least word, following your habit of speaking by chance, for it is no longer the time to talk. You have become God, you also, even when you are still on land, when contemplating in the imitation of angels the face of God which is in the heavens. For the angels, as the Saviour has said, see continually the face of our Father who is in the heavens (cf. Matt. 18 : 10). When you understand, as Solomon said elsewhere, that the light shines always on the just (cf. Prov. 13 : 9), consider that those experience the light naturally through the shining of the face

of the Lord, when they see by divine grace, in the manner of angels, that face where the light flows as from its source. For man becomes and is on the earth another angel, not to say God. Then if you returns to the gift of the grace of the Lord, to the gift which his image gives to you, consider that what God is on high, you also ought to be so down below on the earth, that is to say God. But do not speak of this marvel, and do not think. You will then be divided in your intellect if you were to do so. But apply yourself in all simplicity, contemplating like God in the darkness and immobility, in a simple and unique vision, and play in the inaccessible splendour which flames and shines from the face of the Lord.

Such then is the high condition of those whose intellect is wise and turned toward God, and worthy of imitation: the flower, so to speak, of the purity of the intellect, the desired unity of the faith (cf. Eph. 4 : 13) accomplished in the communion of the Spirit, the glorious fruit of divine and deifying wisdom, the foundation of spiritual peace, the resting place of unimaginable joy, the door of the love of God, the flaming germ, the source in the heart from which flow waters of the Spirit which never run dry, the true food which manna symbolises, the delights, the growth, the transformation of the soul, the commencement of mysteries and ineffable revelations of God, the fulfilment of the unique first truth, the disappearance of all thought, the end of all mental activity, the spiritual knowledge higher than all comprehension, the origin of ravishment, the renewal of the intellect, the renewal which exceeds, and its change in view of what is simple, without limits, infinite, incomprehensible, without figure and without form, pure, inviolable, intangible, higher than the world: in sum the re-establishment which revives in us the image of God.

When you have arrived at that state and grace, in his love of man, has made you know the miracle of God, do not push yourself then, though ignorance, to say the least word before the face of the Lord (cf. Eccl. 5 : 1). For to him be the sole and simple glory in the ages.

77. The intellect which aims to contemplate the inner essences which exceed it, sees nothing but uncertain, obscure, confused things, if, by the grace of God, it has no help in the heart so as to arrive at that contemplation. That is why there is a need to know the pleasure which is proper to it, even if, through ignorance, it believes it has already experienced this pleasure which it has not tasted; just as one who eats bran bread calls it very tasty, never having tasted wheat bread, so this man lacks complete knowledge of the pleasure which bread brings.

78. After being united to the heart through grace, the intellect contemplates without error the spiritual light and aims itself toward the end of its own desire, which is God. It is totally outside of the senses. Beyond all colour, all quality, all imagination, it has ceased to see the sensible.

79. The intellect which, through grace, has been led to the contemplation, truly always eats the spiritual manna. For the sensible manna which Israel eats, and which nourishes the body, had the power to give a real pleasure. But nobody knows what this manna was made from. The word manna itself – ‘What is this?’ – means the unknown. The word says this. The Hebrews ate what they saw, but, ignorant of what it was made from, they asked and said: ‘What is this?’ (cf. Ex. 16 : 15). The contemplative is amazed, he also, in his intellect and says to himself: ‘What is this?’ What he contemplates rejoices and nourishes the intellect which eats in spirit. It exceeds all thought in fact. For this is a divine thing, supernatural, nourishing and paradoxically also drink the intellect, and which escapes his state, not only because it is incomprehensible in its essence, but because it is infinite and has no limits.

80. Three things witness to the truth, I can say it with total certainty: creation, Scripture, and the vision in Spirit. This, in fact, from Scripture, from creation, and from what one sees in Spirit, that one can contemplate the simple truth which is unitary, and the composite truth derives from it. If through these things which we have mentioned, one arrives at two truths, and if one grasps them, one finds, with the grace of Christ, the straight way. For the simple truth permits us to attain the heights and the depths inner essentially, just as the infinite size through which one celebrates in ecstasy and in fear. And beyond these things, the composite truth will make us find peace, love and joy of heart. Amazed, one sings amorously.

But a great deal of time is needed by a man, patience and pains, in one way or another, to reject the senses, separate the intellect from the sensible and to hold to the inner essential. Then contemplation of the truth becomes resplendent in the soul. I do not say that the truth must have these things in order to be discovered, whether time, pains and patience. But I do say that a man needs them. For the truth is a thing one and simple, even if contemplation shows it to be dual. And it appeals in all directions, to be found by those who want to see it. But man is composite, and he has senses, and he is overwhelmed by changes and evolution; it happens that he leaves himself in one way or another, without knowing what he will become, alienated as he is through malice, presumption, and faithlessness. For these three things – I would list presumption, malice, faithlessness – make the three witnesses of the truth decline, namely Scripture, creation, and the Spirit. That is why one must reject evil presumption, at the same time that the other things of which I have already said that must be rejected, with the aim of making the intellect, humble again, to let it believe in total simplicity, so as to be able afterwards, through Scripture and creation, to know clearly in the Spirit, not only the simple truth, but the composited truth which derives from it. I will add again that these three evils distance the intellect from contemplation and stop it from acting.

The first truth is therefore a sole and also simple thing. The, for us who are composite, comes the composite truth which follows from the simple truth. Such is the final and the best response of our intellect, toward which those who are led toward the goal of the Spirit try to bear all their conduct and all their asceticism, so that the naked intellect could see the splendour coming from the unique primary truth and from that composite truth, and be able to act marvellously. Now this cannot happen in any other way than through humility and simplicity in faith, through the witness of Scripture and of creation, in the Spirit.

When the intellect sees the truth in the mirror of these three powers, through the triple witness which we have spoken of, it returns naturally to itself, making itself more humble, much simpler, and it finds faith with total certainty. When, with a rejoicing step, as it is said, it raises itself toward contemplation of that truth which shines with all the light of its beams, which makes it return into itself through the greatness of the glory which it contemplates, it is ravished, invested by faith. Thus, returning and turning on itself, running as in a divine circle, raising itself through humility, simplicity and faith, contemplating truth, making itself always more humble in the light of the truth and more and more simple in faith, it does not cease going on this road, as much as possible to say ‘To day’ (cf. Heb. 3 : 13). In humility, the simplicity of faith, through the witness of Scripture and creation, in the Spirit, it contemplates the truth, then it returns there from whence it came. Thus deified each day through grace, shining with a light which exceeds it, leading a life full of that grace in Christ our Lord, it receives as a pledge the taste of the joy of eternal good to come.

81. The integrity and the invulnerability of the contemplative life are assured by these three things, I would say: faith, the clear communion of the Holy Spirit and the wisdom of spiritual knowledge. Contemplation is in fact by definition, the spiritual knowledge of the inner essence in the sensible. It is also sometimes, for those who progress, the spiritual knowledge of the pure inner essence, aside from the senses. But here faith is necessary. For it is said: ‘If you do not believe, you will not understand’ (Is. 7 : 9). And the Spirit is necessary, while the Spirit goes everywhere, even the depths of God (cf. 1 Cor. 2 : 10). The divine Job says: ‘The breath of God which dominates the universe teaches me’ (Job 33 : 4). Then the divine energy which springs burning in the heart, if I can say, alive and then life-giving beyond the world itself, recollects itself naturally in itself, reassembles the intellect ineffably, distances it from every distraction, and in serenity, profound joy, consolation and divine love, gives him to see without difficulty the things of God, to turn toward it, to contemplate God in complete newness, and to rejoice in the abundance in him at the heart of this new most great intense longing and in the joy which it receives.

But I have said it already, wisdom is needed. For wisdom, says Scripture, makes a man’s face shine (cf. Eccl. 8 : 1). It

makes it shine to make us pass happily from the senses to the activity of the intellect, to raise us from sensible things to visions of the inner essence of God, to give us to see ineffable things in the inner essential revelation. It illumines it so that we can contemplate in the mystery and see in the unity God higher than being. 'Blessed is the man you instruct, Lord, and who you instruct in your law' (Ps. 94 : 12). For he is truly wise, he who, through instruction, attains the faith and who, through the teaching of the Spirit, acquires the secrets of God. That is a great thing, in truth, that a wise man who through faith walks in the union and supernatural communion of the Spirit. It has been said, there are three things which cannot be dominated: God, angels, and a man who loves wisdom. The wise man is another angel, a stranger on the earth. He watches over the visible creation. He is a faithful initiate of the uncreated processions of God, he must speak of the gifts, and he bears in every manner, though a concentrated attention, in the imitation of angels, the spiritual knowledge of this invisible God.

Such is, in a few words, the man who, in the Holy Spirit, through faith, is wise and therefore blessed, and without any doubt, to conclude it suffices to say what Luke explains in the Gospels about Jesus the Lord, when Jesus recounts the power and the praise of wisdom and grace. It is he, in fact, who wrote in part that Jesus progressed in wisdom, in years and in grace (Luke 2 : 52), and again that he grew and strengthened himself in spirit, full of wisdom (Luke 2 : 40). But searching meanwhile to express more clearly what has just been said, I add this which Solomon said to God: 'Who can discover what is in the heavens and who will know your will, if you have not given wisdom and if you had not sent your Holy Spirit from above? Thus the people of the earth have found the right path. Thus men have grasped what pleases you, and they have been saved by your wisdom' (Wisd. 9 : 16-9). Do you see what power wisdom gains, when unified with the Spirit? And how distant from health he who does not possess either wisdom or the Spirit which comes from God, and which has no recourse to wise help or anyone who shares in the Spirit? If such things are written on the Saviour in whom is the total plenitude of the divinity (cf. Col. 1 : 19), it follows, in a word, that to the whole race of men is given to see how wisdom under the governance of the Spirit is necessary, and how the wise spiritual man who investigates what is the heavens and walks toward the spiritual knowledge of the will of the Most High, he has, through compassion, marvellously received from God who loves souls, power and progress.

It is therefore necessary meanwhile to speak at length of the contemplative life and of contemplation, to make progress in part and nourish the mind of those who listen attentively, we can say without hesitation. For God orders beings with reason once for all to: they must abundantly transmit to those who are low the inner essential and accessible things of the divine light, to receive them from on high in piety, and in a spirit of communion and of goodness speak with their equals of the essential things of God. Thus no only the rightness and the

constancy radiating straight from the living God can shine in the Church, but the holiness of love and the extreme beauty of the face which the disciples of Christ knew can shine resplendently and continually in our hearts, flowing on us through the Holy Spirit, in the pure and perfect love of God and of man. Thus we can lead on the earth, and in the most great delights, an angelic life truly blessed, for we have been attached to the dual love, divine and deifying, on which all the Law and the prophets depend (cf. Matt. 22 : 40). Nothing is more sweet to the soul than this love, and singularly when it does not cease to shine in profusion from the contemplation and in the spiritual knowledge of God and of things divine, which is to say in the grace which clarifies us.

So he who has this aim, he who has well and truly done work for God so as to unite with him, so as to be deified by that work, which is to say to be saved (for if the intellect is not deified, it is impossible that the man shall be saved, as the preachers of God have revealed), he advances in the contemplation permitted beings and appearances, while putting into practice as much as possible the commands of the Lord. His activity is not blind, when he is not separated from contemplation. And his contemplation is not inert, because it does not go without action.

Thus, with wisdom and the holy knowledge of Scripture, and conforming to reason and the intellect, he starts with a good intention, as it is said, to happily contemplate the world of sensible things submitted to reason, which are proofs of the infinitely powerful and infinitely wise Creator; then he contemplates the power and all the difference between them, to the extent that his contemplation goes ahead of itself and its attention and it rejoices. In secret, through all that is hidden, the intellect is nourished abundantly; and then, the time arrives, when it enters into a life of peace in stillness, philosophising with the things of God through Scripture and the visible world. Throughout all this work, he is as much as possible in a spiritual contemplation, of creation as something in accord with Scripture, and of symbols as things in accord with the truth, in a unifying vision.

When, with the oversight of the Spirit, and the adoration and the energy which comes from it, the intellect rises into the vision and the knowledge of the holy truth, then it is as the great Dionysios says: 'It attains the sacred level of contemplation which is generally the second, that is to say divine visions and thoughts, beyond any veil and any figure.'¹ The naked intellect, applying itself to naked inner essential things, looking at the divine manifestation which is carried in them, through its proper purity and its straining toward God, as if in a very clear mirror, sees the more than brilliant rays of the Sun, and anew nourished by the grace with what is given it and possible to it, advances as if towards a third degree, in those numerous blessed visions and those divine processions, always with greater unity. In the composure, in the attention,

¹ ** Dionysios Areopagite, Letter IX, 1. Can't find this!!

it raises itself from numerous differences into ineffable love of the immutable and secret unity. It is transformed entirely by the intellectual sense. Thus he who contemplates in truth and in the reminiscence is, through the Spirit which brightens it, transformed in fire and in intense longing of heart, in marvellous love of God, in love without end. Such is, according to the great Dionysios, the divine participation in the simple One, as much as possible. On these three level of the unique participation, the intellect which bears God and thinks toward God raises itself then in the three beatitudes and, rejoicing manifestly and visibly in insupportable stings of divine delirium and of mad love which is at the heart of the delirium, it sees itself clearly sick with love (cf. Song 2 : 5) and as if consumed by what happens to it. It is transported in God and exits truly from itself. It has penetrated, with radiant visage, into the apophatic mysteries of theology. It has, with all its blind attention, made its abode in that which has neither start nor end, in that which is incomprehensible, totally ineffable and completely unknowable. It contemplates like an ocean the infinite and the inaccessibility of the essence of God which exceeds all thought of time and of nature, according to our theologian. Such is, as St Dionysios again says, the festival, the attentive vision which nourishes in spirit and deifies all being which consecrates it, commencing through contemplation and the spiritual knowledge of beings, right to the beyond, he says, where the Hierophant himself purifies the sacred symbols of the terrestrial hierarchy.¹

This is what explains what the great Basil means when he says: 'When anyone who, through contemplation, has exceeded the beauty which is in visible things, comes before God himself whose vision is not given to any except to pure hearts, then after having progressed toward the summits of theology, he can become a contemplative.'

And again: 'In the morning I will go before you and I will look at you' (Ps. 5 : 3). So speaks the great David in the Spirit. When I will go toward you, he says, and when through the intellect I will approach your face in contemplation, then through the illumination and the spiritual knowledge I will receive the energy of vision. One can hear the same things from Saint Maximos, who says and shows what great progress contemplation and spiritual knowledge of God can make through Scripture and creation. This is where the illumination of spiritual knowledge loves to come from, while in our time the blessed deification, if it ever happens, is a thing rare and difficult for those who live the life of stillness, when a Master is lacking who can teach what he has himself experienced in moments of grace, as Saint Isaac says, that eminent guide over the ways of the life of stillness, in that discourse where he undertakes to speak of the spiritual sense and the contemplative power. Then Saint Maximos affirms: 'We say that the teachings of the saints are light of the divine work, for they arouse the light of spiritual knowledge and they deify those who obey.' They follow here Saint Dionysios clearly,

¹ Dionysios, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, I, 1**

who says: 'This is the kind of divine enlightenment into which we have been initiated by the hidden tradition of our inspired teachers, a tradition at one with scripture.'² Elsewhere he says: 'The spiritual knowledge of God raises those who tend toward it as much as is permitted them, and it unifies them in its union which renders everything simple.' And again: 'Every procession of the luminous manifestation comes from the Father and remains in us like a gift of goodness, simplifies us while deploying toward the heights like a unifying power, and returns us to unity and deifying simplicity of the Father who gathers us in. For all things come from him and are in him (Rom. 11 : 36).'³

Do you understand that he who has wisely rediscovered simplicity when making way for the heights through a return to God, that is through divine attention, united to God and is deified if, in his elevation, he contemplates God by starting with things and if he contemplates with Scripture as the start point, whether symbolic or divine in all ways? How can such a man not also himself be called God? "Every being," he says, "endowed with intelligence and reason, which, totally and as far as it can, is returned to be united with him, which is forever being raised up toward his divine enlightenments, which if one may say so, tries as hard as possible to imitate God – such a one surely deserves to be called divine."⁴

This is also what the theological language of Gregory says: 'Man is a living thing which has his destiny down here but then is transported elsewhere, and is at last deified by the call of mystery which leads him to God.' And saint Maximos: 'By means of wisdom, the inner essential form of divine Scripture changes those who have spiritual knowledge. It leads them to deification by transfiguring the Logos within them, and, "their face uncovered, they reflect the glory of God" (cf. 2 Cor. 3 : 18).'⁵ But this contemplative life has a need, as I have said, of three things: faith, spiritual communion and the wisdom of spiritual knowledge, in Christ Jesus our Lord.

82. The contemplative life open to the life-giving Spirit fill with numerous and admirable marvellous inner essences he who contemplates in secret. It does not fill him in an hour or all at once, but with time through the long love of wisdom, progressively and as if by degrees.

Now, hear such a contemplative, when the eminence of the life of stillness and his flight far from everything except God, makes him say: 'I remain solitary, and I escape' (Ps. 141 : 10. LXX). Elsewhere again, when he turns toward beings so as to know them: 'How great are your works, Lord, you have made everything with wisdom' (Ps. 104 : 24. LXX). And: 'The odour of his clothes is like the odour of a fertile field which you have blessed, Lord' (Gen. 27 : 27). But when it has to

² Dionysios, *the Divine Names*, 1. 4; p52; (592B)

³ Dionysios, *Celestial Hierarchy*, 1. 1; p 145 (120B)

⁴ Dionysios, *Celestial Hierarchy*, 12. 3; p. 176 (293B)

⁵ Cite Maximos: *Centuries I*: 97. Cf. 2 Cor. 3 : 18;

reach again higher and to raise itself to the inner essential degrees, he confides in God: 'I run after you, after the smell of your perfume' (Song 1 : 3-4). And: 'I will exalt you, God, my King, and I will bless your name in eternity, in the ages of ages' (Ps. 145 : 1. LXX). And: 'The Lord is great and great is his praise. His greatness is immeasurable' (Ps. 145 : 3. LXX). And: 'Your spiritual knowledge amazes me. It is so high that I cannot attain it' (Ps. 139 : 6. LXX). And elsewhere: 'But you, Lord, you are the Most High in eternity. Your memory endures from age to age' (Ps 102 : 12. LXX).

Those who see, reaching toward that which in the vision is higher than being, the contemplative life makes them sing: You are raised well above all gods. In other times, it makes them declare openly: 'None is equal to you among the gods, Lord. And nothing matches your works' (Ps. 86 : 8. LXX). To those who contemplate in spirit the mountain of spiritual knowledge and the holy place of God, it shows where there rises and where there remain those who are the innocent hands and the pure heart (cf. Ps. 24 : 3-4), while it gives them to see the heights right up to the heavens and the descents right down to the abysses, that is to say the height and depth of the mysteries of the Spirit. So much as it applies itself admirably to discern what the Persons of the Trinity make him see. So much it occupies itself, in ecstasy, to fix itself on the contemplation of Jesus, on the economy of his incarnation of supernatural mysteries which follow him. Finally, after so many blessed visions, it does not abandon what it has contemplated, but it does enter onto a new road – and what grace! – in the very breast of God, illumined by true stillness, in ineffable repose, in supernatural delights of the Spirit, not to say in the drunkenness of the goods of God and in an ecstasy always more divine. For this breast more than blessed has the great depth of divine secrets, and it sufficiently permits the sense of the super essentiality of God to approach. It is the breast which Abraham inherited from above, when God gave Abraham his inheritance when he said: 'I am the God of Abraham' (Gen. 26 : 24). God is thus par excellence the God of Abraham. The bosom of God is in consequence also the bosom of Abraham (cf. Luke 16 : 22). Then it is into the bosom of God – which one could call the bosom of Abraham – that in rising, the contemplative life, the life in spirit, makes entrance in all simplicity, deified in heart with an immense joy of love, and given over to beatitude, rejoicing in ineffable delights, the intellect communes in wisdom and brings all its attention to bear and looks upward on high, in Christ Jesus our Lord.

83. When creation and Scripture have been deployed by the word of God, what is given to contemplate in spirit confirms the intellect, and all its powers, in the vision and the comprehension of God, the heart being in the advance, animated and set in motion by the energy of the Spirit. The blessed David teaches, with the greatest wisdom, when he says: 'The intellects – which he names the heavens, here – have been founded by the word of the Lord, and all their power through he breath of his mouth' (cf. Ps. 33 : 6. LXX).

And elsewhere: 'The inner essential earth – that is our heart – is full of the mercy of the Lord' (cf. Ps. 33 : 5. LXX), so the power, the energy and the motion of the Spirit, in a sensible and manifest manner. But as far as the intellect will not feel in the heart, the energy, the power and the movement, so much will it bet he case that reading the creation and the holy Scripture through contemplation, and gathering what is in itself into a single point, will not comfort it, but one can always also fear to the highest degree that it will lose itself in self-deceptions. So if we must dedicate ourselves to the contemplation of God starting from Scripture and from creation, while collecting in their unity and their simplicity, in a single cause and a single breath, the numerous causes of beings and what we see of them, and while opening ourselves, aside from any limit, of any end and beginning, to unique and simple contemplation, disengaged from any form, searching also to discover the treasure which is beneath our heart and supplicating holy God to fill with his mercy our earth. And now, if we can, we raise our intellect in complete freedom, toward the comprehension of God, unique, as it has been said, pure and simple, eternal, aside from all form, of all end, all limit, in the contemplation and the rescue of the Word and the Spirit.

84. When, through uprightness and simplicity of soul, because of his virtue, in humility, patience and hope which faith gives, man goes to the end of the road of virtue, when the life giving always springing from the Holy Spirit power and the energy make their home in his heart, illuminating the powers of the soul, calling quickly to them the active intellect, by their natural movement and by invocation, and unifying themselves ineffably to it, in such a way that the intellect and grace will be then truly and indubitably one single Spirit, then the intellect, carried by the breath of grace, goes of its own choice toward contemplation, its turning and its indescribable separation paused by the energy and the light of the life giving Holy Spirit. It comes and goes in the revelations and spiritual mysteries of God. Through all forms of silence, through the calm of its own view, it arrives to enter in the ineffable supernatural. And it contemplates so much more, the more it is inspired by God, it is the more directed towards the vision of God himself, in the science of divine things, that science which comes from sacred reading, which is animated by God in the Holy Spirit, it has for itself, by analogy, humility and prayer. It is not then beyond the theological spiritual knowledge, but it is really and precisely theological, and it cannot support not being pledged continuously to theological spiritual knowledge.

Nevertheless, without the heavenly gift which we have said, without the Spirit always clearly in movement and breathing in the heart, alas, the intellect never sees anything except its own fantasy, and what it can say of God is nothing but words thrown thoughtlessly into the air, which does not awaken as it ought the sense of the soul. For it works through hearsay and under the effect of worlds which come from the outside. That is why the terrible scattering of the intellect puts the road of

theology itself toward evil, because it does not come from the heart and it is not sent by the Spirit which shines on us. It is the same with the unique truth of the inner essences, as it is for the immutable truth of theology, when for it in general, but singularly in the heart, the power and the life-giving and shining energy of the Spirit do not assist in a manifest manner and always overflowing him who receives it, such that they say that it breathes or that it flows. There is no union inner essentially speaking, but much division; no power, no stability, but weakness and versatility; worse yet, no light, no vision of the truth, but much darkness, fictions, arbitrariness and fantasy; in sum the way of irrationality and error.

For the Fathers, in fact, the intellect could move through three orders, or three ways: the natural way, the supernatural way, and the way contrary to nature. When the intellect contemplates in matter an inner essential thing, it sees according to nature, with supernatural energy of the Spirit. But when it sees things in a fundamental manner, and not through material things, it can see a demon or an angel. If it unites with peace, and if the illumination of the Spirit becomes yet more bright, it sees supernaturally, and it is clear that it sees without error. But if, if it contemplates the visible, it divides itself and darkens itself, and if the life giving power is extinguished, it sees against nature, and that vision is of the order of illusion. That is why the intellect must not in a fundamental manner rise toward the spiritual vision, nor yet give any confidence to natural vision, if the heart is not animated and carried by the power of the Holy Spirit, assuming that we truly want a healthy and wise intellect.

85. Certain people, who do good at all times, try to cure the burning of their passions with the heavenly dew of grace. It is about them that it is written: 'The dew which comes from you will be for us a remedy' (Is. 26 : 19). With others, this same dew unites itself in some manner to a greater rescue and is transformed into manna, as if, by the contrition of humility of heart, by the water of tears and by the fire of spiritual knowledge, it was completely wheat, found in a state worthy and entirely just, and became nourishment equal to that of angels. It is of such beings that he has often been said with reason: 'Man has eaten the bread of angels' (Ps. 78 : 25). There are those, finally, who higher still, have become like sheep. Their nature itself reveal itself clearly to be manna. The Gospels say of them: 'What is born of the Spirit is Spirit' (John 3 : 6). The first order is that of the wise engaged in the life of stillness. The order following is that of those who live in silence and carry divine spiritual knowledge. The third order is those who have become completely simple and have been transformed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

86. Until through grace, as is natural, the intellect flies in spirit from the Pharaoh, Egypt and the hard things and punishable which are found, that life of the flesh overcome by the passionate waves of bitterness and of evil, until it has entered into the inner essential desert, then in a disengaged state of pharaonic thinking, in a word until in spirit it has been

delivered from passions, these evils which beat it the Hebrews in their senses, it eats until then, by the senses of the soul, in total certitude, the inner essential manna, whose figure was Israel eating the sensible manna (cf. Ex. 16 : 35). But it happens afterwards, not without danger often, nor without risk of falling, to remember in spirit the Egyptian sacrifices and to desire them, as the Hebrews recalled and desired sensible food (cf. Ex. 12 : 8). It experiences in this way the abandonment of God, until through prayer of repentance, prayer which reunites, it is reconciled with the divine. But if, in the life of stillness, it knows manna and never lets it go, the time arrives, when grace gives him a its impulsion and its force, it sees manifestly and very clearly its inner essential flesh transform, so to speak, in to the same nature as manna.

But such an intellect, which eats manna, has a spiritual balance and limits of grace to which, when it takes its weight of manna, it becomes simply a sort of daily bread, so that nothing can be lost, and nothing can be in excess (cf. Ex. 16 : 18-20), for it putrefies in excess, and no matter how much is taken, it is enough. So it is clear that the intellect which nourishes itself on manna, if it eats nothing else, manifestly leads a life better than all intellect which will eat, I speak of things in spirit, great amounts of other foods, of any other food at all. Nevertheless, the sign that the self, by the faculty it has of nourishing itself, is transformed such that it has the same quality of being manna, it is the lack of appetite before all the foreign things which it desired before. When in everything, it eats the manna and makes itself like a child, attached to the love of God, there is nothing astonishing to one who has such an intellect and is transformed into the state that it continually tastes and that this state seizes it for long periods; the transformation of the intellect in the state of manna will not be in a total way against nature. The nourishment, when it is taken continually and without interruption, is naturally transformed into the one who is nourished.

While the intellect approaches the order of angels, it has a part in divine filiation. It is worthy of being transported from spiritual glory to spiritual glory (cf. 2 Cor. 3 : 18). It not only tends toward the One, but it becomes the One for itself, living for it, making of it its delight, playing so to speak with ineffable secrets, carried in the Holy Spirit through the divine resemblance and love of God, and becoming in some manner in the image of visible things and celebrated, in the measure where it sees itself in the state of manna. This order is then well more high and much more venerable than that of the intellect which knows itself to have eaten the manna, but not having been transformed in some state of manna. The first spiritual knowledge is that of the intellect which begins to gather into itself in the inner essential unity. The second is the clear evidence of a union more visible, of a revelation of mysteries of spiritual knowledge; the final one is the deliverance far from all things, and of transcendental intellectuality.

87. The intellect is simple by nature. For it is an image of something simple, namely, the divine. Then because it is simple, it loves to do things simply. It loves, in fact, everything which has a simple nature. Nevertheless, it is diversified, not in itself, but by the senses and the sensible world, out of which it receives the inner essences. But when it submits things to its own reason so as to discern and judge in full knowledge, as much as possible, using its powers and the senses devoted to the sensible, without deadening the senses more than it should, without effacing through negligence or without flattening the beauty of the sensible world with a spurious equality, and while not submitting itself to indifference, but rendering wisely to each thing what is due to it, then once again the intellect is re-established in the unity and simplicity which it has by nature, and it distances itself from what is divided. It naturally sets out to love the One, simplicity, in an action pure and simple which it seeks in love. And it is while searching in this way that it takes flight above everything composite, to the point when it discovers what is truly in itself, one and simple, and which is God, until it rejoices in those delights, protected as it is by the divine wings, and at other times elevated to the heights by the same wings, as is natural to an intellect watched over and carried by God.

88. That which comes with the passions has covered the soul's discernment like a thick cloud in the place of true vision. But when, through frequent prayer, by the accomplishment of the commandments, through straining toward the contemplation of God, the intellect receives the grace to dissipate that thick cloud, it sees clearly by itself that it sees God, without having for all that any need to interpret, just as he who sees the sensible world with his own eyes has no need to be taught by another, so long as nothing hides or damages his eye. Just as, in effect, the sensible is naturally attached to the senses, while they are healthy, so the inner essential is united to thoughts purified of the cloud of passions. And just as the understanding of the sensible comes from the perception of the senses, just so the vision of the inner essential comes ordinarily from the sight of the intellect. Then comes the contemplation of God, simple, outside all form, all propriety and all fantasy, which holds back the intellect, which disengages it from the sensible and from the inner essential, while planting it again into the heart of an infinite abyss, of incomprehension, the unlimited, in a ravishment and an astonishment which no word can describe.

89. O Master who dominates the universe, who are the origin of all the visible and all the inner essential, Uncreated who have for beginning that which has no beginning, Infinite who have for limit that which has no limits, Incomprehensible who has for nature what is higher than nature, Unbegotten who have for being what is higher than all being, Invisible who have for image that which has no image, Incorruptible who have for property that which has no property, Unfindable who have for form what has no form, Unlimited who have for place what cannot be defined, Unsoundable who have for

comprehension that which cannot be comprehended, Inaccessible and Incomprehensible who have for spiritual knowledge and contemplation the invisible and the unknown, Inexplicable who have for name the indescribable, Indescribable who have for explication the inexplicable, Inconceivable who have for thought that which cannot be thought, More than God who has for home the retreat above all, you are all in all, marvel, serenity, courage, love, sweetness, rejoicing, confidence, veritable absence of inquietude, joy, you are the only glory, the only kingdom, the only wisdom, the only genuinely existing power. That is why you are naturally and indescribably the ecstasy above all the visible, the accomplishment the inner essential beyond all, and the marvellous repose they have who contemplate you and have a part in the Holy Spirit, God ineffable.

90. What is admirable – the divine –, is desirable too. And what is desired purifies, the voice of Gregory the theologian says. Now what purifies makes beings equal to God, and he attaches himself to them.¹ And it is not only God who is spoken of here. Those who have been purified here discover in their own selves, in spirit and in truth, the divine and God. The Theologian adds: 'God is united to gods and is known by gods.'² Do you see the marvellous nature of the union? It is said in fact: 'God is united to gods'. But if the union is of like to like, it is clear that the dispositions and the joys of that union are forcefully the same. That is why he also says: 'He is known'. Just as those who are equal to God and are gods through grace meet and known as themselves the divine and God, so in the same manner God contemplates and meets so as to unite with those who, as we have said, are equal to God and are divine.

Then the great Gregory adds, not without cause, so as to explain: 'God is known by his pure beings who are gods, and he knows them already, in the measure that He knows these gods by adoption.'³ How can this similarity be represented properly, then, when you consider it? Completely blessed those who, as is fitting, are aiming with all the power of their soul, and with all spiritual science, in visions and the contemplations of God, so that going beyond the absence of the beginning and of limits, beyond and through incomprehensibility, eternity and absolute infinity which surround God, they see in the unknowable nature of God all those who have received in him a marvel more than marvellous and such a great ravishing. Then their soul attaches to follow God with all their love (cf. Ps. 63 : 9. LXX). Consumed by contemplation of the divine face and the admirable beauty which is in it, they experience with happiness a desire very hard to bear. They are then purified,

¹ Gregory of Nazianzos, *Orations XXXVIII*, 7; E.T., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 7*, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. (Christian Literature Publishing Co., Buffalo, NY, 1895), p. 347.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

until in their divine work they become equal to God and gods, and unite to God in all spiritual knowledge.

He who, through the eminence which fills the deified ones, and after the supernatural gift of their deification, arrives at spiritual knowledge of the divine union, marvellously seizes the sense of inner essential things and the faculty of intense longing, both of them in their more than beautiful beauty, and he wraps himself in these things as if they were angels singing without relaxing and quite rightly: 'God is in the assembly of the gods, and he judges in the middle of the gods' (Ps. 82 : 1. LXX). And: 'The God of gods, the Lord, has spoken. He has called the earth, the children of the earth, from the rising of the sun to its setting' (Ps. 50 : 1. LXX). That is why the princes of the peoples are joined to the God of Abraham (Ps. 47 : 10. LXX). They have surrounded God; like the seraphim they are around him (cf. Is. 6 : 2), receiving the divine splendours of mysteries higher than the world and attaching themselves to God without any intervening space, though God is separated infinitely to the infinite from all. If then these pure hearts, according to the declaration of the Lord, are blessed because they come from God (cf. Matt. 5 : 8), how will they not be manifestly blessed, those contemplatives who purify the spiritual knowledge of God and who, going forward, raise themselves up to the level of the divine dignity? It must be the case that those who desire to experience the blessedness and deification, and thus hold themselves in immobility, like the cherubim around God, must attach themselves with all their force to the science and contemplative action which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

91. I want to see you and at the same time celebrate you, you who created life, you who are the life of those who see you, Lord my God. But I cannot say for myself who is worthy. In truth, I do not know and I suffer. How can the intellect not unite with you, Master, Creator most wise? He who does not see anything but you alone rejoices in peace and rest which are natural. For the intellect, when it is freed from the exterior tournament of appearances and stopped on itself, desire to meditate and understand, with natural promptness, the most high things and attach through the strongest things to develop his immateriality. It goes naturally and as if by itself, toward that is above all things, toward higher than all immateriality. And it is clear that it receives, as is natural, you help through faith, under the impulsion of the Holy Spirit, and that it tends thus toward you. Or moreover the intellect, dressed in the inner essential beings which surround you as if by beings which are apparent to him, desires strongly to see you with all the resolve of its soul. And it experiences naturally things marvellous and blessed.

Because its nature, which is inner essential, as I have said, and is more light and more rapid than any creature, carries it with all its desire toward these inner essential things, it should think with the same naturalness as sensible animals eat. For to think is entirely, for the intellect, what to eat is for sensible animals. It is by thinking, in fact, that the proper life, the

growth, the rejoicing, the delights are given to the intellect, as they are given by nourishment to sensible animals.

This is what it experiences when doing, when thinking outside all measure, and above all when its desire gets mixed up in the allure of ineffable glory, through your spiritual goodness, in what is born indescribably in you. Why does something with its own desire experience things from Him who dressed him, a being such as you, and by your providential choice, so as to see you, so desirable as you are? For it is you, King very wise, all powerful, Lord more than good, you who has made the living intellect inner essential, it is you who created it such that it can naturally rejoice very well in what is yours and enter indescribably in possession of your divine intense longing with ravishment, it is you who create it such that it can give itself madly to you in a divine transport.

The intellect created to love beauty in the extreme, is therefore by nature entirely philokalic. It has in it, by providence, a determination which carries it and makes it always want to think better, to desire further, toward higher things, and to rejoice more, in all that happens to it. This is what the intellect demonstrates, so that you, Master, will seize hold of it in all your wisdom, dressed as it is in an intense longing in the heart for your contemplation, and ravished once and for all and far from all, except from you, in resolution of soul. For you do not reveal yourself, O very sweet, not as something diverse, nor as something simple, not only comprehensible, not only incomprehensible, not only terrible, not only clement. But you are all of these, all of those, so that movement, and then change of the intellect, coming in every way from the one other, can not incline toward one thing which is aside from you, for reasons of apparent diversity, or because of simplicity, because of desire of incomprehensibility, or because of desire of comprehension, because of the terrible, or because of the clemency. In a word, you are the unique good, the unique encompassing beauty, you are the origin more than good and more than lovely, creator of all good and all beauty. The intellect cannot absolutely contemplate, remain and rejoice, in many ways and frequently, in any other way than with you. For you are in yourself the universe, of which you are the cause, and you are higher than all things, while you are infinitely to infinity the Creator more than beautiful.

Thus, God, you are One. Your energies, in their multitude, reveal in so many ways your essence. And you are immense, by their grandeur itself. The most admirable, the marvellous, it is to live in those to whom you have given yourself to be known. For you are totally incomprehensible in your essence and your energies, and nothing can comprehend your power. Who has every discovered the measure of your power? Who has known your wisdom? Who has sounded the ocean of your goodness? Who has totally and until the end understood something of what is yours (cf. Is. 40 : 13), even if, in every manner, by another way, it would be possible to understand you?

Then the intellect which, through the inner essential, in the heart of the sensible world, begins to contemplate, raises itself afterwards into the unity and the incomprehensibility which surrounds you, Saviour. Through the sweetness and the perfect delights which it comprehends, and because it is philokalic, it impresses with great ardour and forces itself in some manner to pass into the beyond, as much as possible. But because it does not happen that it goes much further, considering as it must that which escapes it, which is above it and which carries it, it is completely taken with intense longing, it is irresistibly transported by made love for you, and it relights in the soul an ardent desire, enflamed as it is itself with divine love by what it can understand in the incomprehensible, and making from privation the means of acquiring intense longing, less through the charm with which you touch it, than by burning of what escapes and disposes it, by inaccessible nature of spiritual knowledge, to amaze to the highest degree, to desire above all, and I would add, to persuade to not look any more to know your essence, something which for certain is in every way totally impossible. But the nature of the power and the energy of the divine essence and completely incomprehensible, like those of divine and inner essential beings which we contemplate around you and which, we have said, are infinite in grandeur and uncountable in their multitude. When these beings are infinite, it is impossible, in fact, to attain them. But it is possible, when approaching you through the purification and when tending toward beauty, to arrive at visions of beings more clear and more luminous around you, and to be deified in consequence. You then burn the intellect with the injury of intense longing which accompanies you as it must, illuminating it more and more, and by the same process introducing it into the marvels which it contemplates, inaccessible, mystical, higher than heaven.

O infinitely celebrated unity, Trinity infinitely venerated, Abyss of power and wisdom without end! How, from this point or from that line of departure, whatever the name one gives to it, do you enter into the totally divine darkness in you, which is what the intellect elevated as the Law wishes it be is, leading it from glory to glory (cf. 2 Cor. 3 : 18) and giving it often to remain in the interior itself of the great darkness more than luminous? I do not know, as you know yourself, if Moses entered ever into this darkness (cf. Ex. 20 : 21), if he was himself the image of the darkness, or if the darkness was his image. I know only one thing: this darkness is manifestly essential, and in it divinely, supernaturally, ineffably, in the secret of the soul, they mysteries of the union and of spiritual love are celebrated. Those who are introduced in this darkness with the torch of the Spirit which lights the way are held in the greatest brightness.

92. Who, seeing you, Lord, Trinity, does not rejoice to discover in you the king, the master who never lets us down, the dispensator of all good and beautiful things, whatever they are, and the source of his joy? And who, before having seen

your power which dominates the universe, can know true joy? It is evident that nobody is capable. That is why truly blessed are the pure in heart (cf. Matt. 5 : 8), for they see you with the eyes of the soul, you who are justly and above all joy spiritual. They rejoice, radiant, with profound joy in the heart, and they are filled with insupportable desires of love, then they are often subject to the vicissitudes of their bodies and they experience the attacks of demons. For the spiritual light of the beauty of your face, Lord, is infinitely to infinity more elevated than all submission to the sadness of the world, to one who is sometimes illuminated by grace.

This is why when you advance, you are entirely gentle, entirely desire, holy effort, ineffable intense desire. Then you love re-establishes those who have been dead through the supernatural and insupportable stings and who, in a certain manner, you see in their intellect. Go behind you, following the odour of your perfume (cf. Song 1 : 3), the souls of those to whom you present yourself, ineffable God, moving with all your force, without straying, and forcing with all your means to cover yourself with them, vanquished in every manner and marvellously extinguished as they are by your desire. Elevated toward your supernatural beauty, they look at you in their intellect without every forgetting you. Or moreover, it is you who watch continually and spiritually their hearts day and night. And sleep is gone from their eyes¹ They lay themselves down until now, but their awakened heart (cf. Song 5 : 2), rejoice over their bed (cf. Ps. 149 : 5), as the Prophet says. They see abundance, and they are overcome, they cannot support what happens. They do not know, and they are ravished by what they receive of the ineffable splendour of your face, through the greatness of the glory of your holiness, through your elevations which go higher than the world and that they carry in themselves, through the mystical revelations, and through the myriads of mysterious and ineffable gifts, very beautiful and very good, Father, which surround you²

You can ground those who, in uprightness, live in your presence (cf. Ps. 140 : 14. LXX).

¹ Lacuna in the text.

² Lacuna in the text.